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## Amniotic Allograft Injections

### Groundbreaking new treatment prevents surgery and shortens recuperation time for patients suffering from serious tendon injury.

Susan Minshall was going up the Heart Bridge in the second-to-last mile of the River Run when she suddenly felt a huge tug in her left foot. Her instincts told her she had injured a major tendon in the foot, but she chose to soldier on.



Susan got miraculous results from the amniotic allograft injections at Community Podiatry & Wound Care.

“Instead of stopping and just walking the rest of the way, I kept running,” Susan remembers. “I got to the finish line and was just miserable. I was limping badly. I was in a lot of pain. I had a feeling at that point that it was my Achilles tendon.”

Despite the possible severity of her injury, Susan didn't have her foot examined by a physician. Instead, she nursed it herself at home. Once it started to feel better, she went back to her usual activities, which included working out and running.

As the years passed, Susan's foot continued to be a challenge for her, and the instability and pain that the injury caused seemed to worsen.

“It started to hurt really badly, to the point where, when I finished a run and was cooling down, it felt like my foot was detached from the rest of my body, and I would just sort of drag my leg,” describes Susan.

Still she resisted seeking a physician’s care, thinking if she ignored the condition, it would go away. It took an episode of severe walking distress, observed by concerned family members while on vacation, that convinced her to see a medical professional.

Susan made an appointment with a podiatrist, who performed a full evaluation and ordered an MRI. The results of the imaging test showed that the Achilles tendon in Susan’s left foot was more than 80 percent torn.

The doctor immediately immobilized Susan’s foot and began treatment, which included a discussion of possible surgery. When the doctor suggested Susan undergo a form of alternative therapy, she was eager to try, especially if it meant avoiding the operating room. The doctor then referred her to Rosana Rodriguez, DPM, CWSP, at Community Podiatry & Wound Care.

“After my first appointment with her, she told me she wanted to do something different, a form of alternative therapy called *prolotherapy*,” notes Susan. Prolotherapy involves injecting a solution – usually a mixture of sugar and a local anesthetic – into part of a joint, such as a supporting tendon. The solution stimulates the body’s natural ability to repair the tissue and, as a result, relieve pain.

“Then, about a month later, her office called me and told me that a medical company was at the office, and they were looking for candidates to try a new form of injection. This form of injection was taken from amniotic membrane fluid. It is a form of stem cells. I was very curious at this point because of all the media attention on stem cells.”

Susan is referring to amniotic allograft injections, an innovative new treatment that uses the nutrient-rich fluid obtained from a donor mother during childbirth. It is taken from the discarded amniotic sac after delivery.

“I felt good about this treatment because it has nothing to do with harming the child or taking any of the stem cells from the baby. And they’re taken from a healthy mother. She’s tested for various types of diseases like AIDS and hepatitis. So I felt really good about this. It was something that seemed like it was worth a try.

“Dr. Rodriguez told me that I would be the first one in St. Augustine who would have this injected into the Achilles. She never once got discouraged or said, *This isn’t going to work. You’re probably going to end up having surgery*. She was so positive with everything, and her enthusiasm rubbed off on me.”

## How it works

“The amniotic membrane in a fetus is what protects the fetus and also allows the growth and development of the fetus while it is in the womb,” explains Dr. Rodriguez. “What we obtain is the amniotic fluid, which, once sterilized, can then be utilized for various purposes.”

Amniotic allograft injections involve using micronized and purified amniotic tissue to treat wounds, surgical incisions, and bone and soft tissue injuries. The material used for the injections is derived from tissue recovered from live, healthy donors during childbirth, which is then cryopreserved (frozen).

Because the amniotic fluid is made up of cells designed to promote growth and development, it has unique

healing properties. The fluid in the injections contains essential growth factors and extracellular proteins, such as collagen, which provides a natural scaffold for the attachment of new tissue. It also reduces inflammation and scar tissue formation.

“When you inject this type of cryopreserved factor, it creates the appropriate growth tissue,” states Dr. Rodriguez. “So, if you put it in tendon, it grows tendon. If you put it in muscle, it grows muscle. If you put it in bone, it will grow bone, and so on.

“There are no side effects. After the injection, I immobilize the area and ask the patient not to walk for three to five days. After three to five days, I follow up with the patient and then allow the patient to go back to regular activities as tolerated, and I monitor the progress of the patient on a weekly basis.”



Susan Minshall

Dr. Rodriguez was mindful that Susan is young and active, so she decided to use the amniotic allograft injections for Susan to prevent surgery, restore function, and strengthen the tendon to avoid re-injury.

“She had about eighty-five percent rupture of her Achilles tendon, and this was affecting her activities of daily living,” Dr. Rodriguez notes. “Utilizing this type of bio-factor creates tissue and restores the Achilles tendon and make the area stronger.”

## Miraculous results

Susan recalls her appointment with Dr. Rodriguez when she was given the amniotic allograft injections. The representatives from the medical supply company were there, and everyone was very excited about Susan agreeing to undergo the leading-edge therapy.

“It was maybe five or six weeks later,” relates Susan, “I went in for an MRI. When Dr. Rodriguez received the results, she called me in, and she was so excited. She just looked at me and said, *This is a miracle!* She said I had healed completely! She wanted me to start resuming regular activity.”

“It is amazing,” marvels Dr. Rodriguez. “I have used it in quite a few patients now, and absolutely every patient who has been treated with amniotic fluid injections has had an excellent response.”

Susan is back to her usual routines, although she remains cautious about her Achilles tendon. She feels that her tendon is stronger and thicker than before, and she is doing her activities virtually pain free.

She is grateful to Dr. Rodriguez and the staff of Community Podiatry & Wound Care for the care and support they provided during this experience.

“The office staff kind of became part of my family, and Dr. Rodriguez is just so knowledgeable and up on current things. She really wants to see her patients heal and be treated. There was never a time when I sensed that she was going to give up and do surgery.”



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