



BDMC doctor tackles tough issues to make women's lives easier

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Dr. Ryan Stratford is only 35 years old, but he deals with women's health issues that would make most young men – and many women for that matter – blush. Issues like urinary incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse and fecal incontinence to name a few.

For Stratford, however, it's exciting talking about these things because he is making a difference in so many women's lives through his Urogynecology practice at Banner Desert Medical Center. Stratford says he chose to build his Urogynecology practice at Banner Desert, because of the hospital's focus on women's health issues. Urogynecology is a subspecialty that combines Gynecology and Urology, focusing on female pelvic floor disorders.

"In the United States, more women's sanitary and hygiene products are purchased for incontinence than for menstruation," says Stratford. "Also, the number one reason the elderly are sent to long-term care facilities is for incontinence," he says.

Many women have endured repeated surgeries to try and correct their problems and have all but given up hope for normalcy. That's where Stratford comes in. His patients, following a two to three hour surgery, can expect an 85-90 percent successful outcome – or less than a 15 percent chance the problem will reoccur.

Stratford credits his training under Bob L. Shull, MD, who is a world-renowned expert in pelvic reconstruction. Urogynecologists from around the world fly to Texas to operate with and learn from Shull.

"I was very lucky to train with and do research with Dr. Shull," says Stratford. "It was a wonderful experience and I am proud to be a protégé of what he is doing to improve the lives of women."

Stratford wants to get the word out to women that they can be taken care of with minimal down time. Some of the procedures are outpatient and some require an overnight stay. "The impact on their quality of life is huge," he says.

Stratford's patients are typically age 40 and up. He had one patient recently who, at 96, decided to have surgery to repair her pelvic floor so she could continue living at home and leading an independent life.

“Women, especially elderly women, are the most gratifying people to take care of,” says Stratford. “They are so tough, and always grateful for what you do for them.”

Stratford says urogynecology is a relatively new field and there is a tremendous amount of excitement around the subspecialty. He was recently joined in his practice by Dr. Ronald Burton, an OB/GYN, who also performs pelvic reconstruction surgeries.

Stratford’s longer-term goal is to build a fellowship training program and to continue doing research. He is currently studying the pelvic floor of the female squirrel monkey, which is one of only a few animal models that replicates the human female condition of pelvic organ prolapse. He is collecting tissue and doing genetic analysis.

Stratford and his wife Emily live in Mesa. They are expecting their fourth child.