

After years of debilitating spine pain, Gwen Lewis got her mobility back thanks to radiofrequency ablation.

Outsmarting THE PAIN

For 11 years, 67-year-old Gwen Lewis of Brick suffered back pain, attributing the pain to aging and its companion, arthritis.

A fall in May 2012, however, required a more proactive approach when Gwen found herself unable to move the lower part of her body or to walk.

"When they tell you to choose from one to 10 to describe your pain, I was 110," Gwen recalls.

Casting about for an appropriate physician, Gwen discovered Mariam Ghobriel, MD, board-certified pain management specialist and anesthesiologist and on staff at CentraState Medical Center.

RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION

Gwen's examination revealed arthritis in her spine, leading Dr. Ghobriel to recommend radiofrequency ablation, also referred to as a medial branch block. When a patient's chronic arthritic pain has not responded particularly well to physical therapy, chiropractic treatments, rest or medications, radiofrequency ablation is an effective alternative.



Mariam Ghobriel, MD, board-certified pain management specialist

"We have no technology as of yet, in 2013, to reverse arthritis, so we fool the brain into

thinking there is no arthritis," Dr. Ghobriel explains.

Gwen was interested. Initially, she had to undergo a 15-minute diagnostic injection to ensure she would benefit from the radiofrequency ablation procedure. If the patient experiences at least a 50 percent reduction in pain in the four to six hours following the diagnostic injection, then the patient is a good candidate for radiofrequency ablation.

"If they don't achieve that, either their pain is too severe or arthritis isn't the source of their pain," Dr. Ghobriel states.

After the injection, Gwen followed the doctor's recommendation to resume life and, to her delight, walked the grounds of a local fair with friends.

"I was actually walking through the fairgrounds without any pain," Gwen says.

With Gwen's success in mind, Dr. Ghobriel followed through with radiofrequency ablation, a minimally invasive, X-ray-guided, outpatient procedure under local anesthetic. The technique temporarily blocks the pain emanating from a nerve when the source of that pain is arthritis. Through inserting a needle into the affected facet joint in the spine and raising the

temperature of the needle to 90 degrees Celsius, the physician is able to deaden the communication of pain from the nerve to the brain, allowing most patients six to 18 months of significant pain reduction, if not elimination.

BACK IN MOTION

Then, it is time to return to an active lifestyle.

"We should all continue to exercise, stay fit and maintain a body weight that's near optimum body mass index," Dr. Ghobriel says. "These are all things that are going to help our spines deteriorate less quickly and strengthen the muscles that protect our spines."

These days, Gwen is back in motion.

"It's amazing. I am good to go," Gwen says. "I don't know how long it's going to last; I hope forever. I am truly blessed by the healing of my body due to the hands of Dr. Ghobriel!"

For more information about pain management services at CentraState, call (866) CENTRA7 (866-236-8727). HD

"The healing process is not just hands-on; it's more than that. It's the comfort, the concern, the compassion that people like Dr. Ghobriel and her staff, and all the nurses in that procedure area provided. The encouragement they give you is absolutely marvelous."—Gwen Lewis

