

"WALKING IN 3 WEEKS"

A HIP SURGERY SUCCESS STORY

I underwent direct anterior approach right hip replacement on May 6, 2016. My surgeon was Sebastian Rodriguez-Elizalde. My prosthesis is a Zimmer product with a continuum cup made of vitamin E poly and ceramic head.

When I was referred to Dr. Rodriguez, I asked a number of people if they knew anything about him. The replies were unequivocal. He is a gifted surgeon with an excellent record and one of the most progressive orthopaedic surgeons in Canada. He has travelled extensively to follow surgeries in the US and Europe and is leading the charge on acquiring the Hana table at Humber River Hospital. If I understand it correctly, there are only two in Ontario – one in London and one in Ottawa.

The pre-op session at Humber River Hospital was very informative but a lot of the information related to the many precautions associated with traditional hip replacement, not direct anterior approach. My prep on the day of surgery was very efficient and, between the attending nurse and the anesthesiologist, I felt very informed. I recall, on entering the surgery room, that there were a lot of people in the room, perhaps more than 15 including Dr. Rodriguez. I was told that many were there to observe. A male doctor introduced himself and said he was from England and would be assisting Dr. Rodriguez. A female nurse introduced herself and said she would be staying with me throughout the surgery and into the recovery room. I recall being transferred to the Hana table and I remember the large boots at the end of the table that looked like ski boots. The rest is history.

I was in the recovery room sometime in the evening on Friday, May 6. The night in the hospital was uneventful. The nurses were very accommodating and available. Apparently, there was an iPad I could have used to communicate, but I didn't. Dr. Rodriguez visited me at about 10am the following morning. We walked around the room and he told me that I could go home whenever I wanted. I was invited to take a physiotherapy class at 1pm. I did that and, when I realized that I was walking reasonably steadily and could climb stairs, I did decide to go home. Dr. Rodriguez called me at home on the morning of Sunday, May 8 to see how I was doing. I was fine but can't say enough about how much I appreciated that call.

I was happy to be at home and didn't have any issues with the few things I wanted to do in the first week, i.e. use the washroom, go to the kitchen, watch television in a different room, etc. I stayed home for that first week, mostly due to periodic fatigue, but then after that I went out every day. I used a cane until my Week 2 visit with Dr. Rodriguez at which time he told me to stop using it. More about that below (see asterisks).

I was extremely impressed with Dr. Rodriguez's wound management. I believe the bandage is called Aquacell. It was in one piece and extended the full length of my incision. The chamber down the centre gathered anything that oozed from the wound. I was told I was free to shower which was wonderful. I didn't give the wound a thought which was a great relief to me. The surgery was on a Friday and, on the following Thursday, I went to the fracture clinic at Humber River to have the Aquacell replaced. Then, another week after that, the Aquacell was removed and my wound had healed.

Before my surgery, a number of well-meaning friends gave me advice and equipment, most of which I subsequently realized was not applicable. With a direct anterior approach, there are no precautions during the recovery period. I wanted to be cautious so, more for comfort than anything else in the first week, I used a grabber to pick things up. I used the raised toilet for about a week and then removed it. I used a bench in the shower for a little longer than a week but more with the concern that I might want to sit down than filling any real requirement. I never did sit down. I used the walker when I left the hospital and never used it again. It was a struggle to put a sock on the foot of my operated leg so, for at least 3 weeks, I did not bother wearing socks. From an equipment perspective, the only things I would use if I was to "do it again" are my cane and a very simple bed rail (more for pulling myself up as opposed to a worry of falling out of bed).

CCAC sent a physiotherapist to my home. He saw me once before the surgery to make sure that my home was safe. The visits were very short and at his convenience (which is fine if you are homebound but not great when you wanted to be out at times). He was a great guy but I didn't find the sessions useful at all, especially since he was only familiar with traditional hip replacement recovery. I terminated him in favour of a more intense and focused program (see asterisks) and he asked me to keep in touch. I called him when I stopped using my cane and he said he had never known a hip surgery patient to have such a rapid recovery.

** I felt I was ready to go back to work after two weeks and had Dr. Rodriguez's blessing to do that; however, I realized that it was tougher than I thought to stop using my cane. I wanted to accomplish that before I returned to work. I contacted Brendan Fox at Medcan on May 24 to work with me on some post-op hip corrective protocols to get me walking on two legs with a biomechanically correct gait pattern. We had seven intense daily sessions before I returned to work and, after about three of those sessions, I was using my cane only sporadically. Thereafter, I went back to work without my cane, continued with four more daily sessions and felt I was solidly grounded on two feet. For the following ten days, I worked and enjoyed long walks and was active, but did not do any more sessions. I felt during that time that I wasn't quite there so returned to see Brendan three more times. I have progressed to the highest level of hip replacement therapy and feel very strong. Brendan provided me with a playbook of exercises I can do at home along with guidelines for introducing cardio into my routine. I couldn't be prouder of my stage of recovery and am very grateful to Brendan for his vast knowledge and his passion for fitness and well-being.

It is my view that Dr. Rodriguez provided an exceptional medical service and that Brendan Fox made all the difference in my recovery.