

Minnesota man takes shot at getting his voice back

VIDEO	AUDIO
	"Let's go through our agenda. What's happening?"
	It's the start of Mayo Clinic News Network's daily team meeting. But Communications Director Ron Petrovich is having trouble communicating.
Ron Petrovich Communications Director Mayo Clinic	"My voice sounds scratchy right now. I'm having ... it's very inconsistent. Right now, it feels like it's closed right there."
	"And it's not painful. But it just comes out of the blue."
	Initially, he chalked it up to a cold or allergies. But his hoarse voice got progressively worse over a year's time.
	"It feels very similar to — like, you know how when you are on a walk — when you have a cramp in your calf? That's what it feels like in my throat."
	"If you would, hold out an 'Ahhh' for me and let me listen ... — Ahhh."
	After undergoing several tests at Mayo Clinic, Ron's health care team made a diagnosis of spasmodic dysphonia — involuntary muscle spasms of the vocal folds in the voice box.
Diana Orbelo, Ph.D. Speech-Language Pathology Mayo Clinic	"Ron has adductor spasmodic dysphonia, meaning the muscles spasm and close the fold. So he gets these intermittent strained, strangled sounds."
	"We have found in the research that there are some differences in the brain, but we don't know if those differences are the cause of spasmodic dysphonia or whether they are a result."
	For temporary relief, Ron was given what some might think is an unusual treatment — injection of Botox into his vocal folds.
	"It inhibits the ability for that muscle to be strong and work hard. So it basically weakens it or partially paralyzes it."

	"About a week later, it just relaxed."
	"Very good. Would you mind taking your mask off? I'll keep mine on. And let's listen to you a little bit. OK."
	Within a few days of his first injections, Ron got his voice back.
	"It feels so much better. I used to have to think about every single word, how was I going to project. And now I can just talk naturally."
	Mayo Clinic experts say the positive effects of the injections usually wear off after about three months.
	"I wish we had a cure. And, unfortunately, we don't know how to resolve it fully. We're really just treating a symptom. So we would anticipate that he would get repeated injections."
	"I was very concerned about it. I was thinking, 'You know, if there's no cure and if this doesn't work, then what do you do?' So I'm thrilled. And I'm very happy at the course we're taking right now."
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Jason Howland.