Phoenix Edition | June 2006 VOL. 6, NO. 6

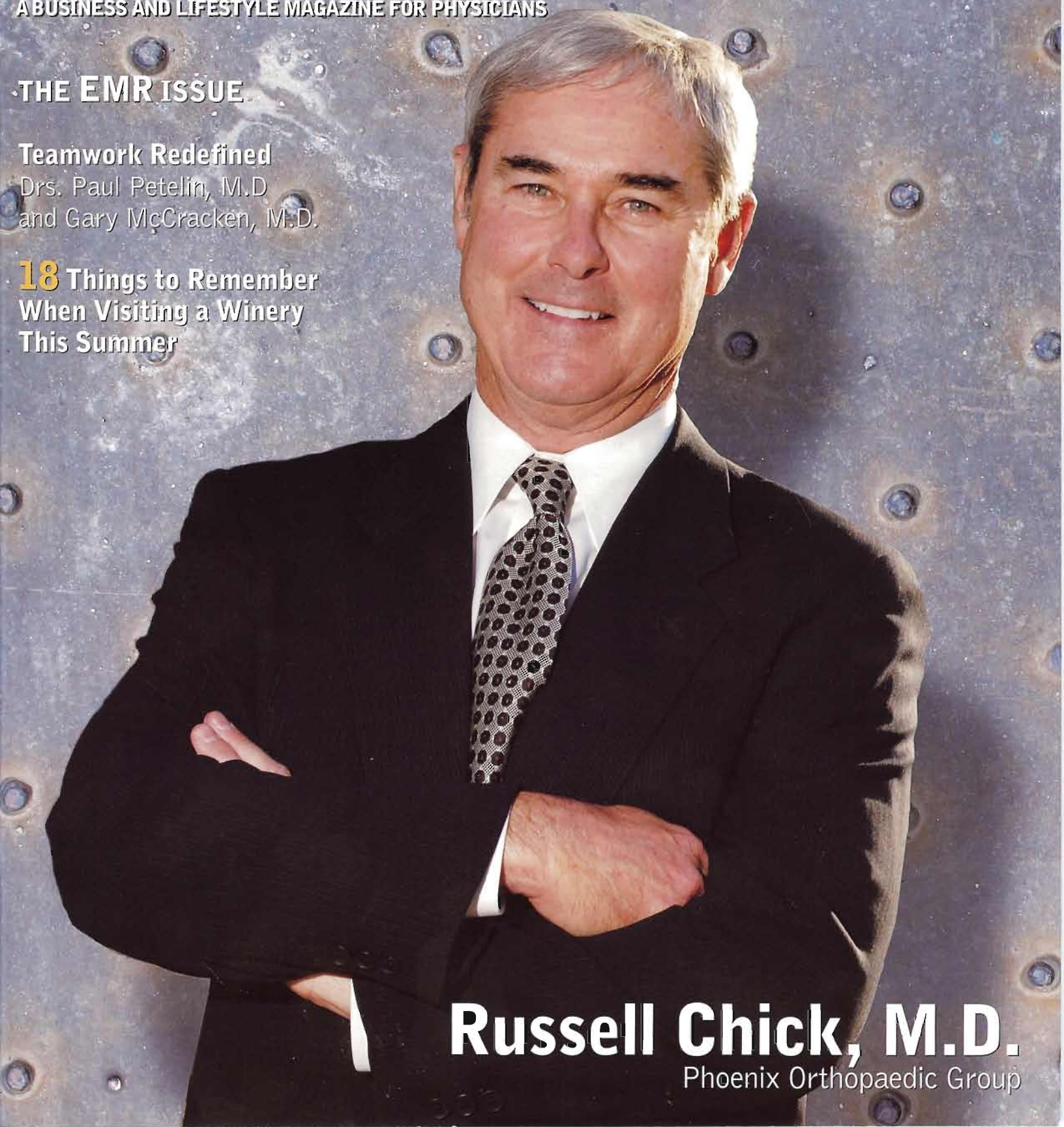
# M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS

THE EMR ISSUE

**Teamwork Redefined**
Drs. Paul Petelin, M.D and Gary McCracken, M.D.

**18 Things to Remember When Visiting a Winery This Summer**



## Russell Chick, M.D.
Phoenix Orthopaedic Group

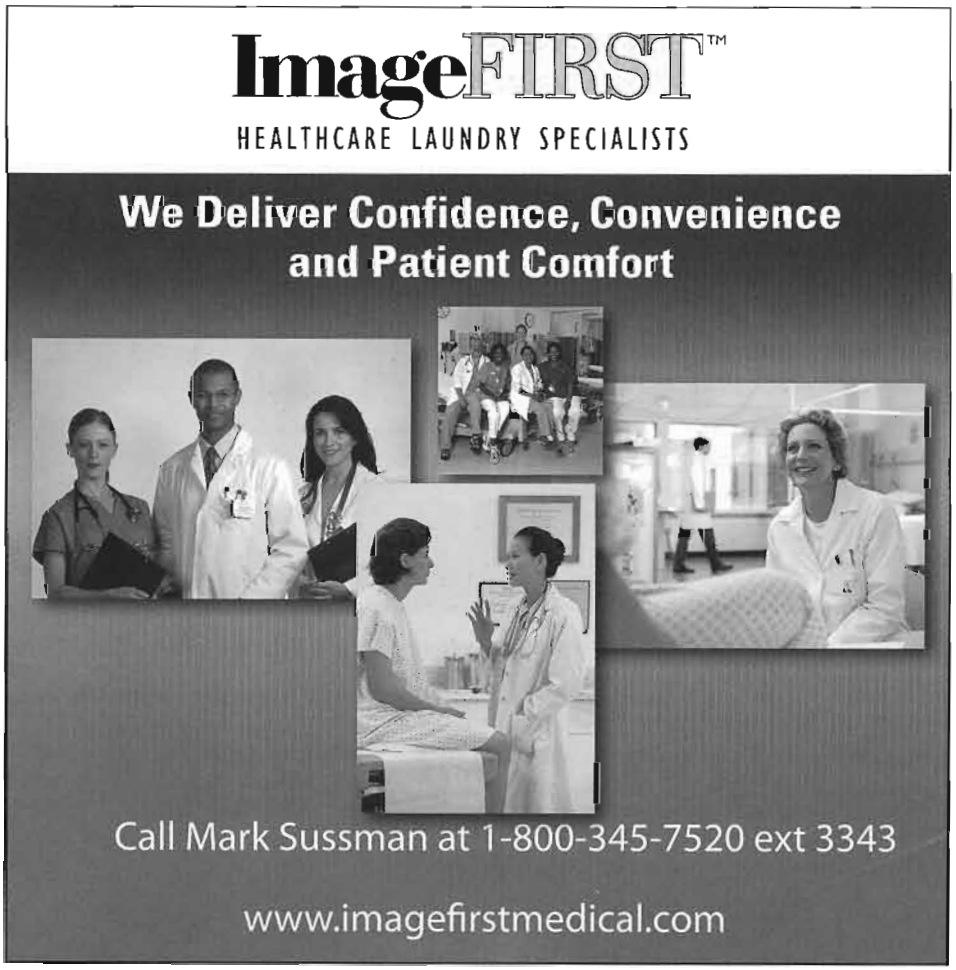
# Healing Heels:

## A Look at Minimally Invasive Treatment Technology for Foot-Pain Sufferers — from the Patient's Perspective

Back in November of last year, *M.D News* featured an article about a new radiofrequency-based technology called Topaz that local Phoenix foot surgeon Kerry Zang, DPM, has been using in his treatment of tendon- and fascia-related foot and ankle ailments. Dr. Zang and his colleagues provide the treatment to patients at the Arizona Spine and Joint Hospital, and his Arizona Institute of Footcare Physicians.

Zang is encouraged by positive outcomes his patients have experienced for a variety of tendon-related conditions, ranging from Achilles tendonosis to plantar fasciitis (heel pain), all too-common ailments. The problem affects an enormous population — in fact, heel pain, specifically, is the most commonly reported complaint among patients visiting podiatrists today — with more than 20 million Americans suffering from the condition. And the numbers continue to rise ... thanks to a combination of repetitive motion activities and shoes that don't do the feet any favors.

At about the time we mailed our November issue, Tempe-based retail professional (and chronic sufferer of plantar fasciitis) Cathy Roberson went in to Dr. Zang for Topaz treatment on her right foot. It worked so well for her, that she came back to Zang in March to have the treatment performed on her left foot!



"With Cathy's heel pain," said Dr. Zang, "the plantar fascia was pulling off and tearing away from the bone. As with most plantar fasciitis cases, fibers tear away a little bit at a time, they get scarred, a few more fibers tear away, and more scar tissue forms. This then becomes a painfully chronic process."

Indeed, it is a process that won't go away without therapy, drugs, exercise or splints — treatment methods that can help — but often don't do the job. Traditionally, when the conservative treatment fails, the patient would receive invasive surgery (such as a plantar fasciotomy — or severing of the fascia). That is, until the minimally invasive Topaz methodology became available.

"For patients that have been suffering from chronic foot pain caused by conditions of the tendons and fascia," said Dr. Zang, "Topaz yields results that are just as good as surgery, but with a big difference — there's less pain after the Topaz procedures and recovery times are greatly reduced because we're not cutting the tissues."

Rather than "cut," Dr. Zang and his colleagues use the Topaz Microdebrider radiofrequency probe, which several of Zang's patients refer to as "the magic wand," due to its shape and the fact that it yields such speedy results.

The procedure is a quick, simple and a minimally invasive alternative performed arthroscopically.

For patients, Topaz offers dramatic relief from nagging, sometimes disabling tendon problems of the feet. And it all happens very quickly.

The physician places the patient under mild sedation. After two small 1/4-inch incisions are made (dramatically smaller than what would be made in a traditional invasive tendon surgery), the doctor then treats the problem area with Topaz

technology, removing tiny fragments of the problematic tendon, which stimulates a healing response. The treated area is rinsed and closed and medication is given.

From start to finish, the whole process takes less than 15 minutes. Cathy Roberson's took less. We sat down with her to capture a sense of the patient's perspective.

***M.D. News Magazine (M.D.):*** *When did you first begin suffering from heel pain?*

**Cathy Roberson (CR):** I was for many years an avid country western dancer. I absolutely love dancing, and I would be out six nights a week dancing — couples dancing, line dancing, the traditional stuff. I realize now that all the pivoting and repetitive motion may have contributed to my condition. I always wore boots to dance in, and some time in 2004, I started feeling intense pain in my feet — mainly my heels. First it was my right foot — I'm right-handed and I lead with my right foot in dancing — but my left foot started acting up about a year later, though it wasn't as bad. It got to the point where I'd drive to the dancing location in tennis shoes or flip flops and change into boots in the parking lot — and then immediately change out of the boots after dancing.

***M.D.:*** *Didn't it hurt to wear the boots while you were dancing?*

**CR:** Yes, but I was passionate about dancing — I didn't want to stop!

***M.D.:*** *Did having this condition ultimately stop you from participating in activities you enjoy?*

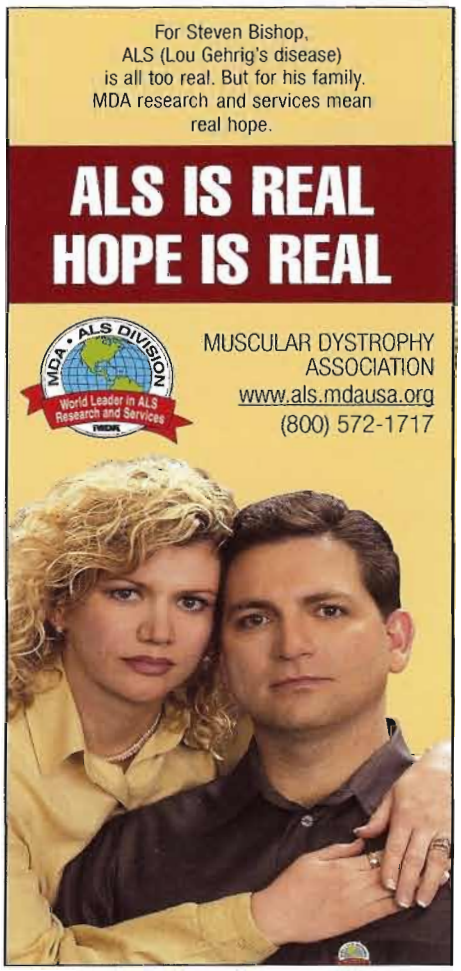
**CR:** Yes, sadly. Where I used to dance regularly from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m., I found myself only dancing for two or three hours — which really wasn't me, but I just couldn't take the pain and discomfort. Aside from dancing, I also had to stop taking hikes. I love to hike, and it was very frustrating not being able to do that. Lots of activities were affected, really.

***M.D.:*** *When did you get medical attention?*

**CR:** Well, when it got to the point that I could barely put my boots on because it hurt so much to point my toes into the boot, I knew I had to do something. Plus, I'm in retail, and I'm standing or walking a good 10 hours per day — my feet were killing me! I saw a doctor who told me I had plantar fasciitis. Later I went to see Dr. Zang, which ultimately led to the Topaz treatment.

***M.D.:*** *Can you describe the pain of plantar fasciitis for someone who hasn't experienced it?*

**CR:** It's awful. Every step you take feels like you have a bunch of needles poking up into your

***Bringing comfort and dignity as life nears its end***

Physicians, Nurses, Home Care Aides,
Social Workers, Chaplains, Volunteers and more

To learn more about our services,
call us anytime at
**602.530.6900**
or visit www.hospiceofthevalley.org

*Your not-for-profit hospice since 1977*
*Medicare Certified – State Licensed*