

Surgeon Among First to Use STAR Ankle Implant

The Scandinavian Total Ankle Replacement (STAR), approved just last year by the FDA, is a three-piece, mobile-bearing substitute for a working ankle.

— and Dr. Eric Anctil has been among the first U.S. surgeons to use it.

Designed by a Scandinavian surgeon, STAR is a non-cemented implant that replaces the ankle, enabling continued movement and allowing for better bone growth, stabilization and preservation. STAR materials, which include cobalt chromium alloy, titanium and polyethylene, have been used in artificial knees and hips for years and are well-accepted by the body.

Before STAR, patients whose ankles were compromised by painful conditions, such as arthritis, had conservative options such as a brace or cortisone injections, or they could undergo fusion, the current standard of care, in which the worn-out portion of the joint is removed and the bones are permanently held in a solid position.

Anctil, a foot and ankle specialist at the Tucson Orthopaedic Institute, had worked with STAR before when he was the head of orthopedics at the Université of Sherbrooke in Québec, Canada. When the FDA approved its use in the U.S., Anctil attended an additional training for the device and was the first surgeon in Arizona to implant it.

FDA's instructions for use and patient labeling indicate that STAR patients had superior effectiveness compared to ankle fusion and had comparable safety results to ankle fusion in clinical trials.

Patient Anita Colony waited for STAR because she knew she didn't want fusion. Now, she has one implanted in each leg.

"I waited for two years for it," explains Colony, 73. "My ankles were so bad from arthritis that I couldn't walk. If your ankle is fused, you can be restricted where you can walk. I knew I didn't want that."

Says Anctil, "Both of Anita's ankles were bad, but on top of that, her left foot was very flat and deformed, so we had to fix the foot first so the ankle would be put on a foot that was straight." He performed the foot surgery, then implanted the STAR ankle in August 2009. Colony received her second implant in June at Tucson Medical Center.



Eric Anctil, MD



Anita Colony

"I'm walking fine now," she says. "I can turn it out and in. I can sleep now without pain." She especially looks forward to walking to meals at the retirement community where she lives in Green Valley.

After the STAR implant surgery, patients will use crutches or a walker for at least four weeks. They then transition to a cast and undergo physical therapy.

"There are some patients who still have some discomfort," says Anctil. "That's part of the risk of the surgery. Not everyone may qualify for the replacement, but if they do, we offer them. For the right patient, it's a very good alternative."