

Quad-Sparing Knee Replacement Procedure Offers Innovative Option

By John K. Konkel, M.D.

Orthopaedic Surgery - Joint Reconstructive Surgery and Sports Injuries

When pain medication fails to relieve knee osteoarthritis discomfort and the pain is severe enough to interfere with daily activities, knee replacement is a reasonable treatment choice.

Today, people with knee pain have a minimally invasive alternative to traditional total knee replacement, also known as total knee arthroplasty (TKA). It is the Zimmer minimally invasive solutions (MIS) quad-sparing TKA procedure. This type of knee replacement surgery allows the surgeon to complete a total knee replacement with a small incision instead of the twelve-inch incision needed in conventional knee replacement surgery. This new approach can dramatically reduce time in the hospital, pain, rehabilitation and expense.

The key to successful MIS knee replacement surgery is the technique developed by the Zimmer Institute and the skill of the surgical team. Using modified techniques and instruments, surgeons can place the same clinically proven implants used in traditional surgery, but through a much smaller incision and without cutting through a key tendon and muscles. In traditional surgery, the surgeon makes a twelve-inch incision down the front of the knee, cutting the tendon and quadriceps muscle (which controls bending of the knee). In MIS quad-sparing TKA, a four-to-six-inch incision is made on the side of the knee, and the tendon and "quad" muscle are separated, rather than cut. The surgeon removes the diseased joint and replaces it with the new knee.

MIS knee replacement surgery requires participation of the entire surgical team on these cutting-edge techniques. The nursing staff, from those in the operating room to those providing post-operative care, must be appropriately trained on this procedure. The anesthesiologist must use combinations of medications to insure the most



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effective pain management during and after surgery. Physical therapists providing post-operative care need additional training to best benefit the patient. And even the patient must be committed to adhere to the therapy program to fully enjoy the advantages of this innovative procedure.

Patients begin rehabilitation immediately and can have a much shorter hospital stay. Most patients are out of bed within six hours of surgery and leave the hospital within three days. Physical therapy will be needed for at least one month after surgery. Therapists will train the patient to continue therapy at home for about six months. Within six months to one year after surgery, most patients enjoy a greater range of motion and little or no pain with movement, regardless the type of knee replacement surgery.

This approach to knee replacement surgery has evolved because researchers pursued methods to reduce trauma to patients. Once the technique was proven and instruments designed, clinical trials were completed and the results documented. When approved for general use, orthopaedic surgeons were challenged to study the new technique to determine if it was the best option for them to incorporate into their practices. While cutting-edge, this is not experimental surgery. Most insurance companies will cover this procedure if recommended by your doctor.

Not everyone is a candidate. The best candidate for MIS quad-sparing knee replacement is the younger patient who was active until pain began to limit activity and impact his or her quality of life. Ideal candidates should be in otherwise good health and within normal range of weight for their age and height. Both men and women are
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considered for the procedure. As with all surgical procedures, there are risks that should be discussed with your surgeon and no guarantee of results.

Surgeons have been replacing knee joints weakened by disease and pain of osteoarthritis for decades. Knee replacement surgery is the recommended treatment when conservative approaches prove to be ineffective. Most patients who have had their knees replaced are quite happy with results regardless which method was used. Using the minimally invasive technique, the surgery is less traumatic, and results can be even more positive. Ask your doctor if this technique is right for you.

It is important to remember that minimally invasive knee replacement surgery is the newest technology available today. It is a patient-focused approach, which offers no greater risk to the patient than traditional surgery while providing potential benefits. While it may not be an option for all patients, it is a good option for many.

For more information, call Advanced HealthLine at (262) 512-2880 or toll-free at 1-888-709-2080, or log onto www.ah.com.

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