

# A Dose of Healing

**Southern Ocean Medical Center** *Hyperbaric oxygen therapy saved a Manahawkin man from amputation.*

It was January of last year when Bruce Plevinsky got a blister on his big toe. A blister is usually innocent enough, but in February, it was still there. Bruce visited his podiatrist, and then went back again in March when it just wouldn't heal. It turned out his blister had become a diabetic ulcer that progressed into a bone infection known as osteomyelitis.

"My toe was in really bad shape," says Bruce, 62, who works as an accountant. "It had tunneling, which means the infection was eating through the bone, going from back to front."

His podiatrist referred him to a hospital near his work, where the doctors said he could lose his toe. Bruce wanted a second opinion, so he turned to the Center for Wound Healing at Southern Ocean Medical Center. There, he found a little optimism and an expert team.

"I did a lot of research, and I liked that at the Center for Wound Healing, you have a whole group of specialists," Bruce says. "It gives patients the most coordinated care because everything is under one roof."

## The Treatment Plan

In May, Bruce met with **Jeffrey Hager, D.O.**, medical director at the Center for Wound Healing. Dr. Hager recommended hyperbaric oxygen (HBO) therapy, which involves going into a chamber with higher-than-normal air pressure. This delivers oxygen straight to the tissues, fighting off infection and helping speed up the healing process. Bruce also saw infectious disease specialist **Homayoun Homayouni, M.D.**, who prescribed medication to support the HBO therapy.

"There are very specific reasons you go for hyperbaric oxygen therapy," Dr. Hager says. "It's not meant for everybody with a wound, but if you're in the chamber for the correct reasons, the data says you'll do very well."

After Bruce received 20 treatments — each of which took a couple of hours — Dr. Hager recommended he have another 20. Although Bruce says the process wasn't easy, the staff at the Center for Wound Healing made it as comfortable as possible. "They helped me realize it was difficult but doable, and they talked about success stories," Bruce says. "You don't know if you're going to win the battle or not, but I approached it like an athletic endeavor."

Less than 5 percent of people treated for diabetic foot ulcer infection manage to avoid amputation. In the end, Bruce was one of the fortunate ones.

"The wound healed from front to back and new skin has grown," he says. "I'm totally healed. Obviously, I'm a happy camper!"

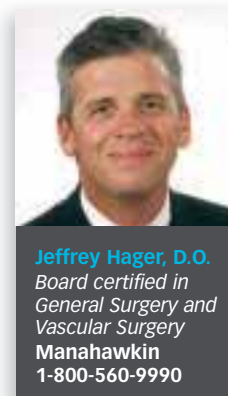
## The Sooner, the Better

Bruce is not alone in suffering with a nonhealing wound — about seven million Americans a year are in the same situation. Dr. Hager encourages anyone who has a wound that hasn't shown improvement over two to three weeks to schedule an appointment. Sores that get more painful, red or swollen over time, or any that smell bad or change in color, should also be checked out.

"Most small chronic wounds can be healed," he says. "The sooner we see them, the faster we can heal them."

The center uses an interdisciplinary model of care, which means you can get everything you need in one place. That includes infectious-disease management, physical and occupational therapy, lab tests, nutritional advice, pain management, diabetes education, radiology testing, and more.

"I would recommend anyone with wounds go to the Center for Wound Healing," Bruce says. "Their approach makes the most sense because you can have all the access to the specialists you need." ■



**Jeffrey Hager, D.O.**  
Board certified in  
General Surgery and  
Vascular Surgery  
Manahawkin  
1-800-560-9990

## We've Got Your Wounds Covered

Every year, chronic wounds keep millions of Americans just like you from enjoying their best quality of life. Hackensack Meridian Health's wound healing centers apply proven wound care practices and advanced clinical approaches to help heal patients' chronic wounds.

Our hyperbaric and wound healing centers achieve some of the best healing rates and fastest healing times in the nation. That means you can get back to living your life the way you want in the shortest time possible.

If you're wondering whether you should seek treatment for a wound that may not be healing, here are a few things to look out for:

- Wounds that have not shown improvement in three to four weeks
- Sores accompanied by pain, redness, swelling, foul odor or change in color
- Surgical wounds that have become infected

Don't let chronic wounds negatively affect your quality of life. Learn more about the wound care techniques used at our centers for wound healing, including hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Visit [HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Wound](http://HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Wound).



When he's not working, Bruce Plevinsky, 62, enjoys spending time with his children and grandchildren.