

Welcome Relief

Minimally-invasive disc replacement by Dr. Dhawlikar at Ocean Orthopedic Associates helps return patients to full and pain-free functionality

As a project supervisor in the construction industry, Neptune resident Daniel Garfinkel, 36, had always been a highly physical person. But all of that changed in the spring of 2016. “I woke up one morning and felt very stiff in my shoulders and neck,” he recalled. And though he refrained from manual labor that day, “things got horribly worse really fast and I began losing nerve sensation down my right arm into my hand,” he said. “Soon everything tightened up, it became painful to drive, and I was unable to do almost anything.” A visit to Dr. Dhawlikar at Ocean Orthopedic Associates in Toms River along with an MRI revealed the cause – a disc in Garfinkel’s neck had herniated and degenerated and was creating bone-on-bone irritation and nerve damage. Though medication helped reduce the immediate inflammation and provide temporary relief, an epidural shot to his spine failed to work and left him in need of a long-term solution that would restore his full functionality and pain-free quality of life.

For 40-year-old Scotch Plains resident Arvind Gurnani, the chain of events was strikingly similar -- debilitating pain followed by a series of unsuccessful attempts to treat it. All his life, Gurnani, the manager of a clinical laboratory and a married father of two young children, had been highly active, regularly playing in basketball and softball leagues and working out 4-5 times a week. “But in October 2014, I was on a plane returning home from Miami and woke up from a nap with a kink in my back,” he said. “I got massages after getting home, but it never went away and I began noticing weakness in my left triceps and tingling down my left arm.” A visit to a neurologist and an MRI revealed the culprit – a herniated disc in Gurnani’s upper back/lower neck – but neither the prednisone, epidurals, nor physical therapy he was prescribed relieved his pain, and in October 2015 his primary physician and neurologist referred him to Dr. Dhawlikar at Ocean Orthopedic Associates for a surgical solution.

Disc Replacement: A Cutting-Edge Approach

“Discs act as cushions between our vertebrae and help enable normal mobility of the spine, but can start pushing on nerves and compressing the spinal cord if they herniate, degenerate, or become damaged,” explained Sripad Dhawlikar, M.D., a spine surgeon at Ocean Orthopedic Associates with over 20 years of experience in the field and specializations in a broad range of spine-related issues, including minimally-invasive, cutting-edge spinal surgical techniques as well as pain management. “For many, degeneration of discs can start early in life and eventually lead to cracks in discs, while accidents or trauma can also cause ligaments to tear and discs to herniate.” The result? “Neck pain that radiates to the arm and/or hand,



Sripad H. Dhawlikar, M.D.

causing numbness, tingling, weakness, and loss of sensation,” he said.

According to Dr. Dhawlikar, the standard approach for decades to treating disc herniation in the neck has been a procedure known as ‘anterior cervical discectomy’ and fusion with a titanium plate and screws. By this method, he said, “a surgeon would remove the herniated disk, put a bone graft in, and secure everything together with a plate and screws,” after which the body would form bone over it that would heal to the graft. While this technique succeeded in reducing pain levels, “it limited mobility and also resulted in the transference of loads to discs adjacent to and below the grafted disc, putting them at risk of degenerating and potentially requiring later intervention themselves.”

By contrast, Dr. Dhawlikar said that the field has seen tremendous success with a newer but proven approach known as ‘disc replacement’ that’s become increasingly popular within the past decade. By this method, “a surgeon would take out the herniated disc to remove pressure from the nerve and spinal cord and insert an artificial, prosthetic disc where the damaged disc used to be,” he said. A 60-90-minute, minimally-invasive outpatient procedure that involves small, one-inch incisions using dissolvable stitches to avoid scarring, “disc replacement with high-quality prosthetics made of the latest cutting-edge materials preserves motion so that the neck doesn’t feel stiff and enables patients to recover quickly and return to their normal activities pain-free almost immediately,” Dr. Dhawlikar said. Thanks to the availability of

five-year follow-up data on patients nationwide, “we can see that their mobility levels have been maintained over time and that levels of discs above and below the surgery have experienced no deterioration.”

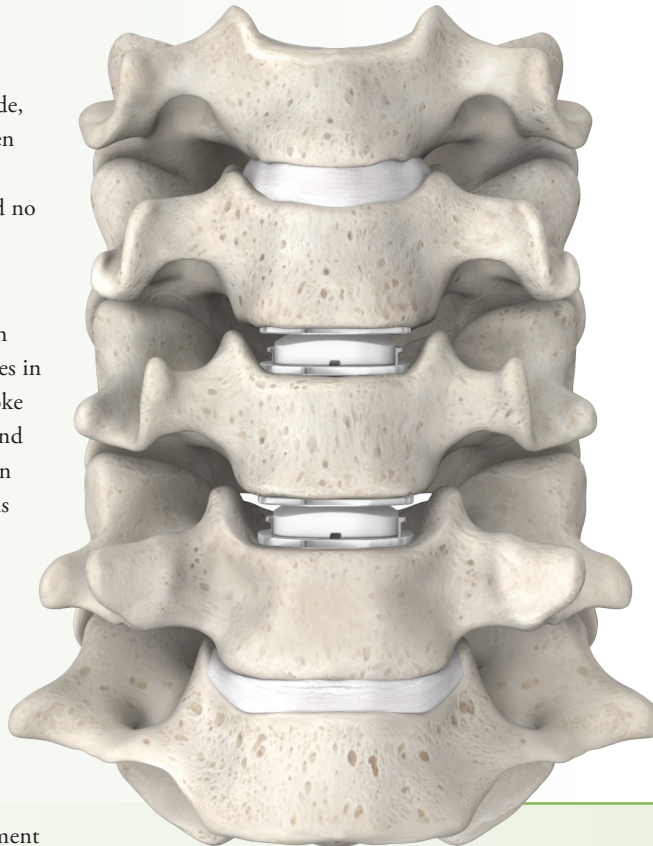
Immediate Relief

After opting for disc replacement surgery with Dr. Dhawlikar at Ocean Orthopedic Associates in May 2016, “I felt immediate relief when I woke up, with no nerve pain in my right arm or hand whatsoever and no pain in my neck other than some temporary discomfort from the incisions themselves,” Garfinkel said. “Dr. Dhawlikar and the staff at Ocean Orthopedic Associates were very responsive and knowledgeable and made me feel comfortable about my surgery,” he added. “Since having the procedure, I’m 110 percent better than I was and I feel absolutely great.”

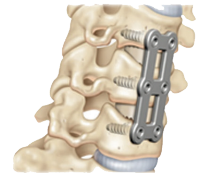
Gurnani too has been delighted with the results of his surgery, a two-level disc replacement that he underwent in December 2015. “I was in better shape the next day and just kept getting better and better,” he said of his ultimate return to a full and active life. “Dr. Dhawlikar made me feel very comfortable about the whole process and made it a collaborative effort that I felt a part of. In the end, the procedure relieved all of my symptoms and my neck got stronger – I now feel 100 percent normal as if nothing ever happened,” Gurnani said.

“After trying other approaches first, both Daniel and Arvind were great candidates for disc replacement and did extremely well with no complications,” Dr. Dhawlikar confirmed. “The procedure made a tremendous difference in their outlooks going forward and both can now work, participate in athletic and recreational activities, and fully enjoy their families and lives.”

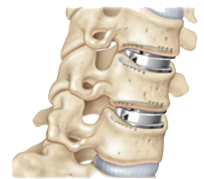
While disc replacement can help a wide spectrum of patients of all ages, “we often see herniated discs among the younger population, many of whom feel that there’s no solution and that they just have to accept and live with the pain,” Dr. Dhawlikar said. While he acknowledges that some people are apprehensive about having spine surgery, “in trained hands and after more conservative measures have failed to deliver desired results, disc replacement is a safe and very proven procedure



©2016 LDR Spine, USA Inc. All Rights Reserved.



Traditional Fusion



Mobi-C Artificial Disc



with little to no risk that enables a quicker recovery, no compromise to adjacent areas, and can theoretically last a lifetime for patients.”

As an active married father of two teenagers, “I’d been very concerned about my future and the prospect of being out of commission for my family,” Garfinkel shared. “But I went back to work the Monday after my Friday surgery and truly felt like I was brand new.”

“Spine surgery has advanced greatly over the past decade and we’re very excited and gratified to be able to bring these cutting-edge techniques to the community and help return patients to their normal lives,” Dr. Dhawlikar concluded. “There is hope and disc replacement is an excellent treatment option that can help patients live a happy, high-quality, and pain-free life with no disability.”

For more information on disc replacement, any spine-related issue, or to reach Dr. Sripad Dhawlikar, contact Ocean Orthopedic Associates at (732) 349-8454 or visit www.oceanortho.com. Ocean Orthopedic Associates has offices conveniently located at 530 Lakehurst Road, #101 in Toms River and at 2 Hospital Plaza, #310 in Old Bridge.