

secondChances

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Man's foot pain leads doctors to potentially deadly pain in the neck

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Imagine going to the doctor for pain in the foot and ankle — supposedly remnants of a stubborn softball injury — and finding out the problem actually had originated in your neck.

That's what doctors eventually told David Podguski after some medical detective work by two Crown Point podiatrists.

When the custom-made foot device doctors prescribed for the injury failed to alleviate his pain, the 49-year-old Valparaiso man sought another opinion from Dr. Michael Nirenberg and Dr. Michael Carroll.

"One of the things we do here is look at the whole person and not just the foot," Nirenberg says.

Because the most obvious diagnosis and treatment hadn't worked, it was clear the doctors needed to dig a little deeper. The doctors ordered a blood test that revealed an unusually high level of uric acid, which they said could only mean a couple of things. They confirmed that Podguski had gout, a form of arthritis that occurs most often in the big toe when uric acid builds up in the blood.

But the gout had shown up in joints where it typically doesn't occur, suggesting another cause was at work.

Convinced there was more to the story, the doctors sent Podguski for an MRI.

The test showed Podguski had a tumor on one of his parathyroid glands. Located on the thyroid gland, these four pea-sized glands secrete a substance that helps the body regulate certain



PROVIDED PHOTO

Dr. Michael Nirenberg and Dr. Michael Carroll discovered a tumor on one of David Podguski's parathyroid glands.

chemicals in the body.

The doctors shared their findings with Podguski's family doctor who arranged for removal of the tumor. Within a month, his pain had vanished, but that's not all.

"Quite possibly we may have saved his life," Carroll said.

The doctors explained that the chemicals adversely regulated by the malfunctioning parathyroid might

have led to life-threatening consequences, such as the development of a heart arrhythmia.

Somewhat shocked that a softball injury could lead him down such a perplexing path, Podguski has learned firsthand that persistence pays off. He's thankful the doctors stayed the course.

"I guess things are not always what they seem," Podguski says.