

Patient Testimonial

The Grateful Golfer! *By: Rev. Dr. George B Wirth*

In March of 2017, I flew to Little Rock to meet with Dr. C. Lowry Barnes and his medical team to explore knee replacement for both of my knees. As a former college/graduate school rugby player for seven years, squash player and a 10K runner for 45 years, both of my knees were in bad shape. The pain had become debilitating. I had difficulty sleeping at night and walking during the day and I knew something had to be done.

In that first March meeting, Dr. Barnes and his team ran me through an hour of tests and convened in the conference room to give me their diagnosis. Dr. Barnes said, "The bad news is that your knees are shot. The good news is that we can replace them and get you back on the move again. You are scheduled here at the UAMS for left knee surgery on July 25, and assuming all goes well, we will replace your right knee on August 29."

"I was amazed, overwhelmed and grateful that this renowned orthopaedic surgeon had in one visit not only diagnosed my condition but had also agreed with his team to fit me into their extremely busy schedule."

Dr. Barnes' highly capable medical assistant, Marty Bushmiaer told me that she would be in touch and that I could call her at any time if I needed more information, which was an assurance to me that not only, Dr. Barnes, but also his professional team were exactly what I had hoped and prayed for.

The first surgery in July was successful and during my three-day initial recuperation, Dr. Barnes, Marty, and the nursing staff took superb care of my needs. Dr. Barnes also drove my wife, Barbara from the hotel to the hospital and back to the hotel several times so that she wouldn't have to take a cab, which was above and beyond the call of duty. The three of us actually began to develop a friendship which has increased since then, as I will explain momentarily. And when I was discharged, there was a celebration of the nursing and rehab group where I took photos of everyone and subsequently gave them to the group upon return for my second surgery in August.

Once again, the August operation went very well, and this time Dr. Barnes invited Barb and me to stay in his home with he and his lovely wife Tanya. Unfortunately, we could not stay as I had to return to Atlanta earlier than expected. Because Dr. Barnes and I are both golfers, I invited him to come play the East Lake Golf Course in Atlanta. The following spring, Dr. Barnes and his wife joined me and my wife for a weekend of golf and some wonderful dinners together. We celebrated not only my ability to walk a golf course again but also the good friendship which has developed between the four of us.

Today, I have completely recovered with no lingering knee problems. I can walk 18 holes of golf again, jog at a slow pace and sleep without pain. At the age of 74, I am totally mobile and able to work for Tom Cousins' foundation, travel whenever and wherever I need to go, and enjoy a quality of life that I did not think possible four years ago. When Dr. Barnes asked if I would be willing to participate as a member of the AAHKS Patient Advisory Group, I agreed to do so without hesitation and hope that I can be helpful in this process of reviewing and reflecting on the medical, financial, physical, and personal dimensions of hip and knee surgery.

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And one concluding comment – the financial cost of both surgeries was not overwhelming, thanks to Medicare and Dr. Barnes and Marty Bushmiaer’s assistance in working things out. As an Advisory Group member, I want to learn more about the challenging issues involved in this regard and offer whatever perspective I can share that might be helpful.

