

New therapy rakes in the results



Michael D. Jackson, MD
Medical Director
MercyCare Occupational
Health Partners

As a retiree, 63-year-old Dave Hartle, Cedar Rapids, has a full plate. He's an active volunteer at Indian Creek Nature Center, Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center and Brucemore.

He's a husband of 42 years, the father of four and grandfather of nine. He even works occasionally for a local temp agency building displays. At the height of his 40-year career in the agricultural feed and animal health business, he managed to juggle four different jobs. And, in his earlier days, he was a college wrestler. He's obviously not one to sit back and watch the world go by.

That's why a fall on his arm that wrenched his shoulder Dec. 18, 2008, was especially difficult for him. The injury—a full thickness rotator cuff tear to his shoulder—left him with very limited use of his right arm. Traditional medical approaches to treating the problem, such as physical therapy, rest and medication, were not successful.

"I lived that way for a month. It was a long, sore month," says Dave. "I took pain pills, but they didn't help the pain or the motion."

The injury had dramatic and immediate effects on Dave's daily activities. He couldn't lift his arm far enough from his side to even hang up

his coat or turn on the car radio.

With no sign of improvement a month after the injury, Dave made an appointment to talk to Dr. Michael Jackson, Medical Director at MercyCare Occupational Health Partners, about his options. Dr. Jackson specializes in workplace and sports injuries. Traditionally, says Dr. Jackson, patients like Dave had few options but to undergo surgery.

Dr. Jackson, however, offered Dave an alternative—Platelet Rich Plasma therapy, or PRP. Dr. Jackson had seen studies and heard encouraging reports about the effectiveness of PRP from some of his colleagues at Mayo Clinic. He decided to get the training himself so he could provide his patients, when appropriate, an alternative to surgery. He's the first to offer the therapy in the Cedar Rapids area.

"PRP is a natural form of treatment that assists the body with its own healing process," says Jackson. "Patients considering surgery might want to give this a try because they can have surgery later, if needed."

PRP works like this: Doctors draw the patient's own blood, which is then centrifuged,

"I took pain pills, but they didn't help."

*Dave Hartle
MercyCare Occupational
Health Partners patient*

or spun down, so it separates into layers. The platelet layer is extracted and then injected back into the patient's damaged tissue. The healing properties of the blood go to work to repair the tissue.

"In many cases, it can eliminate the need for more aggressive treatment and turns out to be more cost-effective in the long term," says Dr. Jackson.

Dave noticed a slight improvement after the first injection. But a second injection in early April brought marked improvement. Just days after that second treatment, Dave was back to his daily activities—with no pain.

"I'd say I've got 95 percent improvement. The only small thing I notice is that my initial motions are still stiff. But once I've warmed up, it's all good. I don't anticipate having another injection. This will probably be it," he says.

PRP therapy has drawn attention on the national level this year as well. Hines Ward, a stand-out football player for the Pittsburgh Steelers, injured himself two weeks prior to the Super Bowl and had all but resigned himself to sitting on the sidelines. But PRP therapy kept him in the game.

Ironically, Dave and his wife were watching the Super Bowl as commentators talked about Ward's success with PRP. Now Dave is happy to say he's back in the game, too.

Volunteer Dave Hartle is back to work at the Indian Creek Nature Center after Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) therapy relieved pain from a rotator cuff tear to his shoulder.

