Focusing on You: Minimally Invasive Spinal Surgery at UHealth

Outpatient Spinal Surgery Now Available

Dr. Michael Wang, chief of neurosurgery at UHealth Tower, the flagship hospital of the University of Miami Health System, discusses a minimally-invasive approach to spinal surgery he pioneered that is now available as an outpatient procedure.
TRANSCRIPTION

Pam Giganti:
Sandra Grant still struggles with the memory of the crippling back pain that made it almost impossible for her to get through the workday.

Sandra Grant:
It bothered me that my coworkers could see me in pain because of my posture, I just felt so embarrassed. I just felt at any moment that HR was going to come and say you're no longer needed.

Pam Giganti:
After pain management treatments failed to help, Sandra was referred to Dr. Michael Wang.

Dr. Michael Wang:
Sandra had a very complicated situation where she had a dislocation of her vertebrae, where the spine is actually slipped apart, and that causes a crippling pain of the back.

Sandra Grant:
I told Dr. Wayne, "I was tired, I'm in pain, and I needed help, and I was told that you were the best and I need the best because I'm afraid of this surgery."

Pam Giganti:
Dr. Wang is a pioneer of a minimally invasive outpatient approach to spinal surgery performed while patients are awake.
Dr. Michael Wang:
We wanted to do an operation that would minimize the amount of time she would stay in the hospital. But this particular technique requires us to use six different technologies, doing a lot of specialized things so that people can have a spinal surgery with yes, screws and rods, which people are afraid of in general, without having complete general anesthesia.

Pam Giganti:
Dr. Wang and his team started performing awake spinal surgeries in 2013, becoming a model for surgeons around the world who want to offer the cutting edge treatment option to their patients too.

Dr. Michael Wang:
In Florida we're still the only ones that are really doing this type of procedure in this way. And there are people coming to watch us do it, and I hope eventually we'll see more and more surgeons doing it.

Pam Giganti:
Thanks to this new outpatient approach Sandra left the hospital the same day as her surgery, and is now grateful to be able to resume life as she knew it.

Sandra Grant:
I know it's going to be good, my pain is gone. And to have that lingering pain for years, and now I don't have the pain at all, I feel like a new person.

Dr. Michael Wang:
That's why we use that technique because it's just a much less invasive approach. In the age of coronavirus I think it enhances safety. In her case that's exactly what you
needed.