Indiana Spine Group

Press Release

A NEW ERA IN SPINE SURGERY BEGINS IN INDIANAPOLIS

Back pain sufferer finds relief with first artificial lumbar disc replacement.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (August 13, 2003) - On August 8, at St. Vincent Indianapolis Hospital, a new device was used in an artificial lumbar disc replacement in the lower back. Dr Rick C. Sasso and Dr. Kenneth L. Renkens Jr. inserted a metal-on-metal type of artificial disc. This was the first implantation of this new design in the world. The new device made of metal, has a ball and socket joint that is designed to allow normal spinal motion.

The artificial intervertebral disc was used to replace a degenerative disc in the lumbar spine (lower back), as a result of degenerative disc disease (DDD). This advanced technology will provide patients a superior option to the traditional fusion surgery. This groundbreaking surgery at St. Vincent Indianapolis Hospital was performed by the same team of surgeons who implanted the first cervical artificial disc replacement in the United States.

The patient, a 49-year-old male suffering from lower back pain resulting from DDD, went home within 48 hours of surgery. As a result of his extreme back pain, the patient had been off work since late spring. According to Dr. Rick Sasso, "The procedure was very successful. The patient felt great and was no longer suffering from the extreme back pain he experienced prior to surgery. He was ecstatic. This new procedure along with other experimental procedures our group is testing will fundamentally change the way we perform spine surgery. In the future we will be able to implant spine prostheses that allow normal movement of the spine, unlike the current standard treatment. Unfortunately, a traditional fusion limits movement."

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Rick C. Sasso, M.D., is a board-certified orthopaedic surgeon who specializes in orthopaedic spine surgery. Dr. Sasso is an internationally renowned speaker and is very involved in research and development of spinal implants and techniques of minimally invasive spine surgery. His professional memberships include the American Medical Association, American College of Surgeons, North American Spine Society and the Cervical Spine Research Society.

Kenneth L. Renkens, Jr., M.D., is a board-certified neurosurgeon who specializes in spinal surgery. Dr. Renkens lectures nationally, and is involved in teaching new surgical techniques to spinal surgeons. His professional memberships include the American Association of Neurological Surgeons, Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, the North American Spine Society, the American Medical Association, and the Neurosurgical Society of Indiana.

Drs. Sasso and Renkens are with the Indiana Spine Group at St.Vincent in Indianapolis. Indiana Spine Group is dedicated to spine and neck diagnostics and surgery. Surgeons with Indiana Spine Group perform, develop and refine the newest techniques for traditional and minimally invasive surgery and micro-surgery. In addition, physicians with Indiana Spine Group are involved in research to advance the diagnostics, treatment and surgery of the neck and back.

St.Vincent Health, one of the largest healthcare systems in Indiana, is dedicated to spiritually-centered, holistic care, which sustains and improves the health of individuals and communities. St.Vincent Indianapolis Hospital is part of the Indianapolis-based St.Vincent Health network. A member of Ascension Health, the largest Catholic healthcare system in the country, the ageless mission of St.Vincent Health is to minister to the minds, bodies and spirits of those in need.

Note: Surgery b-roll is available and Dr. Sasso and the patient are both available for interviews.

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This new artificial intervertebral disc implant procedure will provide the patient many benefits over the traditional fusion surgery, including:

- Patients retain normal spine movement following surgery - whereas with traditional fusion surgery movement is limited following surgery.
- The patient only has one incision site; minimizing the recovery period, post-operative pain and risk for infection.
- There is only one surgical site for the patient as the need for a bone graft is eliminated.

Degenerative disc disease (DDD) is a gradual process that may compromise the spine. The intervertebral disc is prone to the degenerative changes associated with aging; i.e. wear and tear. When damaged, this may lead to the disc's inability to handle mechanical stress. Because the lumbar spine carries a major portion of the body's weight, this increased stress from motion may result in a disc problem. DDD is one cause of lower back pain. When conservative medical management of DDD is ineffective; i.e. physical therapy and medications, surgery to remove the damaged disc is utilized. Typical surgery for DDD is fusion surgery. With fusion surgery, once the damaged disc is removed allograft bone (from a bone bank) and hip bone from the patient are fused to the vertebrae - pedicle screws and rods are then used to stabilize the spine while the vertebrae fuse.

The artificial intervertebral disc is an investigational device that began clinical trials earlier this month. This randomized trial is designed to determine if the symptom relief provided by this new device is better than fusion surgery. Physicians with Indiana Spine Group are one of 22 sites in the United States participating in the study. They are the only participants in central Indiana. For more study information, contact the Study Coordinator - Linda Foley at 317.715.5890.