

TREAMING UP

The best health care results come from a partnership between doctor and patient.

Friday nights haven't been the same for Ruby Beattie in nearly two years. While she and her husband once looked forward to weekly dinner and dancing outings with friends, these days the burning pain of sciatica has, she says, "stopped me in my tracks."

It's not as if Ruby hasn't sought help in those two years, however. In fact, her situation is quite the opposite. But four doctors and scores of injections later, sciatica pain still torments her daily.

"I'm in tremendous pain and I can't take pain medication," she explains. "It's not that I'm a martyr, but I have trouble taking medication. It makes me sick."

Topical medications, while helpful, don't solve the problem either. "I've been living on Biofreeze™, putting that all over the area," she adds. "I just want relief. And I think I'm on the right track with Dr. Jaffe."

New hope

Todd Barrett Jaffe, MD, of Brevard Pain Management, a board-certified anesthesiologist and addiction medicine physician – one of the first in the country to achieve subspecialty certification in pain management – believes patient care begins with sincere conversation. "I hear about doctors who talk to their patients from the doorway," he reports. "If your doctor's in such a rush that he can't even come into the room...is this somebody to whom you're going to entrust your care?"

Such questions are especially crucial with pain management procedures, Dr. Jaffe emphasizes. "One of the things about patients in pain is that they're looking to get better. They're hopeful; they're putting their trust in a doctor. And if the doctor is at all unscrupulous, he could take advantage of that."

Education and empowerment, according to Dr. Jaffe, create the best defense. "Patients need to learn to ask questions. If a doctor gets defensive when you ask about his training, or how many procedures he's done, then you need to find a different doctor."

It's crucial, the doctor says, that patients don't have procedures done blindly. "I know some patients don't want to know the risks, they don't want to know about the procedure itself, and that's fine. But if you do want to know, ask. And if your physician can't explain the procedure to you, why is he doing it?"

Ruby's case is a good example, he notes. Previous doctors did "procedure after procedure after procedure. And she's just thinking she's going to somebody who's going to get her better."

Lesson learned

From Ruby's perspective, it just didn't occur to her to ask those questions. "I guess when I was brought up, when a doctor was going to do something, you knew he was going to help you," she explains.

Additionally, since she's from Scotland originally, Ruby's recent experiences with doctors have been much different than in the past. "From the old doctors that I remember growing up, they were



Ruby Beattie

BREVARD PAIN MANAGEMENT, INC.

TODD B. JAFFE, MD

Have You Heard?

As he says in his radio ads, in addition to providing the best in pain management, Dr. Jaffe's practice is committed to helping patients "navigate the stormy waters" of the health care system. From working with patients to interpret and understand insurance benefits, to making sure that prescribed procedures are covered, to providing clear explanations and creating reasonable expectations for treatment strategies, Brevard Pain Management considers teamwork part of its foundation.

hands-on," she recalls. "They would come to the house and touch your stomach or your back or your leg or your throat and they would diagnose you."

And fortunately, since coming to America 42 years ago, she says she's been really healthy. "This thing here," she emphasizes, "I have been to more doctors with this thing than I have been to in my entire life."

Which is what makes her experiences with Dr. Jaffe so important. She finally understands how important it is to voice her concern about repeating a procedure that hasn't worked in the past.

"Dr. Jaffe has taught me a big lesson," Ruby asserts. "I have suffered with this for nearly two years and that is too much. It should have been taken care of and, partly, it was my fault because I didn't speak up. I didn't question. I just thought, *He's a doctor; he should know.*"

But from that very first conversation, Ruby knew she had an ally in Dr. Jaffe. "Thank goodness he didn't say shots," she confides. "I've had enough shots. It made me feel good that he listened and is doing something different to see if he can help me."

That new approach, the use of a Spinal

Cord Stimulator (SCS), has her feeling very hopeful. About the size of a pacemaker, the device uses electrical impulses to manage or eliminate pain. Ruby says she'll use the SCS externally for about a week and, if the results are good, Dr. Jaffe will implant it.

"I just have faith in him," she says. "And if this doesn't help, I feel that he will get to the bottom of what's to be done."

After all, he's already set himself apart from the rest. "I have complete confidence in Dr. Jaffe," Ruby asserts, "because of his willingness and his caring and his compassion to sit and listen to this long story I had about what's happened to me. Doctors wouldn't take the time to do that anymore." *FHCN—Brenda Klettke*

Live life...pain free

Brevard Pain Management, Inc. offers a wide variety of treatment modalities, ranging from conservative, non-invasive therapy to invasive and surgical techniques, for patients with all types of chronic and acute pain. Please call the office located at **8095 Spyglass Hill Rd., Suite 1**, in Melbourne at **(321) 757-0577**, or the office located at **1832 Garden St., Suite A**, in Titusville at **(321) 264-1961** for more information.

Todd Barrett Jaffe, MD, is board certified in anesthesiology and pain management and is a diplomate of the American Society of Addiction Medicine. He graduated from the University of Health Sciences at the Chicago Medical School and completed a residency in anesthesiology at the Bowman-Gray School of Medicine in North Carolina. Dr. Jaffe has had over thirty years of experience and training in pain management and addiction medicine and is a past president of the Florida Academy of Pain Medicine. Dr. Jaffe is a member of several professional associations, including the American Academy of Pain Medicine, the American Pain Society, the Florida Academy of Pain Medicine, and the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

PATIENT EMPOWERMENT

Dr. Jaffe's steps for taking control of your own health care:

- **Ask questions** – Knowledgeable, confident physicians are happy to share information.
- **Discuss alternative treatment plans** – Before you undergo a procedure, talk to your doctor about expected results, as well as the next step if treatment doesn't meet those expectations.
- **Research board certifications** – Not all certifications have the same requirements; you have a right to know the difference.
- **Shop prices** – Not all doctors charge equally for procedures, and it's worth checking, even if you're insured.
- **Understand your insurance benefits** – There's a difference between "accepting" insurance and "participating" in a plan.
- **See how you feel about your physician's staff** – If the doctor treats his employees well, he's probably going to treat his patients well.
- **Be cautious about cross-referral relationships between physicians and attorneys** – Such arrangements may not be in your best interest.

For more information, visit
www.brevardpainmanagement.com.