Dr. Tammy Sturdevant is back seeing patients after rotator cuff repair

“I've played a ton of volleyball over the years, and for the last 10 years I noticed my shoulder would get sore whenever I played,” says Dr. Tammy Sturdevant, recounting her nagging shoulder pain that never seemed to resolve itself.

She continues, “Then, at the beginning of this year, I was playing volleyball and felt my shoulder pop. I could tell something happened. I heard the sound, but I kept playing thinking maybe it was okay. I hit another ball and then there was intense pain.”

With the pain now too strong to ignore, Dr. Sturdevant made an appointment with Dr. Steven Murrell, her primary care physician at Perham Health. He recommended an MRI, which revealed a torn rotator cuff. Dr. Sturdevant was then promptly scheduled for a consultation with Dr. Matt Nelsen, an orthopedic surgeon from Fargo who does outreach to Perham Health on a weekly basis. Dr. Nelsen looked over the MRI results and informed Dr. Sturdevant it would require surgery to repair her injury.

“Rotator cuff tendons can be torn with athletic activity, work injuries, or sometimes no injury. Younger patients, like Tammy, often get a tear from an injury. Older patients will often just develop a tear over time,” Dr. Nelsen explains. “Usually when the tendon tears it actually pulls away from the bone at the top of the ball in the shoulder. Repairing it involves reattaching it to bone using special anchors that go into the bone. These anchors have sutures that come out of them which are passed through the torn tendon and then the tendon can be secured to the bone.”

As the owner of Perham Family Dentistry, Dr. Sturdevant first faced the challenge of finding a replacement for herself so she could take time off for the surgery and recovery. “I couldn’t work full-time because my shoulder would get sore if I did too much with it,” she recalls. “Then I had to wait to schedule surgery until I could find someone who could cover for 12 weeks.”

After finding a replacement, Dr. Sturdevant scheduled her surgery at the end of March. “I was so thankful that Dr. Nelsen was able to perform the surgery right here in town. It was wonderful to have someone of that caliber come to Perham, meet with me for my consultation, and then perform the surgery here. He did such a great job explaining things ahead of time and told me what I should expect afterwards. He made me feel very comfortable.”

“Everything really went smoothly,” she recalls of the surgery. “The nurses were super nice. It was all done very professionally, and I felt really comfortable. My husband was even able to be with me in the room during prep.”

Shortly after Dr. Sturdevant came out of general anesthesia she was able to leave the hospital and begin her recovery process at home. As a result of an extremely effective nerve block, she says she didn’t feel any pain for the first 36 hours after surgery.

“Tammy had a tear that was relatively easy to repair, and she followed the post-op protocol very well. This helped her recover quickly,” Dr. Nelsen says. “Patients should typically plan for four to six weeks of very limited use of their shoulder, followed by two to three months of physical therapy.”

Approximately six weeks after her surgery, Dr. Sturdevant arrived at Perham Health’s Nelson Therapy Center for her first physical therapy appointment with Pete Anderson, DPT. “By the time of my first physical therapy appointment, I was already sleeping better than I was before my surgery. It was just much more comfortable,” Dr. Sturdevant

Continued on page 2
Continued from page 1

recalls. "I remember that Pete spent time at the first appointment checking my range of motion. He was pleasantly surprised with how much range of motion there was."

Anderson stresses how it was still very important to start off Dr. Sturdevant’s physical therapy slowly and to gradually increase the difficulty of her therapy exercises. "Initially, I moved Tammy’s arm for her in order to improve her mobility. If she were to move her own arm, it would be pulling on the tendon and compromising the repair," he says.

As her recovery progressed, she started doing exercises that allowed her non-surgical arm to help lift the surgical arm by using a dowel. “The following week, we progressed to isometrics, which consists of her pushing lightly into my hand in different directions to target different muscles and holding this position for five seconds at a time. This helps to ready the muscle for more loading and exercise," Anderson notes.

Once her muscles were ready, Dr. Sturdevant then moved to active range of motion exercises. The final process, which she is currently in, involves progressive resistive exercises. These consist of slowly loading her muscles over the course of weeks with increased weight and resistance, using both hand weights and resistance bands.

In addition to her physical therapy appointments each week, Dr. Sturdevant diligently followed Anderson’s instructions to complete exercises at home every morning and evening. “The key to a thorough recovery is the process. If Tammy didn’t do the exercises regularly, she would overload the tendon and possibly create tendinitis, which would feel very similar to the symptoms she had prior to surgery," Anderson explains.

"Once the tendon is strong, she can place a heavy and fast load through it without issue, which is the goal especially for her as a competitive volleyball player. The forces she demands of her shoulder are pretty intense while spiking the ball. Our main concern is that we build up the health and strength of the tendon as much as we can so she can return to play."

Even though it will take time before she recovers completely, Dr. Sturdevant is quick to mention how the recovery process, and the daily progress she’s making, are both very rewarding. “Working with Pete has been awesome,” she says. “He’s thorough and we even have fun together. It’s been a great experience and my recovery has been faster, and much more comfortable, than I expected.”

She estimates it will probably be six months to a year after her surgery until she feels 100 percent. However, she has already recovered to the point where she is back at work part-time. “I was also just recently given the okay to start playing volleyball again,” she reports. “I plan to ease my way into it, but I’m guessing it will be much more comfortable playing now than how it was before I had the surgery.”

“Tammy has been extremely motivated; as a therapist, you can’t ask for more than that,” Anderson adds. “Rotator cuff repair can be a daunting rehab at times; but, if anything, I would say that I had to pump the breaks on her a little bit to make sure she didn’t try too much, too fast, since she was so excited about how well her rehab was going.”

Since her surgery in March, Dr. Sturdevant has had two follow-up appointments with Dr. Nelsen where he checked to make sure her shoulder is healing correctly. Perham Health’s electronic documentation system allows Dr. Nelsen to see the notes that Anderson puts into the system, and vice versa. This allows them to share information regarding patient progress or changes to the recovery plan.

In addition to noticing the strong communication among members of her care team, Dr. Sturdevant says she’s felt extremely happy with the interactions she’s had with everyone at Perham Health. After appointments, she received phone calls checking with her about how she was doing. "I couldn’t be happier with the top notch care I’ve received," she mentions. "I am a big believer in really great customer service and everything has been phenomenal in that regard."

To top it off, she says she is very thankful she was able to receive such excellent care so close to home. "I would have been willing to go to Fargo for the surgery and follow-up appointments, but I was so thrilled to learn I could have it all done right here," she says. "Now I am back to work doing exams in Perham and it is so convenient to be able to head right over to Perham Health during a break at work. The entire process really couldn’t have gone better."
Perham Health welcomes new athletic trainer

“I am super excited to be able to share my skills, and what I am passionate about, with the community that gave me so much and started me on my path of becoming an athletic trainer,” says Samantha Salathe, Perham Health’s new athletic trainer.

After graduating from Perham High School in 2012, Salathe went to the University of Minnesota-Morris where she received her bachelor’s degree in Health Sciences. She then attended graduate school at South Dakota State University, completing her Master’s in Athletic Training. She is now back in Perham working with student-athletes as an integral part of Perham Health’s sports medicine program.

Salathe will provide injury screening and management at Perham High School (PHS) five days a week, offer advice in injury prevention and training to improve performance, and be an on-site resource for coaches and athletes. As a PHS graduate and athlete herself, Salathe is familiar with the area sports scene and most of the current coaching staff.

“This will definitely be a bonus, especially when it comes to the communication aspects of my job. Much of what I will be doing will involve not only the student-athletes but also the coaching staff and parents. Having open, trusting lines of communication is important for the health and training of the student-athletes,” Salathe notes.

Her responsibilities with the local schools will include covering and providing care at athletic events and practices, providing athletes with various treatments before and after activity, working on injury rehabilitation with athletes, offering pre-concussion screening as well as concussion evaluation and management, and working with athletes throughout the summer on a performance enhancement program. When necessary, she can also refer student-athletes to the appropriate medical providers.

“The school district will have greatly enhanced sports medicine services with an on-site presence at the high school and the expertise of a masters-degree athletic trainer to manage and prevent injuries,” says Dave Dahl, director of therapy services at Perham Health. He mentions how Salathe will also provide home varsity game coverage for sports previously not covered in the community.

“For these events, I will do a lot of the sports medicine set-up prior to competition time,” Salathe explains. “I will also be there for any pre-event treatments the student-athletes may require – including proper warm-up, injury evaluation, stretching, taping and bracing, etc. During the events, I will be assessing injuries and determining whether athletes should return to play based on what is in the best interest of their health and wellbeing. If an injury does occur, I will be there for proper management – whether this be on-site treatment and continued rehabilitation or a referral.”

Salathe says she is thankful for the opportunity to work in a field that combines two of her greatest passions: healthcare and athletics. “I love my profession for so many reasons!” she says. “I know I will love watching these student-athletes be successful not only on the court, field, course, mat, or pool but also in their academics, arts, and lives. To be even just a small part of that makes me very excited.”

Construction underway for clinic expansion

“Patients and providers will soon benefit from an 8,800-square-foot expansion currently in progress at Perham Health Clinic. “We are super excited about the expansion,” says Beth Ulschmid, clinic director at Perham Health. “I recently interviewed a doctor and she was very interested in having her own office space. I was glad I could tell her if she were to join us, that by the time she did, she would be able to have her own office.”

The $3.5 million expansion project was approved in May by the hospital’s board of directors. Construction began on May 28, with an expected completion date of November 1. During the month of November, furnishings and equipment will be installed. The plan is to officially move into the space by mid-December.

“The expansion will include a dedicated area for specialists from Sanford Fargo and Detroit Lakes to see patients,” Ulschmid explains.

“The new area will also include space for six physicians, nurse practitioners or physician assistants, nurses, patient access, and other support staff to work in.” When the expansion is complete, approximately 20 additional exam rooms will be added to the clinic.

The new space will be primarily used by providers who see OB patients. Ulschmid notes, “By moving these providers to the new area, space will become available for Rayna Bergseth and Amanda Houghtaling, two nurse practitioners who work closely with Dr. Paulson, Dr. Blickenstaff, Dr. Chapman, and Dr. Hietala, to be co-located near the doctors they work with. The goal of having them closer together is that they share a panel of patients and can more easily share patient information and questions.”

Perham Health’s 120,000-square-foot hospital and clinic opened in January 2012. Within a short period of time, the building was filled to capacity. The new addition will provide some much-needed space for the clinic’s growing number of providers and patients.
Perham Health awards healthcare career scholarships

Perham Health is pleased to announce the recipients of its 2018 Healthcare Career Educational Scholarship. Each recipient will receive a $1,000 scholarship to assist in pursuing a career in the health field. In addition, Sanford Health Network Scholarship in conjunction with Perham Health, awards a $2,000 scholarship to provide financial support to an individual who has decided to make healthcare his or her career.

Kally Conlin
Perham High School
Kally will attend MState – Detroit Lakes to pursue a radiologic technology degree. Her parents are Patrick and Jody Conlin.

Brandy Hensch
New York Mills High School
Brandy plans to pursue health and science nursing at the University of Minnesota – Rochester. Her parents are Travis and Shana Hensch.

Emily Martinson
Perham High School
Emily will attend the University of Minnesota – Duluth in the biology program. Her parents are Brian and Jodi Martinson.

Megan Tellinghuisen
Perham High School
Megan plans to attend the University of North Dakota and study biomedical engineering. Her parents are Dale and LaDonna Tellinghuisen.

Brooke Rehm
University of North Dakota
Brooke is currently enrolled at the University of North Dakota and studying pre-physical therapy. Her parents are Ron and Stacey Rehm.

Troy Diggins, Jr.
St. Olaf College
Troy attends St. Olaf College where he is enrolled in the nursing program. His parents are Troy and Tonya Diggins. (Sanford/Perham scholarship)