A Recipe For Success

Expert Spinal Surgery and a Positive Attitude

"It really changes your personality when you're in that much pain," admits the normally upbeat Bonnie Gold, a former desert resident who now lives with her husband in the Newport Beach area. "In 2008, I was in pain for a good year, in agony on the couch with ice packs," she recalls. "I couldn't stand, sit or lie down for any length of time. I went to every doctor, had cortisone shots and epidurals, but nothing worked. My primary care physician recommended that I see Dr. Limonadi, and I finally got some relief."

Eisenhower Neuroscience Institute's Farhad M. Limonadi, MD, a Board Certified Neurosurgeon, performed an extensive evaluation that revealed Bonnie had two discs in her lower back — the lumbar spine — that were compressing the nerves and causing low-back pain, and numbness and tingling in her lower extremities, a condition known as radiculopathy.

"Bonnie had spondylolisthesis as well as lumbar stenosis, which typically is caused by age-related degenerative changes in the spine," Dr. Limonadi says. "Spondylolisthesis is a condition in which a bone (vertebra) in the lower part of the spine slips out of the proper position onto the bone below it. Spinal stenosis is narrowing of the spinal column that causes pressure on the spinal cord, or narrowing of the openings (called neural foramina) where spinal nerves leave the spinal column."

In April 2009, Dr. Limonadi performed spinal fusion surgery to decompress and stabilize the offending vertebrae in Bonnie's lower back.

"The minute I woke up, I had no pain," she says. "I have a positive mental attitude — it's something my husband teaches — so I just made up my mind that I'd have no pain after surgery and put that thought into my subconscious. Plus, of course, Dr. Limonadi did such a great job. He explained everything; he's the sweetest man, and so concerned about his patients."

"You can have all the positive attitude in the world, but if you're not appropriately treated, you won't have a good outcome."
—Dr. Limonadi

In fact, Dr. Limonadi had some concerns about the upper portion of Bonnie's spine, and said that she may need additional surgery in the future. Sure enough, in June 2011, after experiencing pain, numbness and weakness in her upper extremities, Bonnie underwent a similar fusion procedure on her cervical spine. Because the cervical spine is more complex than the lumbar spine, Dr. Limonadi used a state-of-the-art surgical microscope to ensure preservation of the tiny nerve roots and an optimal outcome.

Bonnie wore a neck brace for three months after her second surgery. She also wore an FDA-approved device called a bone growth stimulator that has been shown to significantly increase the rate of cervical fusion success in high-risk patients. Worn around the neck for four hours a day, it uses pulsed electromagnetic energy to activate the body's natural repair mechanism.

"I feel so good today; I'm pain-free and my scars are practically gone," she says. "Dr. Limonadi really knows his business. He doesn't suggest surgery if it's not necessary. I have friends who've seen other doctors and they didn't have the results I did; they're still in pain.

"It's about having a good surgeon and a good attitude," Bonnie adds. "When you wake up with a good attitude, you have a good day."

Dr. Limonadi concurs — with one caveat. "You can have all the positive attitude in the world, but if you're not appropriately treated, you won't have a good outcome," he says. "But having a positive attitude, in combination with the appropriate diagnosis and treatment — after conservative measures have failed — absolutely makes a difference. Bonnie has been a remarkable patient."

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