

Marcia Hendrix enjoying active lifestyle after tourniquet-free replacement

Advanced Orthopedic Specialists – Dr. Brian Schafer

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by Elane Moonier

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Marcia Hendrix knew her knees were giving her a lot of pain and trouble walking, but she kept putting off doing anything about it until one day she went to the mall with a friend and was afraid she would not be able to walk back to the car. That was the turning point that convinced her she needed to see a specialist.

She went to see Dr. Brian Schafer of Advanced Orthopedic Specialists in Cape Girardeau, and found out she had very bad arthritis in both of her knees, which had caused the cushions between the bones to degenerate, leading to a lot of pain and discomfort with difficulty walking. Marcia learned that both of her knees needed replacement and made the decision to do one knee in March 2013 and the second one a year later.

The first surgery was performed successfully, and over time she recovered nicely and functioned well with her new knee. In March 2014 Marcia had the second knee replace-

ment surgery, but this time Dr. Schafer used a new technique he had learned, called tourniquet-free replacement.

Marcia said she noticed the difference in the two surgeries right away.

"There was not as much swelling and bruising with the second knee," she said, "and recovery time was much faster."

She learned about the difference in the procedures when she went for her visit after surgery.

"That was the first time I was aware they were doing the tourniquet-free procedure," she noted, "and it was so much easier for me."

When she went for physical therapy, she said the therapist was amazed at the difference in the appearance and recovery of the second knee. Marcia said she would highly recommend the tourniquet-free knee replacement to anyone.

Dr. Schafer explained that he learned about this slightly different procedure after attending an educational conference and decided to try it. Since he began doing it two



Submitted photo

Marcia Hendrix had two knee replacement surgeries in the past two years. The second surgery was done with the tourniquet-free procedure which Marcia highly recommends. Marcia is pictured with her husband, Steve.

years ago, he has been very pleased with the results and his patients have been very happy as well.

Arthritic changes are the primary factors in knee replacements, Dr. Schafer noted, and the most common

changes are caused by osteoarthritis. When cushioning tissue in the joints deteriorates, the resulting bone on bone movement is painful.

Dr. Schafer said this is fairly common, and he is seeing more of this in younger

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people this days.

Traditional knee replacements are the same as far as the use of metal and plastic, he noted, and the most common practice in the procedure is to place a tourniquet around the top of the leg to stop blood loss during the surgery. This is a flip side to this theory, however, Dr. Schafer explained.

"When the blood flow is stopped for surgery for an hour or more, then you let the tourniquet down, there are things that happen in the leg, and you get a reaction to not having the blood flow. There is more swelling and bruising. There are certain things that go on metabolically in the leg when you get the blood flow back. There is slower recovery of muscle function."

Although applying the tourniquet stops blood flow to the surgical site, Dr. Schafer said that with the tourniquet-free procedure blood loss for his patients has gone down.

He also said he is able to more easily detect any areas of bleeding immediately and re-

pair them during the surgery.

There are many advantages to the tourniquet free knee replacement as opposed to the traditional knee replacement, Dr. Schafer said. These include less swelling, less bruising, shorter hospital stays, larger range of motion, less blood loss and shorter recovery time.

"Tourniquet free knee replacements provide a better recovery experience for patients because there is less injury to the leg than when a tourniquet is used. In my experience with patients who have had both types of knee replacement performed, the patients say that they would highly recommend a tourniquet-free replacement," he stated. "Recovery that used to take four to six months, can now be done in two to three months."

Dr. Schafer has been practicing orthopedic surgery for 17 years, and trained at Campbell Clinic in Memphis, TN. He was a surgeon in the U.S. Air Force for three-and-a-half years before coming to Cape Girardeau in 2001.