



RESTORING MOVEMENT, RECLAIMING LIVES

For those with chronic joint pain, daily life can be tough but new orthopaedic treatments are transforming outcomes, writes Ali Gudgeon. Photography: Michael Porter

Advances in orthopaedic care are transforming lives - something Mr Merzesh Magra, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at Spire Fylde Coast Hospital, sees first-hand every day.

Mr Magra specialises in hip and knee replacement surgery, a field he was drawn to early in his training. "What fascinated me was the remarkable improvement patients experience in a relatively short space of time," he explains. "These are people who come in with significant pain and limited mobility, and after surgery, they're often among the happiest and most grateful patients in the hospital."

That transformation is what makes his work so rewarding. Patients frequently return to share milestones - whether it's completing a long walk, enjoying a round of golf, or even climbing a mountain. "It really feels like you're giving them their life back," he says. "Not just physically, but mentally as well."

Orthopaedic surgery has evolved dramatically in recent years, with faster recovery times and improved outcomes. One of the most significant developments is Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS), which combines modern anaesthetic techniques, improved pain

management and early mobilisation. "Patients are now often walking on the same day as their operation and going home the following day," says Mr Magra. "Years ago, they might have stayed in hospital for up to six days."

Advances in materials have also played a key role. Highly durable, cross-linked polyethylene components reduce wear in artificial joints, helping to preserve bone and extend implant lifespan. Meanwhile, cutting-edge technology is pushing surgical precision even further.

"Robotic arm-assisted surgery has been a major step forward," Mr Magra explains. Using pre-operative CT scans to build a 3D model of a patient's joint, the technology allows surgeons to plan procedures with exceptional accuracy.



During the operation, the consultant maintains full control throughout, with robotic guidance enhancing precision in implant placement and reducing disruption to surrounding tissue.

"The result is better joint function, less pain and quicker recovery," he says. "We're able to preserve more bone, improve biomechanics and ultimately achieve better long-term outcomes."

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Recovery itself has become far more patient-friendly. Improved pain control techniques mean less reliance on strong opioid medications, reducing side effects such as nausea and drowsiness. Patients are encouraged to start moving as soon as possible, building strength and confidence at their own pace. Most are back to driving after six weeks.

Looking ahead, Mr Magra is excited about the potential of "smart implants" - devices embedded with sensors that could monitor how a joint is functioning in real time. "They could help us detect early signs of problems and better understand how patients use their joints," he says.

For now, his message to patients is reassuringly clear: "Modern joint replacement surgery is very safe and highly successful. With today's technology and techniques, our focus is on helping people return to an active, pain-free lifestyle - faster than ever before." ■

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