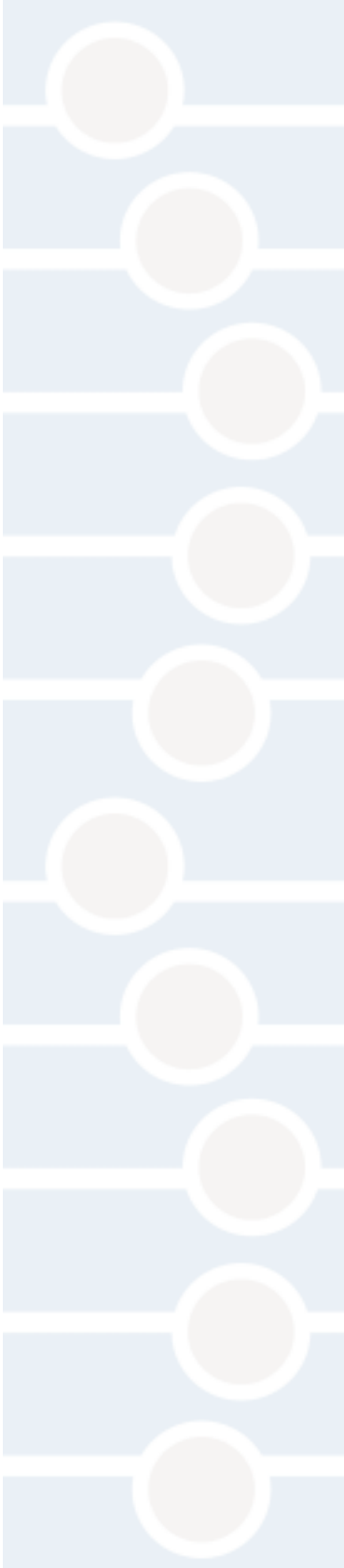


ADVANCEMENTS IN SPINE SURGERY CONTINUES WITH A TWO LEVEL DISC REPLACEMENT

INDIANAPOLIS, IN - DECEMBER 14, 2004 - On November 9, spine surgeon Rick Sasso, M.D., performed the first two level lumbar disc replacement in Indiana. During this procedure, two damaged discs in the lower back were removed, and replaced with two artificial discs. Thirty-one year old Randy Graves enjoyed much needed pain relief, after suffering for ten years from chronic back pain due to degenerative disc disease (DDD).

Over the last year, Randy's back pain became so severe that it greatly minimized his activities. Prior to surgery, Randy had tried to eliminate his chronic back pain with physical therapy and pain management. After nine months of unsuccessful treatment and continued severe pain, he underwent a two level lumbar disc replacement. "I was in constant pain where I could not do anything a 31-year old should be able to do. I had to limit my activities - even yard work. It was quite frustrating," states Randy.

This groundbreaking surgery, performed at St.Vincent Indianapolis Hospital, is a part of an ongoing clinical research study. Spine surgeons with Indiana Spine Group at St.Vincent are participating in a study that is measuring the effectiveness of artificial lumbar discs in the treatment of degenerative disc disease as an alternative to standard fusion surgery. The artificial lumbar disc patients benefit from shorter recovery time, less post-operative pain and the ability to return to normal activities with full motion within weeks of surgery. "The technology that allows us to perform a two level implant brings this procedure to a higher level. For example, patients who have a two level fusion in their lumbar spine have much greater immobility than patients who have a one level fusion. For the younger patient who suffers from DDD who want to remain active, this is a great option," states Dr. Sasso.

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page, consisting of a vertical light blue bar with a series of white circles of varying sizes, resembling a spine, connected by horizontal white lines.

Recently, the FDA approved the CHARITE™ Artificial Disc for use in lumbar disc replacements. This is the first artificial disc approved in the United States. Today, Dr. Sasso performed the first FDA-approved artificial disc replacement in Indiana on a patient suffering from DDD. This procedure, performed at St.Vincent Hospital Indianapolis, is the first time this device has been used in Indiana since its FDA approval.

Dr. Rick Sasso is a board-certified spine surgeon with Indiana Spine Group at St.Vincent in Indianapolis. Indiana Spine Group is dedicated to comprehensive diagnostic and surgical care of the spine - including both neck and spine. Surgeons with Indiana Spine Group perform, develop and refine the newest techniques for traditionally and minimally invasive surgery and microsurgery.

St.Vincent Indianapolis Hospital, 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 Health is a member of Ascension Health, the largest Catholic healthcare system in the country.

Providing the full spectrum of spine care