

Mike Hubicki was back on the golf course just eight weeks after undergoing a double knee replacement, thanks to postoperative rehabilitation.

In the Swing of things

POSTOPERATIVE KNEE-REPLACEMENT REHAB HELPS PATIENTS REGAIN FULL RANGE OF MOTION

In April, Mike Hubicki hit the links—not unusual for this 66-year-old Northumberland resident who is always eager for the season’s first 18 holes. What did surprise Hubicki, however, was the fact that just two months prior he’d undergone simultaneous bilateral knee replacement, which meant surgically replacing the weight-bearing surfaces of both knee joints.

Hubicki had been suffering from knee pain for nearly two years, and after working with his doctors at SUN Orthopaedics of Evangelical, everyone eventually agreed that knee replacement surgery was the right choice.

“I thought I’d be back on the golf course by July at the soonest,” Hubicki recalls. “Turns out I felt great after eight weeks.”

GETTING DOWN TO WORK

Within a day of surgery, Evangelical’s physical therapy team had Hubicki moving both new knee joints. Three days post-surgery, he moved into Evangelical Community Hospital’s Acute Rehabilitation Unit—not unusual for those who have knees done simultaneously. There, physical therapist Chris Wenda worked with him for one week to begin a routine of therapy Hubicki would need after being discharged from the Hospital.

Upon discharge, he teamed up with Thomas Orren, Physical Rehabilitation Services Outpatient Coordinator, who had collaborated with Wenda on how to keep Hubicki progressing.

At home, Hubicki’s work had just begun. For the next six weeks he met with Orren three days a week. On his “days off,” he went through his physical therapy routine at home.



GET A LEG UP ON RECOVERY

Evangelical Community Hospital's Joint Replacement team believes that "rehab" begins two months prior to the procedure. In other words, caring for patients starts the minute a surgery date goes on the calendar.

Helping patients get a leg up on recovery is critical, says Thomas Orren, physical therapist and Physical Rehabilitation Services Outpatient Coordinator.

For Mike Hubicki, who underwent a double knee replacement in February 2017, pre-surgery physical therapist Gary Kremser put together a schedule of exercises to strengthen his quad and hamstring muscles, which would help Hubicki regain his range of motion post-surgery.

According to Hubicki, "The pre-surgery exercises helped my recovery go a lot faster. It also helped me get used to a rehab routine—so there wasn't as much to learn after surgery."

"Physical therapy was tough," Hubicki admits. "But Tom prepared me. He explained that my surgery went very well, but regaining strength in my knees, balance, and mobility was up to me. Tom assured me that he'd never push me too far too fast, which made me feel comfortable, so I worked as hard as I could."

CENTER OF ATTENTION

In retrospect, Hubicki credits a large part of his speedy recovery to the emphasis on individualized patient care.

"There's no cookbook recipe for great results," Orren emphasizes. "We watch how every patient responds to rehab and then we make adjustments. For example, I might see that someone's knee is more swollen than I'd like, or a patient reports feeling sharp pain. That's the body's way of saying we need to pull back."

Hubicki is quick to note that the one-on-one attention continues even after physical therapy ends. Has he ever called in a question? "No. But it makes me feel good to know that I can if I need to," Hubicki says.

RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

A critical part of inpatient rehabilitation in the joint replacement program is communication among fellow patients. "We work with patients one-on-one, but we also have group classes. That helps us get a little healthy competition going," Orren says. "Watching someone like Mike, who did so well, tends to motivate patients—inspires them to work harder and push through mild discomfort."

On the subject of competition, Hubicki does have one small "issue." "In terms of my health, I'm at the top of my game," he says. "But the surgery didn't do much for my golf score."



Mike Hubicki credits a large part of his speedy recovery and quick return to the golf course to Evangelical's emphasis on individualized patient care.