

In Step

by Dr. Arthur Lukoff

Today I would like to discuss actual patient problems that I actually see and treat in my office. Of course in this age of medical privacy I will make up initials of the patient so that no privileged information is disclosed.


DD is an 83-year-old female patient whom I had seen previously when her husband had a problem with foot ulcers due to poor circulation. We had treated the ulcers with some new wound care products to remove any dead tissue and stimulate the ulcers to heal. He also was referred to a Vascular Physician and eventually underwent a lower extremity bypass procedure to improve the circulation in his leg and foot. After a short period, his ulcers healed and he was back on his feet.

DD was not back in the office with her warm smiling disposition. Now she was going to be a patient. She had a complaint of pain on the inside of her right foot just below and down from her ankle. When we tried to move her foot from left to right, I could feel resistance. Her left foot moved easily. Something was different on the right foot.

X-rays showed that the joints on the inside were rubbing against each other and causing a muscle spasm in the foot. When we injected into the joint with Lidocaine and numbed the area the stiffness in the foot movement vanished. Clearly, the arthritis was causing inflammation and pain and the muscles went into spasm to prevent the foot from moving into the position that caused the pain.

We started her out in a soft foot mold to limit the motion and had her try it in a boot for 10 days. When she returned she reported that she had about 30 % improvement.

I then casted her foot and sent out the cast of her foot to a special laboratory which made a device called an AFO which stands for an Ankle Foot Orthosis. It is a custom arch support with a contour, which goes up on each side of the ankle and stops just above the ankle. DD wore the AFO and sneakers and got about 90% relief.

I still see her in my office two or three times a year and she is still going strong, getting around and visiting all her grandchildren. It is very satisfying allowing her to remain pain free and independent. 

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