



Kimberly Starr

DR. BERGER OFFERS INNOVATIVE APPROACH FOR HIP REPLACEMENT, ALONG WITH STAR TREATMENT

By K.H. Queen

WHILE ATTENDING A MARY KAY SEMINAR, Independent National Sales Director Kimberly Starr woke up with so much hip pain that at first she could not get out of bed. She made it through the day and began a two-year journey for relief that ended with life-changing hip replacement surgery with Dr. Richard Berger.

Dr. Berger, an engineer and assistant professor of orthopedics at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, has performed more than 6,000 hip replacement surgeries using an innovative, minimally invasive approach that he helped develop. The modified Watson-Jones anterior approach he employs avoids cutting muscles, ligaments and tendons, and results in a more stable hip joint.

Dr. Berger is one of only a few surgeons in the world qualified in this

approach, which is used in only 2 percent of hip replacements. The growing number of people who opt for this approach experience less pain, faster short-term recovery and better long-term prognosis without the usual worry of hip dislocation. Patients leave the hospital within a few hours, walking on their own. They can return to work much quicker and resume playing their favorite sports within weeks.

“We think of this as Grandma’s disease, but we also see hip issues in younger and more active people,” Dr. Berger said. “I operate on patients in their late teens. My oldest patient was 101— he needed a hip replacement so he could walk a mile to his 82-year-old girlfriend’s house.

“I had one patient run the Chicago Marathon five weeks after her hip replacement, and she finished in under four hours,” he added. “I have a patient who is a world record holder in his age group, 75 to 80, in the triathlon.”

A TWO-YEAR-LONG JOURNEY TOWARD RELIEF

Kimberly Starr had heard about Dr. Berger twice, first from an engineer friend who raved about his hip replacement and then from her sister, an occupational therapist. More than 30 years ago while working as an engineer, Starr fell off a corroded ladder on an oil tank and landed on her right wrist and hip. The doctor who set her broken wrist warned her that she might have hip problems later.

That day of reckoning arrived at the worst possible time: during the annual Mary Kay Seminar in Dallas the summer of 2015. Starr is an Independent National Sales Director — one of the elite business leaders and mentors within the Mary Kay independent sales force, which exceeds 3.5 million people in nearly 40 markets around the world. Starr had to miss the closing ceremonies where, as one of the leaders in her industry, she would have been seated on the stage and assisted with presenting awards to high achievers.

“I got out of bed that day and took my first step — I felt terrible pain,” said Starr. “I couldn’t attend all the Seminar events.

For the next two years, “the pain just kept getting worse,” Starr recalled. “I couldn’t walk from room to room without crying. I kept

taking stronger and stronger pain medication. The pain zaps all your energy. I was not ready for assistance in airports, using a wheelchair, using a cane. I was thinking ‘I’m too young to be old.’”

A UNIQUE TECHNIQUE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

According to Dr. Berger, compared to 50 years ago, people today don’t want to limit their activities or rely on pain medications for relief. “People don’t want to use a cane, crutches or a wheelchair,” he said. “They also know that if they can maintain their mobility, they can maintain their overall health. If you don’t walk as much, in a few years your heart is not doing as well, you may gain a lot of weight and develop diabetes and you’re at a risk for a heart attack, all because you have a bad hip. People also are unwilling to keep taking medication to alleviate their pain like we did a decade or two ago.”

After her surgery, Starr was able to once again enjoy international travel for business and pleasure. “I was in Rome eight months after surgery, and it was phenomenal compared to my trip to see the Pope in 2016,” Starr said. “Before surgery, I couldn’t make it through the entrance of the Vatican without taking a 30-minute break. This time I walked five to eight miles a day sightseeing and shopping.”

A large part of that difference is the technique Dr. Berger uses that gives a patient an improved joint without traumatizing muscles, tendons and ligaments. Using the modified Watson-Jones approach, Dr. Berger makes a small incision. But that small incision isn’t the key factor; what’s important is that instead of cutting soft tissue, Dr. Berger carefully takes out the old hip in small pieces between the layers of muscles, ligaments and tendons. He places the new hip in the same fashion without disrupting the patient’s soft tissue.

“The old school of thought was that any pain the patient had resulted from replacing the hip,” Dr. Berger said. “That’s what I used to think two decades ago. It turns out that’s wrong. The pain and dysfunction patients experience after surgery is from the surgeon disrupting soft tissue. The scar tissue doesn’t feel normal because it isn’t normal. Scar tissue doesn’t function like the original soft tissue. It also causes pain and discomfort. The less soft tissue you cut or tear, the quicker and more complete the recovery is.”

FAST-TRACKING RECOVERY...IN FIVE-STAR STYLE

In addition to this superior surgical approach, Dr. Berger and his entire team provide quality end-to-end customer service, striving to treat patients the way they’d want to be treated. When patients come in for their pre-surgical consultation, they are given a bag with all their prescription medications, eliminating the inconvenience of going to a

pharmacy and waiting after surgery. Patients traveling from far away appreciate that Dr. Berger will review their X-rays, confirm they need surgery and then allow them to travel to Chicago only once. They fly in for their pre-operative consultation on one day, have surgery the following day, leave the hospital to recuperate at one of Chicago’s five-star hotels, and then fly home two to four days later.

Dr. Berger has special arrangements with some of Chicago’s five-star hotels — the Peninsula, Waldorf Astoria, Park Hyatt, Langham and Trump International Hotel — for special rates and preferred treatment. Hotel staff are familiar with Dr. Berger’s patients and the recovery process. They provide TLC such as bringing ice to patient’s rooms every four hours, along with extra pillows and towels — essentially anything the patient would need at home to relax so they can recover more quickly.

“My staff and I meet on a regular basis to talk about customer service,” Dr. Berger said. “The goal is to provide what we would want if we were having surgery. People come from all over the world — Saudi Arabia, Europe, Asia, South America — because we make it an easy experience. That’s why top executives of the country’s leading companies come to see me.”

Starr appreciated being able to leave the hospital the same day, the opportunity to recuperate in a luxury hotel and the fast overall recovery time.

“As I didn’t want to burden my family members by having them come stay with me during my recovery, I felt more comfortable knowing someone was around who was aware of what I’d been through,” Starr said. “Although I only live a few blocks away, I chose to stay at the Peninsula Hotel for ten days — the suggested at-home recovery period — because they were familiar with Dr. Berger’s patients and knew what to do in case of an emergency. They also looked in on me several times a day to make sure I was comfortable and had whatever I needed. I felt very safe by myself for this reason and because Dr. Berger’s nurses

checked in on me a few times a day. I wanted the minimal recovery time, and my restrictions were lifted in only three weeks.”

Although Starr waited for two years before having surgery, she had no doubts once she met with Dr. Berger and his team that it was the right time to move ahead with the procedure.

“Had I known about Dr. Berger sooner and how easy it would be to recover, I would have had surgery earlier instead of waiting two more years,” she said. “Dr. Berger’s attentive nurses were there for me every step of the way. Dr. Berger and his organization treated me like a VIP throughout the entire process.”

One year later: “Dr. Berger made such a huge difference,” Starr said. “I have a new life, free of pain, and I’m back to running my business full time. I was back at the same Mary Kay Seminar this summer and was able to attend and enjoy all the events. I feel 20 years younger.”



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