

MERRIMACK VALLEY HOSPITAL

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**Merrimack Valley Hospital Offers Unique Approach to Orthopedic Care
with Opening of New Orthopedic Center of Excellence**

Haverhill, MA — A unique approach that has proven to be successful in treating orthopedic patients is now available in the Merrimack Valley. Merrimack Valley Hospital is pleased to announce the opening of their new Orthopedic Center of Excellence.

The Center of Excellence concept is based on the premise that clinical excellence and optimal outcomes depend on active collaboration between the patient and the healthcare team. The team consists of surgeons, nurses, rehabilitation staff, educators, and others. From pre-admission testing to registration, operative experience, post-op recovery, and rehab, an entire team works together toward the best possible outcome for the patient.

The idea for a Center of Excellence at MVH began with MVH staff members, Cheryl Durkee, RN, CNOR, Director of Surgical Services and Yvette Chabot-Bailey, MBA, MCHN, RN, Director of Case Management. Both Durkee and Chabot-Bailey come to MVH from facilities with Centers of Excellence. In her position at MVH, Durkee saw the potential for creating one here. Chabot-Bailey agreed: “(At MVH) We are increasing the emphasis on empowering the patient and family with information that will allow them to be active participants in their care.”

Hospital leaders welcomed the idea. Diane Lovallo, MBA, MSN, RN, Chief Nursing Officer, states why: “Our intent is to make Merrimack Valley Hospital a desirable place to be, from the patient, physician, and employee perspective. Orthopedics represents our largest surgical volume and it was something we did well, so we saw this Center of Excellence as a desirable niche for us.”

Cheryl Durkee, along with Carol Mansell, RN, CNOR, Operating Room Clinical Manager and Constance Bagnon, BSN, Director of Education, traveled to Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta, GA, which

has a nationally recognized orthopedic center of excellence. Piedmont brought their team together and explained how all necessary services interacted with each other for optimum patient care. The team worked off the same “script” and patients learned from and participated with the team in their own successful outcomes.

Back at MVH, meetings were held, recommendations were made, and a team was identified and created for an MVH Orthopedic Center of Excellence—whose goal was to strengthen integration of the team and ensure excellence. Maureen Pellot, RN, BS, Med/Surg Clinical Manager, who was involved in planning the Center, describes the Center of Excellence approach this way: “I talk about delivering the right care for each patient, with everyone on the team involved in a consistent manner. If I ask five nurses about the plan of care for a patient who has undergone a specific orthopedic procedure, I would expect to get the same answer from all five with adaptations to address specific patient needs.”

Of course, education and training are needed in order to implement such a new approach—for staff as well as patients—as an introduction to the concept and as an ongoing process. The response of the nursing staff to the training has been very positive. Nurses like knowing that patients are coming into the hospital with knowledge about what to expect.

On the patient side, the team has developed a forum called “boot camp” for preoperative orthopedic patients—to involve patients and families early on. Patients receive hands-on training as to what to expect pre- and post-op, as well as pain management options. “Boot camp” was based upon input from orthopedic surgeons, nurses, educators, and rehab staff. In addition, individual nurse case managers will be assigned to each patient and will be available from the moment a surgical decision is made, straight through to discharge.

As an Orthopedic Center of Excellence, MVH has a priority to educate the community about its value and importance to orthopedic care. “We want to invite the public in to meet our doctors, tour our Center of Excellence, and ask questions,” said Mary O’Neil, Director of Marketing and Public Relations. “We recently had our first educational forum for the public called ‘Oh, My Aching Bones.’” At the forum, orthopedic surgeon, Barry Bickley, MD, presented an overview of joint pain care including medical and surgical options. There will be more forums scheduled in the near future.

Diane Lovallo aptly sums up the significance of the Center: “Our goal is to provide this community with the services they desire and deserve; the patient’s needs will be our number-one priority. Our designation as an Orthopedic Center of Excellence gives recognition to Merrimack Valley Hospital for the exceptional care provided to our patients and to our clinicians who are responsible for that care.”

Merrimack Valley Hospital maintains 108 acute care beds, 17 adult behavioral medicine beds, and 3 pediatric beds. All are private rooms. The hospital’s clinical strengths include a 24-hour emergency department; orthopedic, endoscopic and general surgery; and adult behavioral medicine care with a focus on geriatric issues. MVH also provides a wide range of outpatient services, such as surgical day care; x-rays; MRI exams; PET-Scans; 64-Slice CT Scans; digital mammography; bone density testing; dysphasia testing; nuclear medicine; physical therapy; pain management center; and sleep lab.

The hospital’s awards for excellence include the #1 Nursing Team in New England Award, 2003 (*Advance for Nursing Magazine*); National Quality Leader Award for Pneumonia Care, 2006 (CareScience Select Practice); High Reliability Cardiac Care Award, 2006 (MassPRO); Top 100 Best Acute Care Hospital Award, 2004 (Total Benchmark Solutions); and Top Ranked Community Value Provider Award, 2007 (Cleverley & Associates). An affiliate of Essent Healthcare, Inc., the hospital serves Merrimack Valley and southern New Hampshire. More information can be found at www.merrimackvalleyhospital.com.