

## New technology results in new lease on life

As the baseball championship series take place each autumn, David Leonhart gets excited and yet feels a twinge of sadness. A former pitcher for the New York Mets minor league system, Leonhart had to retire in 1995 due to severe back pain. "This time of year, I really miss playing baseball," he says. Today, Leonhart is manager of the distribution center for O'Reilly Auto Parts in Oklahoma City where he's worked for the past nine years.

Leonhart grew up in Edmond, Okla., playing high school and college ball. In 1994 he was drafted by the Mets and moved to Pittsfield, Mass., to pursue a lifelong dream of playing professional baseball. Unfortunately, years of playing a sport he loved, ultimately led to wear and tear on his hip resulting in unbearable back pain. "My pain got progressively worse," says Leonhart. "In the second year after the draft, I realized I was going to have to retire."

Once retired from sports, Leonhart was still experiencing pain. "I thought when I quit playing ball the pain would go away," he says. "It didn't. It hurt when I'd sit down or get up. It was even difficult trying to tie my shoes because of the pain," he says.

Finally, nine years later after trying a variety of pain treatments, Leonhart scheduled an appointment with Hal Martin, D.O., an orthopedic surgeon on staff at Edmond Medical Center and chief orthopedic physician of The Hip Clinic at Oklahoma Sports Science and Orthopaedics in Oklahoma City. "Often people will experience back pain due to an injury or strain, tendonitis, bursitis in the hip," says Dr. Martin.

Leonhart underwent a series of physical examinations, had an MRI arthrogram and had to complete a comprehensive health status survey. "Dr. Martin had me complete a questionnaire and it blew me away that the questions were so related to my situation," says Leonhart. After evaluating all the information, Dr. Martin concluded that Leonhart was going to need surgery due to a labral tear in his hip. The good news was that it was going to be done arthroscopically.



“Arthroscopy has been used for a number of years for other surgical sites, but has only been utilized in the hip in the past few years,” explains Dr. Martin. “The development came after recent innovation in arthroscopic tools made it possible to repair hips in a minimally invasive way,” he says. “There are several advantages to this type of surgery. Obviously it means a quicker recovery time for the patient, but it also allows the surgeon to make repairs to areas previously undiagnosed and untreated,” explains Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin is one of the few orthopedic surgeons trained in this new procedure. He completed a one-year fellowship in sports medicine/hip disorders at the University of Pittsburgh. He has assisted in the care of professional athletes from the NFL, PGA, LPGA and NHL and athletes of all levels. “We see patients like Dave, who’ve been hurting for a long time,” says Dr. Martin. “With hip arthroscopy we can eliminate pain for people who have resigned themselves to just living with the pain.”

The arthroscopy procedure uses small incisions and pencil-sized instruments to repair damage in the hip. “A small camera is placed into the hip joint through one of the incisions which allows the surgeon to see the hip. A second small incision allows other surgical instruments to be placed into the joint to make the repair,” says Martin.

Much to his surprise, Leonhart felt the difference immediately. “When I went home four hours after surgery, I kept waiting for the pain to set in – it never did,” says Leonhart. “There was some minimal discomfort, from the surgery, but the pain was gone.”

After being on two crutches for a week, Leonhart returned to work the next week on one crutch and was walking without any assistance soon after. “Initially, I was willing to have the surgery, but wasn’t excited,” says Leonhart. “I was concerned about having to take time off from work for recovery. I was amazed at how quickly I recovered and more impressed how I went from pain that I’d rate a ‘8’ on a scale of one to 10, to pain free,” he says.

Now, Leonhart is resuming old activities. In fact, he and his family are planning a ski trip this winter. “I feel like I’m the person I used to be. When you’re in pain, it affects your entire life,” he says. “I can’t thank Dr. Martin enough. I don’t know what you can say to a person who does something like that for you,” he says. “I’ve gone from saying to myself: ‘What can I do today to not hurt?’ to saying: ‘I feel great.’ ”

“With technology like this we’re able to help restore people to their old lives. As for Dave, I wouldn’t be surprised to see him pitching again,” says Dr. Martin.

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