

## **PMMC ORTHOPEDIC SURGEONS – FIRST IN EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA TO PERFORM SPINAL PROCEDURE FOR SCOLIOSIS**

### ***Benefits Local Adolescent with Curvature of the Spine***

*Pottstown, PA* – For 14-year-old Alexandra Leibfried of Malvern, living with scoliosis, a curvature of the spine, was not in her plans. A swimmer and gymnast, it was getting harder to participate in the physical activities she enjoyed.

“My daughter’s curve was getting worse, and we were afraid for her health, so we decided to seek medical attention from a specialist,” said Sandy Leibfried, Alexandra’s mom. After consulting with Dr. Linda D’Andrea, an orthopedic surgeon, the Leibfrieds decided the surgery was the right option for their daughter. Alexandra’s procedure, a posterior spinal fusion, was performed at Pottstown Memorial Medical Center (PMMC) by Dr. D’Andrea, who along with Dr. James Guille, are the first orthopedic surgeons in the region to perform this type of spinal surgery.

Idiopathic scoliosis is a curvature of the spine that occurs in children and young teenagers. This condition affects about two to three percent of children under the age of 16. Most of the time, the curve in the back will remain small and will not progress, however, with growth and over time, it may worsen. This condition causes a visible deformity or a bump that appears on the child’s ribs or in the muscle adjacent to the spine.

According to Dr. D’Andrea, in most cases, the curve will stop progressing or changing once the child stops growing. However, curves that are very large may continue to worsen in adulthood, even though the individual is no longer growing. “Until recently, the only choice for curvature of the spine was a brace, or surgery that involved wearing a body cast for six months following the procedure,” she said.

The posterior spinal fusion is performed to correct the curve and fuse the affected part of the spine. This surgery causes the bones of the spine to grow together to become a solid bone that can no longer twist. Metal rods are placed into the spine to pull it into a corrected position and to hold it there in a stable manner. This allows the bones to heal together, much as a broken bone in the arm or leg would heal. With posterior spinal fusion, most patients are up and walking a few days after surgery without the constriction of a cast.

-more-

Spine/Add one

“We usually wait to perform the procedure until the patient is finished growing,” explained Dr. D’Andrea, who with Dr. Guille, have completed fellowships in spinal surgery. “If the curves are not very severe, some patients choose to wait until the curves become painful, possibly when they reach 30 or 60 years old.”

Dr. D’Andrea adds “I have operated on very young children where we straighten the curve and insert rods that we lengthen every six months until the child has finished growing. We then do the fusion if the curves are still severe. Our overall goal is to take care of the problem earlier rather than later, because if left untreated, the curvature can cause degenerative disk disease and even affect other organs of the body.”

Alexandra’s hospital stay was five days, and then she spent a few months recuperating at home. She is slowly getting back to some of her physical activities. “The nurses on the pediatric floor were amazing. Dr. D’Andrea is not only an excellent surgeon, but a warm and caring person as well,” explained Sandy. “I am glad we decided to come to Pottstown for her care. We received quality medical treatment right in our own neighborhood. Not having to travel to be with our daughter meant a lot.”

To reach Drs. D’Andrea and Guille, please call Brandywine Institute of Orthopaedics at (610) 792-9292.

###

Pottstown Memorial Medical Center (PMMC), a 227-bed, acute care hospital is conveniently located in western Montgomery county just off route 422 at the Armand Hammer Blvd. exit.

The medical staff features 260 physicians and 40 medical specialties. PMMC offers the latest technology and treatments, a full array of inpatient services, and convenient outpatient locations for ambulatory surgery, rehabilitation, diagnostic services, occupational health services, lab work, family care and pediatrics. Pottstown Memorial Regional Cancer Center is a partner of Fox Chase Cancer Center, and received an outstanding achievement award by the American College of Surgeons’ Commission on Cancer for its’ Community Cancer Program.

Each year at PMMC, more than 40,000 patients seek emergency care, and nearly 900 babies are born. PMMC employs over 1,300 full and part-time staff members throughout its healthcare system, including PMMC, Pottstown Scanning and Treatment Center, Coventry and Berks Family Care, Coventry Pediatrics and Tri-County Medical Laboratory.

PMMC is fully accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. For more information, please visit our website at [www.pottstownmemorial.com](http://www.pottstownmemorial.com).