

National Doctors' Day a time to say thanks

These pros all have had an impact on my quality of life.

Rather than wring our hands about whether the new health-care bill is historically reformative, or



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disastrously misguided, let's take today — National Doctors' Day — to put that debate aside. Instead, let's give the special

doctor(s) in our lives the props they deserve. Send a card, letter or e-mail telling him or her how much you appreciate the care you've received.

In fact, I'll get things started by publicly acknowledging some local doctors who've made huge impacts in my life — and pay posthumous tribute to one, without whose expertise I might not be here today.

Michael Bastowski, D.C.

I've been treated by numerous chiropractors during the past 25 years, but none had the dramatic effect on my well-being that "Dr. Mike" did. When I first saw him, in 2003, I had just suffered a subluxation of the sacroiliac joint (chiropractic jargon for "lower-back injury"), was limping, had limited mobility and was in significant pain.

Within a few visits to his Dynamic Medical

Rehab Center (which is inside the Tropical Fitness gym in Deerfield Beach), I benefited greatly from the combination of his custom treatment protocols and expert spinal adjustments, which eliminated the pain. Whenever I have any sports injury these days, he's the first person I see.

Candace Colella, DMD

As I recounted in this space a few weeks ago ("Chew on this: Dealing with dental reality"), the superb front-teeth-bonding handiwork of the dentist I referred to as "Dr. C" not only restored my smile — it also reestablished my consumptive dominance over apples and other crunchy fare.

Craig Hugo, DVM

For devoted pet parents, finding a trusted veterinarian is the equivalent of human parents finding a trusted pediatrician. That's why I take my two feline "babies" — Tanner and Charlie — to Dr. Hugo's unique practice. Why is it unique? Because, in the intimate office that Dr. Hugo and his wife, Karen, run, the only patients are cats.

The Hugos and I love dogs, too. But the sight, sound and scent of them stress out the kitties. Thankfully, that's never a concern at this place. Oh, and let me echo what countless fellow clients of Dr. Hugo have told him over the years: You can never retire. Ever. We won't allow it.

Bradley Silverman, D.O.

Even before he became a prominent Aventura sur-

geon, Dr. Silverman was a high achiever: The son of Miami-Dade County's first paramedic, Dr. Silverman was named to the 1980 U.S. Olympic Water Polo Team. But he never got to compete; those were the Olympic Games that the U.S. boycotted.

I was first treated by Dr. Silverman in 1993. I was born with a congenital double inguinal hernia that had never caused a single symptom — until that April evening when one side became strangulated. (Nowadays, congenital hernias in toddlers are preemptively repaired. But when we were kids — no pain, no procedure.)

Dr. Silverman left his Passover seder to meet me at the Aventura Medical Center emergency room. His soothing bedside manner immediately set me at ease. I also was impressed with his dedication: He rearranged his following day's surgery schedule to fit me in before sunrise.

However, what was supposed to be an outpatient procedure mushroomed into a three-day hospital stay (the only one of my life) because I had a one-in-a-million condition: The small intestine was twisted around the hernia.

Dr. Silverman stressed afterward how lucky I was that the hernia "expressed itself" when it did — instead of in my 40s or 50s, when the small-intestine complication could have made the situation more life-threatening than it already was.

Life-threatening? C'mon, Doc, aren't you exaggerating just a bit?

So rare was my condition that Dr. Silverman said he had studied it before but had never actually seen a case. He could barely contain his excitement; he had just hit the surgical lottery and was going to write medical-journal articles about it. Soon thereafter, he repaired my other hernia without incident.

Fast-forward a decade to Jan. 12, 2003 (my birthday), when Bee Gees singer Maurice Gibb died at age 53 in Miami Beach's Mount Sinai Medical Center (my birth hospital) following a rarely seen small-intestine-related complication from ... minor hernia surgery.

I would've told Dr. Silverman that he had been right all those years earlier. But, tragically, I couldn't.

Four years prior, on Jan. 11, 1999, Dr. Silverman, 41, was gunned down at point-blank range at his Aventura office, allegedly by a deranged former patient. The accused murderer, who has been in custody for more than 11 years, has never been deemed mentally fit to stand trial.

More than 2,500 people attended Dr. Silverman's funeral — I among them.

Guess you weren't exaggerating after all, Dr. Silverman.

Have a question/comment for Steve?

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