

October 12, 2012

Magic Pharmaceuticals

Since my last update just under a week ago, I have been “behaving” and being a good patient. Ugh. Not my forte. I’m on bed rest, with my knee elevated higher than my heart, running the PolarCare Cube that pumps ice cold water through a wrap on my knee, exactly what the doctor ordered last week Friday. Continue to take my Vicodin as scheduled, keeping the pain managed. Had my MRI on Tuesday afternoon, again, as the doctor ordered. Yup, I’ve been behaving.

Late Wednesday, after harassing the doctor’s office a few times throughout the day, I learned that the doctor does surgeries all day on Wednesdays and would be out of the office Thursday & Friday. Boy, did they learn not to tell me this kind of information before I had MRI results! My persistency (a/k/a annoyance) paid off as the doctor himself called me Wednesday afternoon to discuss the MRI results. Now, in my medical experience (which unfortunately, I have more experience than I’d like), when the doctor himself calls you instead of passing the call onto his PA, intern, resident, monkey, etc, it’s usually not too good of news.

Regardless, I was happy to speak to the doctor himself and was not surprised by anything he said (even though it was during the 30 minutes of “happy time” Vicodin provides me every six hours of the day). He began by stating “your knee is a mess”. Yup, I like this guy...why hold back? He continued on to explain that I blew my ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament which is in the middle of your knee), MCL (Medical Collateral Ligament which is on the inside of the knee) and my meniscus, besides the original knee cap dislocation. He repeated that I was lucky I didn’t dislocate the entire knee, which can be life threatening. So, I have 50% of my ligaments holding my knee together... my PCL and LCL (Posterior Cruciate Ligament and lateral collateral ligament) stayed intact (2 out of 4 ain’t so bad!). So instead of my glass being half full, I’m happy my knee is half held together...sigh...I’m trying to stay positive, really I am!

With all this said, surgery is scheduled for 10/24 wherein they’ll piece humpty dumpty (me) together again. I will once again go the cadaver route for the ACL replacement and with the MCL, they have to reattach it to the bone using hardware. The meniscus will be repaired as possible – more than likely stitching it back together too. Fortunately, this is all scheduled to be done during one surgery. The ACL & meniscus are done arthroscopically and the MCL has a separate incision on the outside of the knee. Damn, there goes my career as a knee model... I had been counting on the millions from my Vanity Fair and Cosmopolitan cover pages featuring my right knee. ☺

The recovery is anticipated to be similar to what I went through in September 2009 with my ACL surgery on my left knee. When I told the doctor that I was riding in three months after that surgery, he was taken back, but said it was possible. Of course, I reminded him that I am a diligent patient and will follow physical therapy orders, most certainly not putting my recovery or safety in jeopardy to ride too early. But, believe me, I am a girl on a mission, no doubt about it. And, I’m confident my Vicodin will help me through it all...again...

So, I'm working hard -- resting and icing. As said earlier, not my forte -- it's actually work for me! I'm hoping to be able to teach sooner than later. Just have to get the swelling down and sitting up doesn't enable that. I'm very aware of how lucky I am, things can always be worse. ALWAYS. So, thank God it's 'just' my knee, as that will heal and honestly, doesn't ever have to be 100%...just good enough to be able to ride! Relatively speaking, I have my health and am blessed to have the job I have. Sure, there are inherent risks, but I believe that there are risks in all lines of work. My corporate job was probably worse on my health than this knee injury! Unfortunately, unlike with my knee injury three years ago which happened while I was still working in corporate America during the day, I had disability leave which helped cover the bills. These days my knee pain is almost as bad as my headache worrying about bills. Wonder why Vicodin doesn't cover that pain?!?!? Hmmmm...maybe there's my millions -- Vicodin for the self-employed! Take two pills every four hours and your bills will stop piling up and instead pay themselves...ahhh, sounds good to me.

I'll keep you updated as I progress. And I plan on progressing!!!

Happy riding and stay upright,

Slr

October 6, 2012

Hidden Camera

As you probably already know, I was unloaded a week ago today at the Silverwood show while warming up a client's horse. The fall dislocated my kneecap, but I smushed it back into place as soon as I saw it pointing off to the outside. After waiting forever to be "boarded" by the EMTs and a long trip to the ER (of course, there's a story there...I swear there has to be a hidden camera around me for the crap I endure!) and a week worth of keeping my leg elevated, heavily iced, and resting (my favorite thing...) I saw the Orthopedic Surgeon (OS) yesterday. Again, where's that damn camera?

I'm seeing a new OS, Dr. Wollager, since the dr. that performed my surgery 3 years ago (Dr. Bowers) no longer takes my insurance. Figures, right? Anyway, this OS was recommended by my last OS, so I had some degree of confidence in this new character. Right off the bat, I saw Dr. Wollager's resident -- this OS is out of UW Health, so I know you get to deal with some of the, um, bonuses, that come along with a teach school. Eric was a nice enough guy and explained the good news was that they don't usually do surgery on dislocated kneecaps. Apparently surgery is only needed when it is a reoccurring ordeal, which now might be after having dislocated it. The tendons that keep the kneecap stable apparently tear apart for the dislocation to happen, which is why the inside of my knee was a huge source of pain. And swollen like you wouldn't believe. Ok. Makes sense thus far. Then he asked if I had xrays taken at the ER, which I did. The UW Health nurse had called and asked me where to get them from, even getting the phone number from me. Later in the week, I received a call that the xrays had arrived and we were good to go. As Eric looked through my file, we learned that the most recent xrays weren't in fact there and what the nurse had pulled up on the screen was my left knee -- not even the correct knee!

So, they wheeled me off to xray to do xrays of my knee and my shoulder. As the week progressed, I learned I somehow tweaked my shoulder during my flight lesson (a/k/a getting dumped by the mare). While taking the xrays, again I looked around the room for the hidden camera...they couldn't figure out how to get my shoulder xrays when I was in a wheel chair and I am waaaay too wobbly to stand still for an xray. So, they rammed me into the bed and machine a few times...yah, classic Shelly stuff.

Fortunately, they figured out how to get the xrays they needed and I got good news that nothing was broken. Whew. My first smile in a few days - felt good! Then, I mentioned to the OS that my lower leg sometimes feels disconnected; for example, it just gave me that feeling when they were trying to get me to lay on my side for a knee xray. I couldn't do it without the disconnected feeling. The OS had me climb on the table for further exam. I knew what I felt wasn't good and that I've felt it before...about 3 years ago... He said I had out done myself on this injury -- more than likely I have blown my ACL *and* my MCL this time around. Amazing how quickly my smile disappeared with that news. But, down deep, I suspected the same when I felt the disconnected feeling last Sunday when I got off the bed to leave the hotel. He tested my other knee and said "yep, you don't have a matched set". Sigh...stupid hidden camera watching me fake a smile about the matched set comment.

So, now I'm scheduled for an MRI Tuesday, 10/9 to confirm what the doctor felt in the tests. Then, make plans from there. So, missing USDF Regional Championships next week appears to be my least worry at this point. The good news is that since I've been such a good frickin' patient - implementing the RICE (rest, ice, compression, elevation), my swelling in my knee is waaaay down. I no longer have a pumpkin for a knee, thank goodness. Although a bit less festive as the pumpkin sized knee, I'll take it having a little swelling, with my ankle taking the majority of the swelling (it's almost impossible to get my foot higher than my knee without serious pain in the knee and surrounding the joint). Hopefully that will make any plans for surgery happen sooner than later. But, we'll see what the MRI shows. With that said, I'm drugged heavily as this sucker is painful. Once I know what the MRI shows and we determine next steps, I'll let you know so we can plan lessons, etc. At this point, whenever I was to ride, Jackie is riding. Jackie and I chat each night on plans for each horse we are riding (we = she). So, we have lesson plans for everyone. Hopefully, once I can sit up and remain halfway concious, I'll get back to teaching. One day at a time...

Most importantly, **thank you** for your kind emails, texts, messages, etc. They truly keep me going each day, as hard as some days have been. I'll keep you posted as I know more or have things to share -- good or bad. Keep your fingers crossed for only good news from here on in!

Happy riding,
slr

October 1, 2012

Wings Not Required For Flying

If you haven't already heard, I learned that I indeed, you DO need wings to fly. Well, let me rephrase that - you do need wings for the landing portion of flying, not so much for the flying through the air part. This I know from first hand experience this past weekend. Read on...

After a lovely warm up ride Friday afternoon/early evening, I climbed aboard my client's super horse, Ronja, to warm her up for her first level test in ring 3 at Silverwood this past Saturday morning. When we first entered the schooling arena, she kicked at her belly with her left hind, so I had Jackie check it for flies or something biting her. Nope, nothing there. Thought nothing of it and went about our way with our warm up. We walked, trotted and cantered -- she felt good. After a walk break, I told Jackie that we'd do a little more then go right in (we were one horse out from our test). As I cantered around, she suddenly (and I mean suddenly) bucked so hard that it sent me flying through the air. Witnesses said that I flew between 8' and 10' in the air. That wasn't the part that was bad...it was the landing from the same that did me in. Some say I started to land on my feet, but then crumpled. I don't honestly remember how I got to the ground, but do know that the inside of my right knee (yes, my 'good' knee between the two) was in excruciating pain. As I swore to myself and into the sand repetitively, I decided to look at my knee and see why it hurt so unbelievably bad. That's when I saw my knee facing parallel to the sand, but my kneecap was pointing into the sand. I remember thinking "hmmm...that can't be good" so I did what I thought anyone would have done -- I took my hand and pushed it back to "normal". It did a lovely "klunk"

back into place and at least looked more normal then. By this time, people were reaching me as I laid in the middle of the warm up ring asking if I was ok. Clearly, I knew I wasn't.

After telling my story to everyone that arrived (first responders, the TD, EMTs, etc), I *finally* was carted off in an ambulance to Aurora hospital in Kenosha, WI. They x-rayed the knee and found nothing broken and thanked me for putting my kneecap back in place so they didn't have to. After giving me a knee brace, several ice packs, Vicodin and crutches, we were out the door. I spent the next night and day at the Country Inn & Suites with my knee up on pillows surrounded in ice packs. Sunday, Andrew, my farm manager, drove down to get me and the truck/trailer and horses.

Today, my knee is about the same size as my head, without exaggeration. It's *huge*. And starting to show some lovely colors (bruising). I continue my icing routine and chew on Vicodin like they're tic tacs to keep the pain managed. I'm stuck in bed, totally immobile except for a few trips to the restroom. The routine is all too familiar and I'm a pro at it. I am waiting to get in to see the orthopedic surgeon to determine next steps. Ideally, the ligaments are not torn, just stretched beyond recognition from the dislocation... that's my story and I'm sticking to it until I'm told otherwise.

With all this said, I will not be teaching for at least the early part of this week. Once the pain and swelling is more under control and I can sit upright without anguish, I promise you will see me in my chair with my leg propped up giving lessons again. As for riding, Jackie is riding everything that I normally do and will continue to do so until further notice.

I'll keep you updated via email on my status. Please give Wally a cookie for me if you're at the farm - I haven't seen him since Friday and won't be down there in the immediate future. He must be starving - tee hee!

On a MUCH brigher note, congrats to Cindi Smith and Sabriel (I call her "twistie head") for scoring a 65% in third level test 1 at her first ever dressage show! YAHOO!!! Awesome for a horse that they didn't think would ever be ridden again. And, I couldn't be prouder of my "mini-me", Jackie -- she got her final scores at prix st georges and 4th level this weekend, earning her USDF Silver medal. Way to go team!

As always, if you need anything, drop me an email (phone isn't always by me, esp if I'm trying to sleep), slr