

Tissue donor puts Tyler back in the swing.



Recipient Tyler Fisher

In September 2006, six-year old Tyler Fisher was diagnosed with a bone cancer called Ewing's Sarcoma in his right leg. Amputating his lower right leg might have been the only option at one time, but Tyler was saved that decision by successful limb reconstruction surgery using donated bone (sometimes called a tissue allograft). The surgery was performed by orthopaedic surgeon William Ward, M.D., a member of MTF's Medical Board of Trustees.

Tyler began a three-month round of chemotherapy to reduce the tumor enough to perform surgery. Dr. Ward explained to the Fisher family that he prefers a bone graft versus a metal implant for patients like Tyler who have a good chance at long term survival, and when he wants to retain the patient's natural joint for greater mobility. A major obstacle, however, was that the tumor was positioned very close to the growth plate. If the growth plate was damaged during surgery, Tyler's right leg would stop growing and he might require another surgery on his left leg so that both legs would be the same length. Tyler was present throughout all the discussions with Dr. Ward. His family thought it best to prepare him for all possible outcomes, even amputation.

In February 2007, Tyler underwent a nine-hour surgery, that according to Dr. Ward, "could not have gone better." Dr. Ward did not have to cut into the growth plate and he was able to save a strip of bone on the posterior side of the tibia, giving the allograft even more surface area to bond with Tyler's own bone. After five days in the hospital, Tyler came home.

Although confined to a wheelchair for about five months, and with a cast on his right leg for the first six weeks, Tyler was determined that nothing was going to stop him from playing and being a six-year old kid. He figured out that he could hold his leg straight out in front of him and scoot on the floor faster than the time it took to get into the wheelchair and roll around! Rigorous physical therapy followed and soon he was using a walker and crutches.

(continued on reverse)

Limb Reconstruction Surgery

Today Tyler is nine years old and clear of all cancer, and he can run and play along with all the other children at school. Although he has not been given the okay for contact sports, he has taken up golf and swimming. In fact, says his mother, “We can hardly keep up with him. Looking at him today, you would never know that two years ago he was in a wheelchair and could not walk.”

Through it all, Tyler rarely complained about the chemo treatments or about the hard work it took to strengthen his legs to be able to walk again. There were times though when he would say, “I just want to be a normal kid again.”

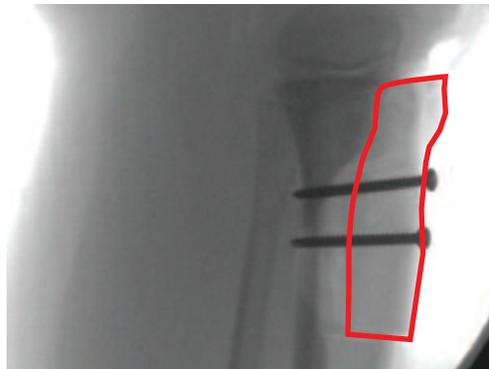
Thankfully, someone made the choice to be a tissue donor, and now Tyler’s wish has come true.



Pre-operative x-ray. The dark spot (pictured below) shows the cancer in the proximal tibia below the knee joint.



Lateral view of operative site (pictured below) shows the allograft fixation. Screws hold the allograft in place.



10-month post-operative x-ray (pictured below) shows how the host/donor junction has fused and the allograft has been incorporated into the existing bone.



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