Bristol Hospital team dedicated to joint replacement

Sunday Conversations

With Robert Storace

BRISTOL — For the first time in its 92-year-history, Bristol Hospital will have a team of doctors devoted solely to performing knee replacements, hip replacements and total joint replacement surgeries.

On Sept. 3, the hospital brought in Dr. David A. Rubins and a team of eight to lead the hospital's efforts in joint replacements and orthopedics.

Rubins, an Essex resident who most recently had his own practice in Middletown, has more than 20 years of experience in the field. Rubins said it's important for Bristol-area residents to have a hospital nearby where they can go for the specialized treatment.

"Before, residents had to travel to Hartford and New Haven for the orthopedic care we offer," said the 53-year-old Rubins. "This is their neighborhood and now they don't have to leave to get a good and modern hip and knee replacement."

Rubins said he expects to see "several hundred" patients a month, most for hip and knee replacements. "Others might have fractures to an arm a leg or a hip or some sports-related injuries like a torn cartilage, broken ankle or broken finger. The Long Island, N.Y., native said he spends about 30 percent of his day in the operating room where more men — about 60 to 40 percent — have knee and hip replacements. The average age of a patient is between 70 and 80 years old, he said.

"The most important thing to me is that we are giving people their lives back," said Rubins, who recently sat down to discuss why he became an orthopedic surgeon; how the business has changed and other topics.

Mike Orazzi | Staff

Bristol Hospital's David A. Rubins

Robert Storace: Why did you want to become an orthopedic surgeon?

Dr. David A. Rubins: I've always been a very mechanical type of person. My dad was an orthopedic surgeon and I was exposed to it early in life. It came very natural for me to do it. I thought doing surgery was the coolest job in the world. When I was a kid, I wanted to be a race car driver and a surgeon and I did both. (He raced cars for 20 years in Florida.)

Storace: One of your special areas of interest is something called the "Direct Anterior Approach" for total hip and surgical repairs and is not widely used. Can you tell us what it is and what it accomplishes?

Rubins: Direct anterior hip replacement is a technique for doing hip replacement surgery using a minimally invasive approach. It spares the major hip muscles from damage so patients recover very rapidly. Typical recovery for most of my patients is two to three weeks. Without this procedure, it could be six to eight weeks. It is a very specialized approach that requires specialized training and is not for all surgeons and patients. It is for patients with a bad hip, arthritis, are fairly athletic and have good bone quality. It is also for people that are not extremely large.

Storace: What is the biggest cause of hip and knee problems, and what can people do to prevent them?

Rubins: Weight is an issue. And, activity levels can be a problem. Previous injuries are also a big factor and a patients own genetics can pre-determine how long joints last.

Storace: Tell us about the biggest changes you've seen in the areas of hip and knee replacement in your 20 years in the business?

Rubins: In hips, the biggest change I've seen is the direct anterior hip replacement and the quality of implants themselves. Recovery time has been diminished and your return to work is faster. Pain control is much, much better and implant materials and techniques are much improved.

Storace: How are all the changes with the health care laws impacting your practice and your profession in general?

Rubins: Thankfully, in the operating room and in my surgeries, there has been little impact. Out of the operating room and in the office setting, the impact has been tremendous. In terms of government regulations in how we treat patients and how we document medical records, it has been tremendously complicated.

For more information, call (860) 584-8306.

CCSU fall institute

SPECIAL TO THE HERALD PRESS

NEW BRITAIN — The Central Connecticut Writing Project will present its annual fall institute Oct. 17 from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Central Connecticut State University Student Center in New Britain.

The theme, Interconnected Writing, will present classroom-ready lessons that use Common Core standards. The 45-minute sessions include various disciplines such as math, language arts, social studies and art. Lesson plans appropriate for primary, intermediate and secondary school students will be featured. The keynote address, "Playing with Language," will be presented by Dr. David Cappella and Dr. Steven Ostrowski, multi-published writers who are professors at CCSU. They will demonstrate various ways student-writers can deepen their understanding of how serious play with language can enhance their creative writing.

The cost to attend the event is $20. Pre-registration is encouraged. For more information and registration forms, contact Dr. Lynda M. Valerie, associate professor, Department of Reading and Language Arts, at Valerie_lym@ccsu.edu.

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