

BECKER'S --- SPINE REVIEW ---

Spine Surgeon Leader to Know: Dr. Michael Roh of Rockford Spine Center

By Laura Miller



Michael Roh is the co-founder of Rockford Spine Center and was recently featured among Newsweek's Leaders in Showcase: Spine Surgery. A career as a spine surgeon came natural to him because of the challenges associated with the position.

"My greatest concern while choosing a career was not becoming bored, since I have always been drawn to that which was most difficult and demanding," says Dr. Roh. "Therefore, of all the subspecialties in orthopedic surgery, the one that seemed most challenging intellectually and technically was spine surgery.

Making an accurate diagnosis was paramount to successful outcomes, but required so much more than reading a simple radiograph. Rather, it required a complex interplay of patient data, radiological interpretation, technical precision and performance under pressure, along with an understanding of human nature and the frailties that make us who we are. Based on the fact that I continue to love my job and have yet to experience even a minute of professional boredom, I am happy with my decision."

He has a special interest in cervical spine surgery and minimally invasive procedures. He was one of the select faculty members for the Prestige Cervical Disc and has traveled nationally to teach other physicians the procedure. He is looking forward to the continued development in spinal technique.

"I think that minimally invasive techniques and motion preservation are the way of the future," said Dr. Roh. "Since 2004, I have been using tubular retractors whenever possible, and have witnessed significantly faster recoveries with excellent results. Though disc replacement is still evolving, I do believe that we will eventually reach a point where arthroplasties outnumber fusions. I have served as chairman or faculty for numerous instructional courses for both techniques because I do believe that every surgeon should have them in their repertoire."

In addition to his clinical practice, Dr. Roh is a professor at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford. He is a cabinet member and committee co-chair for the Scoliosis Research Society as well as a member of the American Academy of

Orthopaedic Surgeons and North American Spine Society. He enjoys treating patients and working with them to improve their health.

"By far, the best part of being a spine surgeon is the ability to relieve the intense pain caused by spinal disorders," says Dr. Roh. "Unless it is through direct experience, one cannot comprehend the intense and disabling nature of pain from pinched spinal nerves. Even the strongest narcotics cannot control this pain, so patients are forced to discontinue all but the most basic physical activities, and their quality of life disintegrates quickly. After surgery, patients will often cry tears of joy when they awake without pain. When patients thank me, I tell them 'the best thanks is for me to see you get better,' and it's true."

Dr. Roh earned his medical degree from Brown University School of Medicine in Providence, R.I., and completed his residency in orthopedic surgery at Columbia University in New York City. His additional training includes a fellowship in spine surgery at Washington University in St. Louis.