

DOC TALK

ON THE CUTTING EDGE

Outpatient Joint Replacement Boosts Patient Comfort, Cuts Cost

When James Hall showed up for a total shoulder replacement surgery last December at the Surgical Center of the Southwest at Gila Regional Medical Center, I told him we would have him up and moving within a few hours, and he would go home that day.

James, a retired Daimler Benz mechanic in his mid-60s, didn't believe we could do that at first. "I just didn't expect they would be able to do that level of care here in Silver City," he says. "I thought I would have to spend at least a few days recovering in the hospital. But I got there early, had the procedure, and by lunchtime, I was headed home."

After surgery, James returned home to recover. And with assistance from his daughter, a physical therapist, he was able to resume his normal daily life. A few months later, he has full use and mobility in his shoulder with no pain.

"I felt fine almost immediately," James says. "I can lift my arms all the way over my head now, something I couldn't do before. I can even throw the ball around with the dog; he loves that. Best of all, I can sleep through the night without waking up in pain."

James' experience with outpatient total joint replacement surgery is a profound change from the experience most patients who undergo total joint replacements have. Typically, patients undergoing joint replacement procedures stay in the hospital for several days after their surgery. After hospitalization, the patients may be transferred to a rehabilitation or skilled nursing facility.

But now that's changing. Today we're using cutting edge advancements in surgical technique and anesthesia to perform total joint replacement as outpatient procedures. In most cases, we're sending patients home that day, though some patients stay overnight in the hospital and go home the next day. Outpatient surgery allows patients to recover in the comfort of their home.

Until recently, outpatient total joint replacements were rare. Most surgeons thought it would be necessary to stay several days in the hospital, because of the pain and recovery time needed following surgery. Now, we can perform joint replacements on an outpatient basis.

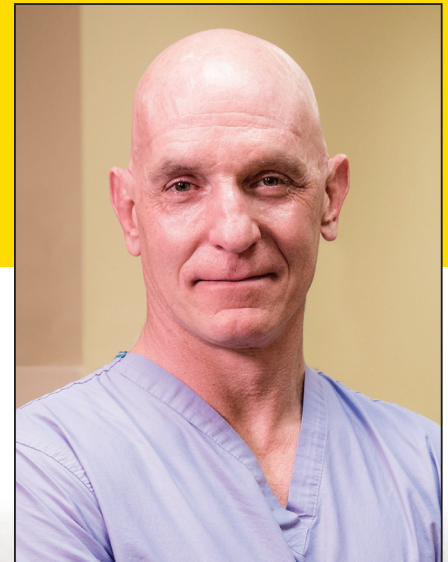
If the outpatient surgery model sounds like a leading-edge development in surgical technique, that's because it is. It is being driven by the patients' desire to save money, while improving their expectations for quality care and convenience. Performing joint replacements on an outpatient basis reduces costs significantly. Patients want quality orthopedic surgery at a reduced cost, and they want to be able to recover at home. This gets patients up and moving and back home sooner.

And the outpatient surgical model fits perfectly with Gila Regional's mission to provide exceptional quality, patient-centered care to our community.

"This is the latest trend in orthopedic surgery, and we are partnering with our surgeons to deliver the best care for patients and ensure patient safety," Taffy Arias, CEO

of Gila Regional, told me. "It is our mission to provide world-class care here for our community, close to home." ~

Dr. Brian Robinson is CEO of Southwest Bone and Joint Institute, P.C. in Silver City, and currently serves as medical chief of staff at Gila Regional Medical Center.



By Brian Robinson, M.D.



James Hall enjoys a pain-free life after shoulder surgery by Dr. Brian Robinson at Gila Regional Medical Center last year.

(Courtesy Photo)