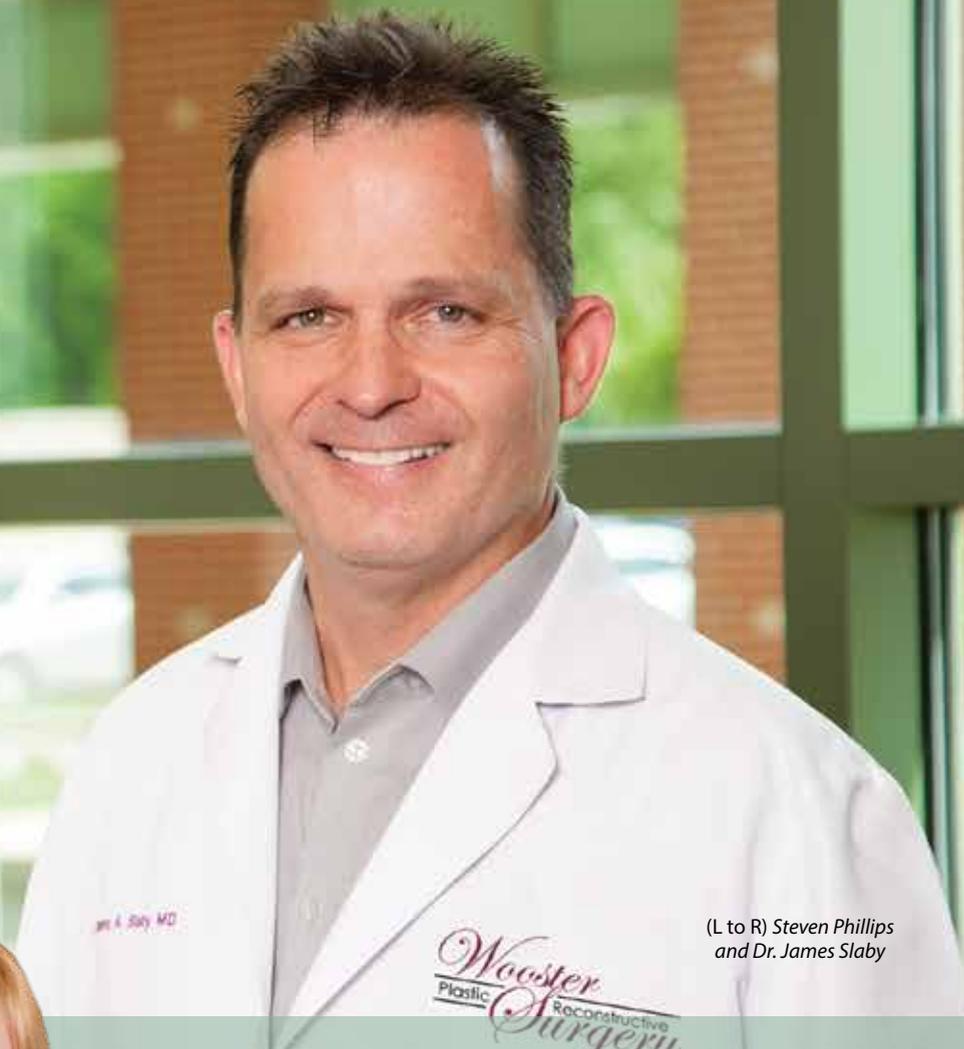


# Wound Care

After the Effects of Radiation Therapy



(L to R) Steven Phillips and Dr. James Slaby

— written by Ellen Pill



## What is Hyperbaric Medicine?

Hyperbaric medicine, also known as hyperbaric oxygen therapy, is a medical treatment that increases the amount of oxygen in the patient's blood, promoting healing. Originally used for treating decompression sickness in scuba divers, it has been found to have medical applications for serious infections, air bubbles in the blood vessels and wounds that do not heal as a result of radiation, injury or diabetes.

"I knew right then things were going to come together," explained Steven Phillips, recounting his decision to seek treatment locally to repair tissue damage caused by radiation therapy. "Why would I go 100 miles round trip when I could go to Wooster, to a facility that fit me perfectly?"

After undergoing surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy for a cancer diagnosis, Mr. Phillips was faced with tissue damage caused by the radiation treatments. A visiting nurse suggested he look into hyperbaric medicine to heal the damage, and recommended

Wooster Community Hospital's Wound Healing Center.

As a patient at the center, Phillips connected with Dr. James Slaby, a specialist in plastic and reconstructive surgery for those who have undergone radiation therapy and developed non-healing radiation ulcers. The two found an instant rapport.

Phillips' experience with the staff at the Wound Healing Center elicits the same enthusiasm. He explains that he spent so much time there everyone began to

feel like family. "My last session — when I walked out,



they were all lined up in the hallway and I got to thank all of them. I can't say enough good things about everyone there."

**Julia Fishburn BSN, RN**, coordinates care for patients at the center. "The goal is for the patient to truly understand the plan of care, which makes communication between healthcare providers and patients so important in getting the best result," she said. Steven was impressed with that communication and

shares, "I don't want to go through it again, but if I had to, this would be the place to do it." Mr. Phillips' wife was also a patient at the center, treated for a lack of blood flow due to radiation. "It worked for her, too," Phillips explains.

Dr. Slaby described Phillips' situation: "Sometimes after radiation therapy, you can develop damage to the surgical incision which leads to a non-healing radiation ulcer. Not everyone has these problems, but when it occurs, it is difficult to treat." Slaby was consulted because of the need for additional surgery

with complex muscle flaps for reconstruction. She said he used the hyperbaric chamber both before and after the complex muscle flap surgery to improve the wound in order to offer a better chance for healing. He summed up the benefits of his collaboration with the hospital's treatment and surgical facilities: "It's great that we can do this type of complex surgery and hyperbaric oxygen treatment in our small community, offering advanced care right here at home."