

SUMMER 2025

RWJBarnabas
HEALTH

1 healthy *together*

LIFE-CHANGING
ORTHOPEDIC CARE
FOR KIDS

TRANSPLANTS:
THE GIFT OF LIFE

MOVING FREELY
WITH NEW KNEES

*Cancer
Care*

POWERFUL NEW
TREATMENTS





CHRONIC KNEE PAIN— RELIEVED

**A LIFE-CHANGING
PROGRAM PROVIDES TWO
WOMEN WITH NO-COST
KNEE REPLACEMENT
SURGERIES.**

For much of her adult life, Elizabeth Alaribe worked as a school administrator in her native Nigeria. “I was very active, visiting all the classrooms,” she recalls.

But over time, just walking down the halls became a challenge. Elizabeth had developed a case of osteoarthritis in both knees. The chronic condition occurs when cartilage that provides a protective cushion between bones of a joint gradually wears down. Elizabeth’s osteoarthritis became so severe that it turned her knees out of normal alignment.

“I suffered in pain for many years,” Elizabeth says. “I tried many types of medication, but nothing worked.”



DAVID CHALNACK, MD



JOEL FECHISIN, MD

Eventually, Elizabeth had to retire from her job. In 2022, she immigrated to the United States with her family and took up residence in the Jamesburg section of Monroe Township. Because she had no health insurance, Elizabeth thought she’d have to endure her knee pain and limited mobility for the rest of her life.

Searching for a better answer, Elizabeth’s daughter, Rhoda, came across the website for Operation Walk USA, a nonprofit organization that has provided life-changing, no-cost joint replacement surgeries for more than 900 patients over the past 14 years. Intrigued, Rhoda sent the organization an email explaining her mom’s story.

INSPIRING PARTNERSHIP

Soon after, Rhoda received a major surprise: an email reply saying that her mother could receive free bilateral knee replacement surgeries at Monmouth Medical Center (MMC) courtesy of the hospital and Operation Walk USA.

“We were skeptical at first—we

couldn’t believe it was real,” says Elizabeth’s son, Jerry. “So I emailed them back, and they confirmed that she would receive the surgery.”

Representatives from Operation Walk USA connected Elizabeth with orthopedic surgeon David Chalnack, MD, Medical Director of the Joint Replacement Program at MMC. As the only New Jersey facilities participating in Operation Walk USA, MMC and Seaview Orthopaedics—a partner practice of RWJBarnabas Health—provide free surgery and free physical therapy to selected patients, often in coordination with JAG Physical Therapy. Zimmer Biomet donates the knee implants used in these procedures.

“For patients with advanced arthritis, knee and hip pain can be absolutely debilitating,” says Dr. Chalnack. “Joint replacement can be an opportunity for patients to get back to daily activities that many of us take for granted, such as simply taking a walk. Through Operation Walk USA, we are able to help patients who may otherwise be unable to receive



Elizabeth Alaribe had both of her knees replaced at no cost thanks to Operation Walk USA, Monmouth Medical Center, Seaview Orthopaedics and orthopedic surgeon David Chalnack (right).

such treatment to get back on their feet and reclaim their lives.”

When Elizabeth and her family met Dr. Chalnack for the first time, in late 2024, they felt at ease immediately. “It was a nonjudgmental environment,” Jerry says. “We took comfort in Dr. Chalnack’s confidence. He gave us constant reassurance that he could fix my mom’s legs.”

A NEW LIFE

On December 3, 2024, Dr. Chalnack replaced both of Elizabeth’s knees at MMC. At about the same time, another Operation Walk USA recipient, Miadea Esther Constant Ganda, received a no-cost knee replacement at MMC from orthopedic surgeon Joel Fechisin, MD. Miadea’s procedure followed a successful single knee replacement that Dr. Fechisin had performed on her a year earlier. The procedures marked the fourth time, and the second consecutive year, that MMC has participated in Operation Walk USA.

“It’s incredibly rewarding to see patients regain their mobility and the

ability to enjoy everyday activities again,” Dr. Fechisin says.

“Helping someone to walk again and return to a life without pain is indeed a cause worth celebrating, and we are proud to once again participate in Operation Walk USA,” adds Eric Carney, President and CEO of MMC as well as Monmouth Medical Center Southern Campus in Lakewood. “Through programs like Operation Walk USA and the kindness and compassion of our dedicated physicians such as Dr. Chalnack and Dr. Fechisin, we’re able to provide this high-quality care to patients in need.”

The day after her double knee replacements, Elizabeth started physical therapy. When she returned home from the hospital after four days, she continued physical therapy at Seaview three or four days a week.

Today, she continues to regain strength in her knees. Best of all, her arthritis-related pain has subsided, and she can both see and feel the difference.

“Dr. Chalnack straightened out my legs again,” she says. “I’m very happy.”



AWARD-WINNING ORTHOPEDIC CARE

For the second consecutive year, RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) has been named among the 100 Hospitals and Health Systems with Great Orthopedic Programs by *Becker's Hospital Review*. The recognition honors orthopedic programs that:

- Deliver comprehensive, compassionate care for patients with musculoskeletal conditions and injuries
- Offer minimally invasive treatments
- Conduct forward-thinking research
- Perform breakthrough clinical trials that drastically improve patient outcomes

Programs on Becker’s list also have earned recognition from organizations such as *U.S. News & World Report*, *Newsweek* and *Healthgrades*; receive funding from organizations such as the National Institutes of Health; serve as official providers for elite sports teams; and hold the Gold Seal of Approval from The Joint Commission.

RWJBH offers comprehensive orthopedic services for adults and children to help manage conditions caused by arthritis, degenerative joint disease, injuries, congenital issues and general wear and tear. Orthopedic services offered at RWJBH acute care, ambulatory care and rehabilitation facilities throughout New Jersey include emergency and trauma care, diagnostic testing, minimally invasive and robotic surgery, sports medicine and rehabilitation services.



To learn more about joint replacement surgery at RWJBarnabas Health, visit www.rwjbh.org/ortho. To view a video about Operation Walk, scan this code.