

April 14, 2019

I go for my pre-op visit on the 24th of April. I run a half-marathon in Pittsburgh on May 5th. Then surgery on May 16th.

I had the RALP a year ago and the leaking has not improved even though I feel like I would be competitive in the Kegel Olympics. 4-5 pads per day. There are things I find myself not doing because I don't want to be hassled by the leaking so I have to get it fixed.

May 15, 2019

Well, surgery is postponed. I was just diagnosed, probably, with a herniated disc. It's probably related to running a half marathon in Pittsburgh and then sitting in a car for three days to drive back to Montana and lifting a big dog crate out of the truck by myself. I started having leg pain last Thursday and thought it was a muscle spasm. It got worse by Sunday so I went to a clinic and they gave me muscle relaxers and pain meds. They didn't help so I went back today and saw a real doctor and he said it is likely the disc. It makes sense since the muscle relaxers had no effect.

I have to get that cleared up before surgery can take place. They gave me some steroids and if I am not better in a week to go back and they'll do an MRI. It's pretty painful. I can only take about 3 steps at a time before stopping to let the pain subside. This has probably been developing for a while as I was in for back pain last February and once before that.

Getting old isn't for sissies.

Jun 4, 2019

Regarding the cost of the surgery.....

I asked and she said that the device is \$12,000 and the whole procedure runs about \$55,000. She said that my Medicare should cover most of it. I have a supplemental insurance plan that will pick up what Medicare doesn't. If I had no insurance I'd just pay for it myself. At 67 I am not going to live the rest of my life like this so it would be worth it.

I don't know if I mentioned it, but she told me that she visited Boston scientific who makes the AUS and within a few years they plan to bring out a new version that is Bluetooth enabled. It will allow the user to adjust the tension on the cuff using a phone app. I like the sound of that because she told me that the life span is about 10 years and that is not the device but the urethra that wears out. Saving wear and tear on it during times that you wouldn't normally leak, for me at night, would seem to make sense. I know that some guys open the cuff and then push the bypass button to keep it open at night but I hear pushing the button is hard and can cause some erosion in the scrotum. I guess it takes some practice. I imagine that it would be possible for the new device to sense when you are exerting yourself and tighten the cuff automatically. That would be the dream anyway.

June 21, 2019

The day of the surgery...

Surgery went fine. I reported to the hospital at 5:30am. Surgery was at 7:30. I was home at 11:45. I have a catheter which I can take out myself tomorrow. Level of discomfort is about a 3 but I am on drugs and will be taking more when my wife gets back from the pharmacy.

So far, so good.

June 22, 2019

I took my catheter out this morning. Weird feeling but 15 seconds of slow pulling and it was over. Overall pain level is low and primarily feel it in the abdominal area. I'll just do Tylenol and ice. The perineal incision is there but I don't notice it. I did feel the pump so it is there. Overall I was expecting much worse. That back issue I had a few weeks ago was much worse than this.

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They gave me a syringe that fits the balloon side of the catheter. It's threaded and as you screw it in it opens a valve. Then you suck out the fluid. The nurse said to do it twice to make sure it's all out. That helped because I got another cc out of it. I was VERY apprehensive because of my experience a year ago. The doctor who removed it let the fluid out and then pulled on it like he was starting a lawn mower. I about passed out. Of course, things were more

tender since it had been in for a week but geeez, that was uncomfortable. I would recommend self-removal since you can moderate the pull.

Honestly, I feel well enough to meet my friends for our weekly get together at a local brewery but I am sure my wife would frown on that. I'll stay home and watch tutorials for how to draw with ProCreate on my new iPad.

I see the doc in two weeks and then activate this thing in 4 weeks. She did say that some are ready at two weeks. The package comes with a little practice pump that can go on a key chain.

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I am leaking like before so at least I'm not stopped up there. I am still waiting for peristalsis to get the bowels back on track.

June 23, 2019

Two steps forward, one step back...and just when I was thinking this wasn't so bad...

At the 36 hour post-op point, middle of the night, I got up to pee. I don't wear a pad at night and usually just manually clamp things off so I can make it to the toilet. I reach down and immediately noticed that the scrotum was swelled to twice its size. After emptying out I looked in the mirror and I have a royal purple bruise from above the public bone to all parts below. I returned to bed and packed the area with a package of frozen corn and tried to relax and eventually got back to sleep.

I had read that the bruising and the swelling is common and thought I'd dodge that but I guess there is a delay in the onset so file that away as info for when you take this trip. I think the bruising comes from the procedure to route all that tubing. I read the instruction manual from AMS directed to the the urologist and it says to create those pathways by "blunt dissection" which, I think, means to plow through the connective tissue with a finger or forceps. That explains a lot.

I also read on the forum that during the first couple days after the surgery it's common to wonder if the right decision was made. Yep, I thought about that for a moment, but I quickly put that aside and remember all the times I had "accidents" by exceeding the design capacity of the flood insurance I wear. And then there were the times I would stand up from a low position and

the “nozzle” would be pointed to the side and miss the pad entirely. This happened in a college ceramics class I was taking this past spring when I stood up from a pottery wheel. My classmates, all 20-somethings, are aware of my condition as I’ve been open about it and I deal with it humorously but the joke can quickly become stale, for me.

So, I guess I am on track and I hope I am not providing too much information, after all, your mileage may vary.

June 23, 2019

I go through 4-5 of the heavy duty guard pads per day. If I am working on my cars or doing gardening, where there is lots of squatting, getting up and down, etc. I might go through a few more. I have not tried other control methods as I figured that at the one year mark if I was still the same I’d get the AUS.

Interestingly, I don’t leak when horizontal, like at night. I will if I cough or sneeze in that position.

I am a distance runner and I will fill a pad in 3-5 miles depending on my level of hydration and the temperature. However, I ran a half marathon in Pittsburgh last month and made it through without a pad change. I think the body decides making sweat is more important than making urine.

Right now I am close to having my first post/op bowel movement. Between the anesthesia and the the pain killers that system takes a while to wake up. I think it took 4 days after RALP.

Overall this AUS is less painful than the RALP. There is only one abdominal incision rather than the 5 I had with the RALP. I feel it when getting up and down but it’s like a sore muscle rather than a sharp pain. I am not even aware of the perineal incision but I did get a donut cushion to sit on, partially to protect that area from the cuff while it heals. And only 24 hours of a catheter rather than a week is a big difference.

June 24, 2019

I am about 72 hours post op and doing well.

Yesterday was tough do to severe constipation. Not only was there the discomfort involved but I was getting quite anxious about it. I was taking stool softeners and drinking tons of water but making no progress. Late in the afternoon I took a fairly direct approach and "loosened the plug" and things worked fine after that.

The bruising covers a trapezoid area directly over the pubic bone about 2 and a half inches high by 4 inches wide. The bruising extends downward and includes the shaft of the penis and the scrotum. It has turned from purple to black.

I did take a short shower yesterday and could feel the perineal incision which, like the one in the abdomen, is sealed with glue. Surprisingly the perineal one has no discomfort associated with it. I would say that the primary discomfort is abdominal and very reminiscent of the post RALP feeling, although less so, maybe 25%. It hurts getting up and down but that's about it. I am still icing it.

If I did anything differently it would to be better prepared for the constipation. I would not have taken the oxycodone for pain but have stuck to Tylenol alone. They tell you not to wait until you feel the pain to take the meds and I was very apprehensive so I took it. I did take the stool softener along with it but I should have been doing Metamucil shooters as well. I think I would also have stayed on primarily a liquid diet until I had a bowel movement. That's what I did in Cleveland last year on their recommendation and I think that helped. I don't put all the blame on the oxycodone or my diet though. They told me in Cleveland that the last system to go back online after general anesthesia is the digestive.

So far, no regrets and I certainly wouldn't dissuade anyone from undertaking it due to the post op issues. After all, if I can pee only when I want to pee that would be great.

While this is down the road a bit I have read that the logistics of manipulating the pump are interesting. They suggest holding the top of the pump with one hand to keep it from moving away while squeezing with the other. I am not sure how "aiming" is accomplished. I read on one forum that in time a single handed technique can be developed. There is also the issue accessing the pump without partially undressing. All new things to learn.

June 24, 2019

My urologist's nurse called a bit ago to set up my 2 week appointment and told me that I need to pull the pump down into the scrotum 3 times per day. They hadn't mentioned that but I knew about it from the forums. There's a possibility/tendency for the pump to want to move up into the abdominal area instead of staying low in the scrotum and as we heal it could get stuck up higher than we'd want. I didn't feel like probing around much the past few days but this morning I gave it a tug and it's pretty low, at least as low as its neighbors. And it's on the correct side. That is your choice, BTW, usually on the side of your dominant hand.

And, it's nice to have a caregiver handy the first couple of day. My wife has been great and has kept me fed and harassed me to remember to drink lots of water. I'm retired and she's a self employed accountant and has lots of flexibility in her schedule. Today I actually got dressed and made my own breakfast but returned to bed to ice and rest and do some tutorials in ProCreate.

June 28, 2019

Healing is going well. One thing that is bugging me is that since they completely shaved me I am now aware of how much protection hair provides in keeping a pad from abrading the skin. I am not sure what the solution is for that. As a runner I am used to applying Vaseline in that area for chafing but I found out that it attacks/dissolves the pad material. And the lack of hair causes skin to stick together down there.

All things one never considers.

The rest of the healing is going OK. Yesterday I ventured out for the first time, got gas in the car, went to the post office and the grocery store. Made us a nice dinner.

It is difficult to bend over to pick something up off the floor because it pulls on the perineal incision or the clothing puts pressure on it. When sitting I am using a donut cushion I picked up on Amazon.

So, progress is being made. I don't like pulling that pump down three times per day as things are tender but they say you don't want it healing in an upper

position.

June 28, 2019

The bowels are almost back to normal as of today. Boy, when that stuff isn't working the world just isn't right. I never have an issue in that department because, as a long time vegetarian, I get plenty of fiber in my diet.

Most of the swelling is gone.

The cushion I bought is the Duro-Med 18-inch molded foam ring Donut seat cushion

It was about \$20 on Amazon. It's not round, more of an ellipse. I find that sitting on it with the long side parallel to legs is more comfortable.

The bruising continues to fade.

I mentioned that bending over is tough. I was playing fetch with the dog and we are working on return the ball to a chair instead of dropping it on the ground so I don't have to bend over. Everyone has to make accommodations for me.

My wife has taken over all the yard work which is a lot. Our house is on a corner and we own the house diagonally across from us which is a corner as well. We rent that one out. Mow, trim, etc. Wow, I may never want to get well.

July 3, 2019

Just a progress report at day 12. I am feeling pretty good. If it wasn't for the sensitivity of the scrotum I would feel about 90% but that tenderness makes walking annoying.

I did get out to a local brewery (we have many here) for a couple beers with friends last Saturday. I didn't take my donut cushion and probably should have. I sort of sit on one side and then roll to the other. Definitely do not want pressure in the middle.

Pulling the pump down 3 times per day is no joy. Luckily it feels like it is about as low as it will go but I still give it a tug. I suppose it's also practice on finding it.

It helps to lotion up that region to make the search and the pull easier but it's still tender. The incisions are healing well, still covered in glue. I do feel discomfort from the abdominal one all the way down to the groin but only when I stress that area. I try to lean to the right rather than to tighten that area when getting up from a bed or chair. Sleeping is OK, but as a side sleeper my legs together sort of pinch the perineal area and it's still not ready of that kind of attention yet.

Yesterday I took the dog to a nearby lake and walked him down to the dog beach/park. A very short walk, about a quarter mile, but played a lot of fetch with him. Bending over to pick up the stick pulls in the perineal area. I suppose that should loosen in time but at first I was concerned about popping it open. I have developed an stooping method for retrieving the stick and probably look like I'm 90.

Everything else is back to normal and I am back to doing the shopping and cooking. Because I am more sedentary than usual I am watching my food intake. Going from LOTS of running to nothing could easily translate to pounds. I am hoping when I see my uro on Monday she'll give me clearance to swim. My wife and I like to lap swim together 3-4 days per week. We use the pool at a local college which is only a mile from home so super convenient.

So, no regrets so far. The first couple of days were tough but it's a steady, although incremental, improvement since then. Small price to pay for, hopefully, a lifetime of dryness.

July 8, 2019

I saw the uro this morning and all is well. The incisions are healed enough that I got clearance to get back in the pool for my lap swimming. She said the pump placement is good. The rest of the healing process is progressing nicely. The skin of the scrotum still feels sensitive and she says it's the lack of hair and she takes responsibility for that. She's pretty funny.

I go back in 2 weeks and she'll activate it.

I also talked to her about why I am less continent now than in the past. It's because the one of the muscles I'd built up with Kegels is the one she cut through.

I am going through 6-7 pads per day.

Also, because I sit on the donut cushion I don't have pressure on the perineum which, in the past, squeezed on the urethra enough to keep me from leaking while sitting. I leak pretty much all the time now. I don't notice it and I have had situations where I stand up and realize I'm all wet.

One thing I'm looking forward to is getting back to wearing boxers.

July 19, 2019

Things are going really well. Every couple of days I'd say I feel the healing getting better. The perineum is definitely still sensitive. I certainly won't be going for a bicycle ride any time soon. The skin of the scrotum is still sensitive but I switched to a different brand of pad and I've been using lotion and baby powder so that helps.

I joined up with our running club and me and another guy did a 2 mile walk while they ran 3-5 miles. The walk felt great and I didn't feel too chafed down there.

Bending over is still an issue, mostly because clothes ride up in that area and put some pressure on things.

I've been lap swimming 4 times a week for the past two weeks and that is going well. The doctor told me to take it easy and I am.

I still have accidents, mostly because I forget to go. Since I leak all the time when I am vertical I never get that "full" alarm, except at night, and if I don't go empty out frequently I forget, the pad gets full, and you know the rest.

I have my "activation" appointment next Monday morning and am looking forward to it. I read the instructions so I think I know what will take place. The upper sides of the pump are squeezed and that allows the fluid to flow into the cuff. Then a few pumps of the cuff and it should be ready to go. I read on one blog that they have you wait a while for the bladder to fill and have you operate it on your own before you leave and that makes sense.

I don't know if I mentioned two things I am looking forward to by being dry but, if I don't still have to wear a light pad, going back to boxers. The other is eating asparagus. I had a big helping of that a few months ago and since I am always wet that stench it gives the urine followed me around.

I'll be asking the doctor how much longer on weight lifting restrictions and when I can start running again. My wife signed me up for two races. One is in early August and she put me in the 2 mile. I usually do the 5 mile. The other is in early September and I am in the 5K when I usually do the 10K. We do lots of running and swimming together and since I've been off a while and she's increased her training I won't be able to keep with her up for a while.

So, that's the latest from here. I've been keeping busy in non-lifting activities. I am restoring/building an early 70s quadraphonic hi-fi system. I bought lots of nice stuff back then when I was in the army and am trying to get it all operational again. I have a thing for reel-to-reel tape machines and have added a few extra ones to my system, like 7, along with some 8-track players. Compared to my vintage cars, this is a really inexpensive hobby. One of the tape machines has some bad pre-amps and one of the parts is no longer available, an integrated circuit, so I found some tips online for how to build it from individual components which just arrive today. Lots more fun than thinking about health issues.

July 22, 2019

### Activation

The process of turning it on only took a minute. She squeezed the top of the pump as per instructions and waited until the lower bulb filled, gave it a squeeze and said that was it. She had me stand a cough and I dribbled a little but she said that's normal. I think the cuff might not have been fully inflated yet. She also reminded me that I was between two sizes for the cuff and she went with the larger one since it would give me a better flow and does not put as much pressure on the urethra.

We did chat about deactivating it at night and I told her I was no longer interested in doing so. The literature I've read said that there is little evidence that it saves on urethra wear plus you have to add the extra wear and tear on the pump. At least I know how to deactivate it in case I ever do, like if I need a procedure that requires a catheter.

She offered to let me wait and try it out there at the office but knew that I felt pretty confident that I could do it on my own. She said unless there is a problem we are done with this and all that is on the agenda now is an annual PSA.

So, I get home and I plan to wait until it's been 2 hours since emptying out. I make it 1 hour, 45 minutes. I am working around my shop just keeping busy, sitting, standing up, moving around, and, normally, I'd have to go change a pad by that point but instead I start feeling the urge to go. As you probably know, when the drain is always open the tank never fills so there is no high-level alarm activated. It was definitely activated and I tried to hold off but the urge was definitely there.

I went in to the bathroom and sat down, put a finger on my left hand on the top of the pump to hold it in place while using the heel of the left hand to keep things pointed downward. With my right hand, and with a little trepidation, I gave the pump a squeeze. I immediately started flowing. I gave it another squeeze and it was a good steady stream. I waited a moment and then that was it. It works as advertised.

I am very open about what I am having done, especially with my running community, after all, if I couldn't run because of a muscle injury I would share about it. We have a few medical people in our group and I am surprised that few even know that this type of device is available. No wonder they say we should carry a card in case of emergencies.

So far, is the discomfort from the surgery and all that entailed worth it?  
Absolutely.

I am going to celebrate right now by heading to the pool and swimming the laps knowing that I am not leaking. I pretty much knew I wasn't before since, like at night, when horizontal I don't leak, but normalcy is the new reality.

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Answering a query about how often I feel the urge to urinate...

How often I go, today, is about every two hours. I am a runner and the uro gave me clearance to resume all activities so I'll go out for a 3-4 easy run tomorrow morning. As a runner I drink A LOT of water so how often I go might be more frequent than others. I was a high school cross country coach before I retired and when I taught the kids about hydration I told them to look at their pee. It should be pale yellow. If it has much color other than that they are under-hydrated.

I have used the pump about 5 times so far. I notice that when I give it a squeeze I can feel a little swoosh as the liquid moves through it. I like that. It's like a

sensory feedback.

I gotta tell you, every time I have used it I feel like yelling "ALRIGHT!" as it's like having control back in my life again. I am going to get rid of the pad while I am at home and see how that goes. I put a new one in this morning before going to the doctor and I can't see that I have added anything to it since this thing got turned on.

August 1, 2019

I am doing excellent. You are going to love this thing. My comment is like the one I have seen in other testimonials: "I got my life back." I even went at a public urinal without disrobing. Loose fitting pants are key but that describes my entire wardrobe.

I've been gathering up all the pads I have stashed: glove compartments, under car seats, coat pockets, gym bags, school bag, garage tool box, desk drawer, etc. They will all go on the top shelf in storage.

I do not wear even a light pad. I am completely dry. I might leak a little if I cough but I Kegel up and it's fine. I did sit on something the other day that put funny pressure in the perineum and I leaked a little but it was minor and it's just a matter of not doing that.

Things have healed up well. The incision in perineum is still sensitive but the large raised area has gone down. I was afraid it would be like a keloid and would continue to rub against my clothing but that seems to be subsiding. I can now feel where the cuff is. I can see why bicycle riding would require a different stance in the seat or a difference seat. Some say to tilt you seat all the way forward. Some say get a split seat. I might do both although I am not that much of a bike rider.

I have been running for the past 2 weeks and it's sad how out of shape I got in 2-1/2 months off. I've been doing 3-4 miles every other day. I'll build back up slowly to avoid any injury. I always like to have an 8-mile run at the ready. I swim on the other days and that feels just like it did before. I do 1000-1500 yards except on Sundays I do 2000.

BTW, the running and swimming is stuff my wife and I do together. She's faster than me in both right now.

August 11, 2019

The sensitivity has abated and I have moved away from the donut cushion. It still feels a little sensitive down there but I'd say I am 90% back to normal.

OK, a bit that might be TMI (too much information) but it's really part of the deal. While I am dry I have, after several experiences, figured out that I am not dry during an orgasm. I think that the muscle contractions put pressure on the bladder and that pressure exceeds what the cuff is designed to hold back. Just something to think about.

Otherwise, I am pretty much back to normal. I am running, swimming, and doing tasks around the house and remaining dry as I do so. One thing that is really cool is that I no longer leak when I push in the clutch on my 1965 Triumph TR4. It's the small things that make up our victories.

August 15, 2019

Regarding a question about getting an ID bracelet...

I did not. I haven't really decided what to do about that. I wear no jewelry, not even a wedding ring, except for my smart watch when I run. I have the card from AMS and figure I can stick that with my insurance card in my wallet since down here they want to know about your insurance before they take your pulse. Maybe I am not taking it seriously enough but I figure that chances of needing an emergency catheterization when I am unconscious are pretty slim.

The healing process continues well. I was sitting in the hot tub this morning and I feeling around where the cuff is. There is quite the apparatus there. It feels larger than I thought and the tubing is quite evidence. However, it doesn't seem to be a problem although I am not getting on a bicycle. I did run 6 miles this morning and I have felt that all day. Taking 3 months off left me with lots of catching up to do.

August 25, 2019

I did a 6 mile run yesterday morning at about an 11 minute pace. At mile 5 I could feel the cuff as if it was rubbing against something down there. I readjusted my compression shorts a few times and that seemed to help but I think it might be a reminder that healing takes a while.