



**St. Elizabeth's Hospital  
Marketing Department**

Belleville, IL 62220  
618/234/2120 Ext. 1270  
Fax: 618/222/4748

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**November 12, 2008**

**New surgical procedure available for patients with herniated discs at Southern Illinois Brain and Spine Center in Belleville**

*BELLEVILLE, IL* – A herniated disc presses on nerve roots and can cause patients pain, numbness, and weakness in the area of the body where the nerve travels. Just ask Julia Divine of Granite City.

Divine wasn't sure why her hand would often give way when she picked up items. At first, she thought it was just her arthritis acting up. She soon realized it had to be something more when she started reeling in pain whenever she put her hand behind her back or raised it over her head. Even talking became painful.

After seeing her general practitioner, Divine was referred Dr. Nicholas E. Poulos at the Southern Illinois Brain and Spine Center in Belleville where an MRI detected a herniated disc in her neck that was pressing on her spinal cord. She had two options of treatment: cortisone shots or surgery to repair the damage. Since she is allergic to cortisone, she educated herself on the surgery option and decided to proceed with it.

For the past 50 years, the standard procedure for herniated discs has been cervical fusion.

Dr. Poulos explains, "In that operation, a bone graft is used to promote two bones growing together into one." This eliminates motion at the fused joint, but can add stress to the adjacent discs, which can lead them to break down at a faster-than-normal rate, he said. Such limited motion is a lot to live with for someone in their 40s or 50s.

Dr. Poulos recommended a new procedure called *cervical arthroplasty*. It is used on patients in this younger age group who suffer from a single disk herniation and involves replacing the herniated disc with an artificial one made of stainless steel. Because the artificial disc preserves motion in the joint, it reduces the risk of adjacent segment disease and the chance of further surgeries down the road.

Divine had the surgery in February 2008 at St. Elizabeth's Hospital and left a little more than 24 hours later with no pain. Later, tests showed that she had regained completely normal range of motion at the operated level.

"The surgery took the pain away immediately," Divine said. "I can't feel the replacement parts in my neck at all. And it's wonderful to be able to use my arm again."

**About Southern Illinois Brain and Spine Center** The Southern Illinois Brain and Spine Center was formed in 2006 by Dr. Nicholas E. Poulos, a board-certified neurosurgeon who is dedicated to bringing advanced neurosurgical services to Southwestern Illinois. Dr. Poulos is on staff at St. Elizabeth's Hospital.

The primary focus of our center is the diagnosis and treatment of brain and spine disorders. These include relatively common problems such as herniated discs and

osteoporotic compression fractures, as well as serious conditions such as brain tumors and blood clots.

Our center employs the latest available technologies and procedures, including image-guided navigation to reach almost any area of the brain through very small incisions in the skull. This and other minimally invasive procedures, make it possible for us to expertly address a wide range of brain and spine problems while minimizing the risk of neurological injury.

**About St. Elizabeth's Hospital** St. Elizabeth's Hospital, in Belleville, IL, maintains a Gold Seal of approval from the Joint Commission. The hospital was founded by the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in 1875. Today, we continue their mission: to provide care for the sick and needy with a spirit of respect, care, competence and joy. For more information please contact Kathy Kaiser at 618.234.2120, extension 2946.

###