

## Patient Testimonial – Tyler Cardiac and Endovascular Center

*(This is such a cool story!)*

Sometime in my mid-twenties, I began to feel pain in my calf muscles after only walking a few hundred yards. The pain would become uncomfortable enough to force me to stop until it subsided. It had a profound effect on my social life, as well as my ability to participate in activities — whether walking around a mall, getting into my car, or taking a stroll in the park, I could no longer perform basic tasks I used to do easily. I was an otherwise fit, young person with no smoking history, an active lifestyle and a standard healthy diet. Because of this lower leg pain, I went to see doctors. Lots of different doctors. I went from my PCP to an Orthopedist, to a Chiropractor, to a Physical Therapist. I received many different diagnoses, but no solution was found.

One day, I attended a soccer game with a friend who happened to be a Physician. He kept noticing that I stopped after walking a short distance and suggested I mention “intermittent claudication” to my PCP during my next visit. I took my friend’s advice and went to visit my primary care doctor, and he soon realized that he couldn’t feel a pulse in my lower leg regions. My doctor told me that I needed to see a Vascular specialist, immediately.

Looking back now, it’s amazing, how drastically my life had changed from the onset of the problem until the day I saw the specialist. The vascular surgeon went through his process of determining my issue and reviewed his findings with his team. Unfortunately, they were unable to pinpoint the exact cause, but concluded I had a rare condition called Popliteal Arterial Entrapment Syndrome (PAES). They also added that my PAES, coupled with the way my arteries were clogged, left me with no remedy. I would have to live with this pain until eventual limb amputation.

I began to study what I could about PAES, mainly with research from Cleveland Clinic and John Hopkins. The symptoms seemed similar to what I was experiencing, and it seemed to affect young athletes as well, which lined up with my experience. My family convinced me to get a second opinion at a top healthcare system in Texas. I had relocated to Dallas that year and made an appointment at the local vascular center. After additional tests, the vascular surgeon came to the same conclusion – I had PAES, but there was “no named vessel”. Which in simplified terms meant he couldn’t operate on me without causing damage. The surgeon told me to learn how to manage the pain for the next decade or so, after which I would likely begin to see symptoms of gangrene. At that point, he’d recommend amputation of both legs. I was discharged with this information and to say the least, completely distraught. Devastated, actually.

Through a service my employer provides, I consulted with Ivy League institutions that review similar medical cases to ensure that based on the symptoms, the right procedures and tests have been done, and the results appropriately interpreted. They concurred with both vascular surgeons and also concluded there was no recourse for me. All three institutions in unison agreed I would never be able to run again, but walking short distances would be something I could manage for the next decade before my condition became unmanageable.

Three strikes never felt so real to me! I felt I was out of options and needed to accept my fate. It was difficult, as I was used to being very active. I thought about all the “certainties” I once imagined, like running around with my future kids in the park, going hiking with my future wife, going out dancing. All of that was now gone because of this rare disease. After living for about eight years with this issue and seeing that lifestyle changes hadn’t made much difference, I decided to research once more. I began to read research papers and look closely at different types of treatments that had been successful for the same symptoms.

I was looking for buzzwords – something new from what I had seen before. And then I saw it: Lumivasular Technology. This hadn't been brought up before, so I contacted the company that seemed to promote it (Avinger). They provided me with a list of doctors in Texas. I looked for the closest outpatient doctors and saw Dr. Jeff Carr's name. I setup an appointment with him, took the day off work and drove about two hours to Tyler, TX. As I drove from Dallas to Tyler, I thought to myself "*could the solution really be in a small city like Tyler?*"

My first meeting with Dr. Carr was unlike any appointment I've had with a doctor before. I'd spent so many years explaining my leg issue with other doctors and health care professionals. This was the first person that heard my story and gave a warm response, along the lines of "I want to help you. I'll do whatever I possibly can to help you." I hadn't heard this before from anyone. I looked at him and believed him. He didn't dismiss the previous conclusions from my case, but he questioned how closely they had looked at my arteries. From talking with him, he gave me hope. I didn't need him to tell me he would solve all my problems — I needed to know someone would be conscientious and thorough in ensuring they understood what was happening to me. Dr. Carr remained honest with me every step of the way.

After reviewing my previous medical records and performing his own tests, he took my case. It's difficult to explain, but watching him work was like watching a movie. He refused to quit and stayed persistent. You would think he was working on his own legs instead of mine! He used a special device to try get through the blockage in my arteries, but the blockage was so fibrotic (after buildup of many years) it wasn't able to break through. I could see the clock and the monitor as I watched him spend what seemed like an hour, only to get through about a centimeter of blockage. I closed my eyes and gave up around the one-hour mark, thinking of how I would adjust to life as an amputee.

But Dr. Carr wouldn't stop. He kept trying and encouraging himself and his staff. After about five hours of surgery, he successfully opened up my completely occluded superficial femoral artery, popliteal artery, and below the knee arteries – it was free of blockages and blood began flowing through! This is something I was told was impossible!

In the months that followed, Dr. Carr opened up other arteries which made it possible for me to not only walk long distances, but I could run again! The weekend I was cleared for physical activity, I told my wife I had in mind a special route to run. A previous surgeon had told me being able to walk 300 yards at a time would be my plateau, so I thought it fitting to take a few laps of his medical campus! I ran around that medical campus for half an hour without breaks, including a few sprints. It felt great! It's amazing I could have a story like this. It's amazing that doctors like Dr. Carr and his medical staff exist. These are people who listened to my story and said, "it doesn't have to end like this."

About two months after the surgery, my wife and I had our postponed wedding reception due to COVID. I was able to dance with my wife throughout the night, and it meant the world to her. The future I imagined with her and our kids is once again possible. Dr. Carr and his staff have given me a new story because they looked at me as a human being first and they never quit on me.. Dr. Carr is truly committed to improving his patients' quality of life. He told me he wanted to help me, and I'm glad I believed him.