

Patient Success Story



OrthoIllinois Spine Care Helps Industrial Service Technician Get Back to Life

Richard has a physically demanding career as an industrial service technician. He started experiencing pain in his shoulder several years ago — the pain would come and go. Beginning in the summer of 2012, Richard noticed his upper extremity symptoms worsening. He noticed pain in his right arm and neck along with numbness in his right arm. At times, the numbness and pain would run from his fingertips up to his shoulder blade. As the weeks and months went by, instead of his symptoms getting better; Richard's neck and shoulder pain became excruciating and the numbness more constant.

Richard went to his general practitioner to find out what the problem could be. His doctor performed an EMG test to help diagnose Richard's condition.

An EMG or electromyography involves testing the electrical activity of muscles. The EMG revealed that Richard suffered from carpal tunnel syndrome as well as a cervical spine problem.

Richard's doctor referred him to Dr. Brian Bear, a fellowship-trained shoulder, hand and arm orthopedic surgeon at OrthoIllinois for treatment of his carpal tunnel syndrome.

Meanwhile, Dr. Bear referred Richard to Dr. Brian Braaksma, a fellowship-trained spine surgeon at OrthoIllinois Spine Care. After examining Richard and viewing his diagnostic images, Dr. Braaksma diagnosed him with a herniated disc along with cervical spondylosis and radiculopathy. Because of the severity of Richard's condition and associated

symptoms, Dr. Braaksma discussed with Richard the surgical options for his condition — an anterior cervical discectomy and fusion (ACDF).

During an ACDF procedure, the surgeon makes an incision in the front of the neck and the damaged portion of the disc is removed. The space above and below the disc is prepared for the bone graft. The graft is placed between the vertebrae and a metal plate may be placed to secure the bones as they heal. The bone graft and vertebrae fuse together and form a bone mass. Advantages of the minimally invasive ACDF procedure over traditional spine surgery include smaller incision and less disruption to muscle tissue.

Richard's symptoms were interfering with his normal lifestyle. Weekend activities like riding his motorcycle were impossible. Even daily activities such as work and sleep were becoming difficult because of his symptoms. Richard decided to move forward with the spine surgery performed by Dr. Braaksma to correct his condition. Dr. Braaksma performed a C6-7 anterior cervical discectomy and fusion on New Years Eve.

Richard noticed some immediate relief of symptoms following his surgery. Though it was about three weeks following his surgery that Richard experienced major relief of his neck and upper extremity symptoms.

He was careful to follow the post surgical guidelines he was given by Dr. Braaksma and OrthoIllinois Spine Care. He was given some specific arm and neck exercises which would

help with his recovery. Richard gradually returned to activity. He was back to light duty work as a service technician six weeks after surgery and then back to full duty work, eight weeks following surgery.

"My work involves repairing equipment, I am on my feet all day — it's important to have full use of my hands and arms. I'm relieved to be back to my career and back to my normal lifestyle," Richard says. He still incorporates the arm and neck strengthening exercises into his daily routine.

Today, Richard is pain free and notices only a faint bit of numbness in his right finger tips. Now that the temperatures are warming up, he is looking forward to riding his motorcycle more often!

Consumers can visit our educational website at OrthoIllinoisSpineCare.com and request a 36-page Home Remedy Book that has symptom charts and customized stretches that relieve pain.



OrthoIllinoisSM
SPINE CARE