

St. Joseph Medical Center

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First Two Level Artificial Disc Surgery in U.S. Performed at St. Joseph Medical Center

WHAT: Orthopaedic surgeons implanted a two level Charité Artificial Disc replacement into a patient with degenerative disc disease on Friday November, 20, 2004 at St. Joseph Medical Center. This was the first time in the U.S. a Charite two level disc replacement has been performed. The surgery was done by **Dr. Paul McAfee, chief of Spinal Surgery at St. Joseph Medical Center**, and replaced discs L4-5 and L5-S1 in a 57-year old woman. (You can say it was the first 2 level “Charite” disk replacement or the first “approved” two level disk replacement)

The Charité artificial disc received FDA approval on October 26, 2004. It is the first motion-preserving device for chronic lower back pain and degenerative disc disease. Spinal fusion surgery, which limits motion and may place stress on the adjacent discs, has been the common surgical treatment for degenerative disc disease, with 200,000 procedures performed annually in the U.S. DePuy Spine, which produces the Charité disc predicts 20% of spinal fusion cases will be replaced by artificial disc surgery in the next two years, once enough surgeons are trained in the intricate replacement surgery.

Two level artificial disc surgery expands the opportunity to provide relief for patients with degenerative disc disease. 30 % percent of patients suffer from more than one diseased disc.

“The challenge in implanting two discs is convincing insurance companies to cover the cost of modern innovative surgical techniques. The actual surgery is very straightforward as long as the Spinal surgeon partners with a vascular surgeon as talented as Sam Saeidy, and as long as the patient is cared for in a place with nurses as good as those at St Josephs Hospital. Patients inherently know that disk replacement and motion preservation is better than a traditional Back Fusion. No patient wants a fusion. It will simply take more time for insurance companies to authorize this reconstructive procedure which increases and preserves spinal flexibility. We have already had quite a few patients who are auditors and executives for medical insurance companies – so it is only a matter of time before they authorize this medical advancement for their covered patients as well.”

And according to Dr. McAfee, “In the next several months, we will be evaluating a cervical disc replacement procedure at St Joseph Medical Center which looks very promising.”

St. Joseph Medical Center, one of 15 spine centers (and the only Maryland center) in the two-year, randomized Charité study, enrolled one of the largest numbers of patients. Study patients who received the artificial disc improved more quickly, were discharged from the hospital a half-day earlier, and had pain and function scores statistically superior to the fusion patients. Dr. McAfee co-authored the book,

“Artificial Disc,” with Dr. Buttner-Janz, the E. German co-developer of the Charité disc says, “The Charité replacement has improved the care of patients at St Joseph Medical Center over the last four years, where we pioneered this innovative surgical procedure for back pain.”

The Charité Artificial Disc is made of two metallic endplates and a polyethylene core that allows for motion and function very much like a normal disc. Two-thirds of the 304 patients enrolled in the U.S. study received the new disc; one-third had spinal fusion surgery. More than 7,000 patients world-wide have received the Charité disc, which has been available in more than 30 countries for several years.

St. Joseph Medical Center is a 365-bed nonprofit, regional medical center in Towson, Md., and a member of Catholic Health Initiatives. Founded in 1864 by the Sisters of St. Francis, St. Joseph has been recognized by “U.S. News & World Report” as one of America’s best orthopaedic facilities and is a nationally ranked Top 100 heart hospital. For more information about St. Joseph Medical Center, visit sjmcmd.org.