

Laparoscopic Repair of Multiple Hernias

“The Swiss Cheese Abdomen”

The “Swiss Cheese Abdomen” describes my abdomen. This is the term commonly used by physicians to describe an abdomen with many weak areas. It must be stressed that my hernia repairs were complicated due to the scarring and the location from previous incisions. Also, I had two hernias: an inguinal hernia and a lateral hernia. In addition, a subcutaneous cyst was found.

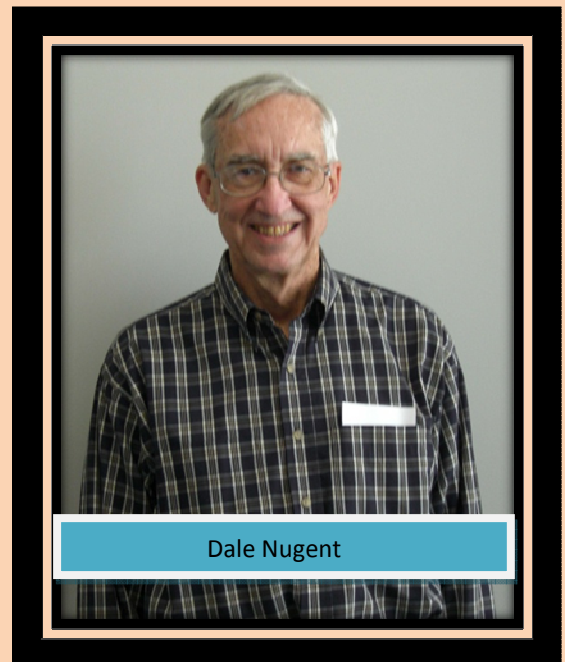
I am Dale Nugent a 61 year-old male with a history of Crohn’s Disease. Like most people, I consider surgery the intervention of last resort. I believe that if I can avoid someone cutting on me, the better I will be. With Crohn’s Disease, the treatment objective of the clinician and surgeon for this chronic condition is to preserve as much of the intestine as possible.

I’ve had five surgeries of the small intestine. The first surgery in 1974 at Carle Foundation Hospital in Urbana, Illinois was for ulcers, but resulted in a diagnosis of Crohn’s Disease. After surgery, I was treated with (TPN) Total Parenteral Nutrition for 25 days in the hospital. In 1983 I was admitted to St. James Hospital in Chicago Heights, Illinois and again treated with (TPN). I was in the hospital for 25 days. After my treatment I was put on steroids. In 1987 my condition worsened, and I was referred to Dr. Stephen Hanauer, a gastroenterologist, at the University of Chicago.

Dr. Hanauer is a wonderful doctor and my friend. Due to the many strictures of the small intestine, surgery was necessary. The surgeon used an open wound technique cutting vertically on my abdomen to allow access to the strictures. Approximately three feet of my small bowel was removed. I stayed in the hospital for ten days and recovery took 8-10 weeks. After surgery I entered a trial drug treatment for Crohn’s. Unfortunately, this drug was ineffective in treating my disease.

In 1991 I underwent a series of small bowel x-rays. I remember the radiologist saying to me, you must be in pain most of the time. I had pain anytime I ate or drank. At this time Dr. Hanauer referred me to an excellent surgeon, Dr. Fabrizio Michelassi, at the University of Chicago. Dr. Michelassi used the same open wound technique this time cutting horizontally on my abdomen. He removed all of the diseased areas, approximately five feet. I was disease free! However, Dr. Michelassi was concerned that every four years I would need surgery. Dr. Michelassi said that I could not keep going like this.

My health improved using a drug treatment. But after six years, I began to experience pain after eating. The pain came from a stricture near the area of my last resection.



Dale Nugent

My fourth surgery was in 1997. Dr. Michelassi used the previous horizontal incision to enter my abdomen. Dr. Michelassi used a technique called stricturoplasty in which my small intestine was widened and connected to my large intestine. Some disease was left at the connection site. For reasons not completely understood, the disease has not spread beyond the site of the surgery. I spent ten days recovering in the hospital. I was treated with Imuran for several years, and I am very happy to say I have been in good health since 1997.

Due to the many abdominal surgeries, it is common to develop hernias. Because of a large inguinal hernia, I asked Dr. Hanauer to refer me to a surgeon. He recommended Dr. Constantine Frantzides. I researched Dr. Frantzides and found that he is a pioneer in the use of laparoscopy. He has patented surgical instruments and trains other surgeons in laparoscopic techniques. He has written numerous books and articles on the topic of laparoscopic procedures.

In addition to Dr. Frantzides gifts as a surgeon, he is patient, personable, humorous and an excellent listener. He immediately makes the patient feel comfortable and confident. He educates his patient with written materials, a computer presentation and a verbal explanation. He encourages questions and answers with thorough responses. Even though Dr. Frantzides has answered the same questions hundreds of times, he responds enthusiastically to every query. Dr. Frantzides has the fire and the passion for his calling.

Immediately I had confidence in laparoscopic hernia repair because Dr. Hanauer referred me to Dr. Frantzides and because of the manner in which Dr. Frantzides treated me. My surgery was done on May 5th 2010 and Dr. Frantzides repaired multiple incisional hernias (Swiss Cheese Abdomen) and my groin hernia laparoscopically with the use of mesh. Because of the previous surgeries I had he encountered a lot of adhesions (scar tissue) but because of his skills the operation was completed laparoscopically.

What a difference comparing traditional open-wound surgery with laparoscopic surgery! I was walking comfortably the evening following surgery. While in the hospital, I started on a soft diet. I spent one day in the hospital. When I went home, I soon resumed a normal diet and pain was completely managed with Darvocet every six hours. I saw Dr. Frantzides one week after the procedure. Dr. Frantzides closely monitors me and is available 24/7. I am doing great, and I am very pleased with the results of my complex procedure. As you have read, I have lots of experience with clinicians, treatments, surgeons and procedures. My wife and I are extremely happy with the laparoscopic surgery performed by Dr. Frantzides. If you are a candidate for surgery, I encourage you to do your homework and checkout laparoscopy. Any outcome will depend on the experience and expertise of the surgeon. I hope my story is helpful to you and good luck!