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Doctor emphasizes with patients' pain

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Many treatments available for those who suffer

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Dr. Kendall Hansen knows pain. He's one of the area's few board-certified pain specialists. But schooling isn't where his best knowledge arose. His best education was personal. He has had four back surgeries. Each procedure, the first in 1991, involved cutting away parts of the spine. Hansen spent several years as the chief of the anesthesia department at St. Luke Hospital West, but he saw an opportunity in focusing on patients' pain.

"Too often, doctors tell their patients that pain is just something they'll have to live with," said Hansen. "In my opinion, that should rarely be true. My attitude is that it is unacceptable, and that's why I have gone to a lot of effort to be trained in all known interventional pain techniques and why I am adding the best doctors I can find in the country to join me in this quest."

James Knox, a 62-year-old retired Delta employee from Florence, came to see Hansen last year. Six years ago he fell down his basement stairs while



going to check his laundry.

"My butt hit every one of those steps. I broke the railing. I hit my head on a wall at the bottom harder than I've ever hit it before," said Knox.

Hansen performed a radio-frequency thermocoagulation procedure - basically superheating - on the

nerves that were giving Knox the pain. This deadens the nerves for up to two years, relieving Knox of his chronic pain.

His practice began in two small rooms at St. Luke in 1994. He now has an 8,000-square-foot facility and a staff of 30, including a new physician

who joined the practice in 2006. Dr. Sung Min came from the pain-management staff at the Cleveland Clinic.

Min said he joined the firm because of the level of work being done at the practice.

"I was surprised at the vast array of treatments we have to offer - many of the procedures our practice uses are not offered at the Cleveland Clinic," said Min.

Hansen says the key is being able to identify with his patients.

"I know how difficult it is to suffer with pain and I understand what most of my patients have to go through."

Hansen said patients who live with chronic pain have decreased physical activity, sleep poorly, are irritable and can develop depression and low self-esteem.

"When I am able to remove someone's pain, there are often others helped - the family. They get their spouse or parent back," he said.