

# Dr. Erich Wolf

## CHRISTUS Surgeon Recognized For Spinal Cord Expertise

In the world of neurosurgery, unwavering patient care and dedication to advancements in medical treatment have had a profound impact on Dr. Erich Wolf. Esteemed in the Southwest Louisiana region, Dr. Wolf began his journey as a student in biomedical engineering that later led to the field of neurosurgery.

Dr. Wolf's interest in the specialty began in childhood. At age 11, his parents, unable to secure a sitter, took him to a lecture where a brain was dissected.

"The dissection was digitized and shown on a computer which was able to give 3D images of the brain—a big technical feat at the time," Dr. Wolf said. "I became enamored with computers and knew neurosurgery was something I wanted to do in the long term."

After graduating from Tulane University with a Bachelor of Science, master's and doctorate, he embarked on his professional career in Memphis before making his way to Lake Charles, where he has been essential to CHRISTUS Ochsner St. Patrick Hospital for nearly 25 years.

One of the defining aspects of Dr. Wolf's career has been his role

in using revolutionary surgical techniques, particularly in the treatment of complex spinal conditions.

"Image spine navigation technology can take a CT scan and load the image into the computer system, and we can see on screen where we are operating and it helps us navigate instruments," Dr. Wolf said.

The precision enabled through this technology is crucial in assisting with complicated surgeries and enhancing surgical outcomes.

Dr. Wolf's expertise with advanced technology is especially evident in trauma surgery, where he handles challenging cases involving severe spinal injuries, such as broken necks.

One of the most challenging surgeries Dr. Wolf has performed is the transoral odontoidectomy. This detailed procedure involves accessing the odontoid process—the tip of the spine on the second cervical vertebra—through an incision made in the mouth. This technique became necessary for a patient suffering from severe arthritis at the odontoid joint,

which was affecting the spinal cord and brainstem, leading to the risk of paralysis.

"We were able to operate and remove bone to decompress the pressure on the spinal cord. It's one of the most complex surgeries done here at St. Patrick hospital," Dr. Wolf said.

After a two-week ICU stay and the three months spent in a halo brace, the patient ultimately regained neurological function and returned to a relatively normal life. This outcome is a testament to Dr. Wolf's skill, the effectiveness of advanced surgical skills, and the importance of comprehensive post-operative care.

Dr. Wolf's contributions extend beyond individual surgeries. He is the founder of Wavegate Corporation, which offers advanced

treatment for chronic pain primarily through spinal cord stimulation. The product can be used by patients or clinicians who are searching for effective pain management. Dr. Wolf hopes to bring his spinal cord stimulation platform to market in 2027.

Dr. Wolf is recognized for not only the technical achievements but also the lasting dedication to the Lake Charles community. His story is a reminder of the ways in which innovation and expertise can intersect to transform lives, affirming the vital role of medical professionals in our society.

*Learn more about CHRISTUS Ochsner St. Patrick Hospital at [www.christushealth.org/locations/ochsner-st-patrick](http://www.christushealth.org/locations/ochsner-st-patrick).*

