



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Peter Priest of Watsonville (center) is all smiles under the care of Drs. William Hopkins and Nicole Surdock of The Foot Doctors Tuesday at the Monterey Bay Wound Treatment Center at Watsonville Community Hospital as he regains the ability to walk.

Local man gets back on his feet

Wound Treatment Center helps man keep his feet, gain mobility

By TODD GUILD

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Just more than a year ago, Watsonville resident Peter Priest was facing the amputation of his left foot and wondering if he'd ever walk again.

Now, the 59-year-old is moving about with the aid of a walker, and can even walk a short distance without help.

Priest was suffering from peripheral arterial disease, which occurs when one or more arteries in the legs or arms are blocked, decreasing blood flow to skin, muscles and bones. The problem caused Priest's skin to break down, bringing on infection and a nonhealing ulcer on his left foot. He was also suffering from diabetes.

After doctors at the Monterey Bay Wound Treatment Center began treating his dying foot, his toes were amputated, but the blocked arteries still needed to be repaired.

Dr. Benjamin Potkin, a Watsonville-based cardiologist, used a state-of-the-art, noninvasive procedure called laser angioplasty to successfully break up the blockage. The procedure in some cases can re-

place bypass surgery.

After six successful treatments, however, the wounds from the amputation surgery still needed work.

Because his peripheral arterial disease was continuing to complicate the healing procedure, Priest needed the attention of a specialist.

Dr. William Hopkins, a podiatric specialist who is treating Priest's feet, said Priest's conditions were serious, compromising his nervous and circulatory systems.

"Without treatment, Peter would have lost his legs and possibly his life," Hopkins said.

Hopkins was quick to share credit for Priest's recovery with the nurses, cardiologists, physical therapists and other specialists who worked with him.

"This was a team effort," he said. "With the wound center, you really get a lot of systems working together."

Hopkins also gave credit to Priest himself.

"Peter has been pretty motivated," he said. "I don't think his salvage would have been possible without him playing

the part."

Hopkins said Priest's treatment has been one of the more challenging cases he's come across.

Priest speaks enthusiastically about the staff who helped him in his recovery, and said he expects to be back on his feet soon.

"It's a very outstanding facility that takes great care of their patients," Priest said. "If not for Hopkins, I'm not sure I would have made it."

"I look forward to coming here," he said. "It's the highlight of my life."

The Monterey Bay Wound Treatment Center opened in Watsonville Community Hospital about 10 years ago, and Hopkins said the treatment offered there has helped prevent several amputations.

Now, physicians from several counties refer patients here. Hopkins estimates the center treats about 120 patients every week. The Wound Treatment Center will soon unveil a new hyperbaric oxygen therapy machine, which can raise the level of oxygen in stubborn wounds and promote healing.

"The facility has grown considerably over the years," Hopkins said.