

VENUE

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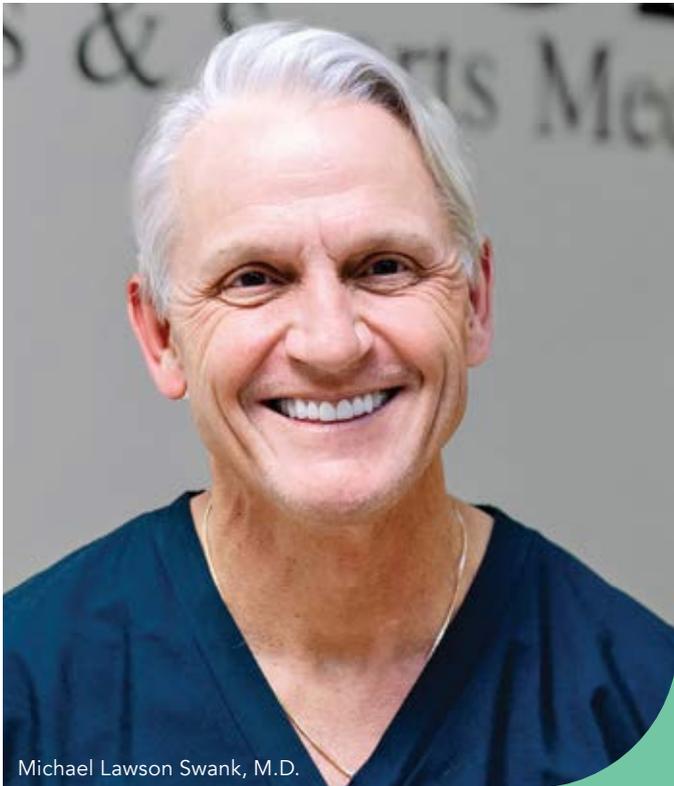
Cincinnati has made a name for itself with its unparalleled medical care. Our hospitals consistently make best-of lists and our doctors are frequently named as leaders in health care.

We are thrilled to present Venue Cincinnati's Groundbreaking Doctors. These physicians are not just improving the lives of their patients, but pushing the boundaries of what their profession can do. We're grateful to have them in Cincinnati and helping you!

GROUNDBREAKING DOCTORS

Reporting by Kate Harold, Christy Heitger-Ewing, Clara Malson
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Photography contributed by Leah Davies



Michael Lawson Swank, M.D.



MICHAEL SWANK M.D.

HIP & KNEE REPLACEMENT SURGEON
BEACON ORTHOPAEDICS &
SPORTS MEDICINE

When he was at Georgetown University, Michael Lawson Swank, M.D., would never have predicted he'd be where he is now. At the time, he was an English and Psychology major considering furthering his studies in modern British drama. Instead, he went to medical school. Now he's a skilled orthopaedic surgeon with Beacon Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine.

With nearly 30 years of experience, Dr. Swank specializes in computer-assisted minimally invasive hip and knee surgery. His goal is to help his patients return to the lifestyle they love.

"I'm trying to restore people back to function," he says. "Whatever it is — tennis, pickleball, refereeing — I want my patients to be able to get back to that activity."

To do that, Dr. Swank has pushed boundaries throughout his career, leading the way in innovations in his field. He was a pioneer in bringing computer-assisted technology to the operating room for orthopaedic surgical planning and operative technique. He performed the first FDA-approved computer-assisted total knee replacement in the United States. He was the first in the region to perform a computer-assisted hip replacement. And he achieved the first fully custom knee replacement in the area.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF TECHNOLOGY

"My goal has always been to improve the patient care experience," Dr. Swank says.

He has tackled that goal by using technology to improve how procedures are done, carefully planning and monitoring care before, during and after surgery.

For surgical pre-planning, Dr. Swank uses special software to personalize a plan designed specifically for each patient's anatomy.

"The instrumentation I use is patient-specific, so I can custom match the implants to the patient's bones," he says.

Dr. Swank likens this process to tailoring a suit. A suit bought off the rack may look nice, but when the suit is tailored, the wearer experiences a much better fit. Dr. Swank tailors knee and hip implants, and in some cases, he'll even make a fully custom implant.

Success with technological advancements early on has spurred Dr. Swank throughout his career. It's in his nature to constantly challenge himself: "Can I do my job better with less trauma to the patients, allowing them less pain and quicker recovery? Can I organize their care better in terms of pain management, using techniques to minimize trauma and programs to allow patients to return to function in a way that's useful to them?"

All of this work done before an operation results in high satisfaction from Dr. Swank's patients. And it's the outcomes of his patients that keep him motivated.

One patient recently underwent knee replacement surgery with Dr. Swank. Seven months later, he was water skiing, an activity he hadn't been able to participate in for years.

"I enjoy keeping people independent and allowing them to return to the activities they love," he says. "That's very satisfying for me."

ADVANCING SURGERY WITH RESEARCH

Additionally, he finds it crucial to use research to understand if his work improves outcomes. He's been keeping an ongoing outcomes database since 2000, tracking what he's doing so he can see if it's working well. A recent research project he's been involved in is exploring alternative surfaces for implants.

"It would be ideal if we had implants made of a material that would never wear out," he notes.



He's also involved in research related to the anterior cruciate ligament, a ligament in the middle of the knee that must be removed during a total knee replacement.

"We're evaluating implants that spare the anterior cruciate ligament," he says. "Does this improve the function for people going down stairs? Is keeping the ACL a viable option?"

He theorizes that it is and looks forward to progress in this area of his field.

MAKING JOINT REPLACEMENTS FULLY OUTPATIENT

To guide his work, Dr. Swank always considers the kind of care he'd like if he were a patient. He asks, "Is this something I'd want for myself?"

When it comes to faster recovery times, experiencing less pain and quicker return to activity, the answer is generally a resounding yes. During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, he took advantage of people's interest in shorter hospital stays after hip and knee replacements. As a result, he became the first joint replacement surgeon in the region to perform exclusively outpatient total joint replacements.

A St. Xavier High School graduate, Dr. Swank has spent his entire career practicing in Cincinnati. He is the president and medical director of the Cincinnati Orthopaedic Research Institute and medical director of the Beacon ambulatory surgery centers.

While it's obvious Dr. Swank would be successful in any field he chose, it's safe to assume his patients are quite happy he didn't study modern British drama. ❖

Do you suffer from joint pain and want an expert opinion? Visit beaconortho.com or call Dr. Swank's office at 513-530-3027 for more information.

