

Southwest Florida's First Outpatient Hip Replacement Patient Celebrates Ten Years of Pain-free Mobility

NAPLES, FLA. (November 15, 2025) — As hurricane season approached in 2015, Don Uhlenkott knew it would be a difficult summer for him. A handyman by trade with a successful home watch business, Don expected to be climbing up and down ladders, reaching and stretching, twisting and bending, to prepare and secure his clients' homes against potential storm damage. What made 2015 different for Don was the excruciating pain he was suffering because of the damage caused by osteoarthritis in his hip.

"The pain was intense," recalls Don. "Dr. Zehr diagnosed me in June, but I had to delay my hip replacement surgery until November. I couldn't be sidelined by surgery and recovery in the middle of hurricane season!" Interim treatments helped him limp through the summer months, "But by November I was really ready to go!"

So, at 7 a.m. one mid-November morning, Don checked into the newly opened Seaside Surgery Center. He checked out just five hours later, walking to his car where his wife waited to take him home. ***Don had just made history as the first patient in Southwest Florida to undergo hip replacement surgery as an outpatient.***

The operation was performed by orthopaedic surgeon Robert J. Zehr, M.D. of the Zehr Center for Orthopaedics, using the anterior approach to hip replacement. Dr. Zehr pioneered the approach in Southwest Florida and has since performed over 3,500 of the muscle-sparing surgical procedures.

"There are multiple surgical approaches that are currently in use by hip surgeons, each having benefits and drawbacks," explains Dr. Zehr. "Surgeons choose an approach based on their experience, the type of prosthesis to be implanted and health of the patient, among other variables. One of the more traditional approaches, the posterior approach, allows clear visualization of the hip and surrounding anatomy, but it involves cutting the muscles along the back of the hip and re-attaching them at the end. This leaves them weak and predisposes the hip to dislocation and leg length inequalities. Patients have to always be careful how they position their legs after this approach."

Zehr continues, "A more advanced approach, the direct anterior approach, separates but does not cut the muscles in the front of the hip joint. An abbreviated incision is used along with a highly specialized surgical table (Hana® arthroplasty table) and



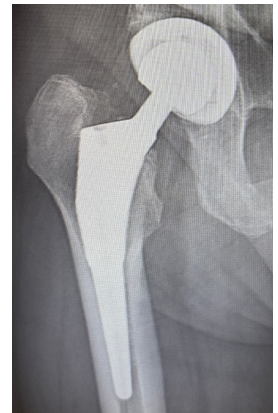
Fluoroscope (X-ray) to perform this state-of-the-art technique. Blood loss is typically minimal, and recovery is usually much quicker than with the posterior approach. Time in the operating room is typically under one hour for most patients.”

Don consulted two other surgeons before choosing Dr. Zehr. “Both of them wanted to use the posterior approach, but my older brother said, ‘NO! Go in from the front!’ I’m the second in a line of five brothers and three of them had to have their right hip replaced before it was my turn. One brother, a nurse in Seattle, had to have the posterior approach and his recovery was so much longer,” he muses.

Working with the visiting nurses and physical therapist in the comfort of his home, with his wife Crissy alongside, Don quickly progressed from using a walker to a cane, to walking without aid by the end of the first week. Don firmly believes that having his hip surgery as an outpatient and going home right away played a big part in his rapid and successful recovery. He was climbing ladders and putting up Christmas lights within a month.

Ten years later, he’s still doing that, working six-to-eight hours a day, with no plans to retire. At his recent ten-year check-up, Don, amused, said he couldn’t remember which side had the hip replacement as it felt so natural and functional. Reviewing his X-rays with Dr. Zehr, he was amazed that the implant still looked brand new!

Don expressed his gratitude to Dr. Zehr, the Zehr Center for Orthopaedics team, and to the many professionals at Seaside Surgery Center who made this historic Southwest Florida procedure happen for him, exclaiming, “If I didn’t have this hip, I would be disabled now. It’s a lifesaver!”



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About Robert J. Zehr, M.D.: Board-certified and fellowship-trained, with over 35 years of experience, Robert J. Zehr, M.D., specializes in hip and knee replacement surgery. As Southwest Florida’s most experienced surgeon in the *direct anterior approach* to total hip replacement, he has performed over 3,500 surgeries using this technique, including Southwest Florida’s **first same-day outpatient total hip replacement**. He performed this history-making operation over 10 years ago at Seaside Surgery Center, Southwest Florida’s first facility designed and built for outpatient total joint replacements, which he co-founded. Consistently chosen as a Castle Connolly Top Orthopaedic Surgeon, Dr. Zehr has won numerous awards from peers and patients alike.