

Just in Time

Spine surgery eliminates pain
and restores activity

Healthy, vibrant and on-the-go are some ways to describe Vicki Stolberg, 48. When she fell off a ladder in 2009, she broke her right hand. Less than a year after it was surgically repaired in Florida, her right thumb and index finger were numb. As her pain and numbness grew, it affected her life and daily activities in dramatic ways.

Stolberg's doctor in Florida ruled out another hand injury and sent her for an MRI scan of her spine and neck, which showed severely herniated discs and degeneration in her neck. Spine surgery was recommended.

Because one of Stolberg's family members had a positive experience at Johns Hopkins, she looked for a surgeon here. Ali Bydon, M.D., neurosurgeon and clinical director of the Neurosurgical Spine Program, knew he could help her. Dr. Bydon confirmed that Stolberg needed surgery to prevent the disability and pain from getting worse.

Waiting and Watching

Stolberg explains, "At first, I decided to wait to have surgery. I wanted to try other options and see if my pain and numbness got any better, so Dr. Bydon worked with me. For a while, I had some relief from epidural injections. Eventually I started having pain on my left side in addition to my right side. Then the pain was more intense, and I knew it was time to seriously consider surgery."

In June, Stolberg traveled from her home in Plantation, Florida to Baltimore for her cervical fusion surgery. "Her spinal cord was very compressed, and the central canal of her vertebral column was severely narrow," says Dr. Bydon.

The central canal is a fluid-filled space that runs throughout the entire length of the vertebral column. As it narrows, it leads to compression of the spinal cord and results in weakness, numbness and pain.

"The brain and spinal cord form the central nervous system, which defines us as humans by allowing us to carry out our daily activities," adds Dr. Bydon. Since the central nervous system controls everything from walking and talking to breathing and feeling emotions, surgery was needed to preserve Stolberg's spinal cord and prevent any other neurological damage.

Timing Is Right

During the surgery, Dr. Bydon removed Stolberg's herniated discs and decompressed her spinal cord and nerve roots.

Stolberg is grateful for the care she received. She notes, "From start to finish, everyone—the admitting staff, nurses, anesthesiologist and physical therapists—made sure that I had a good experience. The difference in the level of care at Johns Hopkins Bayview is immeasurable compared to other hospitals."

Usual recovery time for this procedure, an anterior cervical discectomy and fusion, is about six weeks. Stolberg remembers, "After surgery, I only had a tiny bit of numbness in one finger. Four days later, I was walking laps around the Inner Harbor in downtown Baltimore. Two weeks post-surgery, I had no pain!"

Back at home, Stolberg enjoys riding her bike and exercising on an elliptical machine. "Having this surgery was the best decision of my life because to be free of pain is a wonderful feeling," concludes Stolberg.

—Karen Tong



Vicki Stolberg

Ali Bydon, M.D.
Neurosurgeon



New Home for Neurology and Neurosurgery Clinics

Over the summer, the Neurology and Neurosurgery Clinics relocated to a new, expanded suite on the Johns Hopkins Bayview Campus, in the first floor of the 301 Building. Parking is conveniently located behind the building.

The clinics provide general and specialty services for conditions including:

Neurology:

- Cerebral Spinal Fluid Disorder - including normal pressure hydrocephalus
- Cerebrovascular - including intracerebral hemorrhage
- Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy
- Headache
- Myositis
- Sjögren's Syndrome
- Stroke

Neurosurgery:

- Aneurysm
- Brain Tumor
- Spine

To learn more about these specialty services, visit hopkinsbayview.org/neurosurgery and hopkinsbayview.org/neurology or call 410-550-0465 (neurosurgery) or 410-550-0592 (neurology).



To watch a video of Dr. Bydon describing and performing an anterior cervical discectomy and fusion (ACDF) procedure, visit <http://www.hopkinsbayview.org/spine/videos.html>

For more information about spine surgery options or to schedule an appointment with the Johns Hopkins Bayview Spine Program, call 410-550-0939.