

My name is John Ireland and I am an Emergency Medical Officer with the Pueblo Fire Department in Pueblo, Colorado. In November of 2003, I sustained an injury while performing my duties. On one call, my patient was semi-conscious and weighed approximately 300lbs. While lifting the patient and transferring him to an ambulance cot, I injured my lower back.



The initial diagnosis of my problem was a bulging disc. My symptoms included severe lower back pain, radiating down both legs, decreased mobility and flexibility, and numbness and tingling in both legs and feet. The symptoms were constant regardless of my position or level of activity. At this point, I was placed on light duty.

My treatment progression steered through the usual course of rest, physical therapy, then to the more invasive treatment of steroid injections to relieve the pain and discomfort I was experiencing. None of these conservative treatments brought relief. I now faced the definite possibility of requiring surgery. I was sent to The Center for Spinal Disorders where it was determined that I suffered from degenerative disc disease at the L4-L5 and L5-S1 levels. Three treatment options were offered to me as a result of this diagnosis.

- Do nothing invasive and try to control the pain through medication and exercise.
- Treat the discs with surgical intervention. Fusion of the vertebrae from L-4-5-S1.
- Treat the problem aggressively with a new technique involving replacement of the discs with artificial disc called the Pro-Disc.

I felt that the first two options would result in a significant life changing result for me, namely early retirement from the fire department due to medical inability to perform the duties.

After much lobbying on my part to the human resource director and workers compensation adjuster, I was finally cleared to receive the Pro-Disc. As a result of this surgery, I returned to full duty after 6 months. I no longer have any pain or numbness in my back, legs or feet, or stiffness or loss of mobility.

I have fought numerous structure fires, treated countless patients and crawled into attics, wrecked cars, and crawl spaces on the job without mobility problems or pain. At home I have built a retaining wall using 85 lb. blocks, shoveled many tons of landscaping gravel, and started a small business of trimming shrubs. All of these tasks I have accomplished without pain. I have even returned to playing softball on a city team and enjoying playing football, basketball, and softball with my teenage children.

The staff at the Center for Spinal Disorders is second to none worldwide!! Dr Janssen made sure that my artificial discs were inserted perfectly. His expertise and attention to detail make him the hands-down leading spine surgeon in the world. His great bedside manner and consideration for my family during the procedure is almost unusual. Ruth Beckham is by far one of the Center's finest assets. Her role in my diagnosis, treatment, and in-hospital recovery made the process as pleasant as it could possibly be. Her consideration in keeping my family informed during the surgical process was also great.

The entire staff at the Center for Spinal Disorders is world class and I recommend them all highly. The Pro-Disc gave me back my life and Dr. Janssen and his staff made it possible. I would never allow any one else to work on a member of my family if they suffered from spine problems.