



St. Luke's Medical Center®

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For release upon receipt

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DOCTOR AT ST. LUKE'S IMPLANTS WISCONSIN'S FIRST PIP PYROCARBON ARTIFICIAL FINGER JOINT Special Material Allows Restored Strength & Function

MILWAUKEE, Wis., May 29, 2002 -- A patient at St. Luke's Medical Center is the first in Wisconsin to receive the new Ascension PIP Pyrocarbon Total Joint System for fingers - a device which can restore strength and function to certain arthritis patients far better than the silicone rubber joints previously used in most such surgeries.

Hand surgeon, Lewis Chamoy, MD, implanted the device on May 1st, marking only the third time the total joint system has been used in the United States.

The Ascension Orthopedics PIP is a two-component replacement system for the proximal interphalangeal joint of the hand, or the middle knuckle. It received a humanitarian device exemption (HDE) approval from the FDA in March.

The pyrocarbon two-piece joint system is a viable option in treating the diseased arthritic hand and restoring joint function primarily for patients affected by post-traumatic arthritis or osteoarthritis. Pyrocarbon is a very durable material used for years to make heart valve replacements. It possesses qualities which, along with biologically compatible design characteristics, allow the Ascension PIP system to provide not only pain relief and cosmetic improvement, but also restore functional motion along with pinch and grip strength.

"Most current finger-joint implants are silicone rubber hinge spacers that act to separate the bones, according to Dr. Chamoy. "The spacers are good at relieving bone pain, but they don't restore function and do not possess biomechanical load properties. Moreover, function is often lost in 3-4 years from scarring. With pyrocarbon, function often increases over time."

- MORE -

New Artificial Finger Joint/Add one

It's good news to 44-year old Joseph Caputa. The wood carver from Milwaukee now hopes to return to playing basketball just as he did before he injured his little finger.

"I dislocated my finger playing basketball about 28 years ago, and it's been disfigured and painful ever since," says Caputa. "I wanted to start doing some of the activities I enjoyed when I was younger, and I didn't want to have any other operations down the line. I feel great, and I'm looking forward to playing basketball and football with my son again."

The PIP joint replacement procedure is done on an outpatient basis under general anesthesia with the surgery generally lasting about an hour-and-a-half. The typical patient will wear a splint following the procedure and undergo approximately 6 weeks of rehabilitation before resuming normal activities.

"This joint replacement system is especially good for younger people who are still active with their hands, and whose joints are still fairly intact," says Dr. Chamoy. "It's not for everyone, but for those that we can help, this new system can provide a better range of motion and more side-to-side stability than we've previously seen. It's as close to normal as we can get."

For more information on the system, or to make an appointment with Dr. Chamoy, please call 414-453-7418.

Along with the PIP pyrocarbon total joint replacement system, Ascension Orthopedics also makes a total joint system for the MCP, or primary hand joint. The MCP system received FDA approval in November of 2001.

St. Luke's Medical Center is part of Aurora Health Care, a community-owned Wisconsin health care provider and a nationally recognized leader in efforts to improve the quality of health care. Aurora has care sites in 65 communities in eastern Wisconsin.

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