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Rare Female Surgeon Merges a love of Sports with her Profession

Sports Medicine and Sports are Arenas for Female Orthopedic Surgeon

GREENWICH, CT- **Dr. Katie Vadasdi** pushes herself professionally and personally. In practice with ONS (Orthopaedic and Neurosurgery Specialists, PC) in the Greenwich Office Park, she is one of a very small number of women who specialize in orthopedic surgery. While women make up half of all medical students today, less than 10% choose orthopedic surgery as their specialty.

“I have always been very involved in sports and I regularly compete in triathlons, so naturally at times I’ve had to deal with my own injuries,” said Dr. Vadasdi who bikes, skis, plays squash and also is an alpine climber. “I knew early on that I wanted to become a doctor. Orthopedic surgery seemed like a natural path considering my interest in sports and fitness. When I was a senior in high school at Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts, I had the opportunity to do an internship with an orthopedic surgeon and in college, I had an internship at Boston Children’s Hospital,” explained Dr. Vadasdi. “These experiences stimulated my interest in the musculoskeletal system. It didn’t really concern me that orthopedic surgery was considered a specialty for men. Despite a lack of female mentors in the field, I studied under a lot of wonderful people who encouraged me to follow my gut.”

Dr. Vadasdi, who specializes in adolescent and adult sports medicine and is also fellowship-trained in the shoulder and elbow, is now the first female orthopedic surgeon on staff at Greenwich Hospital. Her qualifications are stellar. She earned her medical degree at Dartmouth Medical School, performed a residency in orthopedics at the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) and received fellowship training at Columbia University Medical Center. Her passion for sports remains at the core of her interest in sports

medicine. In her practice at ONS she's treated numerous professional and amateur athletes. Greenwich resident Larry Santoro is one example.

At 51, Larry, had previously torn both shoulder rotator cuffs. This spring he injured his right shoulder again. He runs, bikes, swims, rock climbs and skis; so being injured is frustrating. He went to see Dr. Vadasdi and- from the start- felt comfortable with her, largely because she too is a committed athlete and shares Larry's passion for sports and exercise.

An MRI scan revealed osteoarthritis of the joint and a torn rotator cuff that would require an arthroscopic surgery. "I didn't want to miss out on the summer and especially a rock-climbing trip in the Grand Tetons I'd planned to do in August," he said. "Being a serious athlete, Dr. Vadasdi understood what it meant to me to be injured and just how important it was to me to get my shoulder fixed."

Dr. Vadasdi performed an arthroscopic repair of Larry's torn rotator cuff in April. She had him begin a physical therapy program just days after surgery, initially to regain his range of motion and progressing into strength training. "Having a doctor who's also an athlete gave her extra credibility," said Santoro. "My treatment was a cooperative partnership between my doctor, my physical therapist and me to push me forward as fast as my body was ready. We were all on the same page."

According to Dr. Vadasdi, arthroscopic procedures have revolutionized orthopedic surgery. "There is a lot more finesse required to master these surgical techniques," she says. "It used to be thought that to be an orthopedic surgeon, you needed a great deal of physical strength, but the newer techniques require different skills. Incisions keep getting smaller and the tools and techniques keep improving. "We are repairing tendon and ligament damage with less trauma and better healing rates than ever before. Like most of my patients, I want to remain active for as long as I can. I can completely relate to my patients goals because they're my goals too."

Eight weeks post surgery Larry was back on his bike. He expects to be swimming and running again soon. He still plans to go on that climbing trip in August but concedes. "I'll only go if Dr. Vadasdi says I'm ready." Meanwhile, Dr. Vadasdi plans to compete in the Mighty Hamptons Triathlon in September and the MightyMan Half Ironman in Montauk in October.

Orthopaedic and Neurosurgery Specialists PC (ONS) is the largest multi-specialty orthopedic and neurosurgery practice in Fairfield and Westchester counties. ONS physicians provide expertise in sports medicine, minimally invasive orthopedic, spine and brain surgery, joint replacement and trauma. For more information, please visit www.onsmd.com.