Christopher M. Pokabla, MD

Passion for sports steered doctor to career he loves

By SUZANNE BOYD

With a father and two brothers who are doctors and a mother who is a nurse, one would easily deduce that Christopher Pokabla, MD, would follow in their footsteps. Today, the Youngstown, Ohio native has moved south of the Mason Dixon line and is an orthopedic surgeon with Memphis Orthopaedic Group, a Division of MSK Group, P.C. Pokabla specializes in sports medicine, arthroscopic shoulder surgery and shoulder replacement.

When Pokabla headed to college at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio he majored in chemistry with the intent of pursuing a career in chemical engineering. After several summers interning in applications engineering with General Motors, Pokabla realized that engineering was not the career for him. “My roommate was a pre-med major and ended up being my best friend,” said Pokabla, who graduated in 1998 with bachelor’s degrees in chemistry and zoology. Studying together for classes gave Pokabla insight into the field of medicine. “Although we did not end up at the same medical school or in the same specialty, we did end up doing our residencies at the same hospital.”

While in medical school at Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine in Rootstown, Pokabla graduated in the top 10 of his medical school and was inducted into AOA. “As I went through my rotations, it was obvious orthopedics was for me,” said Pokabla. “I am a huge sports enthusiast who played football and basketball throughout high school and both my brothers played college football so sports medicine was a natural fit.”

Pokabla completed his orthopaedic surgery residency at The Ohio State University School of Medicine in Columbus then headed south for a one year fellowship in sports medicine and shoulder surgery at Mississippi Sports Medicine and Orthopaedic Center in Jackson and the Tulane Institute of Sports Medicine in New Orleans. “I developed an interest in shoulder surgery while a resident. The shoulder, which is the most mobile joint in the body, is such a challenging joint where a lot can go wrong. There are so many things that have to act together in a concerted manner to make it all work. I love figuring out what went wrong and how to correct and improve for the patient,” said Pokabla. He also served as a team physician for Tulane University while completing his fellowship training. This gave him an opportunity to interact with athletic trainers and athletes daily.

When Pokabla finished his training in 2009, there was an opening for a shoulder surgeon with Memphis Orthopaedic Group. “The opportunity was one I could not pass up as I would be treating primarily shoulders but would still be using my five years of general orthopedic training for sports medicine injuries and problems,” said Pokabla. He is board certified in orthopaedic surgery and will be sitting for his Certificate of Added Qualification in sports medicine early next year.

Feeding his passion for sports medicine, Pokabla can be found on the sidelines on Friday nights as the team physician for Arlington High School, which has made the playoffs for the past three years. “Although I am the team physician for Arlington, I still assess any injured player and evaluate the severity of the injury,” said Pokabla, who also works with other Memphis Orthopaedic Group physicians to provide annual sports physicals to all of Arlington High’s athletes.

“Last year, as a sophomore, linebacker Drew Erwin fractured his hand in the playoffs and had to have surgery. After his recovery, he learned to play guitar and eventually auditioned for ‘America’s Got Talent’ and was able to make it to the finals,” said Pokabla. “In a segment on NBC about Drew and his injury, x-rays from his surgery were featured to show the extent of his fracture and how remarkable his recovery was. It is very rewarding to know that I was able to help in his recovery.”

Pokabla’s specialized training in shoulder surgery allows him to offer patients unique treatment options utilizing innovative procedures that can be used to treat a wide range of patients both young and old. A reverse shoulder replacement offers patients with arthritis and an injured rotator cuff a treatment option if they are not a candidate for a traditional replacement. Pokabla is one of only a handful of surgeons in the area and the only one in his group who performs a unique procedure – the Latarjet.

“It is a technically more challenging procedure which replaces bone loss in some patients with recurrent shoulder dislocations,” said Pokabla, who performs surgery at Methodist and Baptist Hospitals. Pokabla recently performed a Latarjet procedure on a hockey player for the River Kings who went on to play for the Chicago Blackhawks.

Pokabla is currently a Master Instructor for the Orthopaedic Learning Center in Rosemont, Illinois where he teaches shoulder arthroscopy procedures to physicians from all over the world. “It was a great honor to be chosen to be a master teacher and I really enjoy teaching.”
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3980 New Covington Pike, Suite 200 . Memphis, TN 38128
October, 2009 to Present

Date of Birth: June 22, 1975

SPECIALTY/SUB-SPECIALTY
Orthopaedic Surgery (Shoulder surgery/Sports Medicine).
AANA Associate Master Instructor – Shoulder surgery.

EDUCATION

Jackson, MS
Shoulder Surgery/Sports Medicine

The Ohio State University  July, 2003 – June, 2008
Columbus, OH
P.O. Box 183110, Columbus, OH 43218
Department of Orthopaedic Surgery - Resident

Northeastern Ohio Universities  August, 1999 – May, 2003
Rootstown, OH
P.O. Box 95, Rootstown, OH  44272
College of Medicine
- Doctor of Medicine

Kent State University  May, 1998 – July, 1999
Kent, OH
800 East Summit St., Kent, OH 44242

Department of Microbiology and Immunology

- Graduate Studies in microbiology.
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EDUCATION(cont’d)__________________________________________________________

501 E. High St., Oxford, OH 45056
College of Arts and Science
- Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry - Bachelor of Science in Zoology

AWARDS______________________________________________________________

Alpha Omega Alpha 2003
Zouhair Yassine, M. D. Anatomy Award 1999
Miami University Dean’s List 1996 – 1998

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS__________________________________________

Alpha Omega Alpha
American Medical Association
Memphis Orthopaedic Society
Arthroscopy Association of North America (AANA)
American Orthopaedic Society Sports Medicine

RESEARCH______________________________________________________________
Resident Research Projects

- Lateral column lengthening with cervical plate fixation
- Pediatric ACL and meniscal injury
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RESEARCH (cont'd)

National Institutes of Health 2000 Hamilton, MT

Summer Internship – Rocky Mountain Laboratories
  Murine retroviral model of spongiform encephalopathy

Northeastern Ohio Universities 1998 – 1999 Rootstown, OH
Research Assistant – Department of Microbiology
  Resveratrol inhibition of Herpes Simples Virus

PUBLICATIONS

Arthroscopic Debridement and Microfracture of Capitellar Osteochondritis Dissecans of the Elbow.
Pokabla C, Field LD, Savoie F, Ramsey JR.

Identification and management of “floating” posterior inferior glenohumeral ligament lesions.
Pokabla C, Hobgood ER, Field LD.
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PUBLICATIONS (cont’d)

An alternative technique for the Ertl osteomyoplasty.
Berlet GC, Pokabla C, Serynek P.
Foot Ankle Int. 2009 May 30.

Lateral column lengthening using allograft interposition and cervical plate fixation.
Philbin TM, Pokabla C, Berlet GC.
Foot Ankle Spec. 2008 October 1.

PRESENTATIONS

Arthroscopy Association of North America’s 29th Annual Meeting
Hollywood, Florida May 20-23, 2010
Arthroscopic Debridement and Microfracture of Capitellar Osteochondritis Dessicans of the Elbow.
Chris Pokabla, MD, Larry D. Field, MD, Felix H. Savoic, III, MD,
J. Randall Ramsey, MD, E. Rhett Hobgood, MD, Chris K. John, MD.
2010 Open Meeting of the American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons
Arthroscopic Debridement and Microfracture of Capitellar Osteochondritis
Dessicans    March 10-13, 2010
Chris Pokabla, MD,  Larry D. Field, MD,  Felix H. Savoic, III, MD,
J. Randall Ramsey, MD,  E. Rhett Hobgood, MD,  Chris K. John, MD.

2011 Memphis Orthopaedic Group Worker’s Compensation Seminar
Memphis, TN       April 20, 2011

2012 Memphis Orthopaedic Group Worker’s Compensation Seminar
Memphis, TN       April 11, 2011