

Spirit of Halifax

The Community Newsletter of Halifax Regional Medical Center



Wound Care Clinic is a Success.



Titus Williams is treated for his wound.

Halifax Regional's new Wound Care Clinic has proven at least one point in its first three months: There is a need in the community for wound care services.

"We have been seeing many more patients than we expected," said Mick Olesnevich, RN, manager of the clinic. "That indicates that we are meeting a need for a comprehensive approach to chronic wounds." Many patients are diabetic and have ulcers on their lower extremities.

The Wound Care Clinic is an outpatient program – located at 120 Professional Drive in Roanoke Rapids – that works closely with a patient's physician to offer advanced technologies and proven clinical methods to treat chronic, non-healing wounds.

"When a wound fails to heal, serious complications can result," said Olesnevich. They can lead to amputation of limbs and impaired quality of life.

Wounds are associated with inadequate circulation, poorly functioning veins and immobility. Problem wounds are more common among people with diabetes and heart disease and conditions that affect circulation and slow the skin's ability to heal itself.

Pauline Barnes of Warren County was referred to the Wound Care Clinic by her physician. "I'm glad the Clinic is here," she said. "I could not have asked for more attention and better care. I'd give the Clinic an A+ and recommend it to my friends." She adds that she is doing very well.

For more information on the Wound Care Clinic, call 252 535-2350.

Halifax Regional Scores High in Quality Measures.

There's a new focus on avoiding errors in hospitals, and Halifax Regional is working hard to keep errors as low as possible. The federal government has developed a series of "quality measures," which are important indicators of the safety of hospitals. At Halifax Regional, we're proud of the improvements we're making.

"We work as a team in several departments to meet the guidelines set by the government and The Joint Commission," said Margaret Rose, director of quality and risk management for Halifax Regional.

One of the measures concerns preventing infections in patients having surgery by giving the right antibiotics at the right time.

Here's how Halifax Regional scored:

What percentage of the time did the patient receive antibiotics at the right time?

- Halifax Regional 99%
- North Carolina 96%
- United States 91%

What percentage of the time did the patient receive the right kind of antibiotics?

- Halifax Regional 100%
- North Carolina 97%
- United States 95%

Rose explained that Halifax Regional formed a team to develop a process to meet the goals and that the results are excellent.

These are simply one set of measures. Visit www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov for more information.

In My View

What Healthcare Reform Will Mean.

Many people in the community have asked me if Halifax Regional will be better off now that healthcare reform is law.



My first response is to thank those of you who are concerned about the financial health of Halifax Regional. It's important for your family and for this community that we are a strong organization.

The law is the largest overhaul of our healthcare system in nearly 50 years. The aim is to cover 32 million more Americans or about 94 percent of the population.

That's great and much is needed for the uninsured. But the legislation does not address how healthcare is provided and paid for. That's to be determined. We still have a system that is intended to pay for taking care of sick folks, not paying to keep people healthy.

Reform will take place in stages. Some provisions of the law do not take effect until 2014, and it is difficult to predict the impact on hospitals, physicians and other providers. At this point, there are perhaps two ways we know that Halifax Regional will be impacted:

- The government will continue to reduce payments to hospitals. Medicare payments to Halifax Regional are projected to be cut \$44,000 this year, \$153,000 next year and \$633,000 in 2012. They cannot project the reductions for 2013 and beyond.
- Beginning in 2014, an estimated 32 million more people will be provided Medicaid insurance. That will help us because we will be receiving payment for treating uninsured patients. The

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James Pierce Rejoins Medical Center Board.



James Pierce.

James Pierce, chairman of the Halifax County Board of Commissioners, has rejoined the Board of Directors of Halifax Regional. He previously served on the Board from 1997-2008.

Pierce encourages citizens to use Halifax Regional when they need healthcare services. "Our goal is to provide the services needed by residents so they will not have to travel out of town for healthcare," he said. He also welcomes suggestions from the community.

A native of Halifax County, Pierce is the retired Area Manager for Kapstone Paper Co. He has received the Governor's Award for Community Service and the North Carolina Outstanding Citizen's Award.

More about Halifax Regional

Our web site, www.halifaxregional.us, is full of information about our services, and we hope you visit us here.

If you'd like to see our annual report, click on "annual report" at the top of the home page.

If you'd like to know more about how Halifax Regional benefits the community, click on "community benefits" on the left column.

Our news releases can be found under "news" at the top. Check us out for health information.

Pain Management – a Specialized Service at Halifax Regional.



Dr. Thomas uses technology to help patients manage pain.

Pain management is among the specialized surgical procedures provided at Halifax Regional.

Joey P. Thomas, MD is board certified by the American Board of Pain Medicine and has vast experience in management of chronic pain and interventional pain medicine.

"Our mission is to identify the source of

pain, provide effective treatments and help our patients to set realistic goals so they will have the most functional and productive lifestyle possible," he said. He adds that people often suffer unnecessarily and wait too long to seek treatment.

In addition to his office practice in Roanoke Rapids, Dr. Thomas sees patients at Halifax Regional who need special procedures to reduce chronic pain, which includes radiofrequency ablation, cooled radiofrequency ablation, spinal cord stimulation and kyphoplasty for compression fracture of spines. These procedures typically are performed under fluoroscopy.

Dr. Thomas specializes in cancer pain, back and neck pain, and headaches other than migraines.

In addition to pain management, Dr. Thomas is an anesthesiologist at Halifax Regional and is certified by the American Board of Anesthesiology. Visit www.roanokevalleypaincenter.com for more information or contact Roanoke Valley Pain Center at 252 410-0001.

Halifax Regional Strengthens Imaging Services.



Dr. Ericson uses high-tech equipment to read images of patients.

Halifax Regional's diagnostic imaging service is at a high level, according to the new radiologist, Douglas Ericson, MD.

Dr. Ericson has re-joined Halifax Regional, having served here in 2005-07. He is in partnership with DRI, a group practice that serves the Medical Center.

"Halifax Regional now is fortunate to have a stable group of well-trained physicians who are dedicated to meeting the needs of our medical staff for diagnostic imaging," said Michael Adcock, vice president of clinical

and support services.

Having worked in North Carolina for 10 years, Dr. Ericson is aware of other hospital radiology departments and reports that Halifax Regional has strong capabilities.

"Halifax Regional has kept up with the technology, and the staff is excellent," Dr. Ericson says. "They really look out for what is best for the patients."

Fred Weir, MD, of Roanoke Valley Surgical Associates, says, "I enjoy working with Dr. Ericson. He is very cordial and goes out of his way to communicate to the medical staff. His clinical performance has proven to be above expectation."

Danilo Bernardo, MD of Valley Hypertension-Nephrology, says, "Dr. Ericson communicates well with the medical staff. He listens to our concerns and responds appropriately."

Dr. Ericson is a graduate of Purdue University and earned his medical degree from Indiana University. He did a clinical internship followed by a residency in Diagnostic Imaging at Michigan State University. He is certified by the American Board of Radiology.

Advanced Surgery for Urologic Conditions at Halifax Regional.



Dr. Rajan prepares for surgery.

Halifax Regional provides advanced surgery for many urologic conditions, including laser therapy.

Laser therapy is used to remove painful

kidney stones and for benign prostate problems.

In addition to traditional surgery, Natarajan Rajan, MD performs a minimally-invasive procedure called Cryocare TCAP that uses a freezing technique to destroy prostate cancer. Patients are typically back on their feet quickly, since this is not major surgery.

Many women have the problem of stress urinary incontinence (SUI). Urine leakage can be embarrassing, and it may keep a person from being active. But Dr. Rajan wants women to know that SUI can be treated. Surgery often helps.

Dr. Rajan employs minimally invasive procedures, such as Monarchy Sling or Pubovaginal Sling, to help keep the urethra closed to prevent leakage. Incisions are made

in the vaginal wall. A “sling” of tissue is placed like a hammock under the bladder and urethra. The “sling” helps support the bladder and urethra firmly in place.

Dr. Rajan, a board certified Urologist, completed his residency at the State University of New York. He and David Varney, MD practice at SAI Urology at 117 Professional Drive in Roanoke Rapids. The office phone is 252 308-6889.

Guidelines for PSA Testing.

Prostate cancer is a major concern for American men 50 years of age and over. More than 200,000 new cases and about 30,000 deaths are attributed to prostate cancer each year in the United States.

Prostate cancer cells do not follow normal patterns and grow uncontrollably and spread to other tissue. Although the disease is rare before age 50, experts believe that most elderly men have at least traces of it. Often, prostate cancer causes no symptoms until advanced stages.

Prostate cancer in the early stages can be cured. Fortunately, about 85% of American men with prostate cancer are diagnosed in the early stages.

Elevated PSA levels may indicate prostate cancer or a noncancerous condition such as an enlarged prostate or infection.

The American Cancer Society says men should talk to their doctors about the risks, limitations and benefits of prostate cancer screening before deciding whether to be tested.

For most men at average risk, PSA screening is started at age 45-50. Natarajan Rajan, MD, a board certified Urologist at Halifax Regional, recommends testing begin at age 40 for African-American men and men with a family history of prostate cancer.

The American Urological Association recommends a first time test at age 40, with a schedule of follow-up testing to be determined on an individual basis.

For more information, call Dr. Rajan's office, SAI Urology at 252 308-6889.

The Joint Care Center – a Happy Place.



Physical Therapist Chris Lewis exercises the knee of Polly Babb after her knee replacement surgery.

Pain in the knees and hips is a growing problem, and more than 400,000 people a year are having their knees or hips replaced.

The surgery is an opportunity to improve quality of life, and Halifax Regional has a high-ranking program that has proven to be caring, innovative and success-oriented.

In fewer than five years, our Joint Care Center has managed approximately 1,700 replacement procedures.

More patients from outside the Roanoke Valley have chosen Halifax Regional for their procedures because of our track record and the staff that makes the environment so positive.

Vickie Wells, RN, believes the low

patient-nurse ratio is a key factor. “We spend more time with our patients,” she says, citing the ratio of about 1:5.

Joanne Hoggard, RN, points to the visit that patients make to the Center before surgery. “We have an opportunity to get to know them and explain what will happen to them to allay their anxiety.”

May Beth Vincent, RN, says the cheerful atmosphere makes a big difference. “Our patients are not sick when they come here, and they enjoy laughing and joking with us. We motivate them to do their best in the walking competition.”

The nurses were chosen because of their experience, qualifications and commitment to putting Patients First, says Mick Olesnevich, RN, who manages the Joint Care Center. “Their personalities foster a positive environment that encourages patients to work with them to recover quickly.”

Evidence of the quality of the staff comes from patients such as Megan O'Brien of Roanoke, VA. “The staff is upbeat and happy, and I have made friends for life,” she says after undergoing two hip replacements.

“I had been suffering from pain in my hips for 15 years, and the new hips have changed my life. I am pain free. I just wish I had not waited so long to have them replaced. I was back at work in two weeks.”

Visit www.halifaxjointcare.com for more information about the Joint Care Center.

In My View

What Healthcare Reform Will Mean.

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other side of the coin is that Medicaid reimburses us only for 90 percent of our costs to provide that care.

We do not know if these two changes will even out for us. Currently, about 75 percent of all our patients are covered by Medicare or Medicaid.

So, in reality, we do not know the impact. We do know that discussion is healthy, and we appreciate the fact that people have been engaged on this issue.

We also know that hospitals and doctors have a noble purpose – to improve the health of the community. We've been doing that a long time, and we will adjust and continue to serve you and everyone in our community.



Will Mahone
President

P. S. I appreciate your comments and questions about Halifax Regional. Please write me at wmahone@halifaxrmc.org. I'll get back to you.

Terry Moore Joins HalifaxWorks.



Terry Moore, FNP-BC, occupational health manager, consults with a patient at HalifaxWorks.

HalifaxWorks, the occupational health program at Halifax Regional, has a new leader. She is Terry Moore, FNP, who has 23 years' experience in occupational medicine providing care to workers in multiple settings. She is a Board Certified Family Nurse Practitioner and holds a number of

certifications in occupational health.

Terry is using her expertise to direct our program to meet the needs of businesses in the Roanoke Valley. Services she will provide include pre- and post-employment physical exams, treatment for occupational illness or injuries and return to work. Her goal is to assist the employer in getting the employee back to work quickly and safely.

Terry is a graduate of the East Carolina University School of Nursing and also obtained her master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from ECU. She brings expertise in workers' compensation, workplace wellness, and coordinating rehabilitative care.

To speak with Terry and find out how HalifaxWorks can help solve your company's employee health issues, call 252 535-8463.

Sign Up Today.

Halifax Regional wants you to have more information about how to take care of your health. We are expanding our health education program and would like to send you information via email.

When you sign up for HealthEd, you'll receive emails with tips for a healthy lifestyle, information about special events at Halifax HealthLink and news about the services at Halifax Regional. PLUS, if you are not a member of HealthLink, you'll get a FREE one-month membership.

To sign up, go to www.halifaxregional.us and click on the "Sign up for HealthEd" icon.

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Halifax Regional Medical Center
250 Smith Church Road
Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
www.halifaxregional.us

Patients First.
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