

NO PAIN IS ALL GAIN

The new century started with a BANG for Barb Valley when a car tore through a red light, causing her to smash into it broadside.

The resulting back injuries drove her to Mercy's Interventional Pain Management Center. Then, after treatment for an injured disc, she was finally pain-free. She was exhilarated.

But that feeling didn't last long.

In 2001, just a year later, the car she was driving was rear-ended, re-injuring the same disc. Pain became her constant companion and she needed relief.

As Tork Harman, MD, Medical Director of Mercy's Interventional Pain Management Center, says, "She experienced an unfortunate double-whammy."

So, Barb came back to the Pain Center. With the second injury, getting rid of the pain wasn't so easy.

"The terrible part (of having back pain) is when you have to sit down at work – but then you can't because it hurts so badly. There were times I was crying because I couldn't take painkillers at work," says Barb.

The treatment methods used the first time around didn't produce the desired results this time. The disc had further degenerated and torn, and Barb ended up having surgery to have the disc removed and the vertebrae fused in that area of her spine.

While the surgery alleviated a majority of the spine pain, she eventually developed pain in her Sacroiliac (SI) joints, located between the sacrum

and pelvic bones. As part of her treatment for this pain, she occasionally receives injections guided by fluoroscopy (X-ray). For the intermittent recurrent pain from her low back, she occasionally is given an injection in the lumbar spine near the sacrum (a caudal block).

Unfortunately, says Dr. Harman, "There is no single injection that will make her spine anatomically perfect for the rest of her life. After

her surgery, she was able to trade a higher level pain for a lower level pain. There are a lot of tools available that we use to help manage chronic pain, but people may not end up totally pain-free.

"Patients have to be engaged, educated and active participants in the process," he adds. "Each treatment option is not appropriate for every patient."

Barb uses a variety of over-the-counter pain relievers and transdermal medication patches. At night, she takes prescription pain medications.

By combining medications with interventional treatments at the Pain Center, Barb now feels good enough to enjoy life, go to work and play with her dog—a Pug named Sarge.

She continues to visit her "friends" at the Pain Center three to four times a year.

"They are all great," she says of the Pain Center staff. "They all know me. That happens when you go as many times as I have."

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*Tork Harman, MD
Medical Director
Mercy's Interventional Pain
Management Center*

Mercy Medical Center's Interventional Pain Management Center has been awarded Pain Program Accreditation by the American Academy of Pain Management.



Tork Harman, MD
Medical Director
Mercy's Interventional Pain
Management Center

Barb Valley is able to enjoy life and playing with Sarge, her Pug, after treatments at Mercy's Interventional Pain Management Center.