

Spirit of Halifax

The Community Newsletter of Halifax Regional Medical Center



L to R: Dr. Agbata, Dr. Jaffar, Dr. Onuorah, Dr. Shakir, Dr. Kaleab (lead hospitalist), and Dr. Ahmed.

Hospitalists Care for Inpatients.

For the first time, Halifax Regional has a complete hospitalist program with six full-time physicians dedicated to providing the best possible care to patients admitted to the Medical Center.

With six hospitalists, Halifax Regional now offers 24-hour inpatient coverage. "There is always a hospitalist in the Medical Center, so an answer is always close by," said Mary Pat Whaley, who manages the program.

Since the hospitalists work seven consecutive days, they likely will see the same patients throughout their stay at Halifax Regional. "Having the same hospitalist see a patient throughout his or her stay in the Medical Center will improve the continuity of care," said Whaley. "There will be some occasions when a patient sees several physicians, depending on when the patient is admitted."

Hospitalists represent a relatively new specialty that allows a physician to devote full

time to seeing hospitalized patients. "We have an excellent group of physicians who work well together with nurses and referring physicians so that patients have the best possible outcomes," said Birhane Kaleab, MD, PhD, the lead hospitalist.

At the same time, office-based physicians now have more time to treat patients in their offices. "Being able to stay in the office for an entire day means more patients can be seen," Whaley added. "We can already tell that patients can get an appointment more quickly."

Hospitalists meet each morning to discuss the progress of patients. "We have a high level of teamwork among our hospitalists," said Whaley.

Patients are a partner in their care. Hospitalists encourage patients to ask questions and express their concerns anytime during their stay.

In My View

Customer Satisfaction is the Difference.



National experts say the downturn in the economy has created the perfect storm for hospitals in America's rural areas. Revenue has declined significantly and hospitals are caring for more people who do not have insurance. The result is damaging the financial condition, resulting in hospitals' having to reduce expenses with the goal of trying not to sacrifice quality and safety.

In rural areas, the percentage of people living in poverty is higher. Rural areas have been losing jobs at a faster rate than the rest of the nation. The facts lead to fewer people having health insurance. Patients are more likely to skip doctors appointments and then are seen in the Emergency Department.

It all adds up to a bleak picture for smaller hospitals in rural areas.

Reducing costs is not the long-term solution to financial challenges in any business. Halifax Regional has made short-term reductions, but we intend to continue to invest in improving technology and services in fulfilling our mission "to meet the healthcare needs of our community by providing excellent and compassionate services—and always placing Patients First."

A key to the viability of Halifax Regional is customer loyalty. We place great emphasis on patient satisfaction, as you note by our "Patients First" motto.

Most Americans have a hospital they call their own; one they prefer to go to when they need care. At Halifax Regional, we strive to be the place you refer to as "my hospital."

Cheryl Wheeler, whom you met in the spring issue of Spirit of Halifax, is our Guest Relations

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Together, for Life



Forrest and Ruby Carpenter exercise together at Halifax HealthLink.

Ruby and Forrest Carpenter have been together for many years, and they credit Halifax HealthLink for enabling them to be together now.

A retired Lieutenant in the Roanoke Rapids Fire Department, Forrest suffered a heart attack and underwent quadruple bypass surgery. His physician told him to watch his diet and begin an exercise program, or he would not be so lucky next time.

After undergoing cardiac rehab, Forrest and Ruby joined Halifax HealthLink. Today, he walks the six miles to and from HealthLink at Becker Village Mall and then exercises for one hour.

"What has it meant?" asks Ruby. "It's meant that he is alive." Forrest has lost more than 40 pounds.

Forrest advises not to wait until you have suffered a heart attack and you have to exercise. "All you have is time, so use it wisely," he says.

To encourage Forrest, Ruby began exercising with him. She also has lost weight. "My time at HealthLink has benefitted me as much as Forrest."

Ruby is a retired Registered Nurse. She and Forrest met when he was a patient at the old hospital in Roanoke Rapids and have been married 62 years.

The Carpenters are one of many healthy stories you find at HealthLink, an affordable and convenient fitness center that offers supervision, personal support and health information to members.

HealthLink is one of the many ways Halifax Regional, a non-profit community-based organization, contributes to the well-being of the community.

Community benefits are services such as

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Joining HealthLink

Halifax HealthLink is your connection to better health. Memberships come in a variety of affordable packages for adults, children and families. HealthLink has a broad range of exercise equipment. Members receive personal attention from our professional staff and enjoy social interaction with friendly people. For more information, visit www.halifaxregional.us/healthlink.html or call Jackie Cieslinski at 252 535-4334.

Allergy Testing at Roanoke Clinic



Courtney Slaughter, RN tests Philip Smith of Seaboard for allergies.

Allergy is a condition that affects one in five Americans, many of whom have suffered for years. Allergies are now the 6th leading cause of chronic disease. Hay fever, asthma and eczema are the most common allergies and typical symptoms include sneezing, congestion, puffy eyes, runny nose, shortness of breath, frequent cough, wheezing, and itching.

Fortunately, patients in the Roanoke Valley can receive effective treatment for allergies. Roanoke Clinic, on the campus of Halifax Regional, offers a comprehensive program for allergy testing and treatment. Testing begins with a visit to a physician and then a skin test, where a small amount of potential allergens is injected. After your test results are reviewed, you'll return to the doctor to receive a treatment plan customized for your situation.

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Dr. Guo Joins Valley Hypertension-Nephrology Associates.

Valley Hypertension-Nephrology Associates now has three physicians to serve patients with diseases of the kidney and high blood pressure.

Daqing Guo, MD, has joined the practice from Washington, DC, where he recently completed a Fellowship in Nephrology at Georgetown University Hospital.

He is Board Certified in Internal Medicine.

After his medical education in China, Guo completed his Residency at Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston in 2007. For the past two years, he has been at Georgetown.

"After living in two large metropolitan areas, I wanted to live in a small town where it is

quiet and less crowded to raise my family," he said in explaining what attracted him to Roanoke Rapids.

"I also want to use my medical knowledge and experience to treat patients who are in need of hypertension and kidney disease treatment," he added. He said the hospitality shown by Drs. Bernardo and Santarina has made him feel welcomed.



Dr. Guo

He and his wife, Ning, a former accountant, have two children. Grace is an avid reader and enjoys playing the piano. Maxwell, 5, enjoys golf and swimming and is a fan of the armed forces.

Guo enjoys golf, swimming, classical music and traveling.

Valley Hypertension-Nephrology Associates

Danilo Bernardo, MD
Lorenzo Santarina, MD
Daqing Guo, MD

937 Gregory Drive, Roanoke Rapids
 252 535-2111

Your Link to the Community



L to R, Bottom Row (In Chairs): Neal Philips, Board Member; Johnny Draper, Chairman; Evelyn Dawson, Board Member. Middle Row: Will Mahone, President; Dr. Jonathan Jack, Chief of Staff; Drewery Beale, Board Member; Tom Lynch, Treasurer; William Hodge, Board Member. Back Row: Dr. Richard Minielly, Past Chief of Staff; Ernest Barner, Board Member; Vernon Bryant, Vice Chairman; Rev. John Smith, Board Member; J. Hugh Bazemore, Member at Large. Not Pictured: Bob Patterson, Secretary.

Halifax Regional's connection to the community lies in the Board of Directors, a 14-member organization which governs the Medical Center.

While including the current and past Chief of the Medical Staff and the President of

Halifax Regional, the Board consists primarily of community representatives.

"Halifax Regional is a non-profit, community-based organization," said Johnny Draper, chairman. "The members of the Board view

themselves as the policy makers for Halifax Regional and as community ambassadors.

"We are the key link between the community and the Medical Center," Draper added. "We want to hear from the public about how well the Medical Center is meeting the healthcare needs of the community and what we can do better."

People can take a hospital for granted, Draper said. "It's easy to assume that the community always will have a strong hospital with excellent physicians, but it does not happen automatically," he continued.

"It takes public involvement with the leadership of the Board," Draper said, "along with the commitment of the administration, staff, physicians and volunteers all working together as a team."

If you have a comment or question about Halifax Regional, please feel free to speak to one of the members of the Board of Directors.

A Simple Test May Save Your Life.



Terry Mason conducts mammogram at Roanoke Valley Women's Imaging Center.

"Make your appointment at the Imaging Center and for the first time go in with a smile, and I guarantee you that you'll come out with a smile because the staff truly cares about you," says Dail Allen.

Dail knows. She is battling breast cancer, having been diagnosed after a mammogram. Thanks to early detection, she is doing fine. "The staff at the Imaging Center was there for me, laughed with me, cried with me and even prayed with me."

The staff has prepared gift bags for every woman who has a mammogram in October, the 25th anniversary of National Breast Cancer Awareness month. "The bags contain educational information

and every day useful items," says Terry Mason, mammography supervisor at the Imaging Center, which is a service of Halifax Regional. Each bag is different.

Money to purchase items in the bags came from the sale of special tee-shirts, designed by Tim Archer, whose aunt Junie Connor is a technologist at the Imaging Center.

The American Cancer Society recommends mammograms annually for women age 40 and older. Women who are at higher than average risk of breast cancer should talk with their healthcare providers about whether to have mammograms before age 40 and how often to have them.

The Imaging Center is arranged in a private clinical setting. Patients usually complete their mammograms within 30 minutes. "Our staff treats patients like family members," said Mason.

Financial assistance is available for those who qualify.

A doctor's order is required to have a mammogram. For information, call Roanoke Valley Imaging Center at 252 535-3417. For appointments, call 252 535-8888. The Center is located on the campus of Halifax Regional at 244 Smith Church Road, Building C.

In My View

Customer Satisfaction is the Difference.

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Manager. Her job is to make sure that patients are treated as they would treat people who were their guests.

We know that patients who have excellent experiences are more likely to return to Halifax Regional for future services and to recommend us to their friends.

Halifax Regional is committed to excellence in placing Patients First to build loyalty among patients, physicians and employees.

It's about trust, and we are here to earn your trust every day.

Will Mahone
President

P.S. I'd like to hear from you. Please write me at wmahone@halifaxrmc.org. I'll get back to you.

Allergy Testing at Roanoke Clinic

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Treatment varies and the length of treatment varies according to each patient's situation. Injections are a common form of treatment, and can bring relief within a few months but may require years. More than 80 percent of patients who receive regular shots experience significant improvement or complete relief.

If you suffer from allergies and would like more information about allergy testing and treatment, please call Roanoke Clinic at 252 537-9176.

Together, for Life

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HealthLink that increase access to care and improve the health of the community.

The total monetary value of benefits we provided the community in 2007 was \$8.4 million, not including the \$4.8 million in bad debt charges. For more information on our benefits, visit www.halifaxregional.us/benefits.html.

Halifax Regional and Medical Staff Rank High in Quality Clinical Measures.

Halifax Regional and its Medical Staff are achieving a high level of clinical performance.

For 17 of 25 performance measures developed by a group of national and government healthcare organizations, Halifax Regional met or exceeded national averages.

For five measures, we achieved "Top Hospital" status, meaning we are in the top 10 percent of hospitals nationwide. They deal with how we take care of patients with heart attacks and how we prevent infections in patients undergoing surgery.

For the 12 additional measures, we meet or exceed national averages.

We are implementing performance improvement plans for the remaining measures to become a high performing hospital in all areas.

"This is just one of the indications of the quality of care that is provided by our physicians and caregivers at Halifax Regional," said Margaret Rose, director of quality and risk management.

The information comes from the public web site, Hospital Compare, an effort of the

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Department of Health and Human Services and other members of the Hospital Quality Alliance.

These measures show how often hospitals give recommended treatments known to get the best results for patients with certain medical conditions or surgical procedures. For more information, visit www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov/Hospital/Static/ConsumerInformation.tabset.asp.

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.

Twelfth Edition. *Spirit of Halifax* is the newsletter of Halifax Regional, published quarterly to inform residents of the Roanoke Valley about the advancements at the Medical Center. If you have questions or comments, please contact Gail Wade at 252 535-8111 or gwade@halifaxmc.org. © 2009, Halifax Regional Medical Center

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