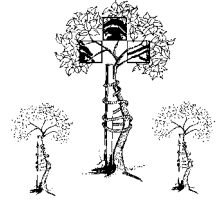


ORTHOKNOW®



STRATEGIC INSIGHTS INTO THE ORTHOPAEDIC INDUSTRY

Disc Patient Becomes Advocate

As patients share research and discover overseas medical solutions, a Global Patient Network is born.

On Saturday, June 5, in Fountain Valley, California, 46 people from eight states gathered to listen to noted spine surgeon Anthony Yeung of Phoenix, and to network with each other regarding treatment options. Among the attendees were 12 patients who have 20 artificial discs. Eight of the patients had their surgery performed at three different centers in Germany and Austria.

Saturday's meeting was the third of its kind. The first two were with Dr. Rudolf Bertagnoli from Germany, one of the world's most experienced ADR surgeons, founding Board member and this year's President of the Spine Arthroplasty Society. In October 2003 and March 2004, 25 patients were treated to six and four hour sessions with Dr. Bertagnoli. The events were organized by Mark S. Mintzer, Founder of the Global Patient Network (GPN).

Mintzer knows first-hand the value of the network. After an automobile accident and two spine surgeries, he was still functionally disabled. A comprehensive pain management program including large doses of pain medications was of little help. Because disc replacement was not available in the U.S., in September of 2002, he traveled to Europe to have two SB Charité III artificial discs implanted by Dr. Willem Zeegers at the AlphaKlinik in Munich. "Six weeks after my surgery, I was completely off pain meds. This was after two years of being a shut-in and three straight years on opiates. I was afraid that I'd wind up with a morphine pump... what I got instead was a normal life! Just a few months after surgery, I was playing tennis, SCUBA diving and playing soccer," Mintzer said. "I can identify with the patients and their families because I've lived through spinal hell."

Before and during his ordeal, Mintzer began to connect with others with similar problems via the Internet. After his surgery, as the community grew and grew, Mintzer found himself spending most of



Mintzer's post-op x-ray

his time helping spine patients from all over the world. In January of 2004, he founded Global Patient Network and is now working full time to raise awareness of new technologies and to help spine patients find solutions. Among other innovations to help streamline the path for patients, GPN has developed an Online Patient Profile that includes the critical information needed by doctors to evaluate a patient. The profile and additional information such as x-rays, MRIs, etc. can be electronically sent anywhere in the world. According to Dr. Zeegers, "The Online Patient Profile that Global Patient Network is developing is an excellent tool that saves me time and allows me to provide better service to my international patients. Patients assisted by GPN come to me with a clearer view of what to expect, both pre-op and post-op. Mark is able to help my patients from a very unique perspective."

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Disc Patient...

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"I learned more from talking to the individual post-op patients than I could ever fathom."

—GPN gathering attendee



Mark Mintzer (far right) and fellow artificial disc recipients at the June gathering of the Global Patient Network—seven Charités, three ProDiscs.

Mr. Mintzer helps shepherd patients through the sometimes confusing and nearly always frightening ordeal of "spine hell." "I function as a patient advocate," he says, "helping spine patients understand what their options are and which issues are relevant."

The recent gathering in California represented an historic moment. Only days after the FDA panel unanimously recommended approval with conditions of the first disc replacement to be marketed in the U.S., the Global Patient Network gathering set a record for the most disc replacement recipients ever to be in the same room. With the patient becoming more of a force in determining treatment, the groundswell represented by the GPN is expected to

grow substantially. A true Baby Boomer phenomenon, some say the impact of the organized patient movement will be profound.

Mintzer maintains that the service he provides streamlines the process for the patient AND the surgeon, and indeed provides value that doctors simply can't. "I learned more from talking to the individual post-op patients than I could ever fathom," said Lisa Marks, a potential Maverick recipient and attendee at the June gathering. "I never dreamed that there were people out there in the same situation. I found comfort and new friendship beyond my doctor's advice."

In the few short months since Mintzer began GPN, there have been some stunning successes. Patients who had given up hope have received life-changing treatment, thanks to the network. Said one patient, "If not for GPN, I'd still be completely disabled and in pain management."

Mintzer maintains his steadfast commitment to his mission, and is grateful for the gift of making a living through helping others. "I feel honored and privileged to be able to help people who are suffering in the same hell that I lived in for years. This started out as a labor of love and it still is," he says. "It's very exciting to watch it unfold into a business."

For more information, please visit www.globalpatientnetwork.com.

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