

The Current

Three Rivers Hospital's Quarterly Newsletter

March 2015, Issue I

Welcome to Three Rivers Hospital



By J. Scott
Graham

Chief
Executive
Officer

Good day, and happy spring to all of the residents and visitors of our hospital district. We at Three Rivers Hospital hope the increased sunlight and warmer weather are bringing you happiness, and of course, good health.

The headline of this article also bears in mind the promise that a new year brings. We're committed to delivering quality patient care, as the hospital has been since it opened in 1949, but many changes are already underway to improve

that quality.

Since September, we have developed new vision, mission, and values statements that we try to live up to each day. That, along with our new strategic plan, will help us achieve our top two goals: providing the ideal patient experience, and breaking even operationally.

For several years, hospital residents have shared their concerns about our reliance on interest-bearing warrants with Okanogan County. Through cost-cutting measures in the 2015 budget and finding new ways to promote our services, we're practicing fiscal prudence while making every effort to increase revenues so we can pay off our debt by 2017. The county is support-

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ive of our efforts in this, and we hope you will be, too.

In these pages you'll find information about our services and recent improvements, and health tips for your families. Health care is changing nationwide, and Three Rivers Hospital is committed to being proactive so we can continue to serve our communities for decades to come.

Sincerely,



Employee Spotlight

Vince Miller, RN, was celebrated as the winner of the "Name Our Newsletter" contest in January.

Vince works nights in the emergency room. He has been with Three Rivers Hospital since January 2008.

ER provider Erica Hickson, ARNP, said Vince is "cool under pressure, kind and caring to our patients, one of the best!"

"I look forward to working with him always!" she said.

"Vince makes night shift fun with his great attitude and knowledge," ARNP Michele Hansen said. "I don't mind getting that call at 2 a.m. that 'You have a patient waiting,' knowing that I will get to work with Vince."

Our thanks to Vince for his hard work and for coming up with a great name!

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Helping Your Health

In each newsletter, we'll address common health-related questions. Send questions to jmarshall@trhospital.net.

When Should I Call My Doctor?

It can be difficult to tell sometimes when symptoms are serious enough to visit your family doctor. Often, it depends on the issue and/or the patient's age.

When it comes to a cold or the flu, an older child or adult should see a doctor if their temperature is at least 103 degrees, but a young child, an elderly person or a pregnant woman should call once it reaches 100 degrees.

If you're pregnant, you should call your doctor if you have spotting that lasts longer than one day, persistent severe headaches, sudden swelling of your feet, hands or face, or if the baby stops moving.

Parents may want to consider calling the doctor if their chil-

dren have abdominal pain, difficulty swallowing, or a headache accompanied by a fever.

If you have a stubborn cough this time of year that has lasts longer than a month, or coughing fits that trigger vomiting, you may want to call your doctor.

High blood pressure and diabetes are common health issues. Blood pressure or blood glucose readings that are higher than normal for more than one day should be reported to your doctor.

For chest pain, call if it is frequent and/or severe, or if it's accompanied by shortness of breath.

If you still aren't sure, go ahead and call. It's better to be safe than sorry!

Stubborn coughs lasting longer than a month might warrant a doctor visit.



World Wide Web

A trip to the doctor might be needed if you're a high-risk patient.



Flu Facts

It's been an active flu season in our hospital district this year. As of March 17, there have been about 43 positive tests for flu out of 135 conducted at TRH.

In addition, there have been 35 positive tests out of 224 at the Family Health Centers clinic on Indian Avenue in Brewster, which runs its tests through Three Rivers Hospital.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control notes that February is traditionally the peak month for influenza, although some are still testing positive for it.

Three Rivers and on-site family practice clinic Columbia Medical & Surgical Services can help protect you and your family from several strains of the flu.

Here are some facts:

- Symptoms include feeling feverish or having chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, sore throat, cough, headaches, and a runny or stuffy nose.
- The flu can be contagious up to seven days after becoming sick. Wash your hands often with soap and water, and cough or sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve, not your hands.
- The flu shot doesn't ward off every strain of the flu, but it can prevent several. To help protect our patients, 96% of TRH employees have been vaccinated this year.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

Providers' Corner: Preparing for surgery



By
Gordon
Tagge,
M.D.

Well, you think you heard your doctor correctly and you are going to need surgery. Most of the time, when a patient comes to see a surgeon they already have an idea their primary care provider thinks an operation is indicated.

If you elect to pursue the surgical option there are a lot of steps ahead and a lot of people who will be involved in your care.

I always tell patients I don't guarantee results; I guarantee my best effort. Surgery can be a great option for many situations, but it has risks as well.

You need to do your research and have trust in your physicians. When patients come in for a consultation we will take a full histo-

ry and perform a physical exam. It has to be clear the operation is indicated and other medical issues are addressed and stabilized. Any pertinent X-rays and recent laboratory studies will be reviewed. Your surgeon will also need to know all the medications and supplements you are taking, as they can affect the procedure and the anesthesia.

It is important you are completely honest. For example, some may not think taking one aspirin a day or taking a nutritional supplement is important to divulge. Some medications can increase the risk of bleeding, and supplements often contain several ingredients that we need to know about.

You will also have options with respect to type of anesthesia used, so be sure to ask about them.

For many conditions there are other options available besides surgery, such as additional medications to manage your condition or simply waiting if you think the

symptoms aren't that bad and it isn't an emergency (like appendicitis). If those options are not reviewed with you, make sure to ask.

One of the advantages of the new electronic medical records is we can access databases that provide patient educational materials. We provide the patient with printouts that they can take home and read. That way some of the questions not asked at the initial appointment may be answered. And, even with all that, we will still visit just prior to the planned procedure to answer any final questions. Make sure you understand what the risks of surgery are and what is involved with the critical recovery period.

I continue to be humbled that people place their lives in our care. It is the best part of this job.

I enjoy working at Three Rivers Hospital and am proud of the whole team working there. It may not be a brand new hospital, but the care delivered there is first class.

TRH upgrades equipment for better patient care

Three Rivers Hospital has revived its mammography program after about two and a half years with the purchase of a state-of-the-art digital machine.

"The program ended because the old machine was outdated and not functioning, and the budget did not allow replacement at that time," board Chair Vicki Orford said.

For about 20 years, the hospital used an analog mammography machine.

"The pictures are so much clearer," Radiology Manager Bob Johnson said of the new digital technology. "It's easier for doctors

to detect any abnormalities."

In addition, the machine is becoming popular with patients because compression is less painful.

"It seems like we're getting better images without having the same discomfort," he said.

The hospital is also offering ultrasounds on a new Toshiba machine purchased in September. It replaced a 12-year-old unit that was reaching the end of its useful life.

A new 32-slide CT scanner is also on the way this spring. It will replace an older 16-slide scanner.



TRH photo

Charlene Dovich is one of two qualified technicians who provide mammograms at Three Rivers.

*Our vision is to be a trusted
community partner providing
excellence in health care.*

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UPGRADES: Surgeons enjoy new equipment

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These upgrades will “greatly improve patient diagnoses while making our department more efficient,” Johnson said.

Patients can call (509) 689-2517 ext. 3285 to schedule appointments for radiology exams.

In the pharmacy, staff has been training to use new equipment that will make medications easier to administer and track.

Omnicell is installing elec-

tronic dispensing machines in the pharmacy and at the nursing station this month. This will streamline the process of getting medicine to the patient.

The vending-like cabinets will eliminate the need for nurses to count out pills for controlled drugs, according to pharmacist Lawrence Timbal. The machines also print labels.

With the new dispensing cabinets comes the ability to use telepharmacy, which will allow the hospital to provide 24-hour pharmacy service to patients.

Meanwhile, surgeons at Three Rivers Hospital have been making frequent use of a new Stryker laparoscopy and arthroscopy machine.

Simply called “The Tower” by medical staff, the new technology has been here for about two months, according to OR technician Jose Bucio.

The Tower boasts a high-definition, 1080p display. It can record and temporarily save videos of surgeries for doctors to reference later, and print images from procedures.

“Doctors use it to fix rotator cuffs and other issues using a



Photo by Raine Beeson

Orthopedic surgeons Dr. James Lamberton, left, and Dr. Joshua Drumm pose with their new favorite machine at Three Rivers. “The Tower” allows them to use a camera scope to see inside your body during surgery without the need to make large incisions.

camera scope,” Bucio said, which allows surgeons to get a good look inside your body without the need to make a more invasive incision.

“When you see a surgery through that, it’s amazing,” he said.

The machine is already well-used by Dr. James Lamberton and Dr. Joshua Drumm of Caribou Trail Orthopedics, who perform surgeries at Three Rivers every Friday.

The scope can also be used to aid in gallbladder procedures, appendectomies, and more.



TRH photos

Above, a look into the pre-Omniceil pharmacy stock. Below, pharmacy technician Eva Olea trains in the new program.

