

Choose Well.

News from Heartland Spine & Specialty Hospital
Where physicians and staff work to deliver an ideal patient experience



SPRING 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

A hospital created and run by physicians is a new idea for many people, and Heartland Spine & Specialty Hospital is unique in that way.

Leading physician pioneers from several specialties built and opened the hospital in 2003. Our motivation comes from our experience working in various hospitals coupled with our knowledge and desire to create the optimal hospital experience for our patients. We have top-notch operating rooms and equipment, higher nurse-to-patient ratios for more personalized care, and lower infection rates for faster and more successful recovery. We give our patients the best possible treatment by creating an environment that allows our professionals to give optimum care.

Today, Heartland has grown to include more than 80 physicians who specialize in orthopedics and pediatric orthopedics; bariatric surgery (weight loss surgery); ear, nose, and throat surgery; spine surgery; neurosurgery; hand surgery; joint reconstruction; general surgery; and a full spectrum of plastic surgery procedures.

Our physicians have made wise choices in running our hospital. We invested in a 3.0 Tesla MRI magnet, the most powerful in the region, to allow access to more accurate diagnoses. We have sought the most skilled and patient-focused nursing staff in the Kansas City region, maintain high nurse-to-patient ratios, and keep staff turnover low. Heartland has been able to keep its infection rate exceptionally low—just .5 to .7 percent compared to an industry average of 5 percent.

Heartland's doctors have created the kind of environment in which we would like to receive treatment. We work closely with nursing and other staff to maintain the focus on each patient. We think we've built a unique hospital, and we hope you'll enjoy learning more about Heartland, our staff, and our physicians in upcoming issues.

Sincerely,

Federico Gonzalez, MD, FACS
Chairman of Board of Directors
Heartland Spine & Specialty Hospital



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NAVY DIVING UNIT AND HEARTLAND SPINE & SPECIALITY HOSPITAL

Connections Lead to Successful Surgery for Commander's Wife

What's the connection between the Navy Experimental Diving Unit and Heartland Spine & Specialty Hospital? More specifically, why did Jenn Matthews, wife of the Experimental Diving Unit's Commander, travel from the base in Panama City, Florida to Kansas for spine surgery with Heartland founder Dr. William Reed?

Matthews says there are lots of connections and they all added up to one great outcome—quick recovery from successful surgery for a five-year disc problem.

Three weeks after surgery, she was walking three miles a day.

The Heartland connection to the Navy Experimental Diving Unit - After on-and-off problems with a ruptured disc, three doctors recommended back surgery for Matthews, but the recovery sounded too painful and prolonged to the active mother of four. Her brother, an Army helicopter pilot who lives in Lansing, Kansas, had told her about his difficult recovery from traditional back surgery. But he also told her about a better

experience, a second surgery with Reed using Arthroscopic Microdiscectomy (AMD). He said recovery was much faster and less painful, and suggested this option to his sister.

Reed's military connections -The inner connections in this story don't end with Matthews's brother. Reed, the founder of Heartland, is a former military man himself, as is his partner. "At our practice, we believe it's part of our duty to support active and retired military personnel," Reed says. So Reed was excited to help the Navy commander's wife.

Reed, one of the few spine surgeons also trained in endoscopy, has used AMD to help 1,600 patients since the late 1980s, and Heartland Spine & Specialty Hospital is the only Midwestern hospital to provide this minimally-invasive surgery on an outpatient basis. NFL players from the U.S. and international patients, from as far away as China, have come to Heartland for AMD after exhausting other avenues of medical treatment.

The connections pay off - In the end, Jenn Matthews's connections to Kansas, and Reed's connection to active military personnel led to a successful outcome. Matthews came



"I've never been to such a well-organized and well-orchestrated hospital."

Jenn Matthews

to Heartland on a Wednesday in March, saw Reed on Thursday, had outpatient AMD surgery on Friday, and was home in Florida on Sunday. Matthews called her experience at Heartland amazing. "I've never been to such a well-organized and well-orchestrated hospital. My mom is a nurse and she agrees," Matthews says. "I'm handing out Reed's card to all the people I know who have been putting off this surgery."

As for Reed, he's proud of the Navy Experimental Diving Unit hat and medal that Jenn's husband brought to him. He considers it a good day when a surgeon in Kansas gets to help the troops, and their families.

Learn more at www.spinedr.com.



Employee Spotlight.

Heartland MRI Technician Harley Creek, Takes Time to Explain the Details

When Heartland outpatients fill out a survey about their treatment, they often mention the great service they got from MRI technologist Harley Creek. They use words like exceptional, considerate, and caring to describe their interaction with Creek.

Creek downplays his personal attention to patients, saying he's part of a team in the Heartland Radiology Department who all share the same goal. "We try to tell the patient up front what will happen," he says. "We try to explain in detail, to take the extra time to make sure they understand."

"I was nervous, but he (Creek) was attentive and helpful."

Heartland MRI Patient

For many patients, an MRI visit can be unpleasant. And for about 10 percent of all people, going into the MRI tunnel can be terrifying, because they suffer from the very real condition—claustrophobia. Creek says he and his fellow technologists at Heartland have found everyone has a better experience if they know as much as possible about what will happen while they're getting the MRI, what the noise they will hear will mean, and how and when they can contact a technologist during the test.

Creek, who has lived in the Kansas City area since 1991, trained as an X-ray technician before he began working with MRIs. He traveled all over the U.S. for his job, working at a number of health care facilities before coming to Heartland two years ago. He's seen several improvements in MRIs, including faster exam times.

"The operating systems of the computers have gotten much better, and now most of the doctors read the results on the computer instead of having to print them out," he says.

"Heartland not only has advanced technology, but a radiology department that works together as a team."

Harley Creek

Heartland also has the strongest MRI machine he's used, the 3.0 Tesla magnet, which is the most advanced in the Kansas City region.

Creek wants to make sure his colleagues share the credit for his good evaluations. He works daily with fellow MRI technologist Monte Gant. "Having a great team makes my job easier, especially having great co-workers like Monte," he says.

HOW TO DETERMINE IF YOU NEED BACK SURGERY:

Spine surgeon offers helpful hints

Back pain will affect more than 80 percent of all Americans at some time in their lives. But orthopedic spine surgeon, Dr. John M. Ciccarelli, says spinal surgery should almost always be the last resort. Ciccarelli's practice, Premier Spine Care in Overland Park, KS, is made up of fellowship trained orthopedic spine surgeons with advanced training in spinal surgical problems. Ciccarelli performs surgery at Heartland Spine & Specialty Hospital.

He suggests people with back pain explore other treatments before consulting a spinal surgeon. "In our practice, we are very conservative. Spine surgery is always the last option," he says.

Five Steps to Assessing the Need for Back Surgery - Ciccarelli offers these tips on how to know whether you need to see a spine surgeon, or whether your back pain may be treated by other methods.

1. If the pain is caused by muscle strain, your primary doctor can help. In many cases, back pain comes from soft tissue or muscular problems. Ciccarelli says your primary care physician can help assess whether this is the case. If it is, you'll probably be advised to modify the activities that make your back feel worse, which, as Ciccarelli points out, most patients tend to do naturally.

2. The treatment for most back pain is medication, exercise, and time. Your primary doctor also will probably suggest anti-inflammatory medications, muscle relaxers, or even mild narcotics that will treat your symptoms. You may also be advised to try physical therapy, exercise, or chiropractic care. "Maybe the best advice," Ciccarelli says, "is to give it time. Our bodies have a tremendous healing potential and they are built to heal their own injuries." Back pain that does not respond to time and these modalities may indicate a more severe problem that needs further evaluation.

3. If there are symptoms of a nerve problem, an MRI can aid with the diagnosis. While most back pain will heal itself with time and a little help, pain that radiates into the arms or legs may suggest nerve pressure. If your primary care doctor thinks this is the case, you'll probably be advised to avoid strenuous activities or exercise because these can sometimes make the problem worse. Pain, numbness, and tingling may also be indications that something beyond muscle strain is involved. Getting an MRI is usually the best initial test to see what is going on, Ciccarelli says. Your family doctor may refer you to an orthopedic spine surgeon for further evaluation of your MRI.



"Back pain has many causes, including arthritis, muscle injuries, disc problems, and just normal wear and tear."

Dr. Ciccarelli

4. Another step before surgery may involve epidural injections to treat nerve pain and inflammation. These injections are done as an outpatient procedure and typically combine a corticosteroid (anti-inflammatory medicine) with a local anesthetic type of medicine. Ciccarelli says they both reduce pain and shrink inflammation. "This gives your body a period of rest to try to heal itself. These injections can help in a majority of individuals," he says. Epidural steroid injections are usually done as a series of three injections and are administered by an anesthesia pain specialist.

5. Surgery is typically the last resort, but can be necessary in some cases. While surgery is usually not the first option for back or nerve pain, it is sometimes appropriate. Ciccarelli says abnormalities involving nerve pressure from spinal discs, bone spurs, or loss of spinal stability may require a surgical approach.

Dr. John Ciccarelli is a co-founder of Premier Spine Care, 5525 West 119th Street, Overland Park, Kansas, www.premierspinecare.com

RADIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Greg Duran MA, RT (R) explains how our 3.0 Tesla MRI is different

When most people are told they need an MRI, they're not aware that different types of MRI machines may give different results. At Heartland, the MRI is a short bore 3.0 Tesla. But what does that mean?

Greg Duran, Director of the Radiology Department, explains that Heartland's high-strength scanning system is faster and provides better scanning than many other systems. The important difference at

"Tesla refers to the field strength of the magnet," Duran says. "As good as 1.5 Tesla MR images are, they just can't characterize some subtle abnormalities as well as 3.0 Tesla can."

Heartland is that the magnet is a 3.0 Tesla. The closed MRI systems in the Kansas City area vary from 1.0 to 3.0 Tesla. Heartland currently has the only 3.0 Tesla in the region, which makes scanning of the brain, spine, joints and extremities more precise.

Duran says there are several reasons the 3.0 Tesla gives better results. They include:

- 1. More detailed imaging.** "The high field strength MRI even delineates structures such as blood vessels as small as 200 to 300 microns, drilling down to the ultra-structural level," Duran says. The 3.0 Tesla has also captured finer details such as small lesions and evaluated peripheral vascular disease.
- 2. More accurate imaging** of spine, bones, and joints. For spinal and orthopedic

injuries, the 3.0 Tesla offers greater detail of joints, muscles, spine, brain, and discs. 3.0 Tesla scanning in the brain can be completed in the same exam time at a much higher resolution.

- 3. Reduced scan time and greater patient comfort.** A strong magnet means you may spend less time in the MRI tunnel. A scan that once took 30 minutes may now be done in 15-20 minutes.
- 4. Greater accuracy of diagnosis.** Even if you spend the same amount of time in the scanner, your doctor will get a higher resolution image, allowing a more accurate diagnosis.
- 5. Higher resolution images.** The 3.0 Tesla can see structures like blood vessels that older MRIs did not show, and can capture higher resolution images.

DR. BRAD STORM

Likes the challenge of a varied practice

The complex skills required for plastic surgery make it a creative and challenge field of medicine, according to Dr. Brad Storm of Premier Plastic Surgery in Olathe, Kansas. He focuses his practice on hand surgery and cosmetic procedures. Storm also does reconstructive microsurgery.

Plastic surgeons need to be artful in their cosmetic procedures, and often have to think outside the box.

Dr. Storm

Storm explains that becoming a plastic surgeon begins with training as a general surgeon, plastic surgeon or orthopedic surgeon, followed by advanced training in plastic surgery.

Storm began with a medical degree from the Southern Illinois School of Medicine, followed by additional training in general surgery at the Medical College of Ohio in

Toledo. He then did his plastic surgery residency at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield, Illinois.

He was attracted to the field by the challenge of the technical skills and creativity required to do reconstruction work. "You don't always know what you will need to do until you get in there," he says.

One of Storm's specialties is hand surgery, which can fix injuries, treat diseases of cumulative trauma such as carpal tunnel, tendon issues or arthritis, or finish repair after surgery for an injury. He and his partners also specialize in breast reconstruction, breast lifts, and augmentation.

Storm points out that plastic surgery is a rapidly changing field. One of the most exciting recent innovations has been the introduction of cohesive gel breast implants. These round silicone implants had been available in Europe but are not yet approved by the FDA in the U.S. Storm

has been using them under a research protocol for several years and says once approved here, they will be a great improvement for any patient who needs an implant or needs to have one replaced.

"These cohesive gel implants are not a cure-all, but they are a big step forward," he says. "They are more stable, the gel is better than what was used in the past, and the shell has a more natural shape. And since they come in different configurations, they can be customized to any patient," Storm added.

Storm also says he likes doing surgery at Heartland, because it provides the best operating room and tools for surgeons in the Kansas City region. "Every surgeon likes control," Storm says. "At Heartland, the biggest goal was to set up a place where we can control quality and care of patients."

Learn more at www.ppskc.com.



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