

## 99-year-old woman regains mobility following spinal procedures

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Scans of Elizabeth DiGennaro's spine show the compression fracture, above, and the results, below, after doctors at University of Rochester Medical Center performed kyphoplasty to repair the bone.

(Medical Xpress) -- A 99-year-old woman has returned to her daily routine after doctors repaired three separate compression fractures in her spine three times in a month. Specialists at the University of Rochester Medical Center repaired the brittle vertebra using bone glue while the patient was under sedation, which is easier for elderly patients.

Elizabeth DiGennaro of Scottsville is the [oldest person](#) to undergo the procedure at URMCC exemplifying doctors' commitment to providing

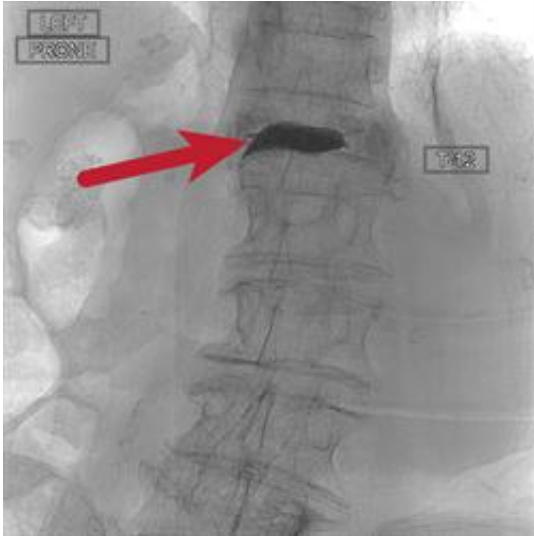
comprehensive care for the fast-growing elderly population. She believes the injury occurred during routine chores that may have been too much for her aging, osteoporotic bones.

She will celebrate her 100th birthday Jan. 3.

“Looking at the scans, you can see that bone had crumbled into pieces,” said Per-Lennart Westesson, M.D., D.D.S., Ph.D., a neuroradiologist who collaborated with Orthopedic surgeon Susan V. Bukata, M.D., and Freda B. Hannafon, FNP-C,MSN, of The Center for Bone Health, to care for DiGennaro.

After several weeks of being bedridden with back pain, DiGennaro’s family worried that she would never recover. They sought help from Bukata, who suggested balloon kyphoplasty. The procedure involves injecting bone cement directly into the compression fracture and using balloons to shift the vertebrae back into place to relieve pain and hasten healing.

This procedure has been used for decades by doctors in Orthopedics, Neurosurgery and Interventional Radiology. Bukata recognized that traditional surgery under general anesthesia may not be best for DiGennaro, because it can elevate a risk of stroke in [elderly patients](#). Bukata suggested Westesson perform kyphoplasty using sedation in an interventional radiology suite, rather than an operating room.



“This was a better option for Mrs. DiGennaro and other elderly patients who suffer these types of injuries,” said Westesson, professor of Imaging Sciences.

The near-centenarian has always been an active, strong-willed woman, according to her daughter, Barbara Galbraith. And the spinal fracture was very painful and the medications to control the pain made her confused and exhausted, and as a result, she was bedridden

“We were really worried that she’d never be able to enjoy her life again,” Galbraith said. “That was no way for her to live.”

“The pain went away immediately and she was back to her normal self again. Two days later she was in pain again, and it was a break, but not the same place. And then there was a third one. Each time we went back and had the second and third procedures she did really well.”

DiGennaro had the first surgery on Sept. 30, followed by a second on

Oct. 12, and the third on Nov. 23. Each procedure was a success; the [pain](#) was gone and she was able to resume her normal life.

URMC doctors perform more than 100 kyphoplasty procedures each year, providing much needed relief for aging adults with compression fractures.

“This is something we’ll do more and more often with sedation as we see the baby boomer generation age further,” Westesson said.

Provided by University of Rochester Medical Center

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