

Anne, XLIF[®] Patient

Sixty-nine year-old Anne spent most of her career working as a teacher and as a school administrator. After her retirement nine years ago, she dedicated her time to giving back to those around her. Anne spent five of the last eight years caring for her ailing husband and also became an active volunteer within her community. When she wasn't teaching Catechism to second graders or helping out at the Senior Center, Anne volunteered on a local arts board. Over time, however, something began holding Anne back from participating in many of the activities that she enjoyed. Anne suffered from severe back and leg pain and it started interfering with even the simplest of her daily tasks.



Today, after having the XLIF procedure, Anne is spending more quality time with her friends and family.

Anne's back pain started more than two decades ago, when she was in her early forties. "The pain progressed and it became worse over the past five years," explains Anne. "I had lower back pain and overall discomfort." At first, Anne would take Advil to relieve the pain. Then her back pain progressed to a point at which she found very little relief. "The pain finally got to my legs," recalls Anne. "I became much more limited. There was less and less that I could participate in."

Anne was determined to find a solution, but did not want to have surgery. Over the years, Anne saw several doctors in an effort to alleviate her back pain. "Every doctor I saw said that I needed back surgery," says Anne. "But, they said that they wouldn't touch me because my back was so disfigured." Anne was diagnosed with severe degenerative scoliosis, spinal stenosis, and degenerative disc disease, three conditions that, combined, resulted in misalignment and instability of the spine and painful nerve impingement.

Although Anne's doctors continued to recommend that she have surgery, she decided that she would only consider it as a last resort. Therefore, she exhausted numerous non-surgical options. "I was on both over and under the counter prescriptions," jokes Anne. "I was also working with an exercise ball that was just wonderful for me. It gave me about six months of mobility and freedom from the pain." It was not long, however, until her pain resumed. She tried pilates, and enjoyed the exercises, but it did not provide long-term relief. Anne also scheduled two sessions of steroid injections with her doctor. "The injections did absolutely nothing for me," she recalls.

Still, Anne is the type of woman who will "suit up and show up" and did not want her back pain to prevent her from participating in her daily activities. Unfortunately, her pain finally became so severe that it did just that, and she had to stop her volunteer work. "I just couldn't do it anymore," explains Anne. "Even sitting became unbearable." Anne's pain also began interfering with her family activities and her social life. "I had less family interaction," says Anne. "And socializing with my friends was difficult. I wasn't able to enjoy activities like going out to lunch with my friends. Someone would have to take me home early."

Patient Testimonial



Finally, after seeing numerous doctors, Anne was referred to an orthopaedic spine surgeon in San Diego, CA, who specializes in the treatment of scoliosis and other spinal disorders. After reviewing Anne's case and examining her x-rays, he recommended that she consider having an XLIF® (eXtreme Lateral Interbody Fusion) procedure.

Unlike typical spine surgery approaches, the XLIF procedure, developed by NuVasive®, accesses the spine laterally, through the patient's side. This unique approach allows the surgeon to access the anterior spine without requiring the traditional abdominal incision of an anterior procedure or the dissection or retraction of the sensitive back muscles, bones, or ligaments that is typical of traditional posterior approaches. Therefore, the XLIF procedure yields patient benefits compared to traditional spine surgery, such as a shorter hospital stay, reduced recovery time, and minimal scarring. "I didn't know about the XLIF procedure until I went to see my surgeon," explains Anne. "He said that if I didn't have the proposed surgery, including XLIF, that the chances of improvement would be minimal and that my condition most likely would get worse."

Anne had serious concerns about undergoing spine surgery - even if it was minimally disruptive - and went online to research both her surgeon and the XLIF procedure. Her friends and family also conducted research and told her that they thought that having the XLIF procedure would be a good decision. "My doctor was very patient with me," says Anne. "He never pushed me to make a decision. He just showed me my progression and let me make my own decision." Anne recognized that her condition was progressively getting worse and decided to undergo XLIF surgery.

Given the severity of Anne's condition, her surgeon performed a two-stage surgical procedure. On April 22, 2008, Anne underwent a three level XLIF procedure followed four days later by posterior spinal fusion and direct decompression. After she was released from the hospital, Anne went to rehab where she learned how to walk and climb stairs again. "The rehab staff taught me how to get better," recalls Anne. "I had minimal pain during rehab. Just some fatigue and discomfort. I was walking with the help of a walker within about two weeks." In order to facilitate her recovery, Anne also started water aerobics which has become one of her favorite activities. "I think the water aerobics had a lot to do with my attitude, how strong I am, and generally how good I feel now," explains Anne.

Although Anne has not resumed her volunteer activities yet, she hopes to start soon. She already finds that she is spending more quality time with her friends and family. "I'm a part of a book club, and I go out to the movies and out to lunch with friends," says Anne. "I'm doing fun stuff!" Recently, Anne's son and grandchildren came out for a visit and she was able to participate in activities with them. "Having the XLIF surgery improved my quality of life and it improved my future," says Anne. "Not to mention that before the surgery, I had lost about three and a half inches in height. Now, I've gained those inches back! I'm very pleased with the results. I look at my recovery as a blessing."

As with any spine surgery, there are potential benefits and possible risks associated with the XLIF procedure. It is important that you discuss the potential risks, complications, and benefits of XLIF with your doctor prior to receiving treatment, and that you rely on your physician's judgment. Only your doctor can determine whether you are a suitable candidate for this treatment. You can find a surgeon in your area who performs the XLIF procedure by utilizing the Physician Locator on www.lateralaccess.org.