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# Marlton surgeon makes house call -- to China

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'The surgeons really wanted to see some actual cases and to speak with people who have used the materials,' said Dr. Steven B. Kirshner of his trip to China. 'Like everywhere else in the world, when somebody does have a new technique, newer isn't always better ... They want to make sure they're doing the right thing for the patient.' / Douglas Bovitt/Courier-Post

Written by  
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When Dr. Steven B. Kirshner was invited by a medical device manufacturer to take an eight-day teaching trip to China, he didn't know what to expect.

It was the Marlton orthopedic spine surgeon's first trip to the country, though he has taught internationally. But this was no tourist jaunt. After flying from Newark to Beijing, he traveled to seven cities, taking four flights and two trains within China's vast borders.

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"I did not see China," said Kirshner, of the Kirshner Spine Institute. "I saw [hotel rooms](#), the insides of hospitals and six different hotels, and the insides of cars . . . it was busy."

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Instead, Kirshner taught more than 500 physicians and surgeons who pelted him with questions about two medical devices made by Indiana-based Zimmer that are now approved for use in China. One of his [talks](#)

was made before a national conference of spinal surgeons like himself. A Chinese translator who spoke Mandarin and English traveled along with him.

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"Like everywhere else in the world, when somebody does have a new technique, newer isn't always better . . . They want to make sure they're doing the right thing for the patient."

One device is a flexible rod system used in place of spinal fusion surgery. Made from polycarbonate-urthethane plastic spacers, polymer cord and titanium screws, the Dynesys device is used to help stabilize the spine.

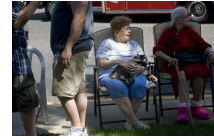
The other is Trabecular Metal Material, a porous metal device that looks and acts like bone — so much so, that real bone will grow through and around it. Made of tantalum, one of the elements in the periodic chart, the device is used in patients with degenerative disc disease. Before the device was approved for spinal surgery, Kirshner said, surgeons used bone harvested from a patient's pelvis or from a cadaver's bone.

The TM device is also useful for patients suffering from advanced stages of tuberculosis, which is more common in rural parts of China, Kirshner said.

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