



Thanks to his repaired rotator cuff, work is now pain-free for Dr. Geoff Perr.

“Over the years, I’ve taken my share of falls mountain biking and skiing,” the Bellevue dentist says, “and while there wasn’t any one major injury, the discomfort in my shoulder kept increasing.” He kept going until the summer of 2003, when he heard something pop as he playfully tossed his son into a swimming pool. Perr decided it was time to get his shoulder repaired. He was referred to Richard Angelo, MD, of the Evergreen Orthopedic Center, because he is one of the few surgeons who performs minimally invasive rotator cuff surgery.



Richard Angelo, MD

SPECIALIZED PROCEDURE

“The kind of catastrophic injury that happens to athletes is not that common,” Dr. Angelo explains. “Most patients are like Geoff; their rotator cuff problems are the result of chronic tears that occur over time, much like a hole slowly gets worn in a sock after years of wear.” The patients he sees want surgery so they can get back to work and the activities they enjoy without pain.

Dr. Angelo used an arthroscopic procedure on Perr. Instead of one large incision, he used several small incisions with special instruments to do the repair work and an arthroscope to visualize the operation on a video screen. Perr was able to go home the same day and begin recovery faster than with the older-style “open” surgery. Arthroscopic patients typically begin physical therapy about 10 days after surgery.

Faster Fix for Rotator Cuff Injuries

When you hear about rotator cuff surgery, it’s typically involving a star pitcher who’s lost to his team for a lengthy recuperation. You don’t usually associate rotator cuff injuries with dentists, but the pain from one was making it increasingly difficult for Dr. Geoff Perr to do his job.

While much easier on the patient, the arthroscopic procedure is more technically challenging for the surgeon, who has to guide his actions by watching a video screen. “We’re fortunate that Evergreen provides the state-of-the-art equipment and instruments to support this procedure,” Dr. Angelo says. “Evergreen is one of the very few hospitals in the area that performs arthroscopic rotator cuff surgery.”

While the majority of patients are from the Eastside, patients do come from all over the Puget Sound region for the arthroscopic procedure.

ENJOYING ACTIVITIES AGAIN

Geoff Perr had his rotator cuff surgery in December 2003, and was back seeing a limited schedule of patients just two weeks later. By summer, he was feeling more comfortable than he had in the past 15 years.

With regular physical therapy, Perr has even been able to return to his passion, mountain biking – a sport that’s very hard on the shoulders. And he has some special plans for this winter. “I can hardly wait to get back on the ski slopes,” he enthuses. “I had to sit out all of last year while recuperating. I really feel very blessed.”

For referral to an Evergreen-affiliated orthopedic surgeon for arthroscopic rotator cuff repair, or a brochure on Evergreen’s orthopedic program, please call the Evergreen Healthline at 425.899.3000.