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## Spinal REVOLUTION

Dr. Christopher Good Helps Patients  
Overcome a Range of Medical &  
Mobility Issues, Improving Lives

Dr. Christopher Good, a renowned leader in spine surgery and nonsurgical spine treatments, doesn't simply help patients overcome a range of medical and mobility issues. He changes lives.

# SPINAL Revolution



By  
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VSI

CHRISTOPHER GOOD, MD  
Spine Surgeon

*“Tailoring a treatment plan starts with communication and shared decision-making. In spinal healthcare, there’s rarely just one right solution.”*

—DR. CHRISTOPHER GOOD

**D**r. Christopher Good’s journey into spinal surgery and nonsurgical treatments began when he was 10 days old. “My father, who managed a ski area in Colorado, fell from a chairlift and sustained a severe spinal injury,” explains Good, a pioneer in his field and part of the team at VSI (VSIspine.com), formerly the Virginia Spine Institute. “In the 1970s, spinal healthcare was vastly different from what it is today. He underwent a rudimentary spine surgery and spent three months confined to bed in a body cast.”

As a child, Good remembers telling his father that he would one day help people like him. “I still remember his response: ‘Oh, son, I hope there aren’t many others like me.’ That moment has stayed with me my entire life.” We sat down to chat with Good about his brilliant work, continuous breakthroughs and his gold-standard relationship with patients.

**Your father’s story obviously impacted you greatly. How does your personal story influence your work with your patients?** Despite the challenges, I had a happy childhood. My family’s resilience shaped who I am today. But our lives always revolved around managing my dad’s health, and losing him when I was in sixth grade left a lasting impact on all of us.

Now, as a spine surgeon, I am deeply thankful for how far the field has progressed. The days of body casts and prolonged bed rest are long gone. If my father were to sustain the same injury today, there are so many modern treatments that could have kept him functional—and alive.

My father’s story is the root of my passion for what I do. Every patient I meet reminds me of him in some way, and I approach each case with the same dedication and empathy I would have wanted for him. My experiences growing up shaped not just my career, but the way I connect with my patients. I understand their struggles, their frustrations and their hopes.

It’s not just about fixing a spine—it’s about helping someone reclaim their life, their independence and joy. That’s what inspires me every day.

**How do you make meaningful connections with your patients?** Connecting with patients starts with genuinely caring and being fully present during our time together. In today’s fast-paced world, especially in medical settings, it’s easy to rush or take shortcuts. However, I’ve worked hard to prioritize being attentive and undistracted, whether in the office during a consultation or in the operating room.

Building a strong connection means understanding a patient’s story—where they’ve been, where they are now and

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where they hope to go. To provide the best care, I strive to fully grasp how a spinal issue impacts their life, including their limitations and activities that matter most to them. For many patients, there’s also a significant concern about how their condition will affect their future.

In my approach, I focus on addressing their immediate needs and creating a plan that helps them live their best possible life in the long term. This balance between addressing the present and planning for the future is key to fostering trust and making a meaningful difference in my patients’ lives.

**How does your leadership shape the organization’s impact and approach to patient care?** As the CEO and President of VSI, I have the privilege of leading an incredible team of over 100 professionals dedicated to improving the lives of those suffering from spine-related issues and beyond. At VSI, we’ve built something truly special—a place where the highest-caliber medical providers all work together under one roof with exceptional support staff to provide a patient experience unlike any other.

VSI’s independence allows us to spend more time with our patients and to provide customized treatment plans beyond what’s most commonly recommended. Every decision is tailored to ensure patients receive the highest quality care. By combining elite medical expertise, personalized care plans, and a compassionate approach, we help our patients achieve life-changing outcomes. At VSI, we don’t just treat conditions; we create solutions and restore hope, all while setting the standard for elite spine care. Improving lives is more than our mission—it’s our promise.

**How do you tailor treatments to suit individual patient needs and goals?** It all comes down to the golden rule: treating others how I want to be treated. I always ask myself, ‘If I were in this patient’s position, what would I choose for myself?’ This perspective helps guide my approach to creating personalized treatment plans.

Tailoring a treatment plan starts with communication and shared decision-making. In spinal healthcare, there’s rarely just one right solution. We can often take multiple paths, and the best choice depends on a deep understanding of the patient’s unique needs, lifestyle and goals. This includes considering their daily demands—whether at work, with family or in other aspects of their lives.

**How do you measure patient success?** Success in this process ensures patients fully understand their options and feel empowered in the decision-making. When a treatment plan is developed collaboratively, patients increase their confidence and become more committed to the journey.



Even if the initial approach doesn't produce the desired outcome, informed and engaged patients are more willing to explore the next steps and continue working with their doctor toward a solution.

Ultimately, tailoring a treatment plan is about building trust and working together as partners in their healthcare journey, not just for the short term but for the long haul. This ensures that each patient feels heard, respected, and empowered.

**What do you believe sets you apart in spine surgery?** What truly sets me apart as a spine surgeon is my ability to take complex medical concepts and communicate them in straightforward, non-medical language that patients can easily understand.

Another key differentiator is the unique model at VSI, where I practice. Unlike traditional medical settings that often feel rushed, VSI gives me the time and flexibility to focus deeply on each patient. Whether it's taking the time to build trust and understanding during an initial consultation, guiding someone through rehabilitation or performing a complex surgery, I can be fully present and detail-oriented at every step of their care.

I've built my approach on the belief that making the right decision the first time is critical in spine care. To do this, I strive to thoroughly understand not just the structural issues a patient is dealing with, but also the personal challenges they face as a result of their condition.

**How do you approach patients who feel discouraged by past unsuccessful treatments?** Unfortunately, encountering patients who feel disheartened by previous unsuccessful treatments is common in spinal healthcare.

Communication and information are at the heart of my approach. First, I work to thoroughly understand the root cause of the patient's problem and carefully review their treatment history. I then review diagnostics, listen to their experiences and uncover why certain treatments may not have worked. This evaluation often reveals overlooked details or opportunities to approach their care differently.

For example, patients may have undergone physical therapy or injections not well-matched to their specific condition. In some cases, repeating a similar treatment but tailoring it precisely to their needs can yield entirely different results.

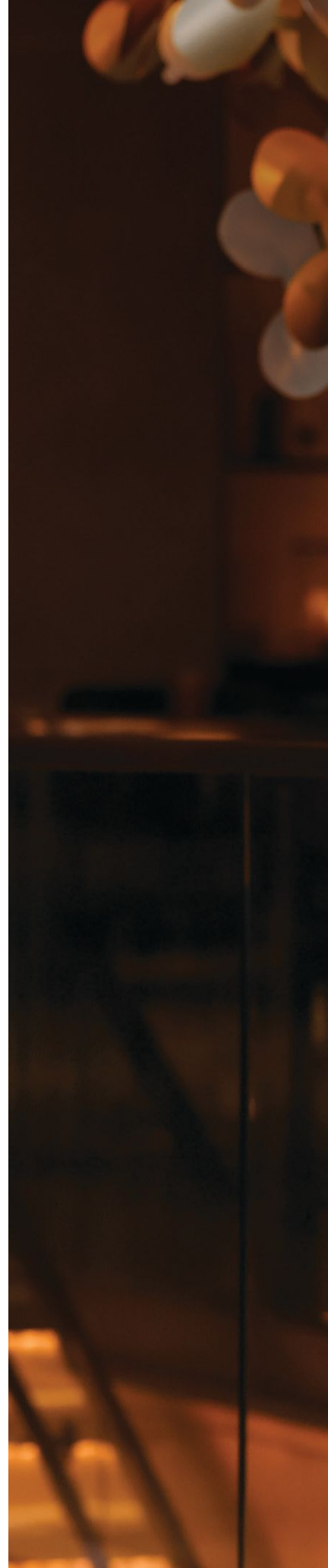
What sets my approach apart is the emphasis on individualized and customized care. By diving deep into a patient's history and conducting a thorough assessment, I often uncover new, effective options that had not been considered before. Patients who have experienced the frustration of unsuccessful treatments often see the most value in this level of care—an approach that prioritizes precision, empathy and partnership.

**What's your philosophy on integrating natural and nonsurgical solutions, such as regenerative stem cell therapy?**

While it's often said that we should exhaust all non-operative treatments before considering surgery, there are cases where a well-planned, predictable surgery may be the better option compared to non-operative treatments with a low likelihood of success.

That said, I strongly advocate for natural healing through non-surgical regenerative procedures. During my orthopedic

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training, I had no exposure to regenerative medicine or stem cell therapy, but over time, I've come to appreciate its value deeply. Regenerative medicine works by using natural substances—derived from the patient's body—and injecting them into areas where the body has not healed properly, to stimulate recovery and reduce pain.

I have benefited from regenerative treatments, undergoing successful procedures that have significantly improved my quality of life. I've used PRP (platelet-rich plasma) to heal ligament injuries in my wrist and knee, and I've had concentrated bone marrow aspirate (BMAC) injected into my shoulder AC joints and lumbar discs to address pain and improve function. These treatments have allowed me to stay highly active and avoid surgery when other approaches weren't effective.

When considering regenerative medicine, I firmly believe in the importance of precision: injecting the right substance into the right structure in the right patient. Achieving success with these treatments requires a detailed, individualized evaluation rather than a cookie-cutter approach.

When done correctly, regenerative medicine has the potential to offer profound benefits, helping patients heal naturally and maintain their functionality without the need for surgery.

**Can you share an example of a patient success story that profoundly impacted you?** I'll share two success stories—one showcasing the power of nonsurgical regenerative medicine and the other the life-changing impact of spine surgery.

The first involves a young marathon runner in her 20s who had severe back pain caused by two degenerative discs. After years of physical therapy and injections that offered only temporary relief, she finally said, 'Enough of this, fuse me!'

Despite her frustration, I hesitated to perform a spinal fusion, knowing it would limit her movement at such a young age. Instead, we explored the emerging field of regenerative medicine and injected platelet-rich plasma (PRP) from her blood into her discs.

It was a bit of a long shot, but over a decade later, she still hasn't needed surgery. She's back to running, completed a national triathlon, and even had a baby. This story illustrates how regenerative medicine can offer patients long-term success and help them avoid surgery.

The second story involves a young nurse who had previously undergone a spinal fusion that didn't heal properly, leaving her in debilitating pain. She had to stop working, go on disability and delay starting a family.

After a thorough evaluation, I discovered loose implants were causing micro-movement in her spine and triggering her pain. Through revision surgery, we carefully removed the failed implants, re-stabilized her spine and restored proper fusion. Today, her pain is gone, she's back to her nursing career, and—best of all—she's pregnant!

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**How has your approach to spine surgery evolved over the years?** My approach parallels the rapid advancements in technology and surgical techniques. As I've gained experience, I've developed a deep respect for the physical toll that major surgeries can take on patients. This awareness drives me to explore alternatives to avoid large surgeries whenever possible.

**How has introducing robotics impacted spine surgery?** The field of robotics has revolutionized spine surgery and completely transformed my career. At VSI, we've been at the forefront of this change, being one of the first centers in the country to adopt spinal robotics in 2012.

Since then, we've worked with various technologies and robotic systems, continuously refining our approach to provide the best outcomes for our patients. Today, we use robotics, and we are already working to further develop these systems. I was honored to perform the first surgery in the world with the Mazor X Stealth Edition robot in 2019, and I'm excited to be involved in ongoing innovation.

Robotic spine surgery offers tangible benefits for patients and the surgical team. Research—including our own at VSI—has shown that robotics significantly enhances patient safety. For instance, robotics reduce radiation exposure by 80% for the patient and everyone in the operating room. That alone is a game-changer.

Our research has also shown that robotics help decrease the risk of complications during surgery and dramatically lowers the chance of patients needing revision surgery down the road.

**What medical technologies excite you?** Exciting new advancements like regenerative medicine and cervical and lumbar disc replacement surgery allow us to address a patient's pain or spinal condition without eliminating natural movement.

For many years, spine surgery has relied on spinal fusion, where two vertebrae are essentially 'welded together' using implants to stop movement. While this can be very effective for relieving pain and is still a common and necessary procedure, it does come with trade-offs. Fusion eliminates movement in the treated area, which can sometimes affect a patient's overall mobility and put added stress on other parts of the spine, potentially leading to future surgeries.

By preserving motion, we can relieve symptoms, help patients maintain their function and reduce the risk of creating new problems elsewhere in the spine over time. These advancements represent a shift in how we approach spine care, offering solutions that are effective today and better for a patient's long-term health. It's rewarding to be part of this new era in spine surgery, where we can improve lives in ways that weren't possible just a decade ago.

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