

# Procedure **Blocks Pain** from Knee Surgery



**Patient Michael Andrae with orthopedic surgeon and former student, Tom Fessler, MD.**

**A**s a young student at Erie's Cathedral Preparatory School back in the early '70s, Tom Fessler, MD, learned a lot about biology from then teacher Michael Andrae. Late last year, Andrae learned from Dr. Fessler—now a Saint Vincent orthopedic surgeon—something he never knew. He could have a knee replacement with virtually no pain.

Dr. Fessler performed a total knee replacement on each knee of his former teacher in November 2006. Prior to the surgery, anesthesiologist, Edward Podufal, DO, utilized a technique called a femoral nerve block. He placed a small catheter in Andrae's groin area next to the femoral nerve prior to surgery, administering anesthesia through the catheter to the nerve to decrease pain both prior to surgery and during the 48 hours that followed.

Because of the nerve block, Andrae, 64, had no need for the pain medications—such as morphine—that are commonly used. This also enabled Andrae to begin postoperative physical therapy sooner.

“On a scale of zero to 10 with zero being pain free, my pain after the surgery was a zero. I couldn't believe how well it worked. I was in physical therapy the next morning and walking down the hall the next afternoon with no discomfort,” Andrae says.

Andrae reports the knee replacement has changed the quality of his life and that he looks forward to a return to bicycling and possibly running as soon as he's recovered. And for the books, Andrae believes Dr. Fessler—as well as Dr. Podufal and the anesthesia department, his Saint Vincent nurses and physical therapists—deserve good grades for the care they've provided.

“They all get straight A's,” he says.

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