

Alton's finest back on the job thanks to Alton Memorial

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Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. John Stirton, Performs Joint Replacements on 2 Firemen

ALTON - Timothy Quigley, 54, spends his days lifting heavy equipment, climbing up and down stairs, and loading up fire trucks. He's an Alton Firefighter.

“My knee was a continual problem,” he says. “I had surgery on it in the early 1980s, and it was time to step it up and get a new one.”

After receiving a referral from his primary care doctor, he set up a knee replacement surgery last year with John Stirton, MD, an orthopedic surgeon and joint replacement specialist. After completing his general orthopedic training, Dr. Stirton received advanced sub-specialty training in minimally invasive joint replacement surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. Dr. Stirton is the first Fellowship-trained joint replacement specialist in Alton and is a member of the Alton Orthopedic Clinic on the campus of Alton Memorial Hospital.

The rapid recovery was surprising for Quigley.

“Within a few days, I was back at home and didn’t even need the crutch anymore,” he said. “I was out doing anything that I wanted in about two weeks.”

He did have to put in some work with a physical therapist from home health, but he credits Dr. Stirton for the successful surgery.

“My twin brother had the same surgery, and my recovery was much easier than his,” Quigley said. “I really didn’t do anything special. I just followed the directions from Dr. Stirton, and I was back to work in three months as a full-time firefighter, crawling around, doing ladders and everything else. It was fantastic.”

Quigley’s fellow Alton firefighter Jesse Jemison, 49, never thought he would be a candidate for a joint replacement before the age of 50. But after experiencing lower back pain for a couple of years, Jemison was referred to Dr. Stirton last summer.

“I had some arthritis and spurring in my left hip,” Jemison said. “Dr. Stirton was very straightforward with me. I had the surgery on Dec. 3 and was up doing laps around the nurses station the next day. There was pain for several days, but it subsided and I know this (anterior) approach made the recovery time much quicker.

“Dr. Stirton makes you feel comfortable and he’s very knowledgeable about the things firefighters need to do. If I follow what he says, I should be fine.”

Dr. Stirton believes that joint replacement should be a partnership between the surgeon and the patient in which a team approach is adopted to obtain the best outcomes.

“At AMH, we are developing a systematic approach to the entire care stream for orthopedic joint replacement which makes the process much easier for patients and

ultimately results in better outcomes,” said Dr. Stirton, medical director of the Center for Joint Preservation and Reconstruction at AMH. “People in the community are beginning to recognize that they can obtain high-quality subspecialty orthopedic care right here in town without having to travel across the river.

“Three years ago, Alton Orthopedic Clinic surgeons performed about 150 joint replacements a year. That number has doubled to more than 300 and within a few more years we expect to be performing well over 500 joint replacements a year at Alton Memorial Hospital.”

That experience makes the whole process easier for patients like Quigley and Jemison. Quigley feels like new.

“I’m back at work with no pain and no discomfort,” he said. “That’s exactly what I had hoped for.”

Jemison also feels great and returned to light duty approximately six weeks after his surgery. He fully expected to be working with no limitations within three months of his surgery.

“It’s good to be able to do things without pain anymore,” Jemison said. “I credit Dr. Stirton and Alton Memorial for that. I was considering an early retirement prior to the surgery. Now that I’m pain free, I’m looking forward to working for a few more years.”

Dr. Stirton is a member of BJC Medical Group and on staff at Alton Memorial Hospital. His practice, Alton Orthopedic Clinic, is located at 4 Memorial Drive, Building B, Suite 130, Alton, Ill, and can be reached by calling (618) 463-7600.