

The Laparoscopic Treatment of Chronic Colon and Small Bowel Obstruction.



Karen Winklers "New Lease on Life"

My GI system ceased to function properly in April 2006, after the removal of a football sized, benign tumor from my abdomen. It was in the back of my organs so the abdominal incision went very deep. I was cut from sternum to pelvis and from my bellybutton to my back. In the process of removing the "monster," as I called it. I also lost my left kidney and adrenal gland. Worst of all, I lost my ability to enjoy food, had no appetite, and was sick with IBS and constipation. That tumor may have been benign, but it was wicked beyond its monstrous size for years to follow.

Only 3 months after its removal, I was in the ER with severe abdominal pain - stabbing in the right upper side of my belly. They said I had "gastritis," to which I questioned the possibility, because the pain seemed so severe. No matter, they insisted it was "gastritis." They were wrong. Several months later, I was nauseated daily, which escalated to vomiting, which put me back in the hospital. Again, they released me thinking this time I had "food poisoning." Within the week, I was back in the ER, and by the eighth day, they found I had a "remarkable" bowel obstruction that required surgery.

To my dismay, I had to undergo another operation that was supposed to be laparoscopic, but instead, wound up leaving me with a four inch incision along my previous scars. The braid-like rope of adhesions was removed from strangling my small intestine, but eventually left me in the hospital for 13 days. Recovery was nothing short of a nightmare and my system never did fully recover.

Shortly after this, my discomfort increased and I began to have spasms in my abdomen that would drop me to the floor like a swatted fly. In due time, my stomach & small bowel started acting up as well. I pleaded that these excruciating pains were

not normal and that something was definitely wrong only I was told there nothing they could do.

I had endoscopies, CT scans, gall bladder imaging, tests for Celiac disease and a plethora of drugs to "help" ease the spasms. All tests were negative, and the drugs didn't work. I changed my diet to exclude gluten, to increase fiber, to consume more roughage, etc, you name it, I did it, but all to no avail. Nothing helped.

As time went by, I lost the ability to have a bowel movement and the spasms worsened. The only way to eliminate was to give myself an enema, but it didn't always work. Again, I pursued the doctor's with dogged determination because my life was becoming so problematic.

After six months of another round of tests and a rather obscure diagnosis, I was sent "packing," if you will. I was told I had some atrophy of the abdominal muscles and slow motility of digestion, and that there wasn't anything to be "fixed."

My constant pain and difficulties left me depressed. I complied with everything I was told, yet my condition intensified. It was then that I found Dr. Frantzides; my therapist, Dr. Amy Robinson, knew of him and advised I contact him right away. I called his office and

explained my plight and they got me in to see him that week. I knew in my heart that this wonderful man was going to ease my distress.

Upon first examining me, he noticed a hernia in my abdomen near the colon. This was the first problem. He also studied my test results with great scrutiny and decided that a laparoscopic exploration would be needed, as he could then fix the hernia and address the other issues I described. Though adhesions don't necessarily show up on scans, my description of symptoms told him there were other factors at play, and using modern laparoscopes would help him correct them if possible. He sat with my husband and I and explained in meticulous detail how the process of laparoscopic surgery works; and how it ultimately lessens the chances of acquiring more scar tissue that an otherwise conventional surgical incision would create. I was thrilled that my voice was being heard, that someone was finally going to do something about this. We were optimistic, and our faith in medicine, and in doctor's especially, was restored.

Having gone to the Minimally Invasive Surgical Unit at St. Francis Hospital in Evanston, IL, Dr. Frantzides and his "Assistant" Dr. Welle, worked laboriously on my entangled bowels,

multiple hernias, and removal of scar tissue. The condition inside my abdomen even took Dr. Frantzides by surprise. He explained that based on the operative findings every pain and complaint I had was absolutely justified, and that it was his belief that I was going to feel better.

I had surgery on Thursday and went home the next day. One of the most amazing things that happened right away, was that I had a bowel movement two days after surgery all by myself! I hadn't been able to do this in years, and now I went as nature intended! It was a miracle come true.

Both doctor's were very encouraging and begged for me to hang in there, for the first few weeks were going to be difficult, but they kept reminding me that I would get better, little by little, and that it was already evident by the fact that I was having bowel

movements. I must also add, that in my darkened days of pain, my spirit had also fallen into the depths of despair. Thus I had the good fortune to meet this outstanding and humble man who literally changed my life, not just physically, but mentally as well. He gave me joy and hope. He gave my husband and entire family a renewed hope for a future WITH me, where the sun has been shining so beautifully. That, is nothing short of a miracle.

I came, he listened, and in the end, the Good Doctor gave back my life. Life is good once more~

Karen Winkler
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