

Back In The Swing of Things

Joint replacement surgery can enhance quality of life

SHELBY - An industrial accident in 1969 cost Freddie Clontz his left arm. In 2003 he faced the very real possibility of losing the use of his right. Wear and tear had taken its toll on Clontz's overworked right shoulder.

But as with everything else in his life, Clontz, 66, put his faith in God. "I had the best doctor in the world in the Lord," he said. "I figured if the Lord could create the body, he could fix it, too."

A large part of that fixing came in the form of Patrick Hayes, MD, an orthopaedic surgeon on staff at Cleveland Regional Medical Center (CRMC). He recommended that Clontz have total shoulder replacement surgery. "He's a hard-working man, and a vigorous and avid golfer," Dr. Hayes said. "He put his shoulder through a lot."

With the pain of arthritis keeping him up at night despite pain medication, Clontz was beginning to lose some of his hard-won independence. "He was backed into a corner," Dr. Hayes said. "He couldn't work the way he liked and probably, more seriously to him, he couldn't golf the way he liked."

The surgery would keep Clontz from his beloved golf game for weeks, but it was a choice Clontz felt he had to make. Clontz said every time he moved his shoulder it sounded like rocks rubbing together.

If he worried about the surgery on his good arm, he wasn't about to tell anyone. "Worried? Nah," he said. "Never say die, that's me."

Clontz said Dr. Hayes carefully explained the surgery and all that would happen. "He's a really good doctor and he's good at analyzing the situation," Clontz said. "The job he did is one reason I recovered so fast."

While the operation sounds daunting, cutting muscle and bone to replace worn out structures with metal and plastic instead, Dr. Hayes said it can really make a difference in a patient's quality of life if done correctly.

"The good news is that many times people will wake up after the surgery with less pain than they went to sleep with," he said. "If you have the right diagnosis and a bad enough problem it's an amazing transformation."

Patients typically stay in the hospital one night and go home wearing a sling for three to four weeks. "They can take it off to shower," Dr. Hayes said. "They can use their hands, wrist and elbow right away, but we have to cut a muscle to do the operation and that takes a full six weeks to heal."

He recommends a patient refrain from heavy lifting, pushing or pulling for at least six weeks with 12 weeks being ideal.

"We'll have the patient do outpatient therapy for two or three months," he said. "Usually at three months, they are very good, but they continue to improve up to a calendar year after the surgery."

Clontz admits he's hard-headed and said he started swinging the golf club again in about six months rather than waiting the 18 months Dr. Hayes recommended.

"Recovery was painless," Clontz said. He credits the Joint Academy at CRMC for speeding up the process.

"They put you through an exercise program," Clontz said. "They make you move your arm and do so many repeti-



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Freddie Clontz lines up for a putt at River Bend Golf Course. His golfing buddies say never bet against the one-armed man because he's a fierce competitor and is a pretty good golfer.

Want to learn more?

TO SEE FREDDIE CLONTZ talk about his amazing story, go to www.youtube.com/CCHHealthSystem.

CLEVELAND REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER offers a unique program for some patients who have knee and hip joint replacement surgery. These patients may also go through the Joint Academy, an intensive program aimed at getting joint replacement patients back on their feet as soon as possible. Videos detailing this program are also available for viewing on the CCHS Channel on YouTube.

tions. It really helped with my recovery."

The Joint Academy is a specially designated unit for joint replacement surgery patients who are willing to work hard and push themselves so they can return to normal activities as soon as possible.

The Academy initially served patients needing hip or knee replacement surgery but recently expanded to include those needing total shoulder replacement. It involves intense physical therapy for four days immediately after surgery.

"It's a wonderful institution," Dr. Hayes said. "The patient is surrounded by ancillary staff - physical therapists, nurses, nurse's assistants - who are all well versed in taking care of the joint replacement patient. It's more than just getting your surgery at CRMC. You're getting your surgery in an environment where people are completely focused on getting the best result after that joint replacement surgery as soon as possible."

The best result for Freddie Clontz was getting back out on the golf course with the other three players who make up the "Fearsome Foursome" - Ron McCurry, Hayward Grigg, and Bill Pearson. "Even I'm impressed at how well he's done after surgery," Dr. Hayes said. "He's a remarkable guy. He's had at least one hole-in-one that I know of since the operation."

His friends aren't the least bit surprised. "If Fred says he can do it, he does it," Grigg said. "He was like that when we were working together and after Fred lost his arm. I'd try to help him and he'd say, 'I can do my job. Just stay out of the way.'"

Now they've all learned to stay out of his way. "Even after surgery and with only one arm, I can still do anything I want to now," Clontz said.

Medical Society Honors Three Local Physicians

The North Carolina Medical Society honored three local physicians recently during its annual meeting in Raleigh.

Surgeon Michael L. Barringer, MD, CRMC's Trauma Medical Director, was presented the 2009 E. Harvey Estes, MD, Physician Community Service Award as recognition for his years of exemplary community service in Cleveland County. Urologist Robert Gossett, MD, and Family Medicine Physician George Bradley, DO, were each presented Presidential Awards given to Medical Society members for unique contributions to the community of medicine.

Dr. Gossett nominated Dr. Barringer for the award and wrote: "Dr. Barringer epitomizes what physicians should strive to be. He shares his talents, making us all strive to be better."

Dr. Barringer is credited with helping to establish and promote safety programs for children and youth in his community. He received the 2009 NC Safe Kids' Shining Star Award for leading the Safe Kids program for the past 10 years. Other initiatives include the Kid Tips safety education program in several schools. For many years Dr. Barringer has dressed as Trauma-roo, a giant kangaroo mascot of trauma services at Cleveland Regional Medical Center,



Dr. Michael Barringer



Dr. Robert Gossett



Dr. George Bradley

to welcome children to the Safety Zone at the Cleveland County Fair. He also has led discussions with teenagers about safe driving and shared how tragic accidents involving teenagers affect him and others in the emergency department.

Dr. Gossett was recognized for his work on the Board of Trustees of the North Carolina Medical Society Employee Benefit Plan. During his tenure as Chair of the Board, the plan grew to become the seventh largest health benefits plan in North Carolina, covering nearly 30,000 lives.

Dr. Bradley was recognized for authoring and sponsoring many of the policies adopted by the House of Delegates, the governing body of the Medical Society. In presenting the award, NCMS President Albert Osbahr, MD, said that Dr. Bradley's involvement exemplifies physician engagement in organized medicine and demonstrates an understanding of what the governance process seeks to do for the community of medicine.

The NC Medical Society is the largest and oldest professional member organization in North Carolina, representing approximately 12,000 physicians and physician assistants who practice in the state. Established in 1849, the Medical Society seeks to promote access to quality health care for all citizens of North Carolina and champions initiatives that seek to improve quality of care and promote patient safety."

CLEVELAND COUNTY HEALTHCARE SYSTEM UPCOMING EVENTS

Healthy Hearts Support Group

Dec. 1: 11 a.m.

Location: CRMC Cardiopulmonary Rehab Department
For more information, please call 980-487-3659.

Parkinson's Disease Support Group

Dec. 1: 6:30 pm

Location: Life Enrichment Center

For more information, please call 980-487-3182.

Breastfeeding Support Group & Mom to Mom Support Group

Dec. 2: 10 a.m.-Noon

Location: Women's Life Center Classroom

Open to all breastfeeding mothers and nursing babies and expectant moms who are interested in

breastfeeding. For more information, please call 980-487-3887 and 980-487-3983.

Pink Ribbon Network

Dec. 3: Noon-1p.m.

Location: CRMC Oncology Department Board Room
A gathering for newly diagnosed breast cancer patients. Lunch served.

To register, please call 980-487-3757.

WINGS Cancer Support Group

Dec. 7: 6 p.m.

Location: CRMC Blumenthal Cancer Center

A support group for patients with all types of cancer.

For more information, please call 980-487-3025.



Cleveland Regional's Joint Academy

Bringing specialized support to patients

The Joint Academy is a specialized unit, bringing together nurses, physical therapists and other staff members who are hand-picked and specially trained to take care of joint replacement patients. The Joint Academy recently received its third consecutive 5-Star rating from PRC for excellence in patient satisfaction. **For more information call 980-487-3589.**

Cleveland Regional Medical Center: 980-487-3000

Kings Mountain Hospital: 980-487-5000

www.ClevelandCountyHealthCareSystem.org



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