

# NNMC Spine Center of Excellence:

*Accelerating healing with artificial disc replacement.*

A speedy recovery for racecar champ Ken Kurtz made spinal surgery feel like a pit stop.

Ken Kurtz feels the need for speed. A computer engineer, racecar driver and four-time winner of the United States Touring Car Championship (USTCC), Ken is not one to sit still – even when he sustained a severe neck injury while moving computer equipment.

In April 2013, Kurtz was lifting a heavy computer above his head when it slipped from his grasp. He extended his right arm and grabbed the 140-pound machine before it crashed – literally – but not before it struck his shoulder. “I felt an intense, white-hot pain in my neck,” he recalls. “For weeks, I was unable turn my head without pain and had numbness in both arms.”

### A severe neck injury

He met with Deven Khosla, MD, FAANS, a neurosurgeon with expertise in the use of minimally invasive techniques to ease spinal pain and repair abnormalities. “A cervical disc at the base of Ken’s neck had been severely compromised by the impact,” says Dr. Khosla.



Deven Khosla, MD, FAANS  
Neurosurgeon,  
Sierra Neurosurgery Group

Ken tried physical therapy and steroid injections to ease the constant pain, but four weeks later, he was unable to sleep and “my arms felt like pins and needles,” he says.

At this point, Dr. Khosla told Kurtz he needed to have surgery. “I explained to Ken that he had two choices,” he says. ▶

“The first was a spinal fusion, which would mean a longer recovery. The second was an advanced artificial disc replacement procedure. Because there is no need for a neck brace with a disc replacement, there is typically a more rapid recovery and a faster return to normal daily activities.”

As usual, Ken made a fast decision. “I felt that the artificial disc replacement would allow me to get back to my life as quickly as possible,” he says. Unlike spinal fusion, artificial disc replacement does not require fusing of vertebrae, which locks the bones together so they cannot move except as a single unit. “An artificial disc will retain the spine’s mobility and share the loads exerted on the spine,” Dr. Khosla explains. “This reduces the probability of needing a future surgery.”

*“The hospital had a phenomenal staff – I didn’t have to wait for anything!”*

– Ken Kurtz

### Crossing the finish line

Kurtz realized the benefits of the procedure immediately. “From the time I woke up in recovery until now, I’ve had no pain,” he says. “Two months after surgery, Dr. Khosla cleared me to race again!”

What did Kurtz take away from his experience? “The care I received was phenomenal. I was very happy with my surgeon, and I had a private suite. But the staff was awesome! They were very quick to respond to a request – I never had to wait for anything!” ■

## NECK OR BACK PAIN?

*Reduce your pain. Restore your lifestyle.*

The following questions are designed to see if you could benefit from therapeutic intervention to address your back or neck pain.

- 1 Do you have neck or back pain that limits you performing daily functional activities? (e.g.: dressing, bathing, toileting)
- 2 Do you have neck or back pain that restricts you from performing any recreational activities? (e.g.: hiking, sports)
- 3 Do you have neck or back pain that restricts you from performing any daily household activities? (e.g.: laundry, vacuuming, cleaning)
- 4 Do you have pain at night that significantly interferes with your sleeping?
- 5 Do you have any of the following symptoms in your arms or legs: pain, burning, shooting pain, ache/numbness, tingling?
- 6 Have you noticed weakness in your arms or legs?
- 7 Have you noticed significant loss of balance or difficulty walking?
- 8 Do you have a weakness in the foot or ‘foot drop’?
- 9 Have you experienced loss of bowel or bladder control?

**IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO AT LEAST ONE OF THESE QUESTIONS,** you should consult with a physician. If you are experiencing any of the symptoms in questions 6 – 9, you may need a referral to a spine surgeon. Call our Spine Care Center of Excellence at **775-356-6662** to schedule an appointment.

