



Surgeon uses innovative procedures to alleviate shoulder problems

Nancy Thomas, 72, fell backwards when trying to get into a van at an airport and smashed her shoulder onto a curb. She had surgery to repair it, but her doctor knew immediately a regular repair wasn't going to work; too much damage had been done. Her shoulder kept popping out of the socket and was constantly in pain and basically useless.



Dr. Anbari

She was then referred to Ammar Anbari, MD, a shoulder replacement and arthroscopy specialist at Backus Hospital. He said that because of the irreparable damage to her rotator cuff, a new procedure, called a reverse shoulder replacement, was ideal for her.

"Instead of a ball and socket, it is the reverse, a socket and ball," he said. The Food and Drug Administration approved the procedure in November 2004, but doctors have been using it in Europe for the past 20 years. Dr. Anbari is the only orthopedic surgeon in the region who performs this procedure.

Patients over the age of 70 with large rotator cuff tears can develop a condition called rotator cuff arthropathy, a form of arthritis that causes a loss of range of motion and severe pain. This reverse shoulder replacement does not need an intact rotator cuff, but relies on the deltoid muscle, which is usually still strong.

Ms. Thomas had her reverse shoulder surgery last May, performed by Dr. Anbari, and was pain-free within two weeks. She never expected her shoulder to work again but now she is very happy with her motion and pain relief.

For patients between the ages of 50 and 70 with shoulder arthritis, Dr. Anbari performs a total shoulder replacement. This surgery can give patients excellent pain relief and restoration of function.

For patients with shoulder arthritis younger than 50, a shoulder replacement may not be the ideal treatment. Instead, patients can have their humeral head resurfaced and covered, rather than having it replaced entirely.

"Essentially you place a hub cap over the bone itself without cutting any bone," Dr. Anbari said. "It makes it easy to replace the whole shoulder later on in their life."



Ammar Anbari, MD performs a total shoulder replacement surgery on Oct. 17.

Dr. Anbari also specializes in the latest shoulder arthroscopic procedures. He uses a new arthroscopic technique, called Transosseous Equivalent, in which he repairs rotator cuffs using two rows of repair, with anchors and stitches above and below the rotator cuff. This has resulted in faster patient recovery, better outcomes, with less pain and improved range of motion and strength.

Dr. Anbari has performed more than 400 shoulder surgeries at Backus in the past year. He received his training in the latest shoulder arthroscopy and replacement techniques at Rush University, one of the most prestigious fellowship programs in the country. He has published multiple articles and book chapters on shoulder arthroscopy and reconstruction. He is also the orthopedic team doctor for the Connecticut Sun and Norwich Free Academy.