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## **Nation's First Artificial Disc for Treatment of Lower Back Pain Available at Hackley Hospital**

*Dr. Kim Pratt, Shoreline Neurosurgical Consulting, Becomes One of the First Surgeons to  
Complete Training in Revolutionary New Procedure*

**(Muskegon, MI)** – A revolution in back surgery has come to Muskegon. In October 2004 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the CHARITE Artificial Disc, a manmade device used to replace a damaged or worn out spinal disc in order to alleviate low back pain. Dr. Kimball Pratt of Muskegon's Shoreline Neurosurgical Consulting recently completed training in the use of the CHARITE Artificial Disc with Dr. Christopher Marquart of the same practice scheduled to complete training in this new leading-edge spinal procedure in March.

The CHARITE Artificial Disc is the first manmade disc for spinal columns approved for use in the United States. Artificial replacements are commonly used in hip and knee surgical procedures, but this is the first such approval for an artificial disc replacement for use in backs. Typically, lumbar spinal fusion surgery is utilized for treatment of low back pain or degenerative discs. More than 200,000 such procedures are conducted annually in the United States.

Traditional spinal fusion procedures can limit a person's range of motion and transfer extra stress to discs above the surgical site. It also typically requires a bone graft taken from the patient's hip. The CHARITE Artificial Disc is designed to help align the spine in a manner to preserve its ability to move, thus allowing for greater flexibility to bend and twist as compared to spinal fusion surgery. Clinical trials with the disc showed improvements in pain reduction and function and lower hospitalization stays as compared to traditional surgery.

**States Dr. Kimball Pratt of Muskegon's Shoreline Neurosurgical Consulting,** "Traditional spine surgery can greatly alleviate back pain but often at the price of reduced flexibility and limited motion. This artificial disc offers the patient the possibility of the best of both worlds – reduced pain and preservation of the back's motion."

The spine has three main parts: the neck, the central or thoracic area, and the lower back or lumbar area. Twenty-four small bones known as the vertebrae provide support, arranged in a column stacked on one another. Soft discs between each bone allow the back to move and bend. When such discs wear out or are injured, functions are decreased causing pain and/or limiting flexibility and the ability to fully move. This condition is called Degenerative Disc Disease, which is often treated with spinal fusion surgery.

“The CHARITE Artificial Disc offers a revolutionary new approach to spinal surgery,” offers Dr. Pratt. “I believe we’re on a cusp of a medical advancement which will usher in a profound change in the manner in which this disease will be treated for years to come.

**Adds Gordon Mudler, President/CEO of Hackley Hospital,** “This is yet one more leading edge neurosurgical advancement both Hackley Hospital and Shoreline Neurosurgical are able to offer the community. It is remarkable that Dr. Pratt and Dr. Marquart are able to bring these types of medical advancements so quickly after FDA approval to our hospital and their patients.”

The artificial disc also offers the hope of persons returning to work and normal human functions much faster than compared to traditional spinal fusion patients. CHARITE Artificial Disc patients at one center during the clinical trials returned to work in an average of 12 weeks, compared to spinal fusion patients who take up to six months to return.

It is estimated that 65 million Americans suffer from low back pain costing approximately \$50 billion annually. Low back pain is the most common condition for disability related claims and lost work days, according to the American Association of Surgeons.

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