

# VALLEY

## health & life

MEDICAL  
**DETECTIVE**

NAVIGATING **KNEE  
REPLACEMENT**



# HEALTHIER TOGETHER



## DEAR FRIENDS OF HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER AND VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEMS,

I HOPE YOU HAD a wonderful holiday season and that 2022 will be a very good year.

There are many new and exciting things in the pages of this issue, including several great success stories from our patients about the high-quality services available at the hospital and within our system. I hope you will enjoy reading about them.

One of the unfortunate side effects of the pandemic, as I mentioned in the fall issue, is the large number of workers who left healthcare, resulting in hospitals being severely understaffed. We have worked hard to retain our staff and to recruit additional people to fill vacant positions. Despite the strains of the national staffing crisis, our employees continue to provide quality care as quickly as possible. They have been putting in extra shifts and overtime, taking assignments on any unit where there is a need, training and acquiring new skills and being as flexible as possible in order to meet the needs of our healthcare system.

I want to take this opportunity to salute and publicly recognize our nurses, nurse assistants, doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, operating room staff, mental health assistants, medical assistants, emergency room and critical care techs, office and clinic assistants, radiology staff, respiratory staff, therapy staff, phlebotomists and lab personnel, registration and call center staff, case managers and counseling staff, dietary and housekeeping staff, maintenance and information systems staff, supervisors and managers who often jump in to take frontline assignments, and everyone who works tirelessly to support our patients. Thank you all for the outstanding job you are doing and for stepping up to support our community hospital.

I want you, our readers, to know what an asset our staff is for all the communities we serve. Many of you have sent letters describing the good care you received and recognized the staff who provided it. I can assure you that your kind words are not only appreciated, but also serve as the fuel that keeps our staff going when the going gets tough. So, thank you for giving them this encouragement. If someone on our staff made a difference in your life, please let us know. We love hearing from you.

With great appreciation for all our staff and for your support, have a happy and healthy 2022.



Sincerely,

**SPIROS HATIRAS**  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Holyoke Medical Center & Valley Health Systems, Inc.

**On the Cover:**  
Jeff and Lisa Manzi tackled weight loss together, losing more than 200 pounds between them. Read their story on page 3.



## CONTENTS

- 3 HEALTHY HABITS** News and tips for better health, plus hospital wellness events.
- 4 KNEE REPLACEMENT** A specialized nurse navigator guides patients through the joint replacement process.
- 6 A SAFE HAVEN FOR SUBSTANCE-USE RECOVERY** Two patients share their stories of recovery from dependence on drugs and alcohol.
- 8 TACKLING WEIGHT LOSS TOGETHER** A Holyoke couple loses over 200 pounds and embraces a second chance at life.
- 10 A CARING COMMUNITY** The staff of Holyoke Medical Center's Emergency Department is a tight-knit, supportive and highly skilled team.
- 12 VARICOSE VEINS BE GONE!** A simple in-office procedure helps banish bulging, painful and unsightly veins.
- 13 DIABETES: EMPOWERING PATIENTS** Personalized education helps diabetes patients maximize their health.
- 14 MEDICAL DETECTIVE** An infectious diseases specialist collects clues and finds answers to help solve challenging cases.
- 15 GO NUTS FOR PISTACHIOS** Can't say no to this snack? Relax—it's a healthy temptation.

## Valley Health Systems, Inc.

- **HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER**  
575 Beech Street, Holyoke | 413.534.2500
- **HOLYOKE MEDICAL GROUP**  
15 Hospital Drive, Holyoke | 413.535.4800
- **HOLYOKE VNA HOSPICE LIFE CARE**  
575 Beech Street, Holyoke | 413.534.5691
- **RIVER VALLEY COUNSELING CENTER**  
P.O. Box 791, Holyoke | 413.540.1234

# HEALTHY HABITS

FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY



## FLEX FOR FUNCTION

Between the ages of 55 and 86, shoulder and hip range of motion decreases by approximately 6 degrees per decade. To counter that reduction, stretch, do strength training and eat foods that lower inflammation, such as fish and veggies.

—*Journal of Aging Research*

## SOCK IT TO YOUR ROUTINE

Wearing compression socks when running or working out reduces muscle fatigue and soreness, according to recent findings.

—*Open Access Journal of Sports Medicine*



## MOVE FOR METABOLIC HEALTH

Taking a three-minute break from sitting every half hour has been found to improve blood sugar control. Experts advise walking or climbing stairs during those breaks.

—*American Journal of Physiology*

## FUEL FOR YOUR BRAIN

People whose diets are chock full of veggies, fruits, nuts, whole grains and fish score higher on cognitive tests than those who eat less healthful diets.

—*Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*



## WELLNESS EVENTS

### COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

A collection of videos of community education lectures is available on the Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) website. We hope you find them helpful and informative! Topics include:

- New Year, Healthier You! with Marissa Chiapperino, Registered Dietitian
- Medications for the Treatment of Substance-Use Disorders: One Pathway to Recovery with Maria Quinn, PMHNP-BC
- Breast Cancer Awareness with HMC Oncologist Zubeena Mateen, MD
- Congestive Heart Failure with HMC Cardiologist Nirav Sheth, MD, FACC

The videos are available at [www.holyokehealth.com/communityeducation](http://www.holyokehealth.com/communityeducation).

### QUIT SMOKING SUPPORT SERVICES

Our Smoking Cessation Counselors are available to give you the information and support you need to get through one of the most important changes of your life. For more information or to register for one-on-one counseling (in English or Spanish), **please call 413.534.2789 or email [Smoking\\_Cessation@holyokehealth.com](mailto:Smoking_Cessation@holyokehealth.com)**.

### MANAGING DIABETES

Managing diabetes is a journey, but not one you have to make alone. Sign up today for a virtual, group-based distance-learning experience and discover what you can do to better manage your diabetes. Topics covered will include:

- Your Experience with Diabetes
- Monitoring Your Blood Sugar
- Healthy Eating and Activity
- Long-term Management

To sign up or learn more, please call 413.535.4732.





# KNEE REPLACEMENT: A SMOOTH SYSTEM

A SPECIALIZED NURSE NAVIGATOR GUIDES PATIENTS  
THROUGH THE JOINT REPLACEMENT PROCESS.



**JOANNE CHULSO** likes when organizations run smoothly. Her fondness of order served her well while raising seven children and working as an Ombudsman Program Director in Holyoke, advocating for the needs of elders. When Joanne decided to have a knee replacement, she was pleased to discover a finely tuned care process at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) and a kindred spirit in Caroline White, RN, BSN, Orthopedic Nurse Navigator.

"I'm a systems person," says Joanne, who holds a master's degree in psychiatric nursing. "If things are not done well in a system, I'm not comfortable." Fortunately, Joanne liked what she saw when she met Noah Epstein, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at the HMC Orthopedic Center. "Dr. Epstein has an excellent system in place, and it's Caroline. As the navigator, she let me know what to expect with surgery and what my recovery would be like. I appreciated her efficiency, but we also hit it off. She's amazing."

## INDIVIDUALIZED TREATMENT

Joanne had surgery to correct spinal stenosis in 2019. Pleased that she could finally stand upright, Joanne felt it was time to address the achy knee curtailing her independence.

"I like to walk and getting around had become problematic. I used a walker all the time and had to support myself on a cart at the grocery store. Shopping became a royal pain," she says.

Dr. Epstein evaluated Joanne's knee discomfort, the result of osteoarthritis, and discussed treatment options. "We

try non-operative approaches first, such as anti-inflammatory medications, corticosteroid injections and physical therapy," he says, noting that joint replacement is an elective procedure. "Arthritis affects every person differently. For some it causes minor issues and for others it is debilitating. We take a personalized approach and treat the patient, not the X-ray," he says.

Joanne weighed her options and decided a total knee replacement was the best chance for her to regain mobility. "I'm a thinker," says Joanne of her in-depth research into joint replacement. She received additional education from White, the nurse navigator, who gave Joanne a packet of information providing steps to follow before, during and after surgery. White reviewed Joanne's medical record, taking note of her high blood pressure.

"We pay close attention to medical history and medications so we can mitigate risks," says White, noting that surgery is a big stress test for older patients. Her navigation role also includes coordinating pre-operative testing at HMC and scheduling appointments with providers to clear patients for surgery. "I try to make everyone's job easier—physicians, patients, families. I talk with patients about their fears and make sure they have support after surgery. Our patients are well prepared before they head into the operating room."



Joanne Chulso is thrilled with the renewed mobility she enjoys after knee replacement surgery.

habilitation or "pre-hab," an exercise therapy program designed to strengthen patients before joint replacement surgery. Joanne

had physical therapy at CORE Physical Therapy at HMC for three weeks.

"On paper Joanne is 87, but in life she is a remarkably vibrant senior—healthy and active," says Dr. Epstein. "Our goal was for Joanne to be able to do the things arthritis had been preventing her from doing."

Joanne says her knee replacement surgery went well. "Dr. Epstein did a beautiful job," she remarks. "I could feel a difference in the way I walked right away." Joanne was discharged to Mary's Meadow, a rehabilitation center within her assisted living complex, and then had physical therapy at home. Eager to drive again, Joanne traveled to HMC for outpatient therapy. "It was too crowded," she admits. "So, I picked up the phone and called Caroline." White easily transferred Joanne's care to CORE's outpatient satellite site in Westfield, a better fit.

## COMMUNICATION MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Knowing how important communication is for patients, White says she's quick to give out her phone number. "The best compliment I get is, 'You always call me back!'" she says. She continued checking in with Joanne by phone as the energetic senior ramped up her activity—working out with a personal trainer at Snap Fitness in Holyoke, traveling to grandkids' weddings and driving friends to consults at the HMC Orthopedic Center at her urging.

"I'm no shrinking violet," laughs Joanne, who appreciated her experience at HMC so much that she asked White to find her a new primary care physician there. "I love the place!" she says.



Noah Epstein, MD



Caroline White, RN, BSN

## ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Joanne agrees and says this attention to detail was unlike anything she has experienced. "I've seen a lot as a woman with an active family that has lived in many cities. It's different at Holyoke Medical Center. Every step of the process, there was someone taking my hand and walking me through it."

Dr. Epstein prescribed pre-

✳ The Orthopedic Center is located at 10 Hospital Drive, Suite 203, in Holyoke. To make an appointment or learn more, call **413.536.5814**.



# A SAFE HAVEN FOR SUBSTANCE- USE RECOVERY

TWO PATIENTS SHARE THEIR STORIES OF RECOVERY  
FROM DEPENDENCE ON DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.

**CHRIS FIATO AND JOE PALPINI** are straightforward when it comes to past drug and alcohol use. They recall dark days in the grip of addiction and bright moments of hard-won sobriety. They both acknowledge the toll substance abuse has taken on their bodies and their loved ones, and are quick to thank supporters who've been there for them throughout their journeys.

## GETTING HIS LIFE BACK

"I'm not sure where I'd be without Maria," Chris says of Maria Quinn, MSN, PMHNP-BC, a psychiatric nurse practitioner with the Comprehensive Care Center (CCC) at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC). The pair met three years ago following Chris's hospitalization at HMC. "I was drinking a lot and became severely dehydrated," he says. Diagnosed with hepatitis C, Chris was treated for the virus and referred to the CCC and Quinn for treatment of opioid-





Chris Fiato, far left, and Joe Palpini are quick to thank supporters who've been there for them throughout their journeys.

use disorder. "I was at a low point in my life, and Maria was a breath of fresh air," says Chris, who was prescribed buprenorphine-naloxone (trade name Suboxone) to reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms. He saw a



Amelia Jaworek, MD



Maria Quinn, MSN, PMHNP-BC

mental health counselor at River Valley Counseling Center, the CCC's partner, and continues to receive services as he needs them. "Addiction is a lifelong battle," says Chris.

At age 12, Chris began using marijuana and cocaine, and tried opiates at 15. "I was a seventh grader playing in a band with older kids," he says. "I was in a rush to grow up." As the years spun by, drugs wreaked havoc on Chris's life. It wasn't until he found the CCC that he gained a sense of control. "It's a safe haven there," says Chris. "I'm comfortable being open and honest. If I know my drug test won't be clean, I tell Maria. I've learned not to feel shame when I slip up. It's a deep reminder that mistakes are part of the process."

Quinn agrees. "I remind patients that addiction is a disease, and I don't expect them to stop overnight. I see a sense of relief because I get it. I can provide support through some tough periods that can sometimes be hard for loved ones to understand or navigate."

These days, life is on an even keel for Chris, who returned to work as a cook. "I got fired from this restaurant two or three years ago when I was using heroin," he admits. "Now that I'm doing good, my manager welcomed me with open arms." Chris has picked up his guitar again and rediscovered the joy of reading. Some days are harder than others, despite coping mechanisms, and the lure of opiates remains. "I've got a lifeline in Maria," he says. "There are times I've had cravings, but I know I'll see her in a couple hours. That sustains me."

### FEELING A 'MILLION TIMES BETTER'

Joe Palpini, a stay-at-home dad to three young daughters, visits the CCC every two months, checking in with Amelia Jaworek, MD, the program's medical

director. He's come a long way since his weekly visits to the CCC in 2020 while in HMC's Partial Hospitalization Program for mental health concerns. "I don't dance around the subject of addiction, and neither does Dr. Jaworek," says Joe. "Her no-nonsense manner works for me. She's well-educated on all the ways and means to help people recover."

Joe, who also receives therapy through River Valley Counseling Center, is grateful to be engaged in treatment. "I had a rocky upbringing with alcoholic parents and turned to drugs at 13," he says. Hooked on Percocet by 23, jobless and desperate, Joe researched Suboxone and believed it was his way out. Lacking insurance, he bought the drug from friends and on the street for years. "Being part of the Comprehensive Care Center and having a solid plan has changed my life," he says. "Before, I was consumed with worry about my next fix, so I didn't withdraw. It's an awful way to live. Now, I'm in control, feel healthy and have time to enjoy my family and go hiking with friends."

Dr. Jaworek says her program's whole-patient approach—blending medication with mental health care and resources for transportation and housing—makes a difference in opioid and alcohol-use recovery. "Joe is a great example of what our program can do," she says. "He and his wife recently had a baby, and Joe is doing great juggling everything. He's a highly functional member of the community for the many people who depend on him."

Joe hopes his story will put a face to addiction and help others break free. "I've been there. I know it's hard to talk with strangers, but it's different at Holyoke Medical Center. They're interested in your journey and want to be there for you. Don't be afraid to call. Don't be afraid to be honest. Get the help you need, and you'll feel a million times better."

✱ For information about the Comprehensive Care Center or to make an appointment, call **413.535.4889**. Walk-in hours are Monday to Friday, 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. in Suite 404 of Holyoke Medical Center (575 Beech Street, Holyoke).

BEFORE



AFTER



# TACKLING WEIGHT LOSS TOGETHER

A HOLYOKE COUPLE LOSES  
MORE THAN 200 POUNDS  
AND EMBRACES A SECOND  
CHANCE AT LIFE.



**JEFF MANZI** rises at 4:45 a.m. and heads to Planet Fitness, where he exercises for two hours before beginning his workday as a benefits consultant. It's a routine he thrives on. His wife, Lisa, hits the athletic fields at South Hadley High School to coach the girls' junior varsity soccer team and assistant coach the varsity soccer team after a full day teaching middle school. And then she heads to the gym.

Unthinkable a few years ago, the Manzis' active lifestyle and overall approach to wellness has become central to their marriage. Jeff credits the Weight Management Program at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) and the couple's bariatric surgeon, Yannis Raftopoulos, MD, as the catalyst. "I'm not exaggerating when I say Dr. Raftopoulos saved our lives," Jeff says.

## FROM EXHAUSTED TO ENERGIZED

In 2018, Jeff, 5'8", weighed 280 pounds. He had high blood pressure, high cholesterol and was diabetic. "I needed four pills and four insulin injections a day," he says. "I was constantly exhausted." Jeff attended an information session at HMC's Weight Management Program in search of a solution. "I did my research and found that HMC was getting great results. I liked the staff's hands-on style and appreciated that Dr. Raftopoulos is a no-nonsense guy who would hold me accountable."

It was decided that a laparoscopic Roux-en-Y gastric bypass would be the best surgical option. "A gastric bypass is more effective in patients who have significant medical issues," says Dr. Raftopoulos. To prepare for surgery, Jeff underwent medical tests and had a psychological evaluation. He started walking and prepared a meal

plan with the help of Weight Management Program nutritionists. Jeff lost 30 pounds before his May 2018 procedure.

After the bypass, Jeff continued to

lose weight steadily—five pounds per week as he transitioned from a liquid diet to solid foods. He joined a second gym for strength training and participated in Weight Management Program support groups. By February 2019, Jeff was below his goal weight. Down to 165 pounds, he says his energy skyrocketed and his medical issues disappeared. Last May, Jeff had hip replacement surgery at HMC and was able to maintain his progress.

His accomplishments didn't go unnoticed at the Holyoke home he shares with Lisa and their two daughters. "Jeff is the family cook," says Lisa of the Italian specialties her husband whips up. Post-bypass, his decadent pasta dishes have given way to healthier alternatives. "I roast veggies and make lentil pasta with my homemade sauce," he says. "I haven't had a burger in years."

## TIME TO ACT

Along with the family's culinary shifts, Lisa, who had been overweight for decades, experienced a personal loss that spurred her weight loss efforts.

"My best friend died of a heart attack due to obesity," she says. When Lisa's cholesterol medication stopped working and her weight crept up to 250 pounds, Lisa, a former college athlete, knew she had to act.

Lap band surgery at another hospital had left her mistrustful of doctors. "I lost weight but put it all back on," she says. Jeff, concerned about possible lap band complications, suggested Lisa meet with Dr. Raftopoulos. "Lap bands can cause poor quality of life since weight loss comes from reflux and not being able to eat," says Dr. Raftopoulos. "The band may erode and leave a hole in



Jeff and Lisa Manzi are grateful for a second chance at life.

the stomach or slip and cause an obstruction, which means emergency surgery."

During the summer of 2020, Lisa met with Dr. Raftopoulos virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Their initial consultation turned to commitment when Lisa—encouraged by Jeff and impressed with the Weight Management Program—agreed to a laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy.

In August 2020, Dr. Raftopoulos removed Lisa's lap band and performed a sleeve gastrectomy, which reduces stomach size and limits hunger hormones.

"Patients like Lisa who've had unsuccessful surgery are often traumatized," says Dr. Raftopoulos, who has performed over 2,000 weight loss procedures. "They blame themselves for poor results and don't want to take another chance. Lisa realized our program is different."

After surgery, Lisa's extra weight came off as she kept in touch with Dr. Raftopoulos—digitally tracking and reporting her diet and exercise. "Communicating with patients is labor-intensive, but in the long run it saves patients from unnecessary medical problems," says Dr. Raftopoulos, whose patients have had zero complications in five years.

Now lean and fit at 130 pounds, Lisa says, "I'm addicted to being athletic again." She's "having a blast" coaching soccer as an active participant and surfed for the first time in Nantucket this summer.

As they embrace their second chance at life, the Manzis say they're enjoying people's reactions to their slimmer physiques. "My own mom didn't recognize me!" laughs Lisa.



Yannis Raftopoulos, MD

**\* To learn more about the Weight Management Program at Holyoke Medical Center, call [413.535.4757](tel:413.535.4757).**

Recent HMC Employee of the Month Jessica Youmell, RN, with Cayla Litzner, RN, and her daughter, Louiza.



# A CARING COMMUNITY

THE STAFF OF HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER'S EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT IS A TIGHT-KNIT, HIGHLY SKILLED AND SUPPORTIVE TEAM.

**A HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT (ED)** is a universe of its own—a tight-knit environment where staff are united in their goal of saving lives. It takes intuitive, compassionate team players to thrive in this fluid setting, where crucial decisions are constantly made.

Jessica Youmell, RN, a recent Employee of the Month at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC), is a leader of this dynamic team as the clinical coordinator. She has been a nurse for



19 years. Her nominator, Cayla Litzner, RN, is a staff nurse in the ED who has worked with Youmell for 14 years and is viewed as a consummate professional herself.

Litzner nominated Youmell because of her dedication, her ability to accommodate challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the way she has consistently filled in as needed for other nurses and nurse leaders.

## SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

Along with her strong admiration for Youmell's work ethic, a more private event triggered Litzner's recommendation. This event, Litzner feels, showed "the true essence of the ED community—people supporting each other."

During the height of the pandemic, Litzner and Youmell often found themselves working extended hours.

Litzner remembers: "At the peak of COVID, I left in the morning before my daughter, Louiza, was awake and came back home when she was already asleep. But each night she left a drawing and often a note on my pillow. One evening, she wrote a note wishing me a good day at work and saying how much she missed me. She also drew a picture of me in the ED: She knew what I wore and had heard anonymous stories of different patients. In the drawing, I'm dressed in PPE (personal protective equipment), urging a patient whose oxygen is beeping to breathe, while all around, other patients are calling out for staff."

When Litzner showed the drawing and note to staff, Youmell was especially touched. She took time from her hectic schedule to write Litzner's daughter a personal note—one that moved Litzner to tears.

It read, in part: "I work with your mom and wanted to say thank you for sharing her with us. I know how hard it must be on the days she works so long. You know that even though your mom is gone for a long time, sometimes for a few days, she has a special job to do."

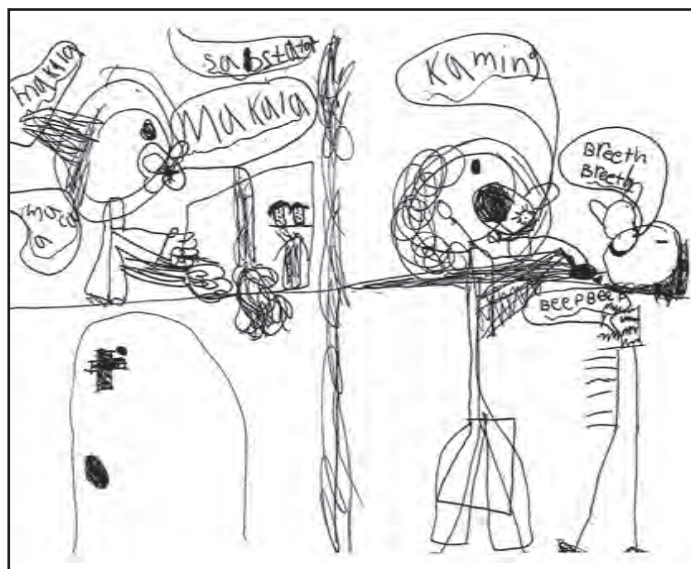
"I was compelled to write the note because I also have daughters, ages 13 and 10," Youmell says. "I know what it feels like to have to leave them so much. I wanted to say thank you to this 7-year-old, who has such a deep understanding of what we do."

Louiza was so delighted to hear from Youmell that she asked her mother to read the note to her three times.

## A UNIQUE SKILL SET

Lynn Garreffi, MS, RN, CNL, Director of the ED, ICU and Nursing Supervisors, views Youmell as part of the network of personalized care that makes HMC so special.

"There's a unique skill set with ED nurses like Jessica," Garreffi says. "They're empathic, resilient and able to keep track of their patients' needs. Over time, they develop the ability to do an across-the-room assessment, to discern who requires the most immediate care. And because they



Nurse Cayla Litzner's daughter, Louiza, drew this picture of her mom at work in the Emergency Department during the COVID-19 pandemic.

have the chance to view the whole patient, they often act as advocates, letting physicians know about personal issues that may not be on the charts."

This teamwork, according to Garreffi, creates a tight-knit environment that's part of the character of HMC and why it's a great place to work.

Youmell says that this sense of being bound together by strong relationships and common goals is why she and Litzner are so committed to HMC. "Working here is like being part of a large, caring family."

## JOIN A TEAM WHERE YOU'LL BE VALUED!

Holyoke Medical Center is looking for registered nurses who want to be part of an award-winning team. Benefits include:

- \$20,000 sign-on/retention bonus or student loan repayment assistance to qualified BSN applicants, or \$10,000 for Associate Degree applicants!
- \$5,000 annual tuition reimbursement program!
- Competitive paid time off.
- Generous health benefits with low employee contribution levels.
- Meaningful connections with your patients.
- On-campus parking.
- Safe patient handling.

To learn more about career opportunities at Holyoke Medical Center, visit [www.holyokehealth.com/careers](http://www.holyokehealth.com/careers).



Lynn Garreffi, MS, RN, CNL



Vascular surgeon Sandip Maru, MD, (left) and Registered Medical Assistant Shanna Miller (right) with patient Cindy Crosby, who received treatment for varicose veins.

# VARICOSE VEINS BE GONE!

A SIMPLE IN-OFFICE PROCEDURE HELPS BANISH  
BULGING VEINS, WHICH CAN BE PAINFUL AND UNSIGHTLY.

**WHEN CINDY CROSBY** began to develop varicose veins, she chalked it up to both genetics (her mother also had them) and lifestyle—as an X-ray technologist, she’s on her feet all day long, often bending at her knees while repositioning patients. Her varicose veins weren’t pretty, but they were painless, until one afternoon when she was gardening in her yard, one of her favorite pastimes. “The vessel behind my left knee just blew up,” she says. “It was so painful I couldn’t even touch it.” When the pain persisted over the next few days, Cindy knew there was something wrong.



Sandip Maru, MD

Worried that she might have deep vein thrombosis (DVT), a potentially life-

threatening condition, Cindy decided to seek out an expert opinion. Fortunately, she works with Sandip Maru, MD, a vascular surgeon with the HMC Vascular and Vein Center, who suggested she make an appointment to be evaluated. An ultrasound confirmed that Cindy’s great saphenous vein was refluxing, meaning “the veins aren’t pushing blood back to the heart as well as they should,” says Dr. Maru. This was a larger vein, making Cindy a candidate for a procedure called a ClosureFast, which uses radiofrequency ablation to collapse the bad veins.

“A catheter delivers heat to the vein wall, causing it to seal and reroute the blood to a deeper vein that’s usually better-functioning,” explains Dr. Maru. The beauty of the procedure is that it can be done in the office in about an hour.

## AN EASY RECOVERY

“Once the procedure was done,” says Cindy, “they wrapped my leg from ankle to groin and out the door I went.” She felt some

soreness afterward, but says the result was well worth a little discomfort: “That terrible-looking vessel is gone!” In its place is a small white bump that hasn’t caused her any pain. She was so pleased with the results that she’s planning to have the procedure done on her right leg once her work schedule becomes less busy.

For Dr. Maru, one of the most rewarding parts of performing these in-office surgeries is the impact they have on his patients’ lives. “People come in with sore, tired legs, we do a one-hour procedure and a few weeks later they come back and feel so much better,” he says, adding that his office also sees a lot of wound-care patients who benefit immensely from vein procedures.

The team at the HMC Vascular and Vein Center takes a comprehensive approach to venous care and tailors treatment to individual patients. “We obtain an initial diagnostic ultrasound and determine the treatment that’s best for each patient,” says Dr. Maru.

In addition to ClosureFast, the Center offers VenaSeal, which uses a medical adhesive to close varicose veins, and microphlebectomy, a treatment for complex varicose veins that must be removed. “Most varicose vein treatments can be done in a safe, comfortable outpatient setting,” says Dr. Maru.

“As vascular surgeons, we’re often taught to focus on the arterial side of things, but veins are very undertreated,” he says. “Simple outpatient venous procedures can make such a big difference.”

✱ The HMC Vascular and Vein Center is located at 2 Hospital Drive, Suite 203, in Holyoke. To schedule an appointment, please call **413.535.4785**.





# DIABETES: EMPOWERING PATIENTS

PERSONALIZED EDUCATION AND TRAINING HELPS  
DIABETES PATIENTS MAXIMIZE THEIR HEALTH.

**TEN YEARS AGO**, Corina Valvo, RN, BSN, CDCES, the new Diabetes Program Coordinator at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC), worked as a dialysis nurse for patients with chronic kidney and end-stage renal disease. It was an experience that drew her to her current career in diabetes education.

"Many patients who end up on dialysis have a lengthy diabetes history," says Valvo, who joined the Diabetes Center in September 2021. "I wanted to work with people before they got to dialysis, which is a life-altering experience. As a diabetes educator, I give people background so they can understand what diabetes is, what the

physiology is and how they can take control, better manage their diabetes and be successful."

Along with Valvo, the Diabetes Center includes a board-certified endocrinologist, a nurse practitioner and a registered dietitian. Working as a team, they help people manage all aspects of diabetes, from meal planning and exercise to glucose monitoring and insulin pump therapy. The Diabetes Center is re-applying for recognition from the American Diabetes Association.



Corina Valvo, RN, BSN,  
CDCES

## TRAINING AND TECHNOLOGY

Before coming to HMC, Valvo worked for the diabetes education program at Nashoba Valley Medical Center in Ayer and the Joslin Diabetes Center in Boston. She holds a bachelor of science in nursing degree from the University of Massachusetts Boston and is a Certified Diabetes Care Education Specialist.

Having relocated to be closer to family in Holyoke, Valvo says she enjoys the warm community-hospital atmosphere at HMC and takes the same personalized approach with her patients. After doing an initial assessment to see how patients are managing their diabetes, she devises a custom plan. For some, this involves general diabetes education. "We provide a full curriculum done over several visits," she says.

For those interested in diabetes technology, Valvo conducts training in the use of continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) devices and insulin pumps. "If patients have a CGM or a pump, they see me every three months so we can review data. If there's a technical problem or blood sugars aren't under control, I can help," she says.

While acknowledging the benefits of technology and insulin, Valvo says they can't replace a person managing their diabetes. "Even if you've had diabetes for 20 years, there's always more to learn. It's good to talk to someone like me and make sure you're getting support."

✱ To make an appointment with Corina Valvo at the Diabetes Center, call **413.534.2820**.





# MEDICAL DETECTIVE

AN INFECTIOUS DISEASES SPECIALIST COLLECTS CLUES AND FINDS ANSWERS TO HELP SOLVE CHALLENGING CASES.

**CONSIDERED DETECTIVES** of the medical world, infectious diseases specialists like Amelia Jaworek, MD, Medical Director of the Comprehensive Care Center, are called in to evaluate and oversee challenging cases when an illness is difficult to diagnose, accompanied by a high fever or doesn't respond to treatment.

Dr. Jaworek, who is board-certified in internal medicine and infectious diseases, completed fellowship training at Bay State Medical Center in the Infectious Diseases Division. She has extensive experience diagnosing and treating a wide variety of infections caused by microscopic organisms including bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites.

Patients with substance-use issues are often susceptible to infectious diseases like HIV or hepatitis C. "These diseases go hand in hand," says Dr. Jaworek, who concurrently treats the infection and provides medication-assisted treatment for substance-use disorder to break addiction.



Amelia Jaworek, MD

Solving an infectious disease mystery requires not only a broad knowledge of medicine, but also the interpersonal skills necessary to interact with patients and learn about the details of their daily life that may contribute to an infection. Dr. Jaworek works closely with doctors and patients throughout Holyoke Medical Center to develop comprehensive

treatment plans tailored to individual conditions.

"I get referrals from colleagues who need help identifying and treating potentially life-threatening infections," says Dr. Jaworek. "I've treated many patients with recurrent cellulitis, a bacterial skin infection, who have allergies to antibiotics. It's challenging, but rewarding to find the best course of treatment and the best type of antibiotic to help them." Dr. Jaworek says an infectious disease such as HIV remains active 30 years after its origin. "Drugs are constantly changing for HIV care, so it's important to keep up to date."

## EXPERT TREATMENT FOR INFECTION

Amelia Jaworek, MD, Medical Director of the Comprehensive Care Center, provides infectious disease consultation and management for a range of infections, including:

- HIV care
- Hepatitis B & C
- Chronic wound infections (Including diabetic foot infections)
- Fever of unknown origin
- Travel medicine
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Tick-borne illnesses
- General infectious diseases

Dr. Jaworek also cares for patients with allergies.

✳ **To learn more about Infectious Disease Management, call the Comprehensive Care Center at 413.535.4889.**



# GO NUTS FOR PISTACHIOS

CAN'T SAY NO TO THIS TASTY NATURAL SNACK?  
RELAX—IT'S A HEALTHY TEMPTATION!

**THEY SAY VIOLENCE** lurks within each of us, and here's a food that proves it. When the bowl of discarded shells is almost full and the bowl of pistachio nuts nearly empty, there's bound to be a straggler whose shell—unlike those of its mates—is locked up as tight as Fort Knox. Do we comport ourselves with dignity? We do not! We want that last delectable green morsel that hides tauntingly inside, and we mean to have it—whether it takes teeth, fingernails or a ball-peen hammer.

Happily, our cause is just. This natural snack food is chock full of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and protein; it's one addiction that—within reasonable snacking limits—you can feel just fine about indulging.

## POWER UP

A 1-ounce serving of pistachios (about 50 unshelled nuts) provides 12 percent of the U.S.D.A. daily requirements of both fiber and protein. Pistachios are free of artery-clogging trans fats and high in monounsaturated fats, which can lower your risk of heart attack and stroke by reducing "bad" cholesterol. They're rich in vitamin E, which promotes healthy skin; potassium, which lowers blood pressure and helps regulate heart rhythm; and copper, which helps increase the iron in your blood and fuel your metabolism. And according to a study in the journal

*Nutrition*, pistachios have antioxidants that can cut your risk of cancer, high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes and improve your immune system and eyesight.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Money doesn't grow on trees, but pistachios do; the pistachio tree traces its roots—so to speak—to western and central Asia, where archaeologists have found evidence of them as far back as 7000 B.C. Around 700 B.C., pistachio trees are said to have grown in the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

Pistachios spread to Europe in the Middle Ages during the Crusades, and immigrants from the Middle East

brought them to the U.S. in the 1880s. Iran is the world's top producer, trailed by the U.S. and Turkey. The nuts have surged in popularity in recent years; they're sold in supermarkets, convenience stores and sometimes even ballparks.

## BUY/STORE/SERVE

If you buy them unshelled, choose nuts with partially open shells, a signal that the nut has reached maximum ripeness and flavor. Out of the shell, pistachios should be bright green, indicating peak ripeness. At room temperature, they may keep for months in the winter but can turn rancid within days in hot, humid weather.

To prevent spoilage, store pistachios in an airtight container in the fridge. Eat them within two to three months.

Pistachios can be shelled and frozen in a heavy-duty freezer bag. But don't wait too long to eat them; even frozen pistachios can go bad after about a year. When you're ready to enjoy a snack, toss a handful of nuts into a plastic bag to protect them from condensation—they'll thaw fairly quickly. Pistachios also add pizzazz to recipes. Simply toss them into salads, or add them to your favorite rice and pasta dishes. (Try pistachios and pesto over pasta.) Mix coarsely chopped pistachios with bread crumbs, olive oil, honey and Dijon mustard to make a savory chicken crusting.



# The Pain Management Center



Martin Lesser, DO; Yuri Khibkin, MD; Syed M. Khurram Owais, MD; Natalie Stucenski, NP; Olga Buchachiy, NP

## Stop Hurting. Start Living.

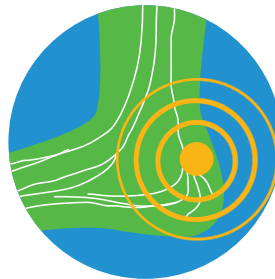
Our team utilizes innovative and comprehensive treatments to personalize your care and identify long-term solutions to:



**Joint pain**



**Back pain**



**Nerve pain**



**Migraines**

Book your appointment today.  
Call the Pain Management Center at **(413) 535-4933**.



**Holyoke Medical Center**

**HolyokeHealth.com**