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Police officer back to active duty after spine specialized surgery

Brian first started experiencing lower back pain early in 2007. The pain was bearable at first, but soon it started radiating from his lower back into his right leg and foot. Brian knew something had to be done. Brian began seeing a local chiropractor, and the appointments offered some relief from the pain symptoms.

Over time, however, the symptoms returned and the pain worsened, Brian found himself in the Chilton Hospital emergency room. Dr. David Sundstrom of North Jersey Spine Group examined Brian and ordered an MRI, which revealed that Brian had a large herniated disc at L4-5. The disc is like a jelly donut, acting as the functional shock absorber between two bony vertebrae. An injury, damage from a lifting incident, or a twist may cause the jelly center to break through the wall of the disc. When a disc herniates, the jelly center can press on nearby nerves. This causes back or leg pain when the herniation is in the low back.

Dr. Sundstrom wanted to try some nonsurgical options first. He prescribed an epidural steroid injection to help relieve the pain, followed by physical therapy sessions, with physical therapist Kim Baubles, at the spine center. The goal of injections is to provide enough pain relief to bridge the patient from inactivity to physical therapy, where special exercises can make the back stronger and more flexible. The injections and physical therapy did offer some

improvement to Brian's symptoms, however the pain did not go away completely. Brian again began experiencing pain down into his leg. It appeared that nonsurgical options were exhausted and surgery was necessary.

Dr. Sundstrom performed a

hemilaminotomy and discectomy. A hemilaminotomy in the lumbar spine is often used to treat recurrent disc herniations or where scar tissue is involved. A hemilaminotomy involves the removal of part of the bone covering the spinal canal and a discectomy is the removal of the herniated portion of a disc to relieve the pressure on nearby nerves as they exit the spinal canal.

After surgery, Brian experienced relief from the pain in the back and leg. He is doing very well and has now completed 10 weeks of physical therapy with Kim Baubles at NJSG where he learned stretching and strengthening exercises that he incorporates into his everyday life.

Today, Brian is stretching daily and able to work out at his local gym. Best of all, he is also able to once again enjoy a game of golf. Brian returned full duty with no restrictions to his position as police officer in late October. "The staff did a good job of educating me on my options," says Brian. "We tried nonsurgical options first. And that way, I had the comfort level that I was doing the right thing when we learned spine surgery was necessary. It was the right move for me."



David Sundstrom, M.D. is a board-certified neurological surgeon who specializes in the treatment of back and neck pain, including the use of spine surgery. He treats a variety of back and neck problems, ranging from simple disc problems to complex spine surgeries requiring the most advanced instrumentation. Dr. Sundstrom has practiced in the North Jersey region for more than 16 years. Dr. Sundstrom grew up in the North Jersey area. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from Tufts University in Massachusetts with a Bachelor of Science in biology. He then completed medical school at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York. He did an internship in general surgery and a residency in neurological surgery at the Montefiore Medical Center in New York. During this time, Dr. Sundstrom was named Chief Resident at Montefiore Medical Center.

Dr. Raab and Dr. Sundstrom have teamed together for more than four years and have worked with hospitals in Bergen, Morris and Passaic counties. Dr. Sundstrom is a member of the American Medical Association and the Bergen County Medical Society.



Dr. David Sundstrom

NONSURGICAL SPINE CARE:
 DOV RAND, MD, BOARD ELIGIBLE PHYSICAL MEDICINE & REHABILITATION
 KIMBERLY BAUBLES, MSPT, MTC, BSBS, CCI, SPINE SPECIALIZED PHYSICAL THERAPIST

SPINE SURGEONS:
 DAVID SUNDRAM, MD, BOARD CERTIFIED NEUROLOGICAL SURGEON, SPECIALIZING IN SPINE SURGERY
 RAJNIK W. RAAB, MD, BOARD ELIGIBLE NEUROLOGICAL SURGEON, SPECIALIZING IN SPINE SURGERY