

# VALLEY health & life

**SLEEP BETTER**  
EXPERT  
NEUROLOGY  
SOLUTIONS

**AI-POWERED**  
PATIENT CARE

**HEALING  
A HAND**  
Benjamin Nadeau

## FARMERS' MARKET!



*Rain or Shine!*

**Every Wednesday**

**June 11 - October 1, 2025**

**11 a.m. - 2 p.m.**

**at Holyoke Medical Center**

**575 Beech Street, Holyoke, Lot D**

*Free Valet Parking available. Free Transportation is available from the HMC Community Shuttle.*



## CANCER SUPPORT GROUP 2025

Meetings:

**August 14, September 11,  
October 9, November 13  
4:30 – 6 PM**

**Fran Como Conference Room  
Holyoke Medical Center  
575 Beech Street, Holyoke**

This is open to any community member and/or caregivers dealing with cancer.

Light meal provided along with education and activities, as well as facilitation of discussion around a variety of topics.

Please RSVP to 413.534.2520

### On the Cover:

Surgery and follow-up care helped Benjamin Nadeau heal a severe and complex bone break in his right hand.



6

## CONTENTS

- 3 HEALTHY HABITS** News and information for better health.
- 4 BENJAMIN'S BAD BREAK** A hand surgeon and her orthopedic team repair a man's nearly shattered bone.
- 6 EXPERT NEUROLOGY AND SLEEP CARE** An expanded neurology team can help with slumber and conditions affecting the nervous system.
- 8 WELCOME NEW CLINICIANS!** We're excited to welcome many new physicians and providers to our team.
- 10 AI IN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE** Artificial intelligence helps providers improve patient care.
- 11 A NEW HOME FOR CORE** Rehabilitation services have moved to a larger space in Springfield.
- 12 CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY** Key accomplishments in community benefits by the numbers.
- 14 PRIMARY FOCUS** As two beloved physicians retire, a new practice promises continuity of care.
- 15 POWER FOOD** Grapes offer bite-sized, refreshing nutrition.



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To be added or removed from our mailing list, please call **413.534.2789**.



# HEALTHY HABITS

FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

## THE WATER'S FINE

Water/aqua aerobics for 10 or more weeks at a time can trim waist size and aid weight loss, finds a pooled data analysis of available evidence. It's particularly effective in overweight women and people over the age of 45.

—BMJ Open



## PAIN AND DEPRESSION

Chronic pain boosts the risk of depression and anxiety fivefold, according to a recent study of nearly 32,000 Americans.

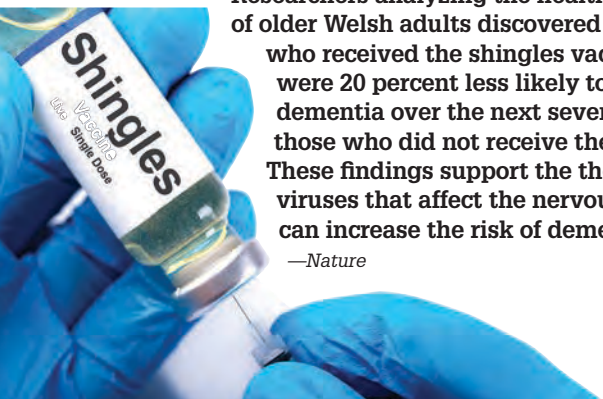
—Pain



## COULD SHINGLES VACCINE LOWER DEMENTIA RISK?

Researchers analyzing the health records of older Welsh adults discovered that those who received the shingles vaccine were 20 percent less likely to develop dementia over the next seven years than those who did not receive the vaccine. These findings support the theory that viruses that affect the nervous system can increase the risk of dementia.

—Nature



## TRY THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Mediterranean diet—consisting of mostly fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds plus healthy fats—has been shown to reduce cardiovascular disease plus cognitive decline.

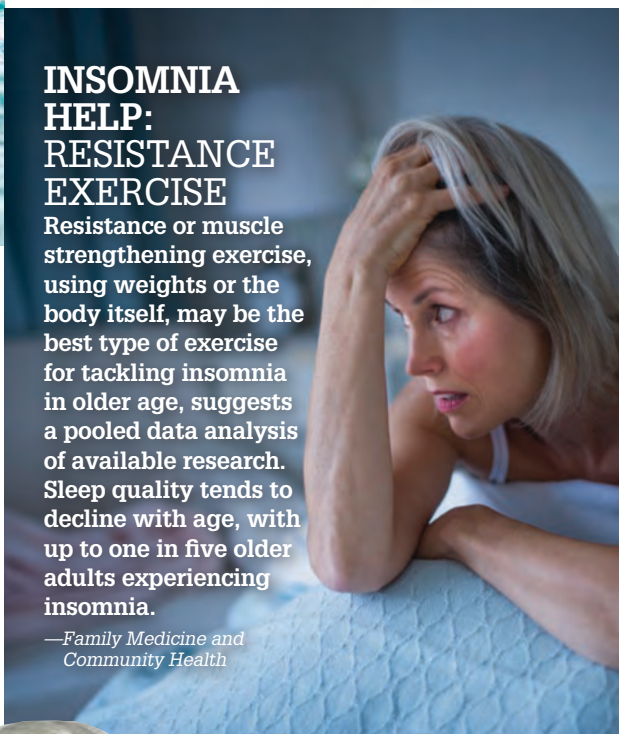
—The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition



## INSOMNIA HELP: RESISTANCE EXERCISE

Resistance or muscle strengthening exercise, using weights or the body itself, may be the best type of exercise for tackling insomnia in older age, suggests a pooled data analysis of available research. Sleep quality tends to decline with age, with up to one in five older adults experiencing insomnia.

—Family Medicine and Community Health



# 30

The percent by which the risk of dementia increases in older people who are socially isolated.

—Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine



Benjamin Nadeau (right) healed a complex hand fracture with care from Allison Richards, MD, and Andrew Allard, PA-C (left).

# BENJAMIN'S BAD BREAK

HOW HMC ORTHOPEDIC CENTER HAND SURGEON DR. ALLISON RICHARDS REPAIRED A LOCAL MAN'S NEARLY SHATTERED BONE.

**IT'S NOT EVERY** day that you hear of someone fracturing their hand in a mosh pit. But that's exactly what 21-year-old Chicopee resident Benjamin Nadeau did.



Allison Richards, MD



Andrew Allard, PA-C

## **'SOMETHING WAS VERY WRONG'**

On November 17, 2024, Benjamin was moshing at a concert by what he calls a "hardcore screamo band" in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, when he inadvertently swung his right arm behind him, his hand landing squarely in the face of another moshers. "I knew right away that something was very wrong," says Benjamin. "I'd had a minor fracture on the same hand once, and I knew this was a lot worse." Unfortunately, an ambulance was

called for the other concertgoer, and Benjamin, who was there with a friend, asked his friend to drive him back to Holyoke and straight to the Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) emergency department (ED).

There, Benjamin's hand was X-rayed, his wound was washed and treated and his hand was put into a splint. The ED physician also prescribed antibiotics to help prevent infection. "It was really bad," Benjamin says. "I broke the bone virtually in half and it was almost shattered. The



doctor and the PA in the emergency department told me that I would probably need surgery.”

### ‘EXCELLENT CARE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING’

The next day, Benjamin received a call from the HMC Orthopedic Center and scheduled an appointment for November 20, when he was initially seen by Andrew Allard, PA-C.

“Andrew was great and provided excellent care from the very beginning,” says Benjamin.

Allard confirmed, as the X-ray taken in the ED showed, that Benjamin had what in technical terms is known as a displaced fracture of the fifth metacarpal shaft of the right hand.

In other words, the long part of the bone that connected Benjamin’s pinkie to his wrist was not just broken, but the pieces of the broken bone were out of alignment, which made the fracture even more painful.

In addition, according to hand surgeon Allison Richards, MD, who would perform the surgery to repair Benjamin’s fracture five days later, his fracture was open. “This means that the bone was poking through the skin, which poses a greater risk of infection,” she says.

As if the bone poking through the skin wasn’t enough of an infection risk, the way Benjamin fractured his hand made the risk even higher. “Benjamin got the injury by literally making contact with someone else’s teeth and mouth,” says Allard. “So, we continued him on the antibiotics and scheduled his surgery for November 25.”

### A SMOOTH SURGERY

Benjamin met Dr. Richards the day of his surgery. “She was very nice, explained the procedure and put me at ease,” he says.

“To repair Benjamin’s fracture, I stabilized the bone using K-wires, also called ‘pins,’ which are stainless

steel wires that are a little smaller than the diameter of a coat-hanger wire,” says Dr. Richards. To keep the bone in place and prevent it from rotating, she placed one pin down the length of the fractured bone, and one pin across it to the adjacent bone (the bone that connects the wrist to the ring finger).

“I left the pins jutting out slightly from the skin,” says Dr. Richards. “That way, no incision would be needed to remove them once Benjamin’s hand was healed. Usually, there is enough bone healing by four weeks after surgery.”

The entire procedure took 14 minutes. After the surgery, Benjamin’s hand was placed in a splint and he was discharged the same day.

### BUMPS IN THE ROAD

Benjamin was slated to follow up with Allard two weeks later, but during that time he was admitted to the hospital briefly for a separate issue.

“While he was in the hospital, I would go in to check Benjamin’s wound, change his splint and make sure he was OK,” says Allard.

Benjamin’s pin sites showed signs of superficial infections, so Allard again put him on antibiotics. On December 10, Allard removed one of the pins. “We wanted to see a little more healing before removing the other one, so we placed him back in a cast for two weeks.”

### HEALING AND RECOVERY

The second pin and the cast were removed in early January. In early February, Benjamin experienced some pain and swelling, and, after another course of antibiotics, he was healed.

It took a couple months but, despite a few setbacks and some post-op pain, Benjamin was able to make a full recovery with the help of CORE physical therapy at HMC to restore his strength and flexibility.

His hand is now completely healed.

## WHAT IS HAND SURGERY?

Hand surgery is a dedicated subspecialty for orthopedic, plastic and general surgeons that focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of problems with and injuries of the hand, wrist, forearm and elbow. Hand surgeons must complete an additional year of specialized training with an accredited fellowship program and pass an exam to receive certification. According to Dr. Allison Richards, who is board certified in both orthopedic and hand surgery, the additional training is necessary because of the complexity of the hand.

“There is a lot of anatomy in the hand, so in addition to understanding the bones and joints, it’s essential to know exactly where the vessels, nerves and tendons are,” she says. “Because hand surgeons are much more familiar with hand anatomy, we know how to treat not just breaks and fractures, but nerve and tendon injuries, arthritis and many other conditions.” These include carpal tunnel syndrome, trigger finger, ganglion cysts of the hand and wrist, and infections.

“I have full range of motion and even some hyperextension that mirrors my left hand,” says Benjamin, who is grateful for the care he received at HMC Orthopedic Center. “I did not have a single bad experience there other than, of course, having to deal with my injury. Dr. Richards is an excellent doctor and a very kind soul, especially for listening to me rambling about my music when she was in the office. She, Andrew and everyone there were incredible, and I appreciate everything they’ve done for me.”

✱ To make an appointment with HMC Orthopedic Center, please call at **413.534.5814**.



# EXPERT NEUROLOGY AND SLEEP CARE

HMC'S NEUROLOGY & SLEEP TEAM TREATS MANY NERVOUS SYSTEM AND SLEEP-RELATED CONDITIONS—AND HAS ADDED MORE PROVIDERS.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT** neurology and sleep are often inextricably linked? The expert team at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) Neurology & Sleep, led by board-certified neurologist and sleep medicine specialist Rani Athreya, MD, ABPN, is highly experienced and qualified to diagnose and treat all sleep and neurological disorders. She is subspecialized in treating various movement disorders like Parkinson's disease and tremors. "A lot of

neurological patients have problems with sleep, and many sleep disorders are related to brain dysfunctions or problems in the nervous system, which is why sleep is a subsection of neurology," Dr. Athreya says.

## TREATING SLEEP ISSUES

Using the most advanced technology and treatment options, Dr. Athreya and her team offer diagnosis and treatment of a wide array of sleep disorders, including those listed below.

## INSOMNIA

Everyone has trouble falling asleep from time to time, but if you have ongoing problems falling and/or staying asleep several nights a week for weeks at a time, you may have chronic insomnia, which can leave you feeling

tired and cranky, affect your memory and ability to concentrate and cause you to be accident-prone and make mistakes—which can have serious, if not deadly, consequences.

## SLEEP APNEA

Does your partner nudge you at night because of your loud snoring? Do you sometimes wake gasping for air? Do you frequently have morning headaches or daytime sleepiness? All of these can be signs of sleep apnea, which happens when your airway is blocked, causing you to stop breathing for short periods throughout the night. If left untreated, sleep apnea can increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and heart attack. "Sleep apnea has a major neurological component as well as a pulmonary component," says Dr. Athreya.



Rani Athreya, MD, ABPN



Kristie Harrington, FNP

## NARCOLEPSY

You may have seen comic portrayals on TV of people suddenly falling asleep in the middle of a sentence or activity, but there is nothing funny about narcolepsy, a chronic neurological condition that hinders the brain's ability to regulate sleep-wake cycles, causing people to fall asleep suddenly during the day. It can also cause cataplexy (a sudden loss of muscle control), sleep paralysis and hallucinations.

## RESTLESS LEGS SYNDROME (RLS)

RLS, also known as Willis-Ekbom Disease, is a neurological condition marked by an irresistible urge to move the legs as well as uncomfortable sensations such as aching, throbbing, itching and crawling. Moving the legs can bring temporary relief, but it, as well as the restlessness, interferes with sleep.

"When a patient comes in with symptoms, they receive a thorough evaluation as well as a neurological exam and a sleep analysis," says certified physician assistant Subhana Begum, MAdEd, MPAS, PA-C, who joined HMC Neurology & Sleep in October 2024. "We'll often do a home sleep study, as well as patient education about things such as sleep hygiene, and then may move on to an overnight sleep study in our sleep lab."

The sleep study involves attaching sensors to different parts of the patient's body in order to measure brain waves, heart rate, muscle and body movement, and eye movement during sleep. The patient's blood oxygen, breathing and snoring are also assessed. Afterward, a multiple sleep latency test (MSLT) may be done to find out more about the patient's daytime sleepiness.

## HELP FOR NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS

HMC Neurology & Sleep diagnoses and treats neurological disorders, including movement disorders such as:

## PARKINSON'S DISEASE

This progressive movement disorder causes nerve cells in parts of the brain to weaken and eventually die. As it worsens over time, the disease causes symptoms such as difficulty walking and talking, tremors, stiffness and impaired balance.

## ESSENTIAL TREMOR

A neurological condition that often worsens over time and causes involuntary, rhythmic shaking or trembling, essential tremor can affect quality of life by making everyday tasks, such as eating or writing, difficult and frustrating.

## ATAXIA

Ataxia is characterized by problems with muscle coordination and control that causes awkward or clumsy movements and can make it difficult for patients to speak, move or maintain balance.

## DYSTONIA

This nervous system disorder, which is often treatable, causes uncontrollable muscle contractions in different parts of the body due to faulty signals from the brain.

"When patients come in with neurological symptoms, such as headaches, memory issues, numbness or tingling, stroke, Parkinson's, or other conditions, we first do a thorough neurological evaluation and order the diagnostic testing they need," says Dr. Athreya.

"At Holyoke," she continues, "we have a neurodiagnostic center where we can do necessary tests, such as electromyography and nerve conduction studies; sleep studies; radiological procedures, such as MRIs, CT and PET scans; single-photon emission computed tomography; cerebrospinal fluid evaluation; and more."



## MEET PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT SUBHANA BEGUM

Certified physician assistant Subhana Begum, MAdEd, MPAS, PA-C, who joined HMC Neurology & Sleep in October 2024, received her Master of Physician Assistant Studies from MGH Institute of Health Professions in Boston in 2023. "I've always been interested in neurology, and I am very happy to be here," says Begum, who also has a Master of Science in Post-Secondary Adult Education. "I'm also a retired Navy vet," she says. "Twenty-two years active duty."

Begum considers herself a "lifetime learner" who went back to school with the goal of becoming a physician assistant after leaving the military and while working as a health coach. She loves working in a clinical environment at HMC Neurology & Sleep, and especially enjoys one-on-one interaction with patients. "I really enjoy customizing sleep strategies for each patient I see, because everyone is different and has their own needs and goals," says Begum. "I am part of a great team here, with Dr. Athreya, who is a great doctor and a great mentor, and Kristie Harrington, who is a wonderful nurse practitioner." Begum encourages patients to bring "lots of questions" when they come in. "That's what I'm here for," she says. "I want our patients and our community to be well educated and to get a good night's sleep."

✳ To make an appointment with HMC Neurology & Sleep, please call **413.736.1500**.



# WELCOME NEW CLINICIANS!

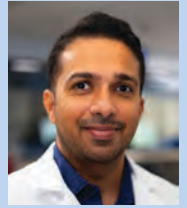
HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER IS EXCITED TO WELCOME MANY NEW PHYSICIANS AND PROVIDERS WHO HAVE JOINED OUR TEAM OVER THE PAST YEAR.

## ADMINISTRATION



**Vishal Tiwari, MD, MHCDS, FACP**  
Senior Vice President  
and Chief Medical  
Officer

## HOSPITAL MEDICAL STAFF



**Avinash Adiga, MD**  
Critical Care



**Catharine Armentrout, NP**  
Hospitalist

## OUTPATIENT MEDICAL STAFF



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**Olga Figueroa, NP-C**  
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**Kristen Maloney, NP**  
HMC & RVCC School-  
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**Meredith Garvin, DO**  
Emergency Medicine



**Konstantin Vatrengo, DO**  
Emergency Medicine



**Shaylie Albright, PA**  
Emergency Medicine



**Jacqueline Foley, PA-C**  
Emergency Medicine



**Terri Morris, NP**  
Hospitalist



**Elizabeth Reale, PA-C**  
Hospitalist



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**James Curtin, PA-C**  
HMC General &  
Specialty Surgeons  
413.532.1411



**Andrew Allard, PA-C**  
HMC Orthopedic Center  
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**Melinda Hurteau, PA-C**  
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**Ashley Landry, PA-C**  
HMC Primary Care  
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**Carly Muniz, PA-C**  
HMC Primary Care  
413.538.5620



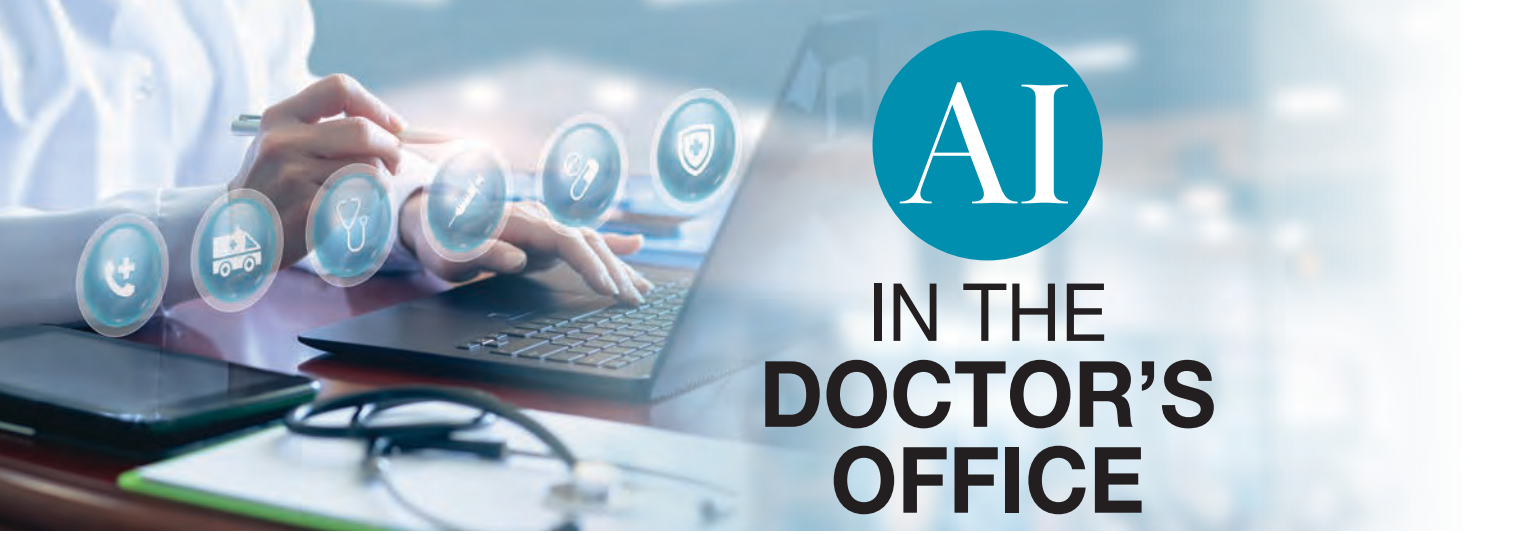
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**Christine Ndissi, DNP,  
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# AI IN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

## HOW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS HELPING PROVIDERS IMPROVE PATIENT CARE

**AI (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)** is everywhere. For years—decades, even—we'd heard rumblings about its eventual "takeover" in everything from science fiction movies to futuristic and dystopian novels. We didn't worry much, as long as it was happening sometime in the future.

However, use and acceptance of AI in mainstream applications have exploded and AI has become ubiquitous in all aspects of our daily lives. While it's true that AI is sometimes overused or misused, conscientious and creative AI applications have great potential to improve many aspects of daily life at home, at work, in the classroom—and in healthcare.

### SUKI AI AT HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER (HMC)

In late February 2025, HMC rolled out Suki AI, an artificial intelligence platform and AI-powered voice assistant designed to help providers complete common clinical tasks accurately and expeditiously, to approximately 50 providers. So far, the response from clinicians has been positive.

One of its primary benefits, according

to HMC vascular surgeon Sandip Maru, MD, is that it allows providers to spend more time focusing on patient care, and less time on paperwork.

Suki AI does this by helping providers with tasks such as clinical notetaking and documentation. "After seeing a patient, a provider needs to write up everything—such as the patient's history, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment plan," says Dr. Maru. "Suki listens during a visit and drafts these notes automatically."

HMC primary care nurse practitioner Kristin O'Connor, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC, also finds Suki AI indispensable when it comes to notetaking. "I use Suki with every patient," she says. "For some, I use it to generate complete visit notes, and for others I use it for parts of notes, such as discussion points or patient instructions."

Dr. Maru also uses Suki AI for medical dictation. "Instead of typing, I can just talk and Suki will transcribe what I say and format it into the patient's medical record," says Dr. Maru. "Without Suki, this would be done by typing notes manually after every patient visit, which could take five to 10 minutes per patient."

Both Dr. Maru and O'Connor agree that Suki AI saves time, increases accuracy, and boosts productivity. "With Suki, we spend far less time on

documentation," says Dr. Maru. "Also, Suki listens carefully and formats notes in a standardized, structured way, which reduces errors. We often see so many patients in a day that fine details are forgotten, but with Suki, all the details are captured."

### MORE TIME WITH PATIENTS

Suki AI performs ambient documentation, which means that it listens and documents during the natural flow of a conversation between provider and patient, without the provider having to pause to give commands or dictate formally. "It picks up what's important from the visit automatically and creates clinical notes based on the conversation," says Dr. Maru. "It also generates detailed patient instructions, which are available to the patient at the end of the visit," adds O'Connor.

Not having to worry about taking detailed notes during a visit allows providers more quality face-to-face time with patients. "Instead of staring at a computer screen typing notes during the visit, doctors can stay focused on the patient," says Dr. Maru. "This allows us to listen more, build trust and pick up on important nonverbal cues." These more meaningful interactions make visits more productive for both providers and patients.



Sandip Maru, MD



Kristin O'Connor, MSN,  
APRN, FNP-BC

✱ **Dr. Maru practices at HMC Vascular Center in Holyoke: [413.535.4785](tel:413.535.4785). Kristin O'Connor is a Primary Care Provider at HMC Family Medicine in Westfield: [413.535.4800](tel:413.535.4800).**





# A NEW HOME FOR

# CORE

THE CORE WESTFIELD LOCATION HAS MOVED TO A LARGER SPACE IN SPRINGFIELD

**CORE** (Centers of Rehabilitation Excellence) is where people with acute or chronic orthopedic, neurological, cardiac or pulmonary conditions go when they need quality physical therapy (PT), occupational therapy (OT) and other types of rehabilitation services provided by an experienced, compassionate team of experts.

## Expanded services for neurological conditions

In early March 2025, CORE's Westfield location moved to larger quarters in Springfield and has expanded services to include treatment for patients with various neurological conditions. "Our new location is in the same building as HMC Rheumatology, and Neurology & Sleep practices, and we are available



Edward Moran, MPT

to see patients with neurological deficits, such as those who have Parkinson's disease or have suffered a stroke," says Edward Moran, MPT,

Director of Rehabilitation Services at CORE. "Both our occupational therapist and our physical therapist have specialized training in rehab focusing on the management of Parkinson's, and we have dedicated treatment space and equipment for this program."

Occupational therapist Lisa Kern, MS OTR/L, CBIS, is a certified brain injury specialist at CORE. "I specialize in working with individuals recovering from concussions or other brain injuries, offering therapies to address cognitive, physical and emotional challenges," she says. In addition, like physical therapist and PT supervisor Sara Brown, PT, DPT, who has also moved to the new location, Kern is certified in the PWR! (Parkinson's Wellness Recovery) program. "PWR! focuses on improving movement and function for those living with Parkinson's or other neurological conditions," she says.

"It also focuses on improving neuroplasticity, strength, balance and flexibility," adds Brown. "This type of exercise program can be utilized across many aspects of rehab, not just for individuals who have Parkinson's."

In her role as a PT, Brown treats patients with many conditions. "I treat a variety of our orthopedic, pre- and post-operative patients,

Left: The main gym area of the CORE Springfield location offers a large workout and treatment space, with adjacent individual treatment rooms. Below: Physical therapist and PT supervisor Sara Brown, PT, DPT with Occupational therapist Lisa Kern, MS OTR/L, CBIS



work injuries, neurological conditions, chronic conditions, sports injuries, balance deficits and injuries of 'weekend warriors'," she says. "I try to make therapy a positive and upbeat experience so that patients will become active and engaged in their recovery."

## Welcoming atmosphere, new equipment

Both Kern and Brown are excited about the new location and its expanded services. "Lisa and I love our new shared space for PT and OT," says Brown. "It's an upgrade over our previous location, and we have a beautiful open floor plan with windows, which is bright and welcoming."

They are equally excited about the equipment at the new location. "We offer a blend of new and upgraded equipment for our orthopedic and neurological populations, including a SCI-FIT stepper and Sports Art TM," says Brown. "We have a new staircase to aid in gait-training/balance activities, a rail/mirror wall and rubberized flooring throughout the space." In addition, the space has new, large colorful floor mats and agility poles to aid in visual and sensory feedback during PT and OT.

✳ To make an appointment at the new CORE PT/OT location at 2150 Main Street, Suite 140, Springfield, please call **413.535.4996**.

# Caring For Our Community

A LOOK AT SOME OF THE MANY COMMUNITY BENEFITS OFFERED BY HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER

**IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING** quality healthcare to the Holyoke community, Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) understands the needs of area residents and collaborates with community partners to address those needs by offering community benefits including programs, education, and other services and resources to improve residents' health and increase access to healthcare, especially for vulnerable and underserved residents. Many of the benefits provided by HMC are life-changing and, in some cases, lifesaving.

## Assessing and Addressing Community Needs

Every community has different needs, and, when it comes to health, HMC is diligent about finding out what residents need most and helping to get those needs met. "Every three years, HMC conducts a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), which is a comprehensive review of health needs and issues in the Holyoke community," says Lisa Wray Schechterle, HMC's Director of Community Benefits. "This information informs the hospital's Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP), which provides a roadmap for community benefits activities and services."

Among the more pressing needs identified by HMC in the community are access to nutritious food, transportation to healthcare services and




Lisa Wray Schechterle,  
HMC's Director of  
Community Benefits

appointments, access to health insurance, and helping to educate our future healthcare workforce. The hospital has programs and services in place to address all of these needs and continues to help residents on a regular basis. Here are just some examples of how HMC helps the community:

✳ To learn more about the Community Benefit initiatives at Holyoke Medical Center, please visit [www.holyokehealth.com/cb](http://www.holyokehealth.com/cb).  
Contact: Lisa Wray Schechterle, [schechterle\\_wray\\_lisa@holyokehealth.com](mailto:schechterle_wray_lisa@holyokehealth.com), 413.534.2533.



**2,950 meals**  
served in the community  
(+9 percent over 2023).



**399** patients with mobility issues received blood testing at home and **6,441 offsite draws** were made through community partners such as the Veterans' Home at Holyoke.



**47** Accountable Care Organization (ACO) patients were referred to Wayfinders and secured housing.




HMC Financial Counseling assisted **699** applicants with access to healthcare insurance (+48 percent over 2023).



Two community shuttles served more than **16,000 patients**.



**39** volunteers aged 16 to 85 years old assisted in 20 areas throughout HMC for a total of **1,555 hours**.



Provided interpretive services in **39 languages** with **40,000 encounters**.  
Over 90 percent of these patients prefer Spanish.



# HMC COMMUNITY BENEFITS BY THE NUMBERS:

Here is a closer look at some of HMC's key accomplishments regarding community benefits in 2024:



School Based Health Clinics accommodated **2,160 visits** from teen patients at Holyoke High School North, Holyoke High School Dean and William R. Peck Middle School.



Nursing students spent over **46,000 hours in internships** on campus (an increase of 380 percent over 2023).

**434** employees participated in Adopt-a-Family where **141 children** received **564 gifts, 67 grocery store gift cards** and supported **51 area families** in need through the Holyoke Boys & Girls Club.



Valet parked **15,871 cars**.



An **average of 304** people visited the **Holyoke Farmers Market at HMC** each week with **5,173 total attendees** over the 17-week period.



HMC door-to-door transportation service served more than **4,400 patients**.



HMC providers spent nearly **8,700 hours** with **Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistant students** and another **1,100 hours** with students aspiring to be **Physicians**, through a new partnership established with the Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University.



Coordinated over **2,200 Lyft** rides.

Addiction Consult Services treated more than **1,300 patients**, with 58 percent seen through the Emergency Department, 19 percent due to overdose, and dispensed **788 doses of Take Home Naloxone**.



**100** mothers going back to school for their **HiSET** (High School Equivalency Test) along with their babies received care through an HMC Family Nurse Practitioner at **The Care Center**.

**200,000** educational magazines distributed to area residents.



**\$16.9 million**

In total, the value of community benefits contributed by HMC in 2024 was \$16.9 million.



**284** patients received uncompensated legal proceedings.

# PRIMARY FOCUS

AS TWO HMC PHYSICIANS RETIRE, A NEW PRACTICE, HMC PRIMARY CARE 10 HOSPITAL DRIVE, PROMISES CONTINUITY OF CARE.

**IN FEBRUARY 2025**, after 38 years in private practice and an affiliation with Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) that began in 1989, Francis M. Croke, MD, retired from practice, much to the dismay of many hundreds of loyal patients for whom he'd rendered primary care for years and, in some cases, decades.

In June, after 36 years in private practice following a 13-year career in emergency medicine, Andrew S. Levin, MD, whose affiliation with HMC also began in 1989, retired as well. Like Dr. Croke, Dr. Levin has a loyal legion of patients for whom he provides primary care, many of whom have been with him for the long haul, and some whose children and even grandchildren see him as well.

## 'A VERY SPECIAL BREED'

Robert Boydston, MBA, CMPE, THDC, Director of Primary Care Services, has known both doctors for decades and is sad to see them go.

"Both of these physicians built their practices from the ground up," he says. "They are both a very special breed of primary care providers who not only cared for patients within the four walls of their offices but also did a great deal of community work." According to

Boydston, both Dr. Croke and Dr. Levin saw patients at home when they couldn't get to the office and both saw many patients in local nursing homes. In addition, both physicians were Golden Gloves boxing ringside doctors. "They always took time with their patients," says Boydston. "They knew their families, their interests and developed strong, long-lasting, meaningful connections with them."

## CONTINUING A TRADITION OF EXCEPTIONAL CARE

With each of the doctors retiring after nearly four decades, HMC has acquired both practices, whose offices were located a door apart, and have merged them into one new, larger practice at the same location in 10 Hospital Drive to serve the doctors' combined base of more than 6,000 existing patients, as well as new patients.

"The transition is in full swing," says Boydston, who notes that Dr. Croke's patients started being seen at the new practice, HMC Primary Care 10 Hospital Drive, earlier in the spring. "We began folding in Dr. Levin's practice and patients in late June, as his retirement became effective on July 1."

In the interim, patients are being seen by Kartik Viswanathan, MD, and

Sarah O'Shea, MD, at 10 Hospital Drive in Suite 303. HMC is currently renovating a new, larger space, where at least four providers and support staff will provide care, according to Boydston. The new PCP team will include Kimberly Bucknor, MD; Adam Qazi, MD; Lucille Passer, PA-C; and Ashley Landry, PA-C, who transitioned to primary care from her previous role with the Hospitalist Service at HMC.

"I practiced in primary care for four years before my role as a hospitalist," says Landry. "As a primary care provider, you have the ability to really make a difference in the overall well-being of patients—taking the time to educate them, working to improve their lifestyles and encouraging both routine care and preventative care."

The new practice continues to provide the same high level of exceptional, accessible, compassionate primary care rendered by both Dr. Croke and Dr. Levin to their patients over the years. "We want to reassure existing patients that they have a home to go to, that they will have the same level of care, and they don't have to go to another location," says Boydston. "Once the new team is on-boarded, the office will begin accepting new patients in the fall."



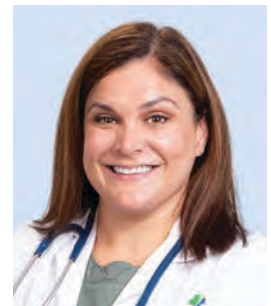
Francis M. Croke, MD  
in 2008



Andrew S. Levin, MD  
at the 2025 HMC Gala



Robert Boydston, MBA,  
CMPE, THDC, Director of  
Primary Care Services



Ashley Landry, PA-C

✱ To make an appointment at HMC Primary Care 10 Hospital Drive, please call **413.539.6830**.



# Grape Expectations

YOU'D IMAGINE THIS JUICY, BITE-SIZED FRUIT TO BE NUTRITIOUS AS WELL AS REFRESHING. YOU'D BE RIGHT.

**THE GRAPE IS A CRISP**, refreshing treat that has nourished everyone from the emperors of yore to the oenophiles of today. The versatile fruit, from the genus *Vitis* (and in botanical terms considered a berry), is the basis not only for wine, but also for juices and jams and jellies and raisins. And by itself, snapped from its native bunch, it's one mean pop-in-your-mouth snack. Grapes' wide diversity, from the type you'd spot in vineyards to those you find in the produce section, makes them one of the most bountiful and widely available foods.

Grapes as a standard crop date back to ancient civilizations. Records in China show grapes being used in fermented beverages as early as 7000 B.C. Iran has similar annals noting the residue from grapes in pots just as long ago. There are references to wine in classic mythology and religious literature. And it's a common belief that raisins were discovered in ancient times as well when, as the crop was grown on vine after vine, some grapes were left on too long and eventually dried and wrinkled.

## POWER UP

As one might expect from any fruit or berry, grapes' health benefits are manifold. They contain antioxidants such as carotenoids and polyphenols that promote heart health and skin health. Some properties are said to help prevent the formation of free radicals, aiding the body in combating common types of cancer. That same action against free radicals—particularly by the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin—is thought to protect the eyes from retinal damage, making cataracts less likely. So

if you're looking to maintain good vision, keep an eye out for grapes.

If vitamin supplements of K and C aren't within reach, it might help to snag off a bunch of this natural supply of both. In fact, the potassium content in grapes is so concentrated it can help regulate blood pressure and also boost the body's storage of electrolytes. They help you to flush out excess water and toxins that you naturally produce, in case you were feeling a little burdened by them lately.

A 100-gram serving of your common grapes found in stores has about 70 calories, as well as about 20 milligrams of phosphorus, which is vital to promoting the strength of bones and teeth. We're all looking to stay healthy these days, and consuming grapes—either red or green—is an easy and effective step in that direction. Not bad for a handy little fruit that's 81 percent water!

## BUY/STORE/SERVE

There's thankfully not much mystery in how to attain grapes if one wishes. Grocery stores come to mind immediately, and any number of farmers markets may give you that organic edge you're looking for. Look for fruit that are plump, smooth-skinned and brightly hued, without too many irregularities.

Remember to wash only the grapes you'll be able to eat in one sitting. In a tightly sealed plastic bag they're usually good in the fridge for one to two weeks. Place them in the crisper for added humidity, which helps the

grapes keep longer. Or freeze them if you plan to cook with them later, as long as you use them all in one go.

Grapes are so open and inviting that rinsing them in the sink and plucking them right off the stem can do nicely. But if you need more frills for your consumption, consider freezing them beforehand. Add a little powdered sugar if you're looking to spoil yourself. Grapes make a great base for a fruit salad or a smoothie. Their sweet flavor, smooth texture and acidic nature enable them to pair with a number of dishes. Maybe a nice cheese plate. Or consider roasting your grapes for a crostini; it makes the juice that much sweeter. And they always do well in sauces, spreads and garnishes as sides to any meat dish. A few grapes go nicely with a flank steak or even roast pork.





# Holyoke Medical Center

2150 Main Street,  
Springfield

## Our Springfield Location now offers:

- ✓ Kidney Associates
- ✓ Neurology & Sleep
- ✓ Rheumatology
- ✓ CORE Physical & Occupational Therapy
- ✓ Lab Draw Services

## Coming Soon...

- ✓ Family Medicine
- ✓ Walk-In Care
- ✓ Podiatry
- ✓ X-Ray Services



[HolyokeHealth.com/Springfield](http://HolyokeHealth.com/Springfield)