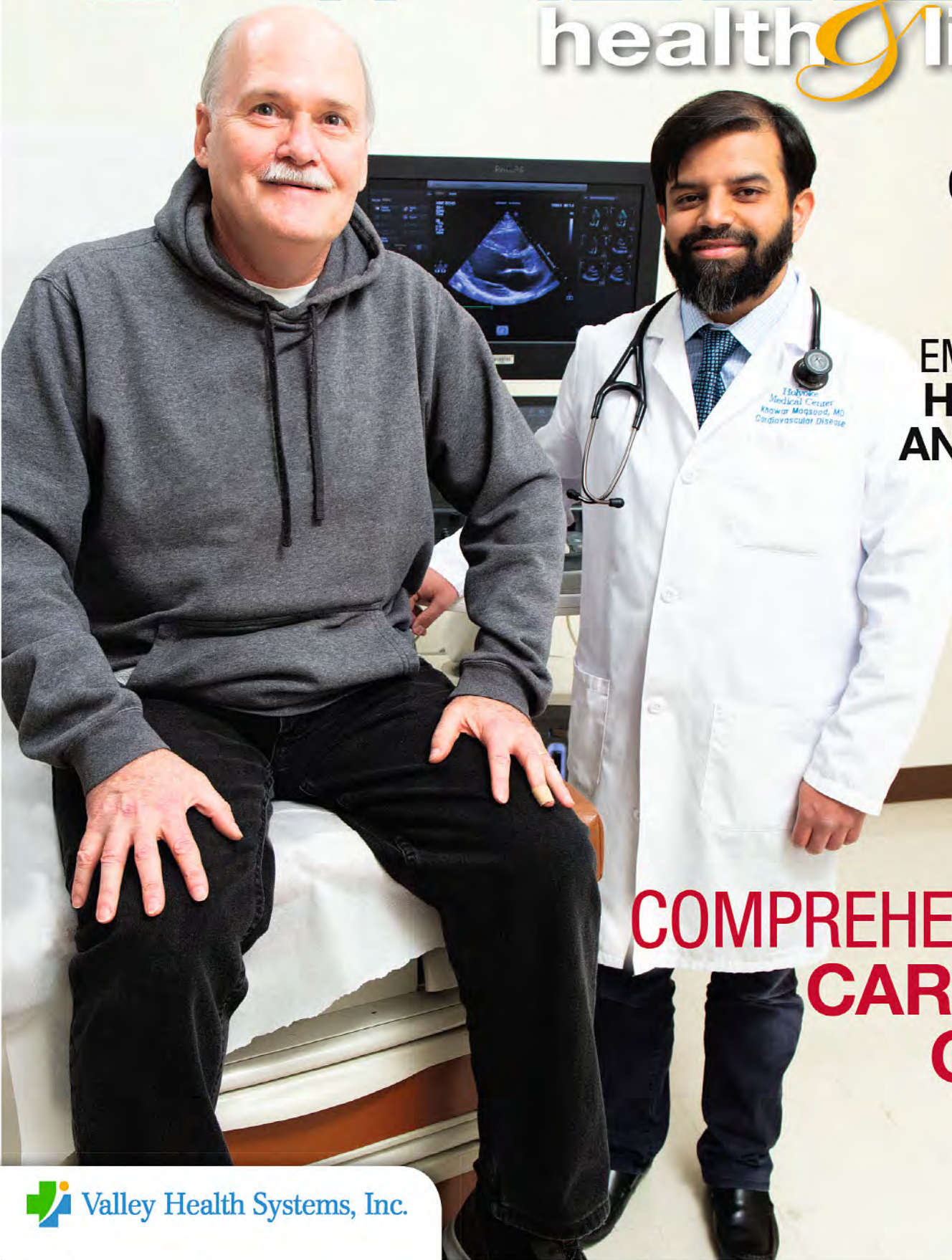


VALLEY

health & life



**GOODBYE,
PAIN**

**KEEPING
EMPLOYEES
HEALTHY
AND SAFE**

**COMPREHENSIVE
CARDIAC
CARE**

DEAR FRIENDS,

With the arrival of spring, we have a lot of great news to share in this issue, including our innovative work in the Pain Management Center, Cardiovascular Center, Urology Center and The Work Connection.

In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to share some exciting and very current news. It's so "hot off the press" that we couldn't include it as a feature article in this issue before the print deadline. The news concerns our next proposed project—building a brand-new, state-of-the-art behavioral health hospital on the campus of Holyoke Medical Center.

Mental health has not only been a priority for Valley Health Systems but also for the Commonwealth and the nation. It's widely recognized that further investments are required to bring mental health services on par with physical health services. We also need to integrate the two disciplines in a thoughtful way. Frankly, this knowledge has existed at least since the time of the ancient Greeks who, among others, underscored the importance of the interplay between mind and body.

The new behavioral health hospital will be an approximately 100-bed facility designed specifically for the needs of mental health patients. It's a bold undertaking, but we are confident that we can succeed in bringing to Holyoke a model of care for mental health patients that will exceed expectations. As you may recall, not long ago we said the same about a new Emergency Department, and by most accounts, we have delivered on our promise.

As before, we will seek partners for our endeavor. We will solicit help from the Commonwealth, our city and our supporters to get the project approved and funded. We have started the conversations with the appropriate stakeholders and anticipate kicking off a capital campaign early this summer.

We will have more news soon on this project, which will be highlighted in upcoming issues. Meanwhile, I hope you are as excited as we are and that you will help support our latest expansion.



Best,

SPIROS HATIRAS

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



On the Cover:
Cardiovascular Center patient
Stephen Quigley with Khawar
Maqsood, MD

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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



FORGET OVERTIME

People who worked 10 hours a day at least 50 days a year had a 29 percent greater risk of stroke than those who worked fewer hours.

—French National Institute of Health and Medical Research



42

The number of grams of walnuts (about a palmful) eaten daily for six weeks that increase the amount—up to 160 percent—of "good" gut bacteria. Researchers note that the nuts feed the microbes, bacteria linked to better immunity and digestion.

—Journal of Nutrition

SOB AWAY HEALTH WOES

Researchers who followed 729 people for 12 years discovered that those who suppressed emotions were at greater risk of dying early. They speculate that bottling up negative emotions can lead to excess production of cortisol, a stress hormone that can wreak havoc on your immune system over time.

—University of Rochester and Columbia University

WORK THOSE LAZY BONES

In a study of 300 children, those who met the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines of 60 minutes of exercise per day had the strongest bones. Researchers tracked their activity and measured bone strength annually for four years. The more vigorous activity the kids got over time, the stronger their bones were.

—Journal of Bone and Mineral Research

SLEEPY GENES



Turns out that people who can get five hours of sleep at night and feel fine the next morning may have a genetic mutation that allows them to do so. Researchers found that subjects with a certain genetic mutation sleep about two hours less than the rest of us—five hours vs. seven. How do you know if you have the sleep-less DNA? Hint: Researchers say the attribute runs in families, so ask Aunt Sally how many hours she sleeps each night.

—University of California, San Francisco

5 STEPS TO WASHING YOUR HANDS THE RIGHT WAY

Washing your hands is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Follow these steps from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:



1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap and apply soap.



2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.



3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.



4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.



5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.



WORKPLACE WELLNESS

THE WORK CONNECTION AT HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER HELPS ENSURE THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF AN EMPLOYER'S MOST IMPORTANT ASSET: ITS WORKFORCE.

WHEN AN EMPLOYEE is injured, ill or disabled at work, he or she needs medical care to get back to work as quickly as possible. At Holyoke Medical Center (HMC), The Work Connection not only manages workplace injuries and illnesses but also helps to improve on-the-job safety. Clinicians in the department also assess employees before they're hired.

The Work Connection has been serving the community for more than 30 years. It's staffed by a physician and three experienced physician assistants, as well as other licensed clinicians. Healthcare



The Work Connection staff members, from left to right: Patrick McIntyre, Practice Manager; Garry Bombardier, MD, Medical Director; Jill Patruno, PA-C; Katherine Rivest, PA-C; and Ashley May, PA-C.

providers at The Work Connection see patients from our community of employers on a daily basis. "Our responsibility is to be our patients' advocate," says Garry Bombardier, MD, Medical Director. "We assist patients in making appointments with specialists, and we appeal insurance companies' decisions when necessary."

The specialty of occupational medicine focuses on the prevention and management of injury and disability in the workplace. "We can design customized and affordable programs for employers to meet their individual workplace health and safety needs," says Patrick McIntyre, Practice Manager.

About 85 percent of The Work Connection patients are referred by their employer or insurance company. HMC and its affiliates send employees to the

department as well. The remaining 15 percent of patients typically come for Department of Transportation medical exams and other self-pay services. Here's how the department benefits community members:

■ PREEMPLOYMENT SCREENING

The Work Connection performs drug screening and preemployment physicals to ensure that there's a match between the requirements of a job and the new employee's ability. "We ensure that a company is hiring an employee who can physically do the job," says McIntyre. For instance, The Work Connection providers might perform a respirator fitting to ensure that a person who needs to work with a breathing device or mask is healthy enough to do so.

■ PREVENTIVE CARE

Often, The Work Connection collaborates with other HMC ancillary services. For example, the expertise of the HMC physical and occupational therapists can be leveraged to perform an ergonomic assessment for a company. They collaborate with on-site environmental health and safety personnel to do workplace audits. For instance, they might inspect the design of a warehouse to ensure that boxes and other items aren't stacked above shoulder level.

McIntyre, who is a member of local safety committees, works with employers to analyze the root causes of workplace injuries. He speaks with managers and helps them create strategies for preventing future problems.

The Work Connection employees also travel to employer health fairs to conduct blood pressure screenings and provide flu vaccination clinics. "These are great because they're an opportunity for employers to show their commitment to their employees' health," says McIntyre.

■ TREATMENT

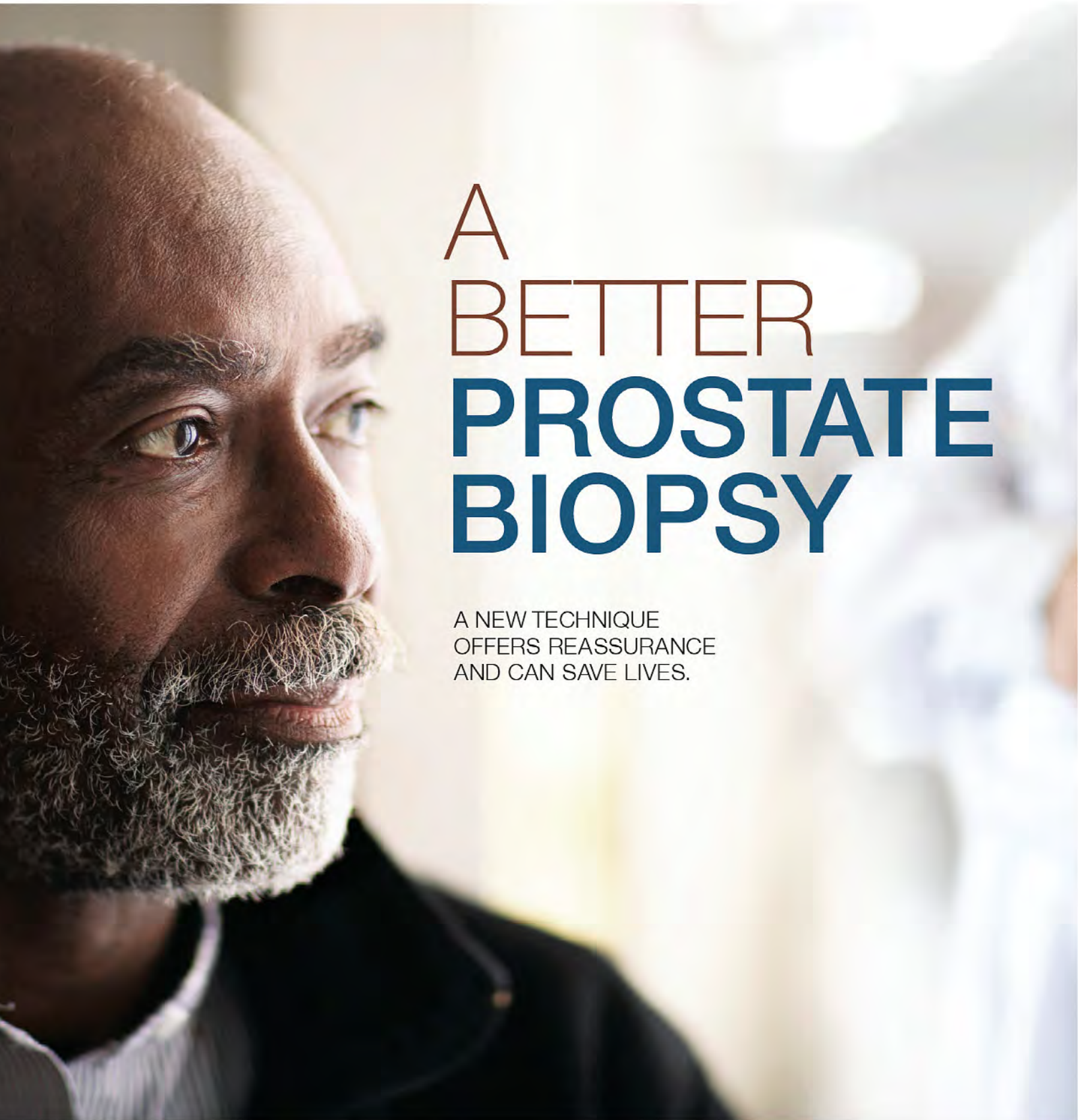
When a patient arrives at The Work Connection, staff members assess the injury or illness and assign a provider to him or her. A nurse examines the patient and takes his or her vital signs and discusses the nature of his or her injury or illness. If diagnostic testing is needed, it can be performed on-site. "Since we're part of HMC, we can perform blood tests or X-rays quickly," says Dr. Bombardier. "We also have a good relationship with HMC physicians, so we can get our patients appointments quickly. This helps to speed up treatment." For instance, a recent patient with an eye injury had his eye washed out and stabilized and was able to see an eye doctor on the campus the same day. "We provide a coordinated and collaborative experience for patients," says McIntyre.

The Work Connection staff members coordinate with the employee, employer and insurance company to help the employee return to work as quickly as possible. Occupational medicine takes a hands-on approach to managing an injury or illness. "We make sure patients stay active so we can get them back on the job as quickly as physically possible," says McIntyre.

Many employers offer light or modified duty programs. Studies show that those who remain engaged in the work environment typically return to their previous position quickly. If an employer doesn't offer a light duty program, McIntyre works with the company to find other jobs a person can do to keep him or her active, engaged and productive.

The Work Connection also offers "fit for duty" or "return to work" exams, which benefit employees who are injured on the job. These exams help ensure that it's safe for an employee to return to work and that he or she poses no risk to the safety of his or her colleagues or professional environment.

*** The Work Connection is located on the campus of Holyoke Medical Center at 575 Beech Street, Holyoke. To learn more, please call 413.534.2546.**



A BETTER PROSTATE BIOPSY

A NEW TECHNIQUE
OFFERS REASSURANCE
AND CAN SAVE LIVES.

OVER THE COURSE of a lifetime, about one in nine men will be diagnosed with cancer of the prostate, a walnut-sized gland that produces fluid that carries sperm, according to the American Cancer Society. It's the second leading cause of cancer death in men; about one in 41 men will die from the disease.

To detect the disease at its earliest stage, physicians recommend screening tests—the digital-rectal exam, prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test or both. (See “When Should You Be Screened?”) While these screening tools can help identify prostate cancer early, when it's most treatable, the disease can be difficult to detect. In addition, it's challenging to distinguish potentially deadly tumors from those that are slow-growing and may not require treatment. “The key question is: How do we identify the men who will benefit the most from treatment?” says Alexander Berry, MD, a urologist at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC).

When a screening test indicates a man might have prostate cancer, the next step is usually to take a biopsy. Guided by ultrasound imaging, a standard biopsy involves injecting fine needles into the gland in a standard pattern and removing tissue, which is tested for cancer cells. The downside of this technique: “If a lesion takes up only 2 or 3 percent of the volume of the prostate gland, it might be missed during a biopsy,” says Dr. Berry.

TARGETING HIGH-RISK CANCER

Now, HMC offers a cutting-edge technology called fusion biopsy, which helps distinguish a high-risk tumor that requires immediate treatment from a low-risk cancer that can simply be monitored. “If a patient has a low-risk cancer, he can postpone therapy,” says Dr. Berry. About 60 percent of men with low-grade prostate cancers can be monitored, says Dr. Berry. “The treatments for prostate cancer can cause problems, such as incontinence and impotence, so it doesn't make sense to treat a cancer if it does not impact life expectancy.”

Here's how the fusion biopsy technology works: A patient undergoes magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which creates a three-dimensional (3D) model of the prostate. Next, the patient has a 3D ultrasound exam. Special software combines the MRI image and ultrasound image, which helps the physician aim the biopsy needles only at the most suspicious areas of the prostate.

HIGHER QUALITY SCREENING

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that fusion biopsies detected 30 percent more high-risk prostate tumors than standard biopsies. “We've seen an improvement in the quality of prostate biopsies,” says Dr. Berry.



Alexander Berry, MD

HMC is the only hospital in the area to offer this technology. To qualify for a fusion biopsy, a patient must have had at least one prior prostate biopsy. “This technique helps determine the type of therapy that's most appropriate for a patient,” says Dr. Berry. “It gives men with low-risk tumors peace of mind with the monitoring process.”



WHEN SHOULD YOU BE SCREENED?

Alexander Berry, MD, a urologist at Holyoke Medical Center, recommends prostate-specific antigen (PSA) testing for prostate cancer starting at age 45. PSA is a protein produced by the prostate gland; when levels are elevated, a biopsy may be recommended. Depending on a patient's results and family history of the disease, he can be screened more or less frequently. If a man has a family history of the disease (meaning a father, uncle or brother who was diagnosed with prostate cancer under age 55 or 60), then he should be tested every year. If there's no family history, a man can be tested every two to three years, says Dr. Berry.

If a man has a PSA level under a 2.5 ng/mL, he can repeat the test every few years. If the result is above a 2.5 ng/mL, he should have a PSA annually. If the result is over a 4 ng/mL, a biopsy is warranted. Check with your physician to determine the best screening schedule for you.



The HMC Urology Center has two locations and is accepting new patients:

**10 Hospital Drive, Suite 204,
Holyoke 413.533.3912**

**100 Wason Ave., Suite 240,
Springfield 413.746.4800**



PROVIDING TOP-NOTCH CARE

GENEROUS DONATIONS ARE HELPING TO
SAVE LIVES AND ENHANCE COMFORT FOR PATIENTS.



Members of the Emergency Department with the LUCAS 3 Chest Compression System, from left to right: April Sheehan, RN; Ellen Ferst, RN; Kelly Marcroft, RN, MSN, CEN; Carol Scott, RN; Christina Delude, PA-S MCPHS; Atif Khan, FAANP, FNP-C; Colin Tocchio, RN; and Tracy Blais, unit secretary.



From left to right: Spiros Hatiras, President and CEO of Holyoke Medical Center and Valley Health Systems with Holyoke Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association members Marjorie Shaw, Connie Kurdziel, Laurene Kittler, Francine Rusiecki and Colleen Desai, Chief Nursing Officer, with the new blanket warmer; Mary Naro's family: Krissy Talevi, daughter-in-law; Vincent J. Naro, husband; Bianca Marie Talevi-Naro, granddaughter; Anthony J. Naro, Esq., son; and Thomas V. Naro, DPT, CEAS III, AOEAS, son; and Lisa Pack Kirschenbaum, RN, and her daughter, Jenna Dupre, with the donated CuddleCot.

THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY of donors, Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) is able to provide the most advanced, personalized care for patients. Over the years, many individuals and groups have donated specialized equipment to improve comfort and save lives. Here are some of the most recent donations:

PRECIOUS TIME

In 1983, Lisa Pack Kirschenbaum, RN, lost her son, Noah, during childbirth, so she knows firsthand how devastating the experience is. As an HMC birthing center nurse for 26 years, she's also witnessed how a stillbirth or infant death affects mothers. In the past, the infant was taken away quickly in the hopes of hastening the mourning process. That thinking has changed. Research shows that parents benefit from spending time with their child. It enables them to introduce the baby to family and friends and say goodbye in their own way, which helps facilitate the grieving process.

Now, with a device called the CuddleCot, parents can keep their child in the hospital room with them prior to an autopsy. The CuddleCot is a pad that's placed in a Moses basket and connected to a cooling unit to maintain a cold temperature. The child doesn't need to go to the hospital morgue until the family is ready.

When Kirschenbaum's husband,

Michael, died in 2019, she wanted to make a donation to HMC in his name. "When I heard about the CuddleCot, it felt like the right way to give back," says Kirschenbaum, who adds that the device would have brought her comfort after losing her son. She donated it to HMC in Michael's and Noah's names.

The CuddleCot is just one way HMC supports parents after a stillbirth. The hospital also connects parents who have lost a full-term baby or miscarry with support groups. Parents can get casts of the baby's hands and feet; keep locks of hair, baby clothing and blankets; and have professional photos taken.

COMFORT FOR PATIENTS

Whether a patient is recovering from surgery or feels cold, a warm blanket can provide comfort. Thanks to recent donations of three warming cabinets, patients now have easy access to warm blankets. Vincent Naro donated one cabinet in memory of his wife, Mary M. Naro, RN, who worked at HMC from 1978 to 2018.

Mary earned her nursing degree in 1977 and spent most of her career in HMC's telemetry department, where she cared for patients who required monitors. After retirement, she worked at HMC on a per diem basis until she died in September 2018. "Holyoke Medical Center was her life," says Vincent. "As a long-term employee, she was very dedicated to the hospital, and I wanted to honor her." The cabinet is located on the fourth floor of the hospital in the Intermediate Care Unit. "When nurses pick up a warm blanket, they see a plaque and photo of Mary and know there's a nurse who's still with them," he says.

An additional blanket warmer, which is located on the third floor nursing unit, was donated by the Holyoke Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association.

"We wanted to express our appreciation to HMC for hosting the annual luncheon for the alumni group," says Association President Connie Kurdziel.

Although the Holyoke School of Nursing closed in 1977, this year marks the 125th anniversary of its first graduating class. About 100 of the Association's 400 members meet at the banquet annually. "Holyoke President and Chief Executive Officer Spiros Hatiras and the staff have been supportive of the alumni," says Kurdziel.

A third blanket warming cabinet has been purchased for the Emergency Department. This cabinet was purchased using the remaining funds donated by the Holyoke Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association, as well as funds available through the Kim Morse Memorial Fund.

HIGH-TECH CPR

Performing CPR can be exhausting—especially if a patient needs chest compressions for a long period of time. Enter the LUCAS 3 Chest Compression System, an automated CPR machine. "It's designed for consistent and high-quality CPR for patients in cardiac arrest," says Kelly Marcroft, RN, Director of Emergency Services at HMC. The device allows chest compressions to be maintained at a consistent rate and depth while ensuring optimal blood flow for a patient in cardiac arrest.

The LUCAS 3 Chest Compression System will be used by clinical staff, including nurses and other trained care providers. "We're educating and training our staff members on how to operate it," says Marcroft. The system was donated by a local family who wishes to remain anonymous. "Their generosity is greatly appreciated by Holyoke Medical Center," says Marcroft. "We're excited about this device because it can help save lives."

*** To make a donation or learn more about areas of need at Holyoke Medical Center, please contact the Development Office at 413.534.2579 or email development@holyokehealth.com.**



Cardiovascular Center
patient Stephen Quigley
with Khawar Maqsood, MD

CARE WITH HEART

HMC CARDIOLOGISTS PROVIDE COMPASSIONATE, EXPERT TREATMENT FOR A VARIETY OF CONDITIONS.

STEPHEN QUIGLEY, of Florence, suffered a heart attack on Thanksgiving in 2018. "When something like that happens, your mind goes to dark places," he recalls. That changed when he met Khawar Maqsood, MD, an interventional cardiologist at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC). "He was great," recalls Stephen. "He told me what was going on inside my body and calmed me down. I relaxed knowing that I was in the hands of a kind and caring surgeon." Dr. Maqsood placed a stent in one of Stephen's arteries that night, then put in another stent about a week later. He's been keeping tabs on Stephen's health ever since.

Dr. Maqsood is the newest physician to join HMC's cardiology department. In 2012, cardiologist Nirav Sheth, MD, joined HMC and was the sole provider for two years. Since then, the department has expanded to include two additional physicians—cardiologist Hari Subramanian, MD, and Dr. Maqsood—and two advanced practice providers (nurse practitioners Lucyna Nigro, CNP, and Dawn Chartier, NP). "Some of our patients didn't have access to a cardiologist, so we've met that need," says Dr. Sheth.

The physicians encourage patients to play an important role in their care. "We want patients to be part of the decision-making process about their treatment," says Dr. Sheth. "We ask, 'What would you like to do?' Everyone's goals are different, so we tailor treatment to our patients." Stephen is grateful for this approach. "You never have to worry about not having your questions answered," he says. "Dr. Maqsood engages you in the treatment process and explains everything thoroughly."

COMPASSIONATE CARE

HMC's cardiologists care for patients with a wide range of conditions—



The Cardiovascular Center team, from left: Hari Subramanian, MD; Lucyna Nigro, CNP; Nirav Sheth, MD; Dawn Chartier, NP; and Khawar Maqsood, MD

coronary artery disease, cardiac arrhythmias, congestive heart failure, valvular heart disease and congenital heart problems, among others. "We can manage patients medically, and if they need advanced care, such as surgery, we can guide patients," says Dr. Sheth.

The cardiologists diagnose heart problems using noninvasive tests, including electrocardiograms, echocardiograms, stress tests, CT scans and more. They implant pacemakers and are expanding their defibrillator (a device that's used to correct an irregular heartbeat) program. Now that Dr. Maqsood has joined the department, interventional procedures are available.

The physicians bring a high level of expertise to the department. All are board-certified in multiple specialties, and they stay abreast of new research, enabling them to provide the most up-to-date care. "There's always a lot of new research in cardiology," says Dr. Sheth. "We attend medical conferences regularly."

In addition to delivering the most advanced care, the practice's

cardiologists strive to provide compassionate care. "I treat my patients the way I want my family members to be treated," says Dr. Sheth. Patients who are scheduled for a procedure like angioplasty or stents may be apprehensive, but comforting words provide peace of mind. "We try to alleviate their anxiety," says Dr. Maqsood. "I reassure patients and give them hope."

Patients appreciate the personalized cardiac care they receive at HMC. A few months after Stephen Quigley's heart attack, he recalls experiencing uncontrollable nosebleeds due to blood-thinning medications. Stephen visited the Emergency Department at HMC. When Dr. Maqsood learned about the nosebleeds, he called Stephen on a Saturday night. "He said, 'Let's talk about your nosebleeds,'" recalls Stephen. "We can give you an effective but less aggressive blood thinner." I took the new medication and haven't had a nosebleed since. I was impressed that Dr. Maqsood didn't wait until Monday morning to call me about the medication."

*** The HMC Cardiovascular Center is located on the first floor of the hospital:
575 Beech Street, Holyoke. To make an appointment, please call 413.534.2870.**





Andrew Demko can control his discomfort better with a new pain pump.

**PAIN,
BE
GONE!**

A PHYSICIAN'S EXPERTISE AND COMPASSIONATE CARE HELPED ONE PATIENT ACHIEVE OPTIMAL PAIN CONTROL.

WHEN ANDREW DEMKO, 58, moved to Westfield a few years ago, he had trouble finding a doctor to manage the pain pump in his abdomen. The pump needed to be filled with morphine every three months to dull the constant back pain he'd experienced ever since he was in a serious car accident in his mid-20s. He had several surgeries, which helped improve his mobility but didn't lessen his pain.

Andrew received his first pain pump more than 20 years ago, when he lived in New Jersey. Doctors there managed his care, replacing the pump every seven years, as needed. When he moved to Massachusetts, Andrew couldn't find a pain specialist, but he found a doctor who would refill the pump periodically. Last winter, the pump was near the end of its life, and Andrew was told that he'd need to go elsewhere for care—perhaps Boston.

A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

Luckily, Andrew found an alternative. In January, he called Holyoke Medical Center's Pain Management Center and made an appointment with Yuri Khibkin, MD, a board-certified interventional pain specialist. Dr. Khibkin wasn't just interested in refilling Andrew's pain pump, as the previous doctor had done. He evaluated Andrew's condition and determined that he needed a new pump in a different location; a new catheter to deliver the medication; and a prescription for a different medication. Andrew's long-term morphine use had caused complications, which made the pump and catheter less efficient at delivering medication. So Dr. Khibkin implanted a new pump in Andrew's buttock and prescribed hydromorphone, a painkiller similar to morphine. He also added other medications to the pump to help with pain management.

At each appointment, Dr. Khibkin sought Andrew's feedback to ensure that the new pump and medications provided sufficient pain relief. "I start low and slow because each patient reacts

to medication differently, and it's a matter of safety," says Dr. Khibkin. His approach has already made a difference for Andrew. "I've had a lot of doctors who would just fill the pump," says Andrew. "It didn't seem to matter whether the dose was giving me a good quality of life. Dr. Khibkin actually listens to me when I tell him, 'This is not working.'"

Dr. Khibkin has cared for many patients with pain pumps. Prior to joining Holyoke in 2019, he implanted pain pumps in patients once or twice weekly. Andrew has had three different pain management doctors over the past three decades, and he says Dr. Khibkin is the best that he's encountered. "He impressed my wife and me as being really competent," says Andrew. "Also, he cares, and everybody on his staff cares. If I'm having a bad day, he tells me to administer a little more pain medication to try to control it. He's getting me back to normal functioning."

A GRATEFUL PATIENT

Andrew is especially thankful for Dr. Khibkin because he remembers what his pain was like before the first pump was implanted. "It was so bad that I was basically horizontal every single day," he says. "If I was lucky enough to be able to sit up and watch TV, that was a good day. After I got the pump, I was able to work, get married and have a family and dog."

Andrew praises Dr. Khibkin for his expertise, compassion and listening skills. "His care has made an enormous difference for me," he says. "Dr. Khibkin knows exactly what I need for a good quality of life."

*Yuri Khibkin, MD
Board-Certified Interventional
Pain Specialist*



✱ The HMC Pain Management Center is located at 10 Hospital Drive, Suite 103, Holyoke. To make an appointment with Yuri Khibkin, MD, an interventional pain specialist, please call **413.535.4933**.



A SNAPSHOT OF COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

The results of the HMC 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment are available via a new interactive online platform.

HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER HAS IDENTIFIED THE MOST PRESSING LOCAL HEALTH CONCERNS.

IN 2019, as part of its Community Health Needs Assessment, Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) surveyed hundreds of residents and local leaders to identify the top health issues in the area. They include mental health issues, lack of healthy food, substance use, diabetes, obesity and a need for transportation for medical appointments.

Over the next three years, HMC plans to take steps to address these challenges in the hopes of improving the health of community members. "If our patients don't have food when they come home from a hospital stay, how can they get healthy?" says Kathy Anderson, Director of Community Benefits at HMC. "If people can't get to their doctor's office for an appointment or pick up their prescriptions, how can they get well?"



Kathy Anderson

ADDRESSING MEDICAL NEEDS

To address the Community Health Needs Assessment outcomes, the hospital is developing a Holyoke Food Resource Guide in English and Spanish to inform our community members who face food insecurity about

where they can obtain food. This guide will include local food pantries, free community dinners, food bank drop-off locations and other food distribution resources. In addition, HMC will investigate ways to improve our current transportation for patients. To help residents cope with mental health challenges, the hospital aims to offer depression screenings and treatment, as well as offer support and guidance to family members who have a loved one struggling with addiction.

HMC is using a new interactive online platform to share the results of the Community Health Needs Assessment. "The platform allows us to provide maps of the community by census tract and show how health concerns are affecting various neighborhoods," says Anderson. The data is collected not only from the HMC Community Health Needs Assessment process but also from public data sources, such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "The data allows us to look at interesting facts to help draw conclusions about various health challenges our community faces," says Anderson. "We have the ability to see what the life expectancy rate is in various census tracts or how many people are using SNAP benefits. The site also covers teen birth rates and the health challenges faced by various age groups. If a person knows what challenges he or she is about to encounter based on his or her age, he or she might be able to take action now."

* To review the results of the Holyoke Medical Center 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment and the 2020 Community Benefit Implementation Strategy, please visit www.HolyokeHealth.com/community-benefits.

{ POWER FOOD }

Get Culture WITH A SPOON

GREEK YOGURT HAS PROTEIN, CALCIUM, VITAMINS AND—
YES—A BIT OF FAT. WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?

THE 1980s BROUGHT us several misguided fads, among them big hair, shoulder pads and a complete shunning of high-fat foods. Fortunately, we now know better, and avocado, coconut and dairy products such as Greek yogurt are allowed back in the house. For good reason, too. Greek yogurt, made by fermenting milk and straining it three times to remove the whey, is a staple in a heart-healthy diet and contains probiotics that experts believe may aid the digestive system and help maintain a healthy gut. With less sugar and a bit more fat than regular yogurt, it can help stabilize your blood-glucose levels, leave you feeling satisfied longer and aid in keeping your weight in check. In other words, it's a big, fat Greek health boon.

POWER UP

Why Greek? Regular yogurt is strained only twice, leaving behind more whey and sugars. Greek or "strained" yogurt, on the other hand, is lower in sugar and more densely packed with the good stuff—protein, calcium and fat. A serving (2/3 cup) of plain Greek yogurt contains about 130 calories and 5 grams of naturally occurring sugar. It also provides 11 grams of muscle-building protein and 100 milligrams (or 10 percent of the daily recommended value) of bone-strengthening calcium. When Greek yogurt is made with whole milk, a serving has about 8 grams of fat. Those concerned with fat intake can opt for a nonfat variety, which is produced with skim milk. But a 2018 study suggested that high-fat dairy products can be more beneficial

in boosting cardiovascular health and reducing inflammation than fat-free or low-fat products and that they can help the body store vitamin D.

Yogurt also contains cultures called *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*, gut-healthy probiotics that may benefit the digestive system. (Note: For a product to be labeled and sold as yogurt, the Food and Drug Administration requires that it be cultured with at least those two strains, but other probiotics are sometimes added to the products as well.)

Yogurt also may help prevent high blood pressure in women, more than other dairy products such as milk and cheese, according to a 2016 study presented at the American Heart Association's annual conference. And it may be a mood booster. A 2017 study found that *Lactobacillus* in yogurt can lower blood levels of a compound called kynurenine, which is linked to depression.

BUY/STORE/SERVE

When shopping for yogurt, you'll want to look for a few things on the container. Some products are heated after fermentation, a process that kills the active bacteria. To make sure you're selecting a brand with all the health perks, check for a label that says "live and active cultures" on the side or underneath the container. Another thing to look for is the amount of sugar in the yogurt. Because it's a dairy product, even plain Greek yogurt will have a nominal amount of naturally occurring sugar, and that's OK. What you want to avoid, though, is flavored yogurt or a non-dairy yogurt, each of which can have upwards of 30 grams of added sugar in a serving. That's more sugar than a doughnut contains and 5 full grams more than a day's worth for women, according to the American Heart Association's guidelines. Instead, buy plain Greek yogurt. If the tanginess is too much for your taste buds, add a teaspoon or two of honey or organic jam and top it off with some blueberries for an added boost of antioxidants.

When it comes to serving yogurt, parfaits or smoothies are popular. But think of it as something beyond simply a sweet and tangy snack. Mix Greek yogurt with garlic, onions and herbs for a dip, or use it in place of mayo for sandwiches or when making chicken, tuna or potato salad. It also can be put to work as a healthy substitute for sour cream on a sweet potato, on top of a burger or in baking recipes. Just remember that heating yogurt kills the healthy bacteria. So it won't have the digestive benefits it has when eaten cold.



The Pain Management Center



Carly Berneche, DNP, FNP-C & Yuri Khibkin, MD, Director of The Pain Management Center

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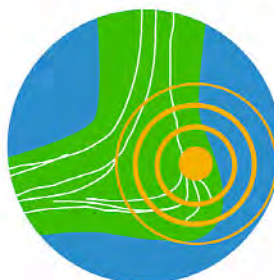
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