

# Washington Hospital Patient Treks Kilimanjaro Seven Months After Knee Replacement

## Minimally Invasive Procedure Spares Thigh Muscle

When David Liggert summited Mt. Kilimanjaro seven months after having a total knee replacement, his leg was the last thing on his mind. At 19,000+ feet, David was more concerned about breathing.

"When you're trekking, all you think about is your breathing," he said. "My climbing mantra was, 'My knee is fantastic, all metal and plastic. The rest is organic and I'm in a panic.' The knee held up just fine."

But back in November 2020, Liggert was in pain. He had just returned from a Thanksgiving trip and decided the knee injections he had been receiving were no longer working and it was time for surgery. "I had very little cartilage left," he explained. "It had worn down to where the kneecap was rubbing on the femur."

The knee is one of the largest and most complex joints in the body. It joins the thigh bone (femur) to the shin bone (tibia), and the kneecap sits in front.

"It had gotten to the point where the pain was causing me to limp and I could feel it putting pressure on my other knee and my hips and back," he added. "I didn't want to harm other parts of my body, and it was keeping me from doing things with my wife. We like to get out and walk and hike. It was really affecting my quality of life."

His physician recommended Dr. John Dearborn, an orthopedic surgeon and medical co-director of Washington Hospital's Institute for Joint Restoration and Research (IJRR), which specializes in minimally invasive knee, hip and shoulder replacement surgeries.

"I already knew of Dr. Dearborn," he added. "Some of my friends had used him, so he was well known in my circle and came highly recommended. I called his office and fortunately, I could be evaluated the next day."

Liggert had a total knee replacement in late December 2020 at the IJRR. "The treatment I received there was phenomenal," he said. "I had surgery in



The Liggert family prepare for major climb.



Less than seven months after knee replacement surgery, Dave Liggert summit the tallest mountain in the world.

the morning and went home that evening. Dr. Dearborn was great. You really want a surgical team with a lot of experience, and that's Dr. Dearborn and his staff."

Dr. John Dearborn is an early pioneer in minimally invasive hip and knee replacement surgeries. Under his leadership, Washington Hospital opened its Center for Joint Replacement in 1998 and then the Institute for Joint Restoration and Research in 2012. The state-of-the-art facility in Fremont offers comprehensive joint replacement care with a highly skilled, multidisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, therapists and physician assistants.

Liggert, who was an equine veterinarian early in his career, was awake during the surgery and chose to watch it on a video screen. "It was fascinating," he recalled.

He was also very pleased with the postoperative care. "I received a lot of support with pain management," he said. "They told me to stay ahead of the pain, and that's what I did. But I don't think I could have done it without the support of my wife, Emily. She charted all my medications and made sure I kept my knee iced and elevated."

The follow-up physical therapy was also crucial to a quick and complete recovery, according to Liggert. "Regaining mobility and strength was key to successfully summiting Kilimanjaro," he added.

His wife was the catalyst for the trip to Mt. Kilimanjaro. She had been planning to go with a friend, but their trip was postponed due to the pandemic. By the time it was rescheduled, Liggert had a new knee and decided to join them.

"The best part was we were able to have our four grown children join us," he said. "My knee did great and it was really a wonderful trip. I am so pleased with my new knee and am delighted with my improved quality of life."

For more information about Washington Hospital's Institute for Joint Restoration and Research, visit [www.whhs.com/IJRR](http://www.whhs.com/IJRR).

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