

Potter County's Cuff Link

Dr. Bradley Giannotti's New Surgical Technique Shoulders Cole Memorial to the Head of the Line

By Dawn Bilder

While most people are blessed with limber limbs, Bradley Giannotti spent his growing-up years plagued with scoliosis of the spine and forced to wear a back brace in an effort to avoid corrective surgery. The brace didn't work, and, in his senior year of high school, he endured the surgery and the subsequent three months of bed rest and twelve months in a body cast. As he lay in bed incapacitated and in pain, thinking of all the things he wanted to be doing, all the fun he could be having with friends, a thought recycled itself over and over, one that he would have again as an adult and as a doctor: *There has to be a better way.*

If Giannotti's body had the first say in his life's development, he has certainly had the last word. At forty-five, he is an athletic, successful orthopedic surgeon and businessman. He attended George Washington University Medical School in Washington DC and spent his residency at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, Pennsylvania. This would have been plenty of training to get the job he wanted, but he decided to study for an additional year at the Los Angeles Orthopedic Institute. He is a member of the American College of Surgeons, a fellow of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, and an associate master instructor of the Arthroscopy Association of North America. For twelve years now he's been with Charles Cole Memorial Hospital's Champion Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in Coudersport, Pennsylvania. Yet, his demeanor is soft-spoken and humble.

Following his deep-rooted feelings about improving surgery techniques, he decided to revamp the traditional shoulder rotator cuff repair procedure in which surgeons must painstakingly tie sutures in knots to reattach the cuff. He also wanted to find a way to reattach the rotator cuff more securely for his patients. In 2003 he developed his own technique. With his light and boyish sense of humor, Giannotti reveals, "I got the idea when I was driving my garbage to the dump." He laughs and explains, "I live too far out in the country to get garbage service. The drive to the dump is a quiet time for me to think—a forty-minute round trip."

Despite its humble beginning, his idea grew to be a nationally recognized rotator cuff repair technique that improves the existing procedure in two ways. "First," says Giannotti, "it eliminates the need for the surgeon to tie knots because the device has a mechanism that captures the sutures and

ratchets them down. Second, it fixes, or reattaches, the cuff in two points, two areas, as opposed to the traditional one point." This makes the repair more evenly distributed, and, since the contact area is bigger, it's more secure. The new technique is also "less invasive, stronger, and takes less time on average. Everybody wins," says Giannotti.

Along with his older brother, Ron, who sold medical devices, and a bioengineer named Alex Piplani, Giannotti founded the company, Kfx Medical (which stands for knotless fixation) and patented the technique. Dr. Joe Tauro, an orthopedic surgeon in Tom's River, New Jersey, became a partner when he helped modify the procedure, making it more practical and easier to use.

Giannotti's technique has been used in over fifteen hundred patients since the FDA approved it three years ago. He tours the country teaching it to other surgeons and receives countless e-mails and phone calls from surgeons thanking him for making the rotator cuff surgery easier on them and on their patients. Giannotti wrote an article about the technique, which will soon appear in the prestigious medical journal *Techniques and Orthopedics*.

Seven weeks ago Tauro performed the procedure on an interesting patient who loves football—despite being in his forties and never having played the sport in high school or college—who tore his rotator cuff during a game with his friends: Giannotti himself. How did it go? "No surprises, I'm doing fine," Giannotti smiles.

The only personal items in his office are on the windowsill—a few photos of his twin daughters, Allison and Emily, and his youngest daughter, Natalie. They look to be about nine and six in the prints, but the photographs are old. They are now seventeen and fourteen. Perhaps Giannotti chooses to keep these older photos around because he preferred them at that age, but much more likely it's because they will always be his little girls. A miniature Everlast desktop punching bag sits by the photos. The last item is a pillow with "DAD" boldly embroidered over the phrases "Strong Shoulders. Saturday Coach. Big Hugs. Fixes Broken Toys and Hearts. Counselor of Wisdom."

Giannotti's company is now working on a better way to fix a torn or diseased bicep tendon. It seems clear that this father, surgeon, and businessman will always try to find a better way, and, thanks to his dedication, intelligence, and creativity, he probably will. 🏠