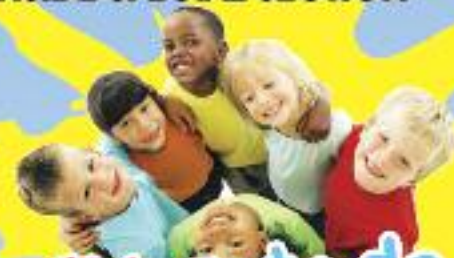


SPOTLIGHT

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INSIDE SPECIAL SECTION



Things to do
this Summer

George J. Martin, M.D.
Neurological Surgery



Dr. George Martin: *Your spine's best friend*

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PHOTO BY RICKY AVINER/CARTASCO



Foundation Surgical Hospital of El Paso

Welcome to Foundation Surgical Hospital of El Paso!

Outstanding Patient Care Serving the Far West Texas El Paso Area

Foundation Surgical Hospital of El Paso is a general acute care hospital that is locally owned and operated. Our mission is to improve the quality of health for the people of our community through physician guided, high quality, cost effective, personalized healthcare using advanced medical practices and modern technology delivered in a caring and compassionate atmosphere.

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FSHEP has a full service surgical department, providing inpatient and outpatient surgery. Private Pre-op rooms provide privacy and confidentiality and are for the patient and family member to wait until surgery. There is a private consultation room for the family members to meet with the surgeon after surgery.



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- Outpatient Physical Therapy
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- Wound Care and Hyperbaric Oxygen
- 24 Hour Emergency Room



Dr. George Martin: *Your spine's best friend*

Photos and story by
Ricky Jimenez Carrasco

There are few medical ailments that give people as much apprehension as anything that has to do with the spine and brain. If one of your organs is malfunctioning, it is not unheard of to replace a kidney or lung. If one of your limbs has been severely damaged, it is possible to amputate it and replace it with some kind of prosthetic. But even as children, we are told to protect our spine because any damage to it could be potentially devastating and permanent. The medical professionals that work on those two areas are then equally as highly regarded by the community. In El Paso, it is taken for granted that we have to travel to big centers like Dallas and Phoenix to speak to anyone with the expertise necessary to do these kinds of procedures. Fortunately, Dr. George Martin calls El Paso home.

Seven years ago, Dr. Martin brought his now 20 years of experience and education to the Sun City to establish his world-class spinal and neurosurgery practice. His practice deals with the brain and spine and any injuries to that area including tumors and blood vessel abnormalities. The majority of his practice deals with spine surgery, neck and lower lumbar back procedures. He also is one of the area's most experienced surgeons familiar with the Mazor Renaissance Robotics Spinal System. To date, he has performed more than 300 cases with the robotics system that allows him to place spinal screws with the accuracy of the width of a human hair. Better precision with his medical tools means less possibility of accidental injury, a better outcome, and a quicker recovery.

Dr. Martin's story begins early, when as a high school student, he spent time volunteering in a children's hospital. "I saw how the kids struggled and how the doctors and nurses made them feel better. It became something that I wanted to do." He then did his medical training at the University of Florida and neurosurgery training at Emory Hospital in Atlanta, followed by a spine fellowship at the University of South Florida. After more than a decade in private practice in Florida, he moved his practice and family to El Paso.

As a spinal surgeon, he is used to the stories of how people get injured and are given little or no hope for recovery. That affects the patients' attitudes before they ever come into his office. "Everyone comes in with a story that their friend or family member had spinal surgery in the past and were then paralyzed. We then reflect on how things have changed. In 2015, we have the tech-



Nurse Practitioner Alvaro Gonzalez and Dr. George Martin.

nology that changes the playing field. We have special scans and we have the FDA's only approved robot for spine surgery here in El Paso that significantly improves the safety factor for surgeries. That, coupled with my 20 years of experience, also improves the safety of the surgery and the patient's chances for recovery."

In the past, Dr. Martin admits that surgeons were a little more in the dark about knowing exactly where and how to place the screws. "We used to just use an X-ray machine and then look with our

own eyes and try to match what we were doing with those X-rays. It takes years of training and performing the procedures again and again in order to get things correct and even then, you're dealing with the accuracy of the human eye and hand when placing the necessary screws. The screw misplacement rate was anywhere from 2% to 15%. Now, we have things down to 99.7% accuracy with the Mazor robot that is available at Foundation Surgical Hospital."

Continues on next page

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Dr. George Martin...

Continued from page 3

More than even the precision of today's technology is still the human factor of experience. When asked about a success story for his practice in El Paso, Dr. Martin remarks that it's hard to pick just one, but he related one from when he had just started here, before the robotics system had even been introduced. "There was a lady who came into my office in a wheelchair and she hadn't walked in two years despite seeing various doctors who had told her she'd never walk again because of a tumor that was pressing on her spinal cord. I told her that I didn't offer any guarantees, but I thought I could go in and remove the whole tumor. I did the surgery, which went well. After a month, she returned still in her wheelchair, but also still in therapy, which I told her to continue. Five months later, she walked into my office." Dr. Martin says that surgery is important, but equally important is the patient, their attitude, and the work they put into recovery and therapy.

A number of different factors make a person an eligible candidate for surgery, which even with today's new safety standards, is a last resort.

Other treatments have to come in place before surgery is deemed necessary for many patients and further physical therapy is usually necessary after the surgery for further recovery. "Our typical patients have spinal stenosis. They come into the office complaining about pain, numbness, or weakness to their back or legs. The majority of our patients that come here don't need surgery because they can get better with medications and physical therapy."

The next step after that is to see if those medications and therapies are working. If not, or if there are extenuating conditions, then it may be time to move on from the conservative treatments. "If the numbness, pain, or weakness do not improve, then we talk about surgery. We explain the surgery, have them obtain a CT scan which we input into the robotics system, and then I plan exactly where the screws will be placed in a 3-D model. They'll spend one or two nights in the hospital and then are sent home to heal."

The office is very proud of the fact that Dr. Martin is the only local neurosurgeon who has had fellowship training and is board certified for his specialty. There are two different types of spine



surgeons: orthopedic, which deals with the body's bones, and neuro, that deals with the body's nerves, which is Dr. Martin's specialty. "There's one board of neurosurgery in the US and they only certify 100 people a year. I'm the only one in El Paso with that certification and a spine fellowship."

The practice is also very proud that they are located here in El Paso and can serve this community. "We're here and we're not going anywhere. This is where I've decided to stay until I retire. The practice is continuing to grow. I have a mid-level provider, a nurse practitioner. We're seeing more patients than we were even just a few years ago."

Dr. Martin offers free seminars periodically throughout the year in case a potential patient wants to learn more about the kind of services and surgeries he can perform. For more information: call his office at the Southwest NeuroSpine Institute at 915-590-2225, click on their website: www.swnsi.com, or follow them on Facebook under Southwest NeuroSpine Institute.



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