



New Hips Replace Pain with the Promise of a New Life

By Sarah Ordody and Lily Tung Crystal

In his mid-30s, when many young fathers are busy chasing their kids around, Jorge Magaña was simply trying to get one foot in front of the other.

"I would put my hands on my hips to support them, and shuffle at an angle to walk," he explains. "I was in a lot of pain."

When he landed in the ER in 2005, doctors told him that he had advanced arthritis, and the cartilage in his hip joints was wearing away. Hip replacement was his only hope for relief, but his medical insurance wouldn't cover it.

Quality Care for Marin's Underserved Residents

By the end of 2010, Jorge's pain and stiffness made working at his job at a gas station impossible. Jorge found a wealth of support at Marin Community Clinics (MCC), a federally qualified healthcare clinic (FQHC) offering primary and urgent health care to residents with little or no insurance.

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“I definitely felt fear, but my kids were my motivation,” says Jorge.

Pictured from left to right: Jennifer Lehr, P.T., director orthopedic service line, Novato Community Hospital; Jorge Magaña with his wife and three children; Leslie Cunningham, P.T., volunteer physical therapist, Marin Community Clinic; Ricardo Montero, referral coordinator, Marin Community Clinic

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“Jorge was dealing with the worst hips I’ve ever seen,” says Leslie Cunningham, a volunteer physical therapist at MCC. “And nothing helped. It was just bone on bone.”

MCC referral coordinator Ricardo Montero recalls, “I could sense Jorge’s frustration, hope, and above all motivation to get this surgery done and change his life.”

A Joint Partnership That Works for the Community

MCC approached Novato Community Hospital (NCH), which agreed right away to do the surgery. But they still needed someone to perform it. “It’s not fair to ask physicians to do this work for free, but it also isn’t fair to ask patients to put their lives on hold,” says Linda Tavaszi, CEO of MCC.

Brian Alexander, chief administrative officer of NCH, found a willing partner in Robert Mayle, M.D. “Dr. Mayle is new to the community, but immediately agreed to provide an extremely complex surgery to a patient who had been waiting in limbo for years,” says Brian.

Dramatic Effort for Dramatic Change

“Hip replacements can dramatically change a person’s life,” Dr. Mayle insists. “Jorge was in such pain that he couldn’t even play with his kids.” His arthritis was so advanced that he could no longer stand up straight, so Dr. Mayle decided to perform bilateral hip replacements.

“That’s not a common procedure. The surgery is long and challenging,” explains Jennifer Lehr, physical therapist and

director of orthopedic services at NCH. “Jorge’s case was further complicated by his extreme weakness due to prolonged inactivity; his legs literally couldn’t support his body weight. But Dr. Mayle and the surgical team were fantastic.” Recovery was also going to require a lot of hard work, but Jennifer knew that “Jorge was a unique human being who was going to benefit from surgery in ways we couldn’t even begin to understand. He was going to push himself.”

“I definitely felt fear, but my kids were my motivation,” says Jorge.

Helping a Father Live his Dream

After undergoing surgery in October, Jorge is now walking his way into a better, pain-free life. “With modern techniques, we use smaller incisions and do less damage to the soft tissue, so patients have less pain and better mobility right off the bat,” says Dr. Mayle.

“I’m a new man!” beams the now 40-year-old. And the goal of providing for his family, including twin boys and a daughter, keeps Jorge motivated: “I have dreams like any other father. I want to take my kids to Disneyland.”

MCC and NCH see Jorge’s case as just one example of their long-standing partnership. “With talented and generous surgeons like Dr. Mayle, we are proud to provide cutting-edge care in our local community to our patients in need,” says Brian. ❖

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