

US surgeon a smooth operator

by Tony Bosworth

A WORLD-class US orthopaedic surgeon jetted in last week to work with one of our surgeons doing revolutionary hip replacement surgery at Hawkesbury Hospital.

Dr Stefan Kreuzer from Texas was here to mentor Hawkesbury Hospital orthopaedic surgeon Dr Michael Stening who has been carrying out the procedure successfully on patients in the Hawkesbury and is the only doctor in western Sydney to carry out this operation.

Hawkesbury Hospital is the only hospital Dr Kreuzer is visiting while he's in Australia, but surgeons from Adelaide and Noosa came in to observe the operation at Hawkesbury as well.

The radically different hip replacement procedure sees patients back on their feet in about half the time of standard hip replacement operations.

"It's a very different anatomical approach," Dr Kreuzer said. The first anterior hip replacement procedure was performed by another surgeon in Paris, but Dr Kreuzer has been refining it using recent advances in equipment.

"The anterior hip procedure is completely different from the usual hip replacement because usually the hip is accessed from behind, which involves cutting through major muscles which are involved with movements such as standing and walking," Dr Kreuzer said.

The anterior approach means going through from the front, which avoids cutting through those major muscles and so needs less recovery time, and our own Dr Stening said local doctors have been delighted.

"GPs have been ringing me, amazed at the post-op recovery," Dr Stening told the *Gazette*.

After the anterior procedure patients normally spend one to two days in hospital compared with five days after the more orthodox procedure. There's also far less pain, with usually only paracetamol required after the operation.

There's better recuperation time too, with almost no physical therapy or rehabilitation required compared with weeks of rehabilitation with the more traditional posterior approach.

There's also less need for walking aids, with 80 per cent of anterior patients not even needing a cane or walking frame after the first two weeks, compared to six weeks if the more orthodox procedure is used.

"We are trying out a new traction table today, called the arch traction table," Dr Stening said before the operation on the patient from Marsden Park. "It's a good opportunity to develop the technique."

A traction table can be used for hip



In the spotlight: Texan surgeon Dr Stefan Kreuzer and Dr Michael Stening at Hawkesbury Hospital. Photos: Kylie Pitt



Dr Kreuzer has done 2000 hips.



Hammer time: Dr Michael Stening.



Other surgeons came to observe Dr Kreuzer's anterior hip technique.



The replacements: many spare parts are needed for different patient sizes.



replacement or as a full trauma table. But it's not just the table that has improved with hip operations.

Both doctors pointed out that today's replacement hips are far superior to the old models.

They are made of ceramic, stainless steel or polyethylene, materials that are much more reliable and longer-lasting than those inserted a couple of decades ago. "Going into surgery with proper equipment and training is the key," Dr Kreuzer said.

He said when he started doing the anterior replacements there were no experts to learn from that he could share knowledge with. But as Dr Kreuzer has carried out more than

2000 of the anterior hip replacements he now mentors other surgeons, "so they don't need to figure it out as they go".

The usual way of learning the procedure is to observe – as the Noosa and Adelaide surgeons were doing – and to assist with the procedure, then practice on cadavers before conducting the operation on patients, under supervision, until proficient.

Dr Kreuzer said the increase in popularity of the anterior method was mostly due to patient demand.

"Patients are very well educated, well informed," he said. "They speak to others who have undergone similar operations. They look at the

internet. The main reason for hip replacement is arthritis. What causes arthritis is not well understood, though what's called FAI, a structural anomaly in the body, is known to be a major contributor.

"Hips are being replaced at earlier ages which in part seems to be due to a reduced tolerance/acceptance of pain. Retirees expect to be active, less so in previous generations.

"War vets, for example, had other things worrying them."

And what did the good doctor think of Australia? "Australia's great!" he said. "I arrived and went for a run around the harbour and opera house. It's beautiful."



Teamwork is crucial in the surgery.

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With our contribution of \$3,000, along with their own fundraising efforts, the Hawkesbury Youth Development Pipe Band were able to purchase seven new kilts for the younger members.

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