

August 22, 1999

Dear Bill,

Thought I'd catch you up on my knee. I finally got a new orthopedist who ordered an MRI which showed no significant damage to tendon or bone. This was a surprise, but it validated my opinion of my first orthopedist, Dr. Willis, who said he didn't need an MRI because he already knew the kind of serious deterioration my tendon had suffered.

Everyone but Dr. Willis had agreed that my pain was too severe for tendinitis, anyway, but the MRI didn't show what was causing it. The second orthopedist at my HMO, Dr. Bullock, speculated that I have a damaged nerve that flares up with exercise. My knee was flared up only slightly when I saw him, so he couldn't pinpoint the location of the nerve. He suggested that I come back when it is really hurting, so he can put a needle in it. He proposed accelerating levels of intervention. First he'd inject it with zylocane to numb it. I'm cloudy as to the purpose of that, perhaps diagnostic. Second level would be to inject the nerve with cortisone—to possibly heal it. Third, he could inject it with alcohol and water to kill it.

I thought it might be simpler to just set me on fire. When my knee's flared up a drop of water on it makes me scream. My cat's tail brushing across it is enough to make me fall over backwards howling. I can't imagine how I'd respond to having it stabbed by a needle. There is no possibility I could sit still for it. I think his true intervention was psychological. I haven't been back since. As far as they are concerned, I am cured.

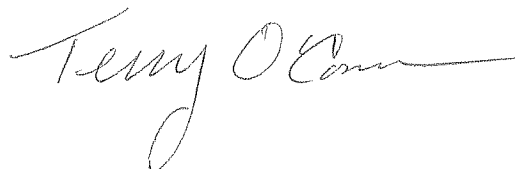
Actually, my knee is doing fairly well. What has been most helpful was your suggestion to bike with one leg. I am getting my aerobic exercise without stressing the knee. I recently was able to take a stress echo test which my knee had caused me to postpone. My cardiologist said I had essentially a normal heart—very welcome news.

I'm gradually using my knee more. I tape when I hurt. As the knee improves I bike with two legs every other time. I am stretching but doing nothing directly stressful like squats. For the past couple of weeks I've been able to press on it without pain. That's likely to change if I work it hard, but I've been cutting back at the first pain, and I am gradually having less of it. Kathy and I are vacationing in Arizona and New Mexico in October. I've planned it so we'll visit the Grand Canyon last. If my knee holds out, I'll hike part way down. I'll let you know how it turns out.

I appreciate your professional and personal help. You've created a great environment at Seneca Physical Therapy, Inc. You're keeping the care in Health Care.

Thanks,

and my love to Lisa.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Terry O'Connor". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned at the bottom center of the page.