

# Relieving pain, restoring lives with physiatry



**James P. Weiner, MD**, is board certified by the American Board of Anesthesiology. He received his medical degree and completed his residency in physical medicine and rehabilitation at Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk, and completed an anesthesia residency and

received fellowship training in pain management at the Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, VA. He also received fellowship training in anesthesia at Bowman-Gray Medical Center, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC. He is a member of the American Association of Electrodiagnostic Medicine, American Association of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, American Society of Anesthesiology, Florida Medical Society, Florida Society of Anesthesiology, International Association for the Study of Pain, and International Spinal Injection Society. He has published extensively in his areas of expertise.



**Peter S. Schreiber, DO**, is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation. He completed his undergraduate studies in microbiology at the University of Florida, Gainesville, and received his medical degree from Nova Southeastern University College of Osteo-

pathic Medicine, Davie, FL. He served his internship and a combined residency in internal medicine and physical medicine and rehabilitation at Case Western Reserve University/MetroHealth Medical Center, Cleveland, OH. Dr. Schreiber is a member of the American Medical Association, American Osteopathic Association, and American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.



**Keith S. Susko, MD**, completed his undergraduate studies, with an emphasis in biomedical engineering, at the University of Arizona College of Engineering. He earned his medical degree and completed his medical internship and his residency in physical medicine, serving

as chief resident, at Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk. While in Virginia, Dr. Susko founded the medical school's Habitat for Humanity student volunteer group, organizing workdays for volunteer labor and assisting in the construction of homes for the needy. He has developed numerous presentations and lectures concerning myofascial trigger point evaluations, osteoporosis, electromyography, cerebral palsy, and low back pain. Dr. Susko is a member of the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Association of Academic Physiatrists, American Academy of Pain Management, American Medical Association, and American Academy of Electrodiagnostic Medicine.



**Robert D. Mehrberg, MD**, is a board-certified physiatrist, certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation, as well as in electrodiagnostic medicine. He completed his undergraduate studies and earned his medical degree at Tulane University, New Orleans, LA. He served

his internship and his residency in physical medicine and rehabilitation at Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk, where he was appointed chief resident. Dr. Mehrberg has lectured on, written, or coauthored numerous articles, abstracts, presentations, and publications concerned with the treatment and well-being of rehabilitation patients. Dr. Mehrberg is a member of the American Association of Electrodiagnostic Medicine, American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and Association of Academic Physiatrists.

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FHCN photo by Nerissa Johnson

**P**atty Currie has no problem remembering what she felt like after being rear-ended by an 18-wheeled truck in 1995.

"I felt like my life was over.

"Between the shearing of muscles and other soft tissues around my shoulders, neck, and head, and the cognitive losses from the accompanying traumatic brain injury, it took me nine months to recover enough to return to work, and I still wasn't fixed," says Patty.

Patty's physical injuries caused severe muscle spasms in her neck and shoulders, crashing headaches, and cognitive deficits that affected every aspect of her life.

"Brain injury patients exhibit a variety of symptoms, from difficulty with language to memory problems, lapses in thought processing, and lack of emotional control," Patty describes.

"I went from case management in home health, supervising and scheduling my staff and dealing with finances, to not being able to remember my own last name. It was unbelievable."

Particularly humbling was the realization that, for all her years as a

home health nurse helping her own patients manage their pain, it wasn't until Patty dealt with chronic, unrelenting pain of her own that she understood exactly what pain does to a patient's life and physical and emotional health.

"It exhausts you, wears you down," she relates. "And everything that your body has to do to compensate for the pain you're in has a marked impact on how well your brain functions, especially if you're dealing with cognitive losses from a concomitant brain injury."

To handle her myriad difficulties, Patty took 50 mg of a strong painkiller as often as seven times a day. At bedtime, she took a muscle relaxant so powerful that it is prescribed for patients with multiple sclerosis to control their severe muscle spasms.

She was on medications to support her ability to concentrate. And every six to eight weeks she received injections of BOTOX to help relax her spasmodic muscles and to reduce her pain.

Patty's life continued that way until 2001, when she moved to Fort Myers and met Peter S. Schreiber, DO, at Southwest Florida Rehab & Pain Management Associates.

## Compassionate and knowledgeable

"My doctor in Atlanta recommended him," says Patty, "and Dr. Schreiber is just an incredible human being. He listens to his patients and doesn't make us feel like we're malingering simply because we don't appear to be mangled. I brought him a medical file five and a half inches thick, and he reviewed it and talked to me until he had a complete understanding of my problems, how they affected my life, what I was able to do, and what I wanted to be able to do."

"Patty had very real pain issues, and that pain made it more difficult for her to compensate for her cognitive losses," recalls Dr. Schreiber. "As

I do with all my new patients, I spent a lot of time talking with Patty, learning which of the effects from her injuries caused the greatest difficulty in her life, and determining the source of those difficulties. We addressed those first."

Armed with that information, Dr.

Schreiber designed a treatment plan that reduced Patty's strong pain medication, added a milder pain reliever to augment it, and replaced her BOTOX injections with injections of a naturally occurring enzyme.

It worked. "Dr. Schreiber's treatment plan brought me incredible pain relief," confirms Patty. "I was able to go six or seven months without an injection, compared to the six to eight weeks I had between BOTOX treatments."

"I'm no longer taking my strong muscle relaxant at night, and my multiple daily doses of pain reliever are down from 50 mg to 32.5 mg, with acetaminophen to back them up, and it's enough. Better yet, with my pain so well controlled, my body has greater reserves for dealing with my cognitive losses. If I follow Dr. Schreiber's directions and do what I'm supposed to do, I'm at about 90 percent of my original stamina and abilities now."

"What Dr. Schreiber has accomplished never ceases to amaze me," says Patty. "Every time I see him, I want to give him this great, huge hug." *FHCN—Billie S. Noakes*

## Relief at last!

The staff at Southwest Florida Rehab & Pain Management Associates welcomes your questions and comments regarding this article. For additional information or to schedule a consultation, please call (239) 432-0774. Southwest Florida Rehab & Pain Management Associates is located at 12700 Creekside Ln., Suite 301, in Fort Myers.

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