

# THE FUTURE OF ORTHOPEDICS IN THE ITALIAN HEALTH SYSTEM

## SAME-DAY OUTPATIENT SURGERY INTERVIEW WITH PROF. PIETRO MEMMO

*President, Orthopedic Associates of Hartford*

By Giuseppe Vinci

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### About Dr. Pietro Memmo

Prof. Pietro A. Memmo, Honorary and Distinguished Member of the Accademia dei Semplici, is a specialist in Interventional Physiatry with a focus on the Orthopedic Spine. He attended Columbia University and graduated with honors in medicine. He later attended the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, New York, completing his internship in Internal Medicine at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. He specialized in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, where he was appointed chief resident and voted “Resident Teacher of the Year” by the medical students he instructed.

He also served as a resident delegate to the American Medical Association and published several original articles and book chapters on conservative spine care. Prof. Memmo completed a fellowship in Spine and Sports Medicine at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City. During this time, he was part of the medical team for several professional sports teams in NYC and received intensive training in advanced and minimally invasive spinal procedures. He is one of the few interventional physiatrists in Connecticut certified in both physical medicine and rehabilitation and pain management. Currently:

- **President of Orthopedic Associates of Hartford**
- **Associate Clinical Professor, Department of Orthopedics, University of Connecticut School of Medicine**

### Introduction

Major changes are emerging in the Italian National Health System in the field of orthopedic surgery, directly inspired by the Ambulatory Surgical Centers in the United States, following current trends in the American healthcare system.

## **Interview Highlights**

### **Q: Professor Memmo, what do you foresee for the future of orthopedic surgery in the Italian Health System?**

**A:** Based on recent experience and data from the U.S., the future of orthopedic surgery in the Italian system will increasingly rely on same-day outpatient surgery. The shift from a hospital environment to an outpatient setting for surgical cases is one of the most important strategies in the U.S. and benefits patients, physicians, and the healthcare system overall.

### **Q: What are the outcomes of outpatient surgeries in the United States?**

**A:** In 2022, 9% of total joint replacement surgeries were performed in outpatient surgical centers. By 2026, it is estimated that 51% of total joint replacements will be done in such centers. Just five years ago, a total knee replacement required a five-day hospital stay—today, the same procedure takes only five hours.

### **Q: How does the outpatient surgical process work, from admission to discharge?**

**A:** For patients undergoing total joint replacement, they are admitted to the outpatient surgical center at 7:00 AM and discharged home around noon. Patients can walk as early as one hour after surgery. This reduction in hospitalization time to five hours—with patients able to walk within one hour—is made possible by advances in anesthesia, pre-operative medical evaluations, and improved operational efficiency.

### **Q: Why is this transition beneficial for the healthcare system?**

**A:** There are several reasons:

- Surgeons can provide high-quality care at lower costs.
- Outpatient procedures, such as spine and joint replacement surgeries, are projected to grow by 18% over the next 10 years.
- The cost difference for a total knee replacement between an outpatient center and a hospital is 30% to 50% lower, resulting in substantial savings for the health system.

### **Q: What techniques make it possible to go from a 5-day to a 5-hour surgery?**

**A:** These include:

- Advances in anesthesia and nerve blocks
- No general anesthesia or intubation
- Long-lasting anesthesia (24–48 hours)
- Pre-operative medical evaluation focusing on patients with low BMI and no permanent pacemakers
- Operational efficiency with staff dedicated solely to orthopedics, working in a single-specialty center where nurses and operating room technicians consistently repeat the same procedure with the same team.