



BACKING IT UP: Spine Team Texas aims to provide the best patient experience through clinical excellence and superior customer service, say Dr. Juan Bartolomei, left, and Dr. David Rothbart.

# Concern, compassion, care and confidence

BY LISA TANNER | STAFF WRITER

**For patients, Spine Team Texas offers nothing less than a new lease on life.**

"I physically crawled into the hospital the day of surgery, and after surgery I was up walking around with zero pain — all this through an incision the size of your thumbnail," said one patient who nominated the Spine Team Texas founders Dr. David Rothbart and Dr. Juan Bartolomei for Health Care Heroes honors. "It was a truly amazing change in my quality of life. I am now back to doing the things I love."

Concern, compassion, care and confidence are the hallmarks of the group, said another patient.

Spine Team Texas is a regional spine care network dedicated to addressing patients' back and neck concerns with a comprehensive approach.

Patients need more than high quality, technologically advanced health care, said Rothbart. They need compassion and a service mindset from medical professionals.

"Our mission is to provide the best patient experience



## PHYSICIAN AWARD 2007

### SPINE TEAM TEXAS

through clinical excellence and superior customer service," said Rothbart, a neurosurgeon who previously operated a private practice with offices in Las Colinas and Grapevine.

That means uniting services a patient needs in one convenient location, for example, and assuring that there are no lengthy delays between testing and treatment.

Spine Team Texas also staffs a liaison to address patient needs, provides Wi-Fi Internet

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access for patients and family members and helps reassure patients by providing educational information in waiting rooms, so they'll feel more in the know.

"Patients with severe pain feel fear and anxiety before they see a spine surgeon," Rothbart said. "So we want to educate them on our philosophy before they see us. Surgery is the last option, and if needed, it is done with a minimally invasive procedure if possible," he said.

About 90% of the clinic's patients are treated without surgery, he said. Research that advances treatment is also a Spine Team Texas hallmark. Rothbart was a pioneer in implanting a disc prosthesis that replaces a damaged cervical disc, which often causes debilitating pain for patients.

Personally, Rothbart has long felt a calling to be a surgeon. With that as the motivating force

through his life, he moved from an initial interest in brain surgery to spine surgery.

"It's a rapidly evolving field," he said, where minimally invasive surgery procedures initially used in brain surgery are now used in spine surgery.

Rothbart says there is tremendous potential for techniques that are easier on the patient, requiring smaller incisions and shorter recoveries.

The two doctors met in 1991, when Bartolomei was in medical school and Rothbart was his resident. They kept in touch as their careers progressed, eventually joining to develop a comprehensive spine treatment center making use of the latest technology.

Bartolomei enjoys building relationships with patients, important because a spine patient often becomes a patient for life, with gravity and time taking its toll on the spine.

"Medicine, to me, is treating patients as family members, because we will be seeing them forever," he said.

In May 2007, Mark Hood, former president of Baylor Medical Center at Grapevine, joined Spine Team Texas as CEO, helping to grow and develop the group's model of health care.

What began in December 2004 with two physicians and eight employees, now has eight physicians and 70 employees. Spine Team Texas operates a flagship center in Southlake and satellite offices in Las Colinas, Flower Mound and Bedford.

Philanthropy and community outreach are key initiatives for the group, including everything from raising funds for the Make-A-Wish Foundation to mentoring students interested in medicine.

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