

Patient credits AMH Wound Care Center with saving leg

by Becky Slatin
March 3 2015 4:58 PM



ALTON - Larry Mayfield admits he was about ready to give up. After months of excruciating leg pain from a small cut that transformed into a chronic wound, he was only days from having his left leg removed.

The 73-year-old had been seeking treatment in St. Louis when BJC Home Care nurses suggested he try one more option. Although it was just two days before surgery, Mayfield contacted the Alton Memorial Hospital Center for Wound Care & Hyperbaric Medicine and sought the care of the center's medical director, Valinda Allen, MD.

"I was a little hesitant because I had been through so much already and it was a nasty wound," Mayfield says. "I didn't think anything else could be done, and I was in horrible pain. I was giving up."

Mayfield just couldn't imagine what life would be like if he lost his leg. It would be hard for him and his wife, Patricia, to enjoy their time as volunteers at Eldon Hazlet State Park in Carlyle, Ill., where they are campground hosts. He had already spent months on crutches, and his left foot hadn't touched the ground.

"Mr. Mayfield was in an exceptional amount of pain when I first met him. He couldn't even lie flat to be examined," Dr. Allen says. "He had been evaluated by other physicians, and the conclusion was that he needed an amputation. I saw it as a personal challenge to keep that from happening."

Dr. Allen says the first steps taken were to get Mayfield's wound drainage and pain under control. She then referred him to Sundeep Das, MD, a Christian Hospital cardiologist with a particular expertise in vascular diseases. Dr. Das was able to restore blood flow to Mayfield's leg by performing a complex angioplasty and stenting of the arteries.

Following this surgical procedure, Mayfield continued his care at the AMH Wound Care Center under Dr. Allen's guidance. Starting in mid-August, he began a treatment regimen that included the use of both negative pressure wound therapy and hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Negative pressure wound therapy, also commonly referred to as a wound vac, stimulates new tissue growth and helps to control drainage and infection within the wound.

The hyperbaric oxygen therapy provides 100 percent oxygen delivered at an elevated pressure within a treatment chamber, Dr. Allen says. The effect of the combined increases in pressure and oxygen content is to force more oxygen into the body, raising the likelihood of wound healing.

"Mr. Mayfield did a really good job during the hyperbaric oxygen therapy," Dr. Allen says. "We were able to make him comfortable and relieve his anxiety using medication."

He underwent 20 treatments in the chamber for two hours each time.

“I drove myself 70 miles each way from Carlyle to Alton for the therapy,” he says. “I’m claustrophobic, but the staff was all wonderful and kept me calm.”

Following his care at the wound center, Mayfield was referred to Washington University plastic surgeon Donald Buck, MD, to repair his skin defect from both the ulcer and previous surgeries.

“I walk with a slight limp right now, and I’m going to physical therapy. I can’t say enough about everyone at the wound center. I really love Dr. Allen. I call her a superwoman,” Mayfield says. “The home care nurses, Dr. Allen and the Wound Care Center saved my leg and gave me back my life.”