

Medical Advances In The Treatment Of Curvature Of The Spine, “Scoliosis” Can Lead To Normal, Active Lives

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Contact: Fred Yaeger (914) 525-9198 Connie Petrovich (914) 374-4957

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Westchester County, New York— A parent, a family member, a school nurse, a coach or even a friend notices a subtle change in the posture of an adolescent boy or girl. The child is taken to his or her pediatrician who, after an examination, suspects the child might be exhibiting signs of early-stage scoliosis, also known as curvature of the spine. A referral to a spine specialist confirms the diagnosis: adolescent onset scoliosis.

According to Westchester orthopedic surgeon and spine specialist John Galeno, MD “the real pernicious element of scoliosis rests with its eventual negative impacts on the

individual’s cardiopulmonary health. Left untreated, scoliosis can do real damage to the heart and lungs, and could prove fatal years down the line. For that reason, Dr. Galeno stresses, it’s critical that young scoliosis patients be examined, diagnosed and treated at the earliest signs of the disorder.”

“Scoliosis in young adolescents, patients are first treated with a brace,” Dr. Galeno explains. “The brace is fitted to help mold the spine into its natural position. The rate of curvature of the spine is carefully monitored; if the brace helps straighten the spine, its use is continued. Should the brace fail to ameliorate the condition, the next logical step is surgery.”

“Advances in surgery for scoliosis have been remarkable over the years,” Dr. Galeno says. “In the operating room it’s the instrumentation to correct the deformity that has seen advancements he says. “Now we have the ability to correct the deformity not just on one plane, but on more than one plane in one procedure with screw and rod placement. We use instrumentation to force the

spine to go into a different position; that way are able to maintain a natural curve of the spine. The use of robotics is also making its way into treatment.

Dr. Galeno recalls one young patient who came to see him for a follow-up exam a few years after her procedure to correct idiopathic scoliosis. Not only had she fully recovered, but she demonstrated her gymnastic agility by completely bending over backwards and placing her palms flat on the floor — a challenging feat for even the most dexterous athlete. “That was pretty remarkable, and impressive,” he recalls. It spelled a remarkable transformation for a young patient who, just a few years earlier, was facing the daunting challenges of adolescent scoliosis. Surgery not only saved her life, but it restored her sense of self.

“Early intervention is extremely important,” Dr. Galeno urges. “The sooner we diagnose and treat a young person, the better the chances for a full recovery.” www.johngalenomd.com

Fred Yaeger Connie Petrovich

+1 914-525-9198

[email us here](#)

Yaeger Public Relations

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