

# Lakeview Community Wellness Center Orthopaedic Connection

## Tell It Like It Is

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.  
Orthopaedic Surgeon

### *Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

I could have also titled the article in two other ways. How often have you heard people say, “To tell the truth” or “I’ll be honest with you”? I decided not to use those, because I hope everyone knows I am always honest and truthful with you!!

I like to think about this article in three sections. The subject “Tell it like it is” applies to any area of medicine, but of course I am putting it in the context of what I know best, Orthopaedic Surgery.

### **Confusing Vocabulary**

Orthopaedic Surgery has its own vocabulary that is very unfamiliar to patients and family members. It is also somewhat confusing to other medical providers who are not Orthopaedic Surgeons.

Accordingly, I have always been aware of this and have attempted to put problems and procedures I am dealing with into language others can readily understand. In other words, “speak English”! I do, as most of you know who read my articles or have seen me in the office or the hospital. Perhaps I am praising myself, but many doctors do not do this.

What do you gain by “snowing a patient” in your conversation? Nothing.

### **Permits For Surgery Or Procedures**

When patients or guardians are asked to sign a permit for something I do it is often worded somewhat technically. Here is where it gets a little tricky. Most of our surgery and procedures are worded more technically than average people understand. The permit is really a legal document giving us permission to do a certain thing to a patient so it can’t be stated in simple English (unfortunately).

This is where my avoidance of confusing vocabulary comes in. I have explained things to the patient in terms they understand before they are asked to sign the permit.

I never want someone to come back to me after surgery or a procedure saying “I didn’t understand what I signed”. Gulp. That’s a bad feeling.

### **Results Of Surgery Or A Procedure**

Going out to talk to a family or sometimes a very large gathering of family and friends after surgery can be challenge! It is hard to explain things to a large group, but I try.

No person or number of persons waiting wants to hear bad news. Fortunately, I don’t have to give that very often. What I try to explain is how things went.

One doctor I have known routinely told the family, “It (the surgery) was the worst one I have ever seen”. In doing that the surgeon leaves some leeway if things don’t turn out fine.

I don’t do that, because it isn’t realistic. I try to be in the middle and explain things as they are (Tell It Like It Is). I answer all questions and give encouragement and hope.

The opposite of “It was the worst one.....” is “Everything went perfectly” seeming to give a guarantee that the patient will do well.

Being in the middle I feel is the best although some families and patients get concerned if I don’t say “perfect” in the conversation.

I hope this is helpful to you in understanding what you hear from me and other physicians.  
Hope to see you next week.

*My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.*

Please remember that anyone can make an appointment to see Dr. Haverbush at his office in Alma, at 315 Warwick Dr., across from Gratiot Medical Center. Call 989-463-6092 to make an appointment.

And don't forget every article I have written for Lakeview Area News is on my Website, [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com). Check it out. I specialize in you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush