

Back and Neck in Action

Advanced cervical and spine surgeries restore mobility

It's not unusual for cervical and spine patients who seek the expertise of Towson Orthopaedic Associates (TOA) at University of Maryland St. Joseph Medical Center to arrive in a state of near paralysis and at their wit's end after being told by other doctors that there is no hope for relief.

When Henry Koch, 92, came to see spine surgeon Ira Fedder, MD, "he was essentially paralyzed," recalls Dr. Fedder.

Koch had lost control of his legs, arms and hands. Doctors at the hospital where he was first treated told him he had neuropathy and "that nothing could be done," says Koch's wife, Patty. "They said he was too old to risk surgery. I don't know what would have become of Henry if we didn't seek a second opinion from Dr. Fedder."

Dr. Fedder diagnosed Koch with cervical spinal stenosis, pinched nerves

in his neck, which resulted in arm pain, numbness, weakness and—in severe cases like his—near paralysis.

Averting Further Complications

Fortunately, Dr. Fedder and his colleagues at TOA are some of the most experienced in the region, performing cervical fusions using a zero-profile device to treat cervical disk herniation (a ruptured disk in the neck) and cervical spinal stenosis (a narrowing of the spinal canal in the neck).

When a disk becomes herniated, it ruptures or bulges. Traditional treatment involves an anterior cervical discectomy and

fusion (ACDF) to relieve pressure on the cervical spine. The disk and bone spurs are removed during ACDF and a traditional device composed of a cage (a cylindrical spacer) or bone graft from the hip and a plate on the front of the spine is inserted into the disk space. However, the zero-profile device is more compact and joins the plate to what's called a PEEK cage, avoiding the need for rods and a bone graft.

Since Dr. Fedder began using these advanced devices, he says his patients usually have fewer complications and heal more quickly. "The zero profile device is less intrusive into the neck's anatomy, and,

in my opinion, patients have less trouble swallowing afterward."

Koch was treated with the zero profile device, has recovered the use of his hands and other extremities, and continues to grow stronger. He can walk up and down stairs

and uses a motorized scooter for distances. "We live close enough to the post office that he drives there daily and can go to the grocery store," Patty says. "Henry has a positive attitude and, thanks to Dr. Fedder, he has his life back."



Henry Koch, with Ira Fedder, MD, was almost paralyzed and told nothing could be done, until he received treatment from Towson Orthopaedics Associates of UM SJMC

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