

Coming Home for Skull Base Repair

When Lynn Goebel, 65, flew from California to visit family in Atlantic Highlands in September 2008, she thought it would be a quick trip. Never did she imagine she'd end up staying for three months.



This New Jersey native is back to California dreaming, thanks to the specialized expertise of a Jersey Shore surgeon. Lynn Goebel's strokelike symptoms actually signaled a defect at the base of her skull.

Shortly before her trip, Lynn had been in a car accident, but she seemed to recover without complications. She made the cross-country trip to visit her family, but once in New Jersey, she began to experience gradual physical and mental changes and felt tired and weak. When she eventually needed help even to get up from a sofa, her family became alarmed.

They took her to the emergency department at Riverview Medical Center where she had a CT scan. "My sister was worried I might be having a stroke," Lynn recalls, "but I assumed I'd be right home."

The CT scan, however, revealed a large amount of air near her brain, at the base of her skull. This type of problem, known as a skull base defect, can compress the brain and impair cognitive and motor function.

THE SEARCH FOR TREATMENT

After being released from Riverview, Lynn went to New York City to consult with skull base specialists. During her consultations, she was examined by Anthony Sparano, M.D., a skull base, facial plastic, and reconstructive surgeon affiliated with Jersey Shore University Medical Center.

"Skull base defects are often caused by trauma or tumors or can

occasionally occur spontaneously," Dr. Sparano explains. "Lynn had a clear defect with a communication between her nasal and cranial cavities. She had a dangerous amount of air compressing her brain and required urgent intervention."

Lynn was impressed with Dr. Sparano's credentials, but the deciding factor in selecting him was his rapport. "He's the best doctor I've ever had," she says. "He listened well and took the time to answer every question. It was the reason I chose him over the surgeons in New York."

A MINIMALLY INVASIVE SOLUTION

Lynn had surgery in November 2008. Dr. Sparano removed a segment of bone from the nose and from above the eyes, allowing him and the operative team clear access to the problem area.

"This subcranial approach is sometimes the best minimally invasive approach for certain tumors or defects," says Dr. Sparano. "It generally allows for a strong reconstruction and quick recovery, without cosmetic effects."

Returning back to her home in Lawndale, Calif., took some time, but she made it there a few months later. Since then, Lynn is back to enjoying her retirement with backyard barbecues, movies, and light exercise. ■

— *Ryan Younger*

ABOUT *the* DOCTOR



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Skull Base Expertise Rarely Seen in the Region

Anthony Sparano, M.D., and a team of neurosurgeons at Jersey Shore University Medical Center have established one of the few skull base programs in the region. The program is equipped to manage conditions including complicated sinus disease, skull base trauma, and benign or malignant tumors of the sinonasal cavity, skull base, pituitary, or brain.

The program features the most cutting-edge technology and techniques, including 3-D image guidance endoscopic approaches through the nose and other minimally invasive open approaches.

To learn more, call 732-280-7855.