



Renewed Life with a New Knee

Robot-assisted knee surgery resolves pain from a long-ago accident.



Dr. Stephen T. Gardner

In 1993, Ann Choi, then 23 and a student at UC Santa Barbara, was walking across the street one afternoon when she was hit by a drunk driver, leaving her in a coma for four months.

"I went flying," says Choi, now 50, a resident of Fullerton and an executive at an interior design firm in Costa Mesa. "My left arm, shoulder and ribs were broken, and my left leg was totally smashed, so they put a steel plate

inside it. My right leg was broken, too, but only needed a rod. I was the Korean version of the Bionic Woman."

A few years ago, she started to have arthritic pain in her left knee, and when it became too much to tolerate, she went to see an orthopedic surgeon. The surgeon reviewed her X-rays and felt that due to the deformity and existing hardware from her prior trauma, a traditional total knee would be extremely complicated. Ms. Choi was referred to Stephen T. Gardner, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at Providence Mission Hospital Laguna Beach who specializes in robotic surgery. After reviewing her X-rays and performing a physical exam, Dr. Gardner felt that, with his expertise in navigated robotic knee replacement, the procedure could be performed. He successfully carried out the replacement procedure in May.

"The ROSA Knee robotic technology made a huge difference. The procedure was much less invasive and less complicated because we didn't need to remove all the hardware in the femur, as you would if using standard instruments," says Dr. Gardner. "We

were able to fit the implants around the hardware using the robot to guide us." He adds that performing the surgery at Providence Mission Hospital Laguna Beach was helpful because "the surgical services have been geared towards orthopedic care and the entire clinical team is highly trained and experienced in orthopedic procedures."

Choi says the two days in the hospital flew by and soon she was home working with a physical therapist.

"I could not have asked for a better hospital, doctor or physical therapist," Choi says. "Dr. Gardner treated me like we were a team, saying 'Let's do this!' before the surgery and 'We did it!' afterward. And everyone on his team was so organized and in sync. Now I feel so much stronger."

That strength has allowed her to again walk her dogs—a Maltese-poodle mix and a terrier. "Slowly but surely, I feel more like myself," Choi says. "I'm slowly doing all the things I love again, like going back to the dog shelter where I volunteer."