

“Doctor Learns to Live as Patient after Ohio Go-Kart Mishap”

Courtesy of *The News-Herald*

Published on Wednesday, August 22, 2001

Dr. David Wolf, a prominent Trenton physician, is learning to adjust to life as a paraplegic. The 54-year-old crashed during a go-kart race at Toledo (Ohio) Speedway on July 29. His injuries left him paralyzed from the waist down.

“I was on the inside of the second row and when we were coming around the first turn, two cars were spinning in front of me,” Wolf said Monday from his room in the Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan in Detroit.

To avoid hitting the go-karts, he tried to pass them on the outside of the track. As he did, however, he lost control and smashed into the wall.

Wolf estimated that he was going about 50 mph when his go-kart crashed.

“It was such a force that it drove my engine and disc brake forward,” he said.

The disc brake went through his seat and fractured Wolf’s lower back. He also fractured eight ribs on his left side and two on the right.

Wolf was taken to St. Vincent’s Mercy Medical Center in Toledo, where he underwent neurosurgery Aug 2.

“There was no hope of me moving my legs again,” Wolf said. “But the surgery was a way to stabilize my lower spine so that additional damage wouldn’t be done.”

He was transferred to the Rehabilitation Institute on Aug. 15.

“I am learning how to get back to normal,” he said.

Every day, Wolf goes through occupational and physical therapy regimes, lifts weights and learns how to get around in a wheelchair.

He expects to be in rehabilitation for about two months.

Dealing with the sudden change in his life has proven to be a challenge for the obstetrician/gynecologist.

“As a physician, I was used to being independent,” Wolf said. “It’s difficult to get used to being a dependent person and being a patient that has to wait for other people to help you. But I think it will make me a better doctor because I’ll be more sympathetic to my patients’ desires and thoughts because I know what it’s like to be in bed and in pain.”

Although he probably will no longer deliver babies, Wolf intends to continue doing gynecological surgery and mentor new doctors in the residency program at Riverside Osteopathic Hospital.

He hopes to be back to his Trenton practice and his duties at the hospital in a matter of months.