



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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St. Luke's Meridian First to Offer Breakthrough Neck Disc Replacement Surgery

Unlike traditional spinal fusion, new procedure speeds recovery and allows patients full use of neck motion

Boise – St. Luke's Meridian Medical Center is the first Treasure Valley hospital to successfully perform a cervical disc replacement surgery.

St. Luke's Meridian has invested in a new neurosurgical operating room with a dedicated neurosurgery team to make this replacement possible.

The procedure – first introduced last year and only offered at a select number of hospitals – uses an artificial cervical disc to replace discs that have degenerated or herniated in a patient's neck.

Dr. Timothy Johans, with NeuroScience Associates in Boise, completed the first procedure at St. Luke's Meridian in early July with the Prestige® Cervical Disc developed by Medtronic.

The disc is the latest treatment for degenerative cervical (neck) disc disease.

Prior to the introduction of an artificial cervical disc, the standard to repair damage was through a fusion process, which uses bone grafts and instrumentation such as metal plates and screws. The procedure fuses, or creates a bond between, two or more adjacent vertebrae, ideally stabilizing the segment.

Unlike traditional fusion, the new option of disc replacement uses the patented ball-and-trough design of the Prestige® disc, which allows for a variable center of rotation, meaning the disc is designed to better replicate the motion of a naturally functioning cervical spine.

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“The Prestige® Cervical Disc represents a major shift in how we treat degenerative cervical disease,” Johans said. “Although not for everyone, the procedure finally gives patients a choice. No longer will they have to settle for a procedure that can negatively impact their way of life.”

Johans, who has undergone a fusion procedure for his own disc herniation, said the procedure relieved his arm pain and the numbness and weakness he was feeling. But it left him with increased neck pain and loss of motion.

More than 200,000 patients receive surgical treatment for spinal degeneration annually. It's estimated that more than half of people over 40 have some level of cervical disc disease, but the disease has also affected younger patients including some in their teens.

The disease causes degeneration of the natural disc in a person's vertebrae. Each vertebra in the spine is separated by a natural shock absorbing disc, which is made up largely of water.

But when the discs lose water content because of disease, injury or age, they compress, or lose height, which causes the vertebrae to move closer together or causes the disc to herniate. The loss of that cushion can lead to severe neck and arm pain. For many, the pain affects their ability to do the things they love – everything from playing sports to just spending time with family.

That was a big concern of Kim Clarke, a Baker City, Ore. woman, who was Dr. Johans' first patient to receive the artificial cervical disc.

“My biggest hobby is gardening and I was hoping not to lose any of the motion it required,” Clarke said.

Not only did Clarke not lose motion, there was the added benefit of a faster recovery. Recovery from a fusion surgery can take as long as three months and require a patient to restrict their activities.

Clarke was back home from the surgery at St. Luke's in one day and in less than two weeks she was back to work at her job at Clarke & Clarke Insurance. She added that the pain during recovery was very manageable.

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