

Lake Forest Hospital

SUMMER ISSUE
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Health Report



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Cervical Disc Replacement
Has Arrived

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Dr. Stanford R. Tack Performs Lake Forest Hospital's First Cervical Disc Replacement



MINIMALLY INVASIVE ALTERNATIVE TO SPINAL FUSION PRESERVES FULL MOTION

For 31-year-old Melissa Cantu of Beach Park, Illinois, severe pain was a part of everyday life for the last four years. If she sneezed hard or rolled over in bed the wrong way, she might find herself laid up for three or four days straight. A neurologist had diagnosed a pinched nerve in her neck and told her it should eventually go away by itself. As a nail technician, Melissa spends most of her day with her head bent forward.

"I finally reached a point where enough was enough with the years of chronic pain," said Cantu. "My best friend's dad recently had back surgery with a highly respected orthopedic surgeon and spine specialist at Lake Forest Hospital, Dr. Tack. He raved about him and suggested I go see him. An MRI and several X-rays later, I was diagnosed with a herniated disc that was severely pinching the nerve in my neck. Dr. Tack told me about this new alternative surgery to spinal fusion that showed great results in its 17 FDA study procedures. He said younger to middle-aged patients (with single-level disc herniation) were ideal candidates for the procedure, called cervical disc arthroplasty or disc replacement. When I got the green light from my insurance company, I was ready to go."

Cervical disc replacement has been performed with success in Europe for nearly a decade, but it is only recently finding its way in the U.S. as a possible alternative to the standard Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion (ACDF) surgery. While the costs of the two procedures are similar, insurance carriers have been slow to accept and cover cervical disc replacement.

"One of the most exciting aspects of cervical disc replacement is our ability to preserve full motion," said Dr. Tack. "With ACDF, recuperation can take as long as four months, often with stiffness or slightly reduced motion that may never fully correct itself. We performed our disc replacement on Melissa on January 17, 2008, and she felt so good so quickly that we had to call and beg her to come in for her follow-up appointment four weeks later."

"It's been amazing," exclaimed Cantu. "Basic things like walking around a mall, climbing a flight of stairs, picking up my goddaughter—I can do again without any pain whatsoever. Dr. Tack and his team at Lake Forest Hospital gave me my life back!"