
“Spina Bifida is considered a rare disease [by most general practitioners], and it’s getting rarer,” Dr. Bruce Gans explains of the difficulties most individuals have in finding doctors that “get it” when it comes to conditions associated with SB. “And if they don’t treat it in pediatrics, they are not going to treat it in adults.” The result of this is the decline of medical specialists highly qualified to treat individuals living with Spina Bifida. Often, the reaction people have when they first meet with Dr. Gans is an overwhelming sense of relief that someone understands and is qualified to treat the issues surrounding SB.

Dr. Gans fell into the Spina Bifida field over 30 years ago. As a physiatrist working in pediatric rehabilitation, he frequently treated children with Spina Bifida. He quickly became the Director of the Rehabilitation Department at the Children’s Hospital in Seattle. Over the subsequent years of his career in Boston and then Detroit he found himself in mainly an administrative role and missing the one-on-one time he had with patients.

Around that time, Kessler was in the stages of beginning the Adult Spina Bifida Clinic. It turned out that Dr. Gans had the most experience with SB and welcomed the opportunity to lead the program. Every month for over six years, Dr. Gans has been bringing our members the benefit of his special expertise regarding the numerous health care issues affecting adults with SB through Kessler’s Adult Spina Bifida Clinic. He fields various conditions of Spina Bifida including shunt issues, bowel/bladder complications, mobility needs, weight management, tethered cords, and other related challenges.

The Kessler Adult Spina Bifida Clinic has grown and developed into an actively attended center with a waiting list. The unique focus of collaborative patient and family centered care continues to attract new attendees and services have expanded over the last several years. Dr. Gans has successfully added the services of a neurosurgeon providing yet another essential facet of the total health management of our consumers. Patients frequently express gratitude for Dr. Gans’ gentle and knowing approach.

“In his capacity as the head of the Spina Bifida clinic at Kessler, Dr. Gans has really helped change my life and, perhaps more importantly, significantly improve my health. All the while, he has exhibited true professionalism and a calming sense of rationality amid my nervousness. I would... I have... recommended the Spina Bifida clinic to anyone needing services associated with Spina Bifida and other differing abilities.” —Millie Gonzalez

Dr. Gans has received several awards for his work and has been recognized as a leading physician in the book, Best Doctors in America. He has been interviewed on television and national public radio as an expert in this field.

Dr. Gans’ distinguished career in the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) spans three decades. When he joined the Kessler Institute as Chief Medical Officer in 2003, he brought vast experience as a leading clinician, educator, researcher, administrator and advocate. His publications include articles, abstracts and book chapters. He is the Editor of the standard medical textbook on physical medicine and rehabilitation, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation: Principles and Practice, now in its 5th edition, and holds a reputation as a thought leader in his field. But it is his dedication and outstanding service to his patients that truly make Dr. Gans stand out as a phenomenal doctor and friend of the Spina Bifida community.