

HEALTH *Link*

SURGICAL STRIDES

BRINGING PARALYZED LIMBS BACK TO LIFE

Reconstructive surgeons work miracles with a new nerve transplant procedure

A 22-year-old New Jersey man has his mom's nerves.

He didn't inherit them, and it's not just a figure of speech. In an operation this January at Monmouth Medical Center, the man, whose arm had been paralyzed in a motorcycle accident, literally had nerves from a living donor—his mother—surgically transplanted into his arm, along with nerves from his own leg.

The surgeon in charge was Andrew Elkwood, M.D., Monmouth's chief of plastic surgery, and his name may be familiar if you watch TV. He and his colleagues have had a lot of exposure lately, because they're helping to advance the frontiers of plastic surgery in ways unimagined just a few years ago. With an innovative new nerve transplant procedure, these surgeons restore mobility to paralyzed limbs.

"Nerve transplants have shown incredible promise in helping once-paralyzed patients surpass previous expectations for recovery," says Dr. Elkwood, who has performed dozens of advanced reconstructive surgical procedures at Monmouth.

In May 2004, Dr. Elkwood did a father-daughter living-donor nerve transplant, which brought back full mobility in the young patient's once-paralyzed arm. He used the same procedure in June 2004 to restore function in another patient's arm, paralyzed in a car accident nine months earlier. In March 2003, using



Using a new nerve transplant procedure, surgeon Andrew Elkwood, M.D., (left) can restore function to paralyzed limbs.

nerves from a cadaver, Dr. Elkwood did the East Coast's first nerve transplant on a person with gunshot wounds in the arm and leg. The patient has since regained nearly full use of these limbs.

The doctor explains that, like organ-transplant patients, individuals who receive nerve transplants must rely on a regimen of immunosuppressive medications to prevent the rejection of the transplanted tissue.

Dr. Elkwood also performs post-bariatric

body contouring, another new plastic surgery technique. People who undergo gastric bypass (bariatric) surgery often have sagging skin after their dramatic weight loss, which poses a risk of rashes and infection. Body contouring surgery, done over several visits, removes and tightens loose skin to fit slimmer bodies. Incisions are placed so as to minimize the appearance of scars.

The Oprah Winfrey Show has been following one of Dr. Elkwood's patients, Stacey Halprin, who has lost more than 300 pounds through bariatric surgery and is now undergoing body contouring surgeries. Halprin was last seen on the show in May, and an update on her—including footage of surgery shot at the hospital in August—will air in November.

Dr. Elkwood has also been featured in news programs on CNN, CBS, ABC and Fox, and on the Learning and Discovery channels. He has offices in Shrewsbury and Manhattan. *ell*



To learn more about Dr. Elkwood and plastic surgery services available at Monmouth Medical Center, please call 888-SBHS-123.