

Dr. Chima Ohaegbulam in the News



What Happened to Clooney's Back?

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the spine. Spinal fluid leaked into his body—and at one point, says Clooney, out of his nose.

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Back in Action

After a scary spinal injury, George Clooney returns with his new movie about TV journalism's glory days

What director wouldn't leap at the chance to snare George Clooney for a lead role? Clooney himself, for one. As he prepared to direct his second movie, *Good Night, and Good Luck*, a drama about venerable CBS newscaster Edward R. Murrow, he opted against playing Murrow. "He felt that he just didn't have it," says *Good Night* producer and costar Grant Heslov. "Murrow seemed to have the weight of the world on his shoulders. And George doesn't." At least not anymore. But last fall, after he put on 30 lbs. in less than a month to play a CIA agent in the upcoming political thriller *Syriana*, the added weight—and shooting a rough torture scene—caused Clooney, 44, to tear his dura mater (the membrane around the spine), an injury that required several painful surgeries to fix (see box). Still, Clooney pushed forward, filming *Good Night* this spring as a valentine to his dad, Nick, whom Clooney watched anchor the local news as a kid growing up in Kentucky and Ohio. "It was certainly a tip of the hat to my dad," says Clooney, "and the sacrifices he made over the years." So Clooney returned the favor, gamely helming *Good Night* while suffering more than most people around him knew. "He wouldn't do any short days or lie down," says Heslov. "He was pretty good at hiding it." Healing meant taking it easy at his Italian villa this summer—"a good place to sit on a lake and not move," Clooney says—and staying away from his beloved motorcycle and pickup basketball. But Clooney, who has been single since splitting with on-and-off girlfriend Lisa Snowdon in June (a rep denies a recent report he's moving in with another ex-flame, actress Krista Allen), is looking forward to letting loose again. He rolled the dice in August by announcing a partnership with Cindy Crawford's husband, Rande Gerber, to build a new hotel and three-back-style casino in Las Vegas. "We both want the same thing," says Gerber. "To be happy, make other people happy and enjoy life." •

Who's Who in Good Night
Set in 1954, Clooney's movie *Good Night* spotlights a historic moment for TV news. Here's a look at the key players.

EDWARD R. MURROW
The crusading CBS newscaster is played by David Strathairn.

SEN. JOSEPH MCCARTHY
The Communist hunter, whose tactics Murrow opposed, appears via archival footage.

FRED FRIENDLY
Clooney plays the loyal producer of Murrow's influential *See It Now* series.

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"He likes to work, so it's been hard knowing the pain he's in," says pal Rande Gerber of Clooney's back injury. "He doesn't want to complain."