Less Invasive Approach To ACL Tears

(PRNewswire) High school freshman Nina McDonald recalls simply running for the ball during middle school soccer practice when she felt a pop in her knee, followed by excruciating pain. As she fell to the ground, she remembers thinking she would never be able to play her favorite sport again. Unfortunately, Nina's story is familiar to thousands of young female athletes across the country who have torn their anterior cruciate ligaments.

Nearly 400,000 ACL repair procedures are performed annually in the U.S. Though ACL tears are more common in males, females are up to eight times more likely to tear the ligament. "Recently, there's been an increase in young female athletes tearing their ACLs, which is the ligament responsible for knee stability and movements such as jumping, cutting and twisting," explained Nina's doctor, Tal David, MD, orthopedic sports medicine specialist, San Diego, CA. "This may be due to anatomic and muscular imbalance in females, coupled with increasing opportunity for young girls to play year-round, high level competitive sports such as soccer and volleyball."

When an athlete tears his or her ACL, it can be potentially career-ending if not treated. However, a recent advancement in knee ligament repair technology is getting athletes back in the game. Nina's torn ACL was reconstructed using the AperFix@ System, made by Cayenne Medical, in Scottsdale, AZ. AperFix is a less invasive reconstruction option for multiple types of knee ligament tears in males and females.

Traditional ACL surgery uses bone-patellar-bone grafts to reconstruct the torn ligament, which involves removing bone and tendon from the front of the patient's knee. The AperFix System uses a shorter, stiffer soft tissue graft such as a hamstring tendon. During the procedure, AperFix is used to attach the newly reconstructed ACL at the aperture of the femoral and tibial tunnels drilled for ligament fixation. This special technique is meant to mimic the patient's natural anatomy as closely as possible.

"The AperFix System uses a less invasive technique that offers less pain, a shorter recovery and increases knee stability," said Dr. David. "In conjunction with appropriate rehabilitation, some of my patients have been able to get back to their pre-injury level of play faster than I thought they could."

Today, Nina is happy to be back playing soccer with her town club team, and plans to try out for her high school varsity team. When asked how her knee feels after surgery, Nina responded, "My knee feels really stable, and I can do everything I could do before I got the ACL surgery. Girls shouldn't be afraid to have surgery because it can strengthen your knee. And in the end, you'll be able to do all the sports that you love, like I do."

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