

ONE-STOP SPINAL CARE

By Elizabeth Mubarek

Rockford Spine Center is proud to be known as a one-stop shop for any patients who are looking for treatment of their spinal problems. Located in Rockford, Illinois, the center is dedicated to the diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment of spinal disorders. Dr. Fred Sweet and Dr. Michael Roh co-founded in 2003. With the addition of Dr. Christopher Sliva, the three have operated the center with the intention of providing the best spinal care in the country.

Dr. Sliva is a board certified orthopedic spine surgeon who specializes in the treatment of herniated discs, spinal stenosis, spondylolisthesis, and degenerative diseases of the spine. He is also an expert in the area of spinal deformity in adults and children. Dr. Sliva currently serves as the President of Rockford Spine Center, a role which rotates on an annual basis among the co-founders of the company.

With the help of an office practice manager, the three founders rotate the administrative role within the company, with the understanding that they each bring different strengths to the leadership and administrative role at the spine center. Although it is perhaps a more traditional approach to have one individual in a chief leadership position, at Rockford



Spine Center, their method seems to be working quite well. "What's worked for us up to this point is to rotate that administrative role, since we all bring a certain set of ideals—even though many of those ideals are shared," said Sliva. "There are subtle variances and differences between us, and we think that that is a benefit to our corporation."

Rockford Spine Center is distinguished by its focus on treating spinal problems exclusively. Individuals tend to either hear about the center from other patients, or they are referred from their primary care provider. Either way, patients can enter the center with

essentially zero evaluation, and receive a thorough assessment. Nearly all imaging studies can be performed at the center, and many times patients go through pre-screening. Most patients have a diagnosis at the time of their initial visit, and with nearly all patients, the diagnosis is made by their second visit.

"I will say that there are university centers that are within an hour of us, but what we bring to the table are three accomplished physicians who underwent extremely rigorous training, and all three of us were sought after for academic positions," explained Sliva. "But for one reason or another,

we ultimately decided that it was best for us as individuals to be a part of a private practice. But we all brought our academic roots, and what we really want is to provide as thorough of an evaluation treatment as patients can get at any other regional academic center, and we can provide that."

The administration at Rockford Spine Center realizes that the most important investment that they make is concerning the ongoing education of their physicians and staff. Investments in the center's physical location help to maintain a pleasant environment for their patients. The center also regularly updates their Practice management software and imaging technology. Recognizing the importance and balance of these different types of investments has allowed the center to be incredibly successful.

While Rockford Spine Center is a fiscally conservative business organization, the center's investment in the physical attributes to their building and in other areas help it better serve its patients. This desire to focus on serving patients to the best of their ability addresses the most prominent foreseeable problem in the company's future.

"I think that one of the primary concerns that we have is that over the next several years, there is likely to be a large influx of spine patients. This is probably due to several factors, one of which is just the general aging of the population. Many of the conditions of the patients that we see are degenerative, and the frequency increases with age," said Sliva. "With the influx of additional patients, it will become more important to route patients to the appropriate care provider. The reality is that the vast majority of patients who have back or neck problems do not need a surgery, but they will need some sort of other care—typically non-operative care. This is best managed by somebody who specializes in managing non-operative care, and in our practice, that's a physician whose specialty is physical medicine and rehabilitation. And so I see us adding additional non-operative care providers. That way, we'll be able to evaluate more patients, and we can also accommodate the influx of the increased number of patients we anticipate seeing. We can also steer those patients to the most appropriate provider so that they can get treated in a quick and efficient manner."

Rockford Spine Center offers patients a certain convenience in that they are able to schedule imaging studies, doctor visits, and see a physical therapist all in one setting. Their success, though, relies on their commitment to their mission of providing high quality care dedicated to the spine and spinal pathology. It is equally as important to emphasize that Rockford Spine Center is Board Certified by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgery, and their MRI center is accredited by ACR (American College of Radiology). In 2011, each of the three physicians were also awarded the Patients' Choice Award. Of the 830,000 active physicians in the nation, only 5% were granted this honor by their patients.



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