



PAIN IN THE FOOT WAS A TUMOR IN THE NECK



JEFFREY FURTICELLA | THE TIMES

David Podguski talks about the tumor that Crown Point doctors found in his neck. Pain in his left foot and ankle led Podguski to see Dr. Michael Nirenberg and Dr. Michael Carroll, who correctly diagnosed a rare neck tumor.

Persistent doctors may have saved Valparaiso man's life

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CROWN POINT | Walter Podguski's foot woes were a pain in the neck.

For nearly a year, the Valparaiso resident suffered severe pain in his left foot and ankle that made it difficult to walk, work or play softball. He bounced among doctors who offered only temporary relief.

That is, until a pair of region doctors diagnosed Podguski's potentially life-threatening problem, ultimately publishing the results in the June issue of the American Journal of the Podiatric Medical Association.

"I just wanted an end to the whole issue," he said. "I was moody, and there were other health issues. I wanted to get to the bottom of whatever was bothering me."

Podguski ended up seeing Dr. Michael Nirenberg and Dr. Michael Carroll at Friendly Foot Care, now in Crown Point.

Nirenberg and Carroll discovered that the source of Podguski's foot pain was a rare tumor in his neck - something that could have been fatal had it gone untreated. When the tumor was removed, so was the pain.

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"When a foot doctor gets to save someone's life, that's really cool."

DR. MICHAEL NIRENBERG



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Dr. Michael Nirenberg and Dr. Michael Carroll found a rare neck tumor in a patient, David Podguski, who was suffering persistent pain in his left foot and ankle. Removal of the tumor ended the pain and may have saved Podguski's life.

Tumor

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Carroll said the diagnosis actually happened at the end of 2004, but the doctors couldn't publish their work until they verified Podguski's pain was gone.

"I'm very thankful the doctors were not satisfied with what they saw," Podguski

said. "They went beyond a quick diagnosis."

Nirenberg said they had a hunch it was a rare tumor before the results came in.

"We're not just looking at the foot," he said. "The foot is a mirror of the whole body. ... It's all connected. We kind of pride ourselves on checking the whole person."

The X-ray and MRI revealed gout in Podguski's foot but not in the typical joints, Nirenberg

said. So the doctors ran blood tests and found abnormal levels of a certain type of acid. Everything pointed to a rare neck tumor, the doctors decided. It was found in the front of Podguski's neck.

Nirenberg said Podguski's case was rewarding because the tumor could have been life-threatening.

"When a foot doctor gets to save someone's life, that's really cool," Nirenberg said.