

After speaking to Frank Femino, MD, Medical Director of Orthopedics at Clara Maass Medical Center (CMMC) and Lillian Gripp, his knee replacement patient, you might believe that the two of them were in cahoots.

And you'd be correct. "The word 'doctor' comes from the Latin word for 'teacher,' and half of what I do is teach," says Dr. Femino. "I tell my patients that this is a team effort, my part and their part—and I need them to embrace the procedure and do their part for it to be a success."

As the Baby Boomers reach their 60s and 70s, joint replacement surgeries are surging. Each year, more than 700,000 people like Lillian undergo this procedure to relieve chronic joint pain and to stay active and independent.

A PAIN IN THE KNEE

Lillian, 74, a retired executive assistant, was always active. Unfortunately, she fell while taking her daily two-mile walk with friends. "My knee needed eight stitches and was never the same after that," she says. "Dr. Femino was recommended to me by a friend. An X-ray showed osteoarthritis, and he suggested we try physical therapy and cortisone injections."

"I like to begin with less invasive methods first," says Dr. Femino. "Lifestyle changes, such as weight loss, along with physical therapy, can allow some patients to live with their knee arthritis and pain."

After several years of this protocol, Lillian's knee became so painful that she had difficulty taking walks and driving. A second X-ray revealed that she had no

cartilage left in her knee, a condition sometimes referred to as "bone on bone." "That's when I decided to bite the bullet and have the knee replacement surgery," she says.

Lillian eagerly prepared for her



FRANK FEMINO, MD



procedure by following Dr. Femino's advice: "The hospital's orthopedic navigator and team members showed me a film about exactly what would happen during the operation and gave me a binder with information about every facet of the procedure," she says. "Most important, they provided me with exercises to begin doing before the surgery to strengthen my leg, and I did them religiously."

"Lillian had a lot of arthritis and pain," says Dr. Femino, "but what set her apart was her positive attitude. We worked very well together."

CUSTOMIZED CARE

Joint replacement surgery has improved significantly over the years, with new materials extending the lifespan of implants. Dr. Femino has refined his own technique so that it's less invasive, which minimizes blood loss and decreases pain. He has also designed and modified the precision surgical instrumentation he uses.

"Both the art and science of orthopedics come into play in how surgery is performed," he says. "Implants are now well-engineered and available in many sizes. This allows for customization according to the patient's anatomy. I premeasure and during surgery I measure again. I find that this method results in a much better fit for the patient."

Lillian was impressed with Dr. Femino and with CMMC's Joint and Spine Institute in its dedicated area within the hospital. The center's comprehensive treatment plan involves patients in every step of the program and stresses their central role in promoting a successful recovery.

"The Joint and Spine Institute had such kind, helpful staff—from the environmental and food service workers to the nurses, who were so patient and friendly in answering my questions," Lillian says.

Total knee replacement patients at CMMC typically enjoy rapid recoveries, walking the day of surgery and driving in two to four weeks. Lillian was no exception. "The surgery went smoothly and that same day, the physical therapist got me up and had me do 30 side steps," she says. "The next day, he walked me around the floor and people were cheering me on."

"Because I'd done the exercises, my recuperation was rapid. I was only in the hospital two days. Dr. Femino was just wonderful—down-to-earth, available for questions. His patients just love him, and now that I'm one of them, I see why."

"I take great pleasure in making people healthy and happy—especially older patients who want to be active again and maintain their independence," says Dr. Femino. "When they tell me that I've given them their life back, it's so fulfilling."

Elective surgeries are now available, and we've taken every step necessary to ensure the safety of our patients. To learn more about orthopedic and joint replacement services at Clara Maass Medical Center, call **888.724.7123** or visit **www.rwjbh.org/ortho**.

