

Cape Cod Rehabilitation

Orthopedic and Sports Physical Therapy

Director, Joseph P. Carroll, PT MS SCS



As Seen In

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Golf and Hip Surgery

One Physicians Example of Success

By Joseph P. Carroll, PT, MS, SCS

One common attribute shared among avid athletes is a fear of not being able to participate in, or return to, their favorite sport as a result of injury. As we know, physical injury can arrive via trauma, such as a broken wrist from a fall, or simply from wear and tear on the body over an extended period of time. Either way, injury minimally results in a suspension of play during the healing and rehabilitation process. So what can be done to maximize rehabilitation and the chance of quickly returning to your favorite sport? We had the opportunity to ask that very question to Dr. James Cavanaugh, an Allergy Specialist located in Hyannis. As an avid golfer and prior patient at Cape Cod Rehabilitation, Dr. Cavanaugh chronicled with us the several hip surgeries he has experienced over the last twenty years.

There is no getting around the fact that internal and external hip rotation is a key element of the golf swing. During the golf swing the precise timing of weight transfer while rotating the hips requires both strength and balance. While golf is commonly referred

to as a game which can be played for life, unfortunately for Dr. Cavanaugh, wear and tear conspired to require multiple trips to the surgeon to correct his ailing hips. "I had my hips resurfaced when I was in my late 40's, and then I had both hips replaced in the mid



Hyannis based Allergist, Dr. James Cavanaugh

1980's. Recently I had one hip redone because it wore out. So I've been to the operating room a few times!" he chuckled. All kidding aside, Dr. Cavanaugh faced major surgical intervention which required substantial post surgery rehabilitation, a process which unfortunately can have varied outcomes depending on the doctor, the patient and the physical therapist.

According to Dr. Cavanaugh, "Before I had the hips replaced my surgeon explained to me that the prosthesis itself is held in place by a group of muscles, and if you don't keep the muscles strong you are going to have a tough time with rehabilitation and a tough time with the recovery that you anticipate."

Because of that advice, Dr. Cavanaugh swam every day prior to his surgery in an effort to strengthen the surrounding hip muscles.

Fortunately for Dr. Cavanaugh, his Boston based orthopedic surgeon insisted he utilize physical therapy as part of his rehabilitation. Because he lives and works on the Cape, his surgeon referred him to Cape Cod Rehabilitation. This is the point where our practice became involved in Dr. Cavanaugh's recovery. It was quickly evident that Dr. Cavanaugh had an excellent opportunity for complete recovery for two reasons. First, he demonstrated a serious commitment to his physical therapy and rehabilitation, and

second, he had a pool at his home which he could utilize as part of his aquatic therapy program. As with our other patients, in addition to land based exercises, I prescribed a series of specific aquatic exercises to aid in his rehabilitation. Beginning in the deep end of the pool the exercises are done in the vertical position wearing a buoyancy vest. Emphasis is on range of motion. The assistance of the water allows greater ease of motion with less pain. Next I transitioned him to the shallow end of the pool to introduce weight bearing exercises to help in the transition to land. Dr. Cavanaugh recognized the benefits of the aquatic environment and mentioned, "I used one of the aquatic flotation vests which allowed me to gradually walk and perform knee lifts and other movements in the

water that were part of an ongoing program which was absolutely beneficial."

Instead of performing his prescribed exercises a few times a week, the doctor was able to execute his routine on a daily basis, a factor which made a significant impact on his recovery. As a physical therapist, I witness every day the rapid rehabilitation progress of patients that are dedicated to their prescribed exercises. It's easy to see the patients that are not committed to their physical therapy, they simply progress at a much slower pace.



Following hip surgery, Dr. Cavanaugh is able to completely turn through his golf swing.

With one of the motivations being able to return to the game of golf, Dr. Cavanaugh was back swinging the golf club in a relatively short period of time considering the extensive nature of hip replacement surgery. The strength requirements for the golf swing are far more complex than most consider. In addition to numerous

shoulder, arm and wrist movements, the foundation and power of the golf swing is centered in Multifidus and Transverse Abdominus muscles. In a symphony of movement, the core also relies on the lower extremity strength of the Quads, Hamstrings, as well as Hip Abductors and Rotator muscles to help complete the swing. When considering this collection of body movements, total hip replacement surgery is not insignificant.

When asked about his rehabilitation expectations and his progress he commented, "I expected to go there and have an exercise program that would gradually increase. I worked hard, I did the exercises and I stayed with it. I had a good schedule of rehabilitation and it worked for me. I felt I moved along quickly with my rehabilitation program, I was there for probably 3 months. As soon as my rehabilitation program was over I went back to see my surgeon who gave me the OK to go back to swinging a golf club."

An important factor of the success of Dr. Cavanaugh's hip replacement surgery is his ongoing exercise regime. Staying active and

continuing with his strength and conditioning program has allowed him to maintain his active lifestyle and remain injury free. In fact, today you would never know Dr. Cavanaugh

had hip replacement surgery. His golf swing is smooth and powerful and he is able to complete his hip turn to finish his swing. "The

only thing that has affected my game is age, it certainly hasn't been hip surgery." He described further, "I considered myself to have reasonable flexibility so actually the surgery improved my ability to turn." Dr. Cavanaugh's comments on age reflect the reality for elder golfers. Common limitations



Practice makes perfect for Dr. Cavanaugh at his home course on Cape Cod.

of the golf swing creep into the game of elder golfer in terms of loss of range of motion and strength in the lower extremities and trunk. In addition to balance and cardiovascular concerns, osteoporosis also places limitations on the elder golfer.

Interestingly enough, the hip replacement experience he went through confirmed the value of physical activity and physical therapy. As a result, Dr. Cavanaugh noted a new devotion in his medical practice to the idea of speaking to his patients about the benefits of exercise. He concluded our discussion by saying, "There is a long list of diseases such as diabetes, arthritis, cardiovascular disease and so on, that impair the function of middle age people who could really stand rehabilitative

services. I think that my experience with hip replacement surgery has really guided me towards insisting upon a lot of this as part of my practice of medicine. There is something else that I realized as well. There are an awful lot of physicians who either tell their post hip surgery patients that they don't want them to hurt anything, therefore shy away from exercise, or they never talk about it in the first place. I would consider that rehabilitative services are almost as important as the surgery itself."

Joe Carroll is a physical therapist and owner of Cape Cod Rehabilitation. He is certified as a master instructor in the Burdenko method and can be reached at jcarroll@cape.com

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