

Total Turnaround

How Sammy the Shepherd's Total Hip Replacement Changed His World Forever

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Sammy was an active, happy seven year old German Shepherd. As his eighth birthday began to approach, however, Sammy's owners noticed him slowing down a little bit. It was nothing dramatic; he was just a little slower on his walks, a little more reluctant to jump on the couch or go up the stairs, a little less eager to play fetch. Sammy's owners didn't think anything of it. He was about to turn eight, after all, but as the months passed, they began to notice a slight limp in his right rear leg after walks or playing. Eventually they decided to have their family veterinarian take a look at Sammy to see if it was just old-age, or arthritis, or something more serious. After performing an evaluation, Sammy's vet suspected that he was suffering from hip dysplasia, a common problem in larger breed dogs. A radiograph (x-ray) confirmed the diagnosis, revealing a VERY arthritic right hip. After discussing the options with Sammy's

owners, the veterinarian made a referral to Gulf Coast Veterinary Specialists (GCVS) for a consultation with a surgeon to see if anything could be done to help Sammy.

At the consultation, several options were discussed for Sammy. The orthopedic



surgeon explained that the best option to return Sammy to full function and pain-free mobility in the joint is a total hip replacement, or THR. Sammy's owners were shocked to learn that dogs could get total hip replacements, but the surgeon let them know that not only was the surgery routine, but Sammy was a perfect candidate! Surgery was performed, and Sammy's owners were shocked again when they

picked him up the day after surgery and discovered he was already using the operated leg to walk out of the hospital. A couple of months later, Sammy was running, playing, and jumping like he had when he was puppy. The hip dysplasia had apparently been bothering him for a long time. Sammy's owners not only got their happy, playful dog back, they got him back and then some!

Sammy's story is true, and is more common than many people realize. Unfortunately our pets aren't able to verbally tell us when they are uncomfortable or in pain,

the patient to regain to normal function in the hip joint and remove the pain of bone rubbing on bone in the arthritic "natural" joint. Total hip replacements in dogs and cats have proven to be very successful. In fact, one patient ran over 1,000 miles a year for nine years with her owner after her THR procedure without a single problem! THR's are most commonly performed in larger dog breeds, but small breeds of dog, as well as cats, also routinely undergo the procedure. THR's have been successfully performed on animals as small as 5 pounds, and the largest to-

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so some chronic issues, like hip dysplasia, can go undiagnosed for months or even years. Once hip dysplasia has been identified, however, there are options that will allow our pets to not just "deal with" the pain, but actually address and treat the problem, which is the arthritic hip. In Sammy's case, the treatment was a total hip replacement.

Total hip replacements (THR's) are considered the best way to treat advanced hip dysplasia, and they are the most common joint replacement performed in dogs and cats. THR's allow

tal hip replacement patient weighed in at an impressive 187 pounds!

Total hip replacements are just one of the ways that the surgeons at Gulf Coast Veterinary Specialists are able to treat patients with hip dysplasia, so if your pet has been diagnosed with this all-too-common disease, consider scheduling a consultation. To learn more about hip dysplasia, total hip replacements, or scheduling a consultation, contact us at 713.693.1122, or visit us online at www.gcv.com.