

From Despair to Giving Thanks

Gregory Volz



“I was completely in despair.”

Gregory Volz had been active his entire life. He served in the Navy, worked as an engineer, traveled around the world, taught high school and ran his own construction business. Not to mention, he also ran marathons in cities across the country. This all came to a sudden stop the summer of 2018 while Volz was on a trip preparing for his next marathon. “I had my best run one week and the next I couldn’t run 3 miles. The drive home from Detroit was so uncomfortable. I knew right away something was wrong!”

Pain became a consistent issue for Volz through the fall. In early October, Volz tried to go back to the classroom to teach but the pain was so bad, he had to turn down the position. His left arm hurt so much that he had to stand and was not even able to lay down to sleep. He had weeks of sleepless nights where he would end up walking his neighborhood to help ease his frustration.

During this time, Volz visited a number of providers who really did not have a full
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UofL Physicians – Restorative Neuroscience

Thomas J. Altstadt, M.D., FAANS

Dr. Altstadt is an Associate Professor in the Department of Neurological Surgery at the University of Louisville School of Medicine. He completed his medical degree, general surgery internship, neurological surgery residency, and postgraduate fellowship in complex spinal surgery at Indiana University School of Medicine.

Dr. Altstadt specializes in minimally invasive and complex spine surgery. He has particular expertise in the use of intraoperative spinal navigation for the treatment of complex spinal disorders. His clinical interests include disorders of the cranio-cervical junction, cervical deformity, motion-preserving treatments for disorders of the cervical spine (cervical arthroplasty), and minimally invasive treatments of lumbar spinal disorders including lumbar disc herniation, far-lateral disc herniation, lumbar stenosis, and lumbar spondylolisthesis. Dr. Altstadt also has an interest in caring for sports-related neurosurgical disorders.



From Despair continued...

answer to why Volz was in so much pain. They provided different treatments to try from steroid shots to physical therapy, but none of them seemed to help. “I was completely in despair,” said Volz.

Friends of Volz were really concerned so one of them suggested that he request an appointment with Thomas J. Altstadt, M.D., FAANS of UofL Physicians – Restorative Neurosurgery. It was near Halloween when Volz was able to get in to see Dr. Altstadt for a consult. “Right away, I suspected that Greg was suffering from carpal tunnel syndrome in both arms,” said Altstadt. “I recommended that Volz undergo an electromyography (EMG) that evaluates and records the electrical activity produced by skeletal muscles as soon as possible.” Volz had asked other physicians about this test previously, but they had put him off or told him there was a long waiting list for the test. Suddenly, he was glad that he had listened to his friends.

The EMG was scheduled later that week and with the results confirming it was carpal tunnel syndrome in both arms, Dr. Altstadt let Volz know he would need to have two surgeries. Since the pain was so severe, the first surgery for correcting Volz’s worst side – his left, was scheduled for the very next week. Immediately, after surgery Volz felt relief. “I could not believe how much better I felt right away. It was amazing.” Surgery on his right side was scheduled for two weeks later when he would have his stitches out of his left hand. “Again, it was incredible how quickly I felt better,” said Volz.

Although the carpal tunnel issues were readily resolved, Volz’s fingers have remained a little numb on his left hand. The severe onset of polyarthritis in August, which was the probable cause of the carpal tunnel, continues to persist, but with some modification, Volz has been able to enjoy the new year. “I am so glad Dr. Altstadt was able to recognize my condition and help me right away. I feel like I have my life back thanks to him.”

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