

January 28, 2008

Skeleton crew

Orthopedic doctors come to Scarsdale

By JOHN GOLDEN



From left, Dr. O. Alton Barron, Dr. Louis W. Catalano III and Dr. George J. Zambetti Jr.

Weekend warriors of Westchester, take heart. Owners of aching runners' knees need no longer run – or limp – into New York City for specialist treatment. Suburban tennis elbows need not be aggravated flagging cabs in Manhattan. Three orthopedic surgeons with roots in Westchester County have teamed up to open a medical office in Scarsdale to serve more conveniently their patients here.

At Scarsdale Bone and Joint Specialists P.L.L.C., doctors O. Alton Barron, Louis W. Catalano III and George J. Zambetti Jr. will apply their expertise in sports medicine and orthopedic and rheumatology services while venturing into a brave new world of marketing that includes mailings, a Web site (www.scarsdaledocs.com) where video recordings of patients' surgeries will be posted and a public relations campaign.

"It's a new idea for us, because we've never advertised in our lives," Barron, an Irvington resident, said in their office at 2 Overhill Road, to which the partners had separately hustled in

the evening rush hour from their main offices and a hospital in Manhattan. "But I think this advertising is as much educational as it is business." The physicians, all fellows of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, are not about to become ubiquitous faces on subway car ads, he added.

"Then again, it is a brave new world now and people do go on the Internet now, and that's a way for them to find us," Barron said of their newly launched Web site.

The new business partners found each other at Fordham University, where Zambetti has been athletic team physician since 1978 and Catalano and Barron became team physicians in 2002. Treating more than 400 student athletes on some 20 Fordham teams, "We have a lot of teamwork that goes on with the three of us," said Zambetti, a Fordham University basketball star in the early '70s and member of the university's Hall of Fame. "That was the impetus to keep expanding on that and open in Westchester."

Catalano, a Pelham Manor resident, said the Westchester location should make it easier for their patients here to receive treatment, especially mothers and children. "There's also very few doctors who do hand and wrist and elbow surgery in Westchester," as he and Barron do. "That's another reason we decided to move here."

A Scarsdale resident, Zambetti has a private practice near Columbus Circle, Orthopaedic Associates of New York, with a special interest in sports-related knee and shoulder surgeries. In Scarsdale, he will concentrate on "mostly knee and ankles," he said. Zambetti is assistant clinical professor of orthopedic surgery and assistant attending physician at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center and also is affiliated with St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center. An inductee of the Catholic High School Athletic Association Hall of Fame, he also serves as physician for four Catholic high schools in the city.

Both Barron and Catalano are attending hand surgeons at the C.V. Starr Hand Surgery Center at Roosevelt Hospital near Columbus Circle. Barron is assistant clinical professor of orthopedic surgery at Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons and a senior attending physician in the department of orthopedic surgery at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center. Both he and Catalano have written on a variety of topics in orthopedics and frequently speak at national medical conferences.

Catalano is assistant professor of orthopedic surgery at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and attending surgeon in the orthopedic surgery department at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center.

In addition to treating amateur and professional athletes, the partners also count numerous professional musicians with repetitive stress injuries as patients. On a wall in the Scarsdale office, Barron has hung a signed photo of one in costumed performance, Peter Kriss, the drummer for the rock band KISS. He was treated for a rotator cuff injury, an affliction shared by drummers and orchestra conductors.

At the C.V. Starr Center, Barron has treated musicians in the New York City Philharmonic Orchestra since 1996. "It's really a unique patient population. They have unique problems" – such as compression neuropathy and cubital tunnel syndrome in bent-elbowed violinists – "and they're very interesting," he said.

Journalists too are prone to repetitive stress injuries of the wrists and shoulders. At the Manhattan center, "I'll bet we've treated half the editorial staff of The New York Times," Barron said.

"Most of the people who come down from Westchester are tennis players in their forties or fifties

or runners," said Catalano. "I take care of a lot of tennis players from Westchester," several of whom were surgically treated for tennis elbow.

The sports medicine doctors said they have seen a rise in "overuse syndrome," often the result of improper use of fitness workout equipment. "The increase in all that kind of activity, even though it can be benign, is causing orthopedic injuries," Zambetti said.

"We happen to be very conservative surgeons," said Catalano. "We treat most things nonoperatively." He and Barron estimated 20 percent or less of their patients undergo surgical procedures.

The partners said they want to continue their Westchester patients' care by developing working relationships with their physical therapists and personal trainers. For the several therapists who already send patients to the doctors' Manhattan offices, "I think we can serve them much better by being up here," Barron said.

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