

## *Orthopaedic Connection*

### **Is a 4” Total Knee Incision Better?**

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*Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

When class let out last week I said that you needed to understand more about total knee replacement to have the full picture. Thanks for returning for part two.

#### **What Is The Goal?**

The goal of any joint replacement is twofold. To relieve the pain of the arthritis and enable the person to function better, i.e. do the things they couldn't do with the arthritis. Simple enough. Right?

Not exactly because the surgery is a highly technical number of steps, which need to be adjusted to each patient's bone structure and the size of their body. It is not cookie cutter as I'm afraid some believe. So for this to work I have to do my very best, every time.

I want their total knee to last the rest of their life. It's always my goal every time.

Relieve pain, improve function and have this new total knee replacement last for the rest of the person's life.

Advantages of doing total knee replacement surgery through a 4 inch incision are:

- A smaller scar
- Shorter hospital stay by a day or so
- Recover strength faster
- Possibly less blood loss.

Disadvantages of doing total knee replacement surgery through a 4 inch incision are:

- Can't be done in all patients
- Harder to get prosthesis in proper position due to limited vision
- May take longer to do the surgery.

#### **Outcomes**

At the six week point after surgery all of the patients in the small incision group and larger incision group are doing the same in all the measures of recovery. Pain, need for therapy, walking speed, strength: all the same. There is, therefore *no long term benefit* to the patient to have a less invasive total knee replacement compared with a more traditional total knee replacement.

#### **Alignment**

In total knee replacement surgery precise alignment of the parts in the bone is the key to the durability and long term survival of the joint replacement. The goal never changes that is, to give the patient a knee replacement that will last the rest of their life, relieves pain and allows the patient to do more than they could do with the arthritic knee.

#### **What Do Cleveland and Mayo Do?**

I trained at the Cleveland Clinic and I have frequent interaction with Orthopaedic Surgeons there and also at the Mayo Clinic through conferences. 80% or more of total knees done at those world renowned centers are done in the traditional manner.

Do they do some surgery through a smaller incision? Yes, of course, but not very many out of the thousands of knee joint replacements they do each year.

I think it is because they know, as I do, that it is a highly technical, difficult operation in the first place and by trying to do it through a smaller incision makes it all the more difficult. I have done the limited incision surgery and know this from experience.

I said last week I am not trying to demonize the procedure. It is an alternative which can have good results in the hands of Orthopaedic Surgeons who have chosen to do their surgery in that way. The outcome after the first few weeks is the same if the surgery was done precisely and the prosthesis is well aligned.

*Our goal is quality, highest standards and best outcomes.*

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It gives access to all Website articles, Your Orthopaedic Connection and every GCH article from most recent to the first. Full text! It covers everything I do in the office and hospital.

Good Health. Good life. All the best to you.

Dr. Haverbush