

# Back on Their Feet

*Clinician who loves helping patients return to normal life knows research is the key to getting them there.*

As a high school wrestler with two similarly active brothers, **Mark C. Pinto, MD** spent much of his youth observing orthopaedists.

"I made out pretty easy compared to my brothers," Dr. Pinto recalled. "I did not need surgery like they did. I had only minor injuries to my knees."

All those hours waiting in doctors' offices might have made some young adults steer clear of the medical profession, but Dr. Pinto was inspired.

"We would be injured and the orthopaedists would treat us and get us back on our feet fairly quickly," said Dr. Pinto, who is now a surgeon with Chelsea Orthopedic Specialists in Chelsea, Mich.

Dr. Pinto dreamed of becoming a physician from an early age. Rather than treat chronic illness, he hoped to solve problems quickly and efficiently.

"I like to help patients get their lives back in a definitive way and allow them to put the medical condition behind them. That's what drew me to orthopaedics," he said.

Dr. Pinto now specializes in sports medicine, with a particular focus on arthroscopy for knee and shoulder injuries. Arthroscopic procedures are particularly satisfying, he said, because they allow him to use advanced medical technology to help patients return to normal activities more quickly than ever before.

▼ Dr. Pinto with the Chelsea Orthopedic Specialists surgical team.



## EYES OPEN TO RESEARCH

Quality care begins long before a patient undergoes surgery. Research is key to improving the lives of patients, said Dr. Pinto, whether that involves understanding what causes injuries or creating more effective surgical techniques to repair them.

Dr. Pinto first learned this when he researched hockey injuries during his residency at the University of Michigan. The analysis of his data provided insights into how to help players prevent certain injuries. The findings helped to influence rule changes in the game, as well as equipment improvements such as adding face guards to helmets.

Although he no longer engages in research in his clinical practice, Dr. Pinto can easily point to the ways in which it benefits his patients. For example, the identification, mobilization and repair of subscapularis tears using arthroscopy—pioneered by **Stephen S. Burkhart, MD**—provides treatment that is far less invasive than open surgery.

Such clinically relevant research requires significant financial support, Dr. Pinto noted. This fact was reinforced for him when he was asked a few years ago to participate in the Leadership Fellows Program through the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. "My eyes were opened to the direct link between money raised to support orthopaedic research and education, and better outcomes for patients," he said. "Not everyone has the wherewithal



▲ Mark C. Pinto, MD

to do research, but we can all support it because it provides improved care for patients in a very real and beneficial way.”

Recently, Dr. Pinto decided to become an Alfred R. Shands Jr., MD Circle member to ensure his support would last a lifetime. By donating an insurance policy, he said, he could establish a substantial gift that he wouldn’t have to worry about from year to year.

## GIVE WHAT YOU CAN

Dr. Pinto, who is also a generous supporter of OREF’s Annual Campaign, said the organization offers a transparent and trustworthy way to support the growth of orthopaedics.

“OREF gives me a central location to give money and know that it’s going to serve orthopaedics directly,” he said.

Dr. Pinto often explains to his colleagues that OREF provides what he describes as a strong return on investment. He believes many orthopaedists don’t fully recognize the impact that OREF has made on their field. They also may not understand how easy it is to support OREF.

“A lot of people think that if they don’t have bags of money to give, they can’t donate. I would encourage fellow surgeons to contribute at whatever level you can,” said Dr. Pinto. “We still have a hard time getting that message out.”

Dr. Pinto will continue to spread that message because he firmly believes that new advancements and improved procedures will benefit his patients. Plus, it may come in handy for a new generation of Pinto athletes. His children, ages 11 and 13, participate in a variety of sports including hockey, lacrosse, basketball, tennis and swimming. His son has already broken his wrist twice, and his foot once. But thanks to the continuing advancements in orthopaedics, he was back to his active lifestyle in no time. ■

## ABOUT THE ALFRED R. SHANDS JR., MD CIRCLE



Founded in 1994 to secure permanent funding for research and education, the Shands Circle is OREF’s most prestigious donor recognition society, reserved for those who have contributed \$20,000 or more in cash gifts (within five years) or \$100,000 or more through deferred giving arrangements. Shands Circle member contributions fund the OREF Endowment, which consists of a general fund for OREF that is directed by its board of trustees and more than 40 other funds that benefit the spectrum of subspecialties on diseases and injuries of bones, joints, nerves and muscles.

Shands Circle members are encouraged to support current research and education projects by giving to the 2012 Annual Campaign at the Order of Merit level (\$1,000+), and inviting at least two colleagues to join the Shands Circle in 2012. As of September 30, 2012, the Shands Circle included more than 630 members.