Meet Tony Degliomini

2019 Believe Award Winner

Tony Degliomini was no stranger to challenges when he hit a sinkhole near the end of a charity bike ride and suffered a spinal cord injury. Cycling was part of a weight loss program that helped him lose 100 pounds. In 2012, he was diagnosed with bladder cancer. In 2015, he came to Magee Rehabilitation Hospital following the bike accident, which left him with a concussion, broken nose and teeth, and spinal fusion C3–C6.

When Tony arrived, he couldn’t walk and had to relearn how to use his hands. He says he always had a vision of walking out of Magee, and he did. But he would sometimes get irritated when he thought about how much progress toward health and fitness his injury cost him.

“You become very frustrated because you want to be ‘the old me,’” Tony says. “Well, I’m never going to be the old me. There’s just ‘Tony 2.0’ now, and this Tony is much more aware of the love and compassion of people than I used to be.”

Now he’s home and back at work. In May, he received the 2019 Believe Award at Magee’s 19th annual Night of Champions. The award recognized Tony’s fundraising efforts on Magee’s behalf, starting in 2016 with the support he and his company, Holman Enterprises, provided for Magee’s wheelchair sports program through the Philadelphia Marathon.

“Night of Champions was the icing on the cake because it allowed me to return home to my Magee family,” Tony says. “The Magee family is an elite group of people, a fraternity.”


“It’s a short story, but it delivers a strong message,” Tony says. “You can’t go back; you can only go forward. It’s about celebrating what you have today.”

Learn more about Tony’s journey at BelieveLikeMe.com.
SCI and Diabetes Study Recruiting Participants

Participants are still needed for a single-visit, paid study of possible connections between bowel function, high blood sugar/diabetes and kidney/eye disease in people with chronic traumatic spinal cord injury (SCI).

You may be eligible to participate if you:

- Are between 18 and 75
- Have had a traumatic SCI 10 years or more
- Have not been diagnosed or treated for diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, chronic kidney or liver disease, vascular disease, or narrow angle glaucoma

**Interested? Questions?**  
Contact Michael Stillman, MD, at michael.stillman@jefferson.edu or 215-955-8872.

INVESTIGATIONAL DRUG STUDY

Study Looks at Investigative Drug for Arm and Hand Impairment

Researchers at Thomas Jefferson University are now recruiting for the RESET Study: ReNetX Safety Efficacy and Tolerability. If you have chronic cervical spinal cord injury (SCI) and significant impairment of arm and hand function, you may be eligible for this multicenter, two-part study of an investigational drug known as AXER-204. You may participate in the study if you:

- Are 18–65 years of age
- Have traumatic cervical SCI that occurred at least one year ago that affected your ability to use your arms and hands, and that was not caused by a penetrating injury or gunshot
- Are not pregnant or breastfeeding
- Do not require ventilator assistance
- Do not have any medical conditions that would increase the risks associated with lumbar punctures

The study involves completing questionnaires about your condition, as well as physical exams, blood draws, electrocardiograms, neurological tests and MRI scans. Lumbar punctures are necessary to collect cerebrospinal fluid and inject the investigational drug.

There is no cost for study-related tests and procedures, and participants will receive some compensation for travel and time.

For information, contact Marilyn Owens at marilyn.owens@jefferson.edu or 215-955-6579 or visit ClinicalTrials.gov and search for study #NCT03989440.

Activity-based Study on Arm and Hand Rehabilitation Therapy

Researchers with Jefferson’s Department of Rehabilitation Medicine and the Spinal Cord Injury Model System are recruiting participants for a study on activity-based training for arm and hand function in spinal cord injury (SCI). This study will look at rehabilitation therapy for upper extremities in adults with incomplete SCI to the neck that limits how they can use their hand and arm. You might be eligible if you:

- Can move at least one shoulder and some fingers
- Have incomplete SCI (levels C1 to C7).
- Can come to Jefferson University twice a week for a total of up to eight, two-hour visits
- Can understand and speak English well enough to provide feedback

The National Institute of Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research is funding the study.

For information, contact Namrata Grampurohit at nxg073@jefferson.edu or 206-353-6054.
Learn About Spinal Cord Injury Clinical Trials

Clinical trials play an important role in improving patient care. Are you curious about the latest research into spinal cord injury? Have you thought about participating in a clinical trial?

Finding Answers

You might have questions about what the clinical trials are investigating, where the research is taking place and who is eligible to participate in the studies. You can find information about spinal cord injury research on these websites:

- **clinicaltrials.gov** – The National Institute of Health website lists hundreds of thousands of privately and publicly funded clinical studies in all 50 states and in 209 countries around the world. You can use the search box on the home page to find spinal cord injury studies.

- **centerwatch.com** – CenterWatch is a source of clinical trial information for patients and professionals. To find spinal cord injury trials, use the Clinical Trials menu and choose Search Clinical Trials, and then enter Spinal Cord Injuries in the Medical Condition field.

- **scitrials.org** – The Spinal Cord Injury Trials site makes it easy to find SCI trials, get the latest updates and apply online—all from the home page. It also has links to resources to learn about clinical trials.

Questions to Ask Yourself

Participating in a clinical trial is a personal decision. As you learn about current trials and think about taking part, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- How long has it been since my spinal cord injury? Studies investigating chronic SCI usually only enroll patients who are at least 12 months post injury.

- How far am I willing to travel for a clinical trial? Find out how many visits the trial involves and the frequency of visits.

- How long can I commit to a research trial? Some studies last only a few weeks; others are much longer.

- What are my expectations regarding clinical trial participation? You might benefit directly from the research or you might not, but you will contribute to advancing knowledge that may help others.

iFIT STUDY

Paid Study Evaluates Lower Limb Prosthesis

Researchers from the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Penn Medicine are looking for adult men and women with above- or below-knee amputation to volunteer in a research study to determine the comfort and functionality of a new immediate-fit lower-limb prosthesis.

You may be eligible if you:

- Have above-knee or below-knee amputation
- Weigh less than 260 pounds
- Are 18 years or older
- Currently use a functional prosthesis
- Have no skin ulcerations or rashes on the limb
- Have no central nervous system disorders, such as stroke or brain injury, that could interfere with safe walking
- Have no severe phantom or limb pain

The prosthetic fitting and follow-up take place at Penn’s Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation on Lombard Street in Philadelphia. Participants will receive compensation and get to keep the prosthesis at no cost if they choose.

For more information on the study, contact Kristine Lima at Kristine.Lima@uphs.upenn.edu or 215-893-2679.
We Investigate, Collaborate and Share Knowledge

The Regional Spinal Cord Injury Center of the Delaware Valley is committed to advancing and sharing knowledge of spinal cord injury care, treatment and cure. Here are publications and presentations by our staff since the last issue of The Cord.

**PUBLICATIONS**


Pat McCloskey Soars with the Magee Eagles Rugby Team

Pat McCloskey shattered his C-6 vertebrae in a 2006 ice hockey accident. Today, the Magee Eagles wheelchair rugby team empowers him to compete again—and forge strong connections.

Pat joined the team in 2011. “It was nerve-wracking and exhilarating at the same time,” he says. “I was learning as I was playing, but it felt good to be part of a team again and make a contribution.”

Scoring Multiple Benefits

He credits wheelchair rugby with keeping him active, strong and flexible—and maybe more important—confident. “Because of rugby, I do not consider myself disabled and broken, but rather as a capable human being with aspirations and goals,” Pat says.

Pat also values the strong bonds he has built with teammates and loves the fact that his father, Chuck, volunteers with the team.

Discovering New Opportunities

Pat encourages others to get involved, too.

“Life is all about experiences. You are physically a new person with a plethora of opportunities to be whoever you want to be,” Pat says. “The hard part is taking the step forward to find out who that is. A sports team can help guide you to becoming the most independent and happiest you can be.”

Magee’s Wheelchair Sports Program includes rugby, racing, tennis, sled hockey and basketball. Players and volunteers are both welcome. If you’re interested, contact Keith Newerla, community programs coordinator, at 215-587-3412 or sports@jefferson.edu.
Meet Nigel: Magee’s Newest Facility Dog

Nigel works alongside occupational therapist Peter DeLong to help promote successful rehabilitation at Magee. Facility dogs are carefully bred and expertly trained dogs that partner with a facilitator in a professional setting like Magee to help patients achieve their therapy goals. Working side by side with trained professionals, facility dogs engage patients in sessions designed to improve functional outcomes, stimulate healing and recovery, and provide comfort and unconditional love. Nigel, who follows 45 different commands, is trained to pick up objects as small as a credit card to help patients retrieve objects that may be out of reach. Playing fetch with Nigel helps with upper arm mobility, and grooming the dog or walking with assistance from the dog can help patients improve their motor skills.

Riverfront Wellness Center Gets the Latest FES Technology

Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) therapy can help retrain muscles, prevent or delay muscle atrophy from lack of use, relax muscle spasms, maintain or increase range of motion and improve local circulation. Magee recently acquired the newest FES technology on the market for patients with paralysis, called the Xcite®, by Restorative Therapies, Inc. The new technology enhances our FES program by stimulating movement in some nerve/muscle systems that didn’t respond to previous levels of stimulation.
Announcements

New Private Suites Enhance Patient Comfort and Convenience

The new beauty at Magee Rehabilitation Hospital is more than skin deep. Progress continues on a remodeling project that will provide private suites to enhance our patients’ stay with us and help our staff provide services more efficiently.

“Nothing compares to the transformation currently underway at Magee,” says Jack Carroll, PhD, MHA, president and CEO. “If it weren’t for the state-of-the-art hospital beds, you would confuse the new rooms with hotel suites.”

Elegantly Appointed Rooms

The renovations are designed to create a more homelike environment while offering sophisticated features, including total room automation that allows patients to control room temperature, lighting, window blinds and television from their bed. Private en suite bathrooms can accommodate wheelchairs and other equipment.

Other amenities include:

• 55-inch flat-screen televisions
• Safe for personal belongings
• Heat lamps for warmth and comfort while showering

“Magee is truly patient centric. We believe in focusing on the needs of those we have the privilege to serve,” Dr. Carroll says. “Unlike an acute-care hospital, we sometimes measure a patient’s stay in weeks, not days. Our goal is to make that stay as homelike as possible, with a facility that is the best in the region.”

With amenities like a 55-inch flat-screen TV and comfortable guest seating, the new private suites rival hotel accommodations.

Other Happenings

Vision Clinic Provides Evaluations and Therapy

A life-changing injury or illness can frequently affect vision, and addressing visual changes is an important aspect of comprehensive rehabilitation. The vision clinic at Magee Rehabilitation Hospital provides optometric evaluations as well as vision therapy for those who have had:

• Brain injury
• Stroke
• Multiple sclerosis
• Other disorders that alter the way the visual system works

Visual changes can be addressed through specific exercises and/or special corrective lenses.

Magee can provide these vision assessment and rehabilitation services through the generosity of the Norman Raab Foundation, which provided inaugural funding; the support of The Friends of Jerry Segal; and through collaboration with Salus University.

These services are available to any individual who is served by a Magee physiatrist. For information or to make an appointment, please call the Gaspar Lifetime Follow-up Clinic at 215-587-3406.

Magee Sends Strong Representation to Professional Conference

Magee staff members made a strong showing at the Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals (ASCIP) 2019 Conference and Expo in early September. Our SCI professionals participated in presentations about Magee’s Adolescent Program, a new video series for persons newly injured, and on changes to the International Standards for the Neurological Classification of SCI. Magee staff also presented six posters; one of which received special recognition for Excellence in Clinical Practice. Magee interdisciplinary team members attending included nurses, occupational and physical therapists, case managers, clinical dietitian, and program director.
Support Groups

SCI Support Group Provides Opportunities and Outings

When the unthinkable happens, it’s nearly impossible to imagine a future. By talking with other individuals with spinal cord injuries (SCI) in the SCI Resource & Support Group at Magee, participants can get a picture of what is possible. The group offers education, recreation and support, including occasional social outings, and provides an opportunity to share or learn tips and resources that have helped people get back to living life. The group facilitators welcome suggestions for topics.

The group meets on the second Thursday of every month from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. in the Second Floor Conference Room.

Interested? Questions?
Contact Marie Protesto at marie.protesto@jefferson.edu or 215-587-3174.

Get Support at Magee!
For details, contact the individuals listed or visit MageeRehab.org/community/support-groups/.

- SCI Family Peer Support Group:
  Ruth Black
  ruth.black@jefferson.edu
  215-587-3030

- Young Adult SCI Social Group:
  Joann Rudi
  joann.rudi@jefferson.edu
  215-518-3912

- Stroke Family Care Group:
  Sonya Dibeler
  sonya.dibeler@jefferson.edu
  215-587-3411

- Wendekos Stroke Club:
  Fritz Louis Jean
  fritz.louisjean@jefferson.edu
  215-587-3180

- Aphasia Support Group:
  Ashley Owens
  ashley.owens@jefferson.edu
  215-587-3484

- Healthy Living (Multiple Sclerosis):
  Colleen McAllister
  colleen.mcallister@jefferson.edu
  215-218-3903

- Amputation Support Group:
  MRH_-amputee@jefferson.edu
  215-587-3106

- Brain Injury Family Care Group:
  Sonya Dibeler
  sonya.dibeler@jefferson.edu
  215-587-3411

- Addictions Mentors:
  Ruth Black
  ruth.black@jefferson.edu
  215-587-3030