

# Spinal surgery gives Kent County resident back his life

Dorchester Banner

**EASTON** — According to the National Institutes of Health website, back pain will affect eight out of 10 people at some point during their lives. When this common medical problem becomes chronic, many sufferers find the quality of their lives jeopardized. Paul W. Kelley, 60, a retired commander of the Maryland State Police Centreville barracks and 1990 Maryland State Police Trooper of the Year, suffered many back injuries during his career as well as outside his career.

Treatment involved many surgeries, shots and pain management. Eventually nothing worked, and Mr. Kelley found himself so debilitated that he faced life in a wheelchair. Mr. Kelley, a native of Kent County, now operates Mr. Kelley Investigative Security Services, so for a man who had led an active physical life on and off the job, this prognosis was devastating.

"I was at a crossroads in my life," Mr. Kelley said. "I was walking with a walker and sometimes needed help to get out of bed in addition to getting in and out of my vehicle, standing, and even simple walking movements required help from another." When Mr. Kelley faced another surgery, his physician of many years wanted him to



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Paul W. Kelley, left, recently underwent minimally invasive spinal surgery by Dr. Khalid H. Kurtom, MD, FAANS, FACS a neurosurgeon with the UMSMC group in Easton.

get a second opinion and to have any additional questions answered so that Mr. Kelley was clear about his surgical options. He sent Mr. Kelley to Khalid H. Kurtom, MD, FAANS, FACS, Neurosurgeon with the University of Maryland - Community Medical Group-Neurosurgery in Easton, and Clinical Assistant Professor, Depart-

ment of Neurosurgery, University of Maryland School of Medicine. Mr. Kelley said Dr. Kurtom told him, "I can fix you."

"Mr. Kelley had multiple back operations that resulted in extensive scar tissue and spinal instability," Dr. Kurtom explained. "He needed decompression of his nerves, realignment of his spine and fusion."

Dr. Kurtom recommended a minimally invasive surgical approach: "A technique," he said, "that very few surgeons utilize. Minimally invasive spine surgery continues to gain notoriety due to the exceptional postoperative outcomes, minimal intraoperative blood loss, limited hospital stay and minimal complications. Despite its popularity with patients, surgeons have not widely adopted the techniques given the steep learning curve and complexity of the procedures. Patients oftentimes travel great distances to receive care from surgeons performing these operations. My hope is that the next generation of spine surgeons are more adaptable to using these techniques."

Surgery was scheduled, but before it could occur, Mr. Kelley's mother passed away suddenly. Four days after her funeral, on April 14, 2015, Mr. Kelley went into the UM Shore Medical Center at Easton for surgery. At the hospital, Dr. Kurtom asked Mr. Kelley if he'd like to postpone the surgery for a week or two, since he was overcome with grief from the loss of his mother.

Patients often remark on Dr. Kurtom's compassion and empathy, and Mr. Kelley's experience was no exception. "He shows compassion toward his patients. He introduced his whole team, and then he held my hand until the anesthesia took over. He is an expert at what he does."

Hours after the surgery when Mr. Kelley awakened in recovery, he was amazed that the chronic pain he had suffered for so long was gone, and the feeling in his legs was returning. Early the next morning Dr. Kurtom came into his room and announced, "We're going for a walk," and then they proceeded to walk throughout the hospital. By 10 am Dr. Kurtom discharged Mr. Kelley, who drove himself home.

At home Mr. Kelley followed Dr. Kurtom's directions to rest for 45 minutes and to walk for 15 minutes. He commented, "I had no setbacks, no pain and the feeling came back into my legs. Two or three weeks after surgery I was walking two-three miles a day, bicycling for eight-ten miles every other day, and on weekends cycling for 20 miles. After a couple of weeks I used no pain medications. I no longer needed injections or pain management."

Mr. Kelley's quick recovery is another example of the efficacy of minimally invasive spine surgery. "Through minimal invasive spine surgery, the same surgical goals can be achieved with minimal tissue destruction," Dr. Kurtom said.

"I now can bend over, touch my toes, and without assistance do the simple things in life I'd taken for granted," Mr. Kelley said. "I'm unrestricted in what I do, but I'm careful. I'm not 18 anymore, and I have to remember that." His recovery was so successful that he spent the first week in February 2016 in Colorado skiing in the Rocky Mountains. "I give thanks for all of this to Dr. Kurtom for having faith in me and for giving me my life back."

"I am glad that in this case I was able to help and get Mr. Kelley back to his life," Dr. Kurtom said.

Mr. Kelley praised Dr. Kurtom's office staff as "wonderful, caring and compassionate."

"Compassion and caring for the patient are intimately connected," Dr. Kurtom said. "We can't do our job on any level without having compassion for our patients."

Khalid H. Kurtom, MD, FAANS, FACS, sees patients at the Easton location of the University of Maryland Community Medical Group-Neurosurgery, located at the University of Maryland Shore Medical Pavilion at Easton, Suite 103, 490 Cadmus Lane. UM Community Medical Group is a multi-hospital, multi-specialty network of University of Maryland Medical System providers all serving the people of Maryland.

A member of the Medical Staff at UM Shore Regional Health, Dr. Kurtom performs surgical procedures at UM Shore Medical Center at Easton. For additional information about the services provided by Dr. Kurtom, call 410-820-9117 or visit his website at [www.umcmg.org/neuronews](http://www.umcmg.org/neuronews).

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