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health & life

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HEALING HANDS

Managing
Stroke-Related
Spasticity

Providing you **QUALITY CARE**
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**CANCER
SUPPORT
GROUP
2025**

Upcoming Meetings:
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:

After suffering from a stroke,
 Sonia Douglas now works with
 Rose Bernal-Larioza, MD, a
 board-certified physiatrist, for
 treatment to help alleviate and
 manage spasticity symptoms.



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HEALTHY HABITS

FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

SPORTS MAY SAFEGUARD KIDS' MENTAL HEALTH

Physical activity in early childhood, especially taking part in organized sports, may ward off several mental health disorders in later childhood and adolescence, research suggests. Mental illness among children and teens has risen worldwide, with stress thought to be a trigger. Physical activity has been suggested for helping build resilience to stress and lowering the risks of such illness.

—*British Journal of Sports Medicine*



EXERCISE AIDS THE ILL EFFECTS OF CANCER TREATMENT

Exercise can counter the detrimental effects of cancer treatment, such as heart and nerve damage and brain fog, suggests a review of the existing data from recent research. Exercise also seems to boost psychological well-being and overall quality of life. The exercises include qigong, tai chi, yoga, aerobic and resistance exercise, and high-intensity interval training, among others.

—*British Journal of Sports Medicine*



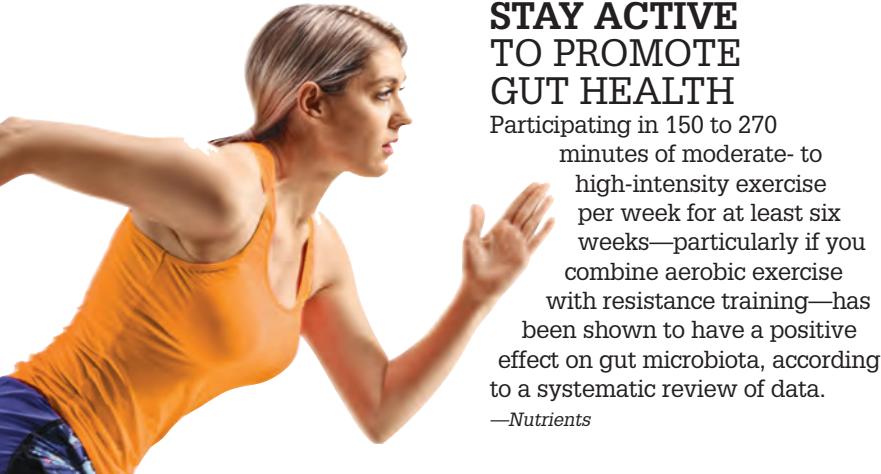
STAY ACTIVE TO PROMOTE GUT HEALTH

Participating in 150 to 270 minutes of moderate- to high-intensity exercise per week for at least six weeks—particularly if you combine aerobic exercise with resistance training—has been shown to have a positive effect on gut microbiota, according to a systematic review of data.

—*Nutrients*

BRISK WALKING IS GOOD FOR THE HEART

A brisk walking pace, and the amount of time spent at this speed, may lower the risk of heart rhythm abnormalities—arrhythmias—such as atrial fibrillation, tachycardia (rapid heartbeat), and bradycardia (very slow heartbeat), according to recent research. Heart rhythm abnormalities are common, with atrial fibrillation alone doubling in prevalence over the past three decades to reach nearly 60 million cases worldwide in 2019. —*Heart*



WELLNESS EVENT

BOOST YOUR WELLNESS IQ AT LOCAL HEALTH FAIR

Join Holyoke Medical Center and the Greater Holyoke YMCA for a health and wellness fair. This family-friendly, interactive event will feature:

- free health education and wellness resources
- free body composition scan with the YMCA's Evolt 360 Body Scanner
- healthy cooking demonstrations
- raffles
- and more!

Date: November 12

Time: 2 to 5 p.m.

Location: Greater Holyoke YMCA, 171 Pine Street, Holyoke





NEUROLOGY & SLEEP PROGRAM GROWS

EXPANDED SERVICES AND ADDITIONAL DOCTORS, PRACTITIONERS, AND LOCATIONS MARK A NEW ERA OF COMPREHENSIVE CARE.

AFTER MANY YEARS of dedicated service to the Holyoke community in private practice and as a consulting neurologist at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC), M. Zubair Kareem, MD, has now officially joined HMC to help expand its already comprehensive Neurology & Sleep program. The expansion—which includes additional practitioners, advanced diagnostic capabilities, and enhanced multidisciplinary care—is expected to significantly improve patient access and streamline neurological and sleep disorder management across three locations.

According to Dr. Kareem, the multifaceted expansion encompasses new services, updated equipment, and a growing team of specialists. “HMC plans to bring additional neurologists onboard, along with experienced physician assistants [PAs], nurse practitioners [NPs], and other professionals,” he shares.

New team members joining the expanded program include Elizabeth M. Bechthold, CNP, who will work alongside Dr. Kareem; Victoria Rondinelli, FNP; S. M. Ali Hazratji, MD; and others at HMC's neurology clinic on the hospital's

fourth floor. The Springfield location includes Rani Athreya, MD, ABPN, supported by advanced practitioners Kristie Harrington, FNP, and Subhana Begum, PA. A third clinic is located in Chicopee, providing further access and coverage for regional patients.

ADVANCING CLINICAL SERVICES

As part of the expansion, Dr. Kareem and Dr. Athreya are collaborating with Harrington and Bechthold to launch a new Headache Clinic, focused on managing complex headache disorders.

Meet Our Neurology Team



M. Zubair Kareem, MD



Rani Athreya, MD, ABPN



S. M. Ali Hazratji, MD



Elizabeth M. Bechthold, CNP



Subhana Begum, PA



Kristie Harrington, FNP



Victoria Rondinelli, FNP

"Both Harrington and Bechthold bring extensive expertise in headache care," Dr. Kareem notes. "The clinic will offer advanced treatments, including injectable therapies such as Botox."

Additionally, HMC is enhancing its neurophysiology lab, with expanded capabilities for essential diagnostic testing. Services will include:

- **Electromyography:** Evaluating the health of muscles and motor neurons
- **Nerve conduction studies:** Assessing peripheral nerve function
- **Electroencephalograms (EEGs):** Measuring brain activity to diagnose conditions such as epilepsy, tumors, stroke, and sleep disorders

To support these services, HMC will welcome three highly experienced neurodiagnostic technicians.

The hospital also will introduce a new offering—ambulatory EEG testing—which will allow patients to complete long-term brain activity monitoring (24 to 72 hours) in the comfort of their own homes. "Previously, patients had to travel off-site for these studies," Dr. Kareem says.

DEMENTIA CARE AND INFUSION SERVICES

The program's capabilities in dementia diagnostics and management also are being expanded. For added convenience, patients requiring treatment infusions will have access

to these services at HMC's on-site infusion center.

In terms of staffing, the program plans to hire at least one additional NP or PA in the coming months. "By late 2026, we anticipate recruiting another board-certified neurologist, further broadening our department's reach," Dr. Kareem says.

While long-term growth plans are still evolving, Dr. Kareem is enthusiastic about the current momentum. "We may not know exactly what the future holds," he says, "but we're building something meaningful. And I believe this: If you build it, they will come."

* HMC Neurology & Sleep has three locations:

575 Beech Street, Suite 401, Holyoke: **413.534.5135**
2150 Main Street, Suite 110, Springfield: **413.736.1500**
260 New Ludlow Road, Chicopee: **413.736.1500**

HEALING HANDS

AN HMC PHYSIATRIST HELPS ALLEVIATE PAIN, IMPROVE MOBILITY, AND INCREASE RANGE OF MOTION IN A STROKE PATIENT WITH SPASTICITY.



"IT WAS ALL SO FAST, I don't remember what happened first," says Sonia Douglas of the series of events that changed her life in March 2019. She recalls her fiancé telling her that she was slurring her words. "Then he said, 'You're having a stroke,' and I remember looking in the mirror and seeing one side of my face drooping," she recalls. At some point, Sonia lost her balance and fell into the bathtub, injuring her head, right hip, and lower back.

Sonia was transported by ambulance to the closest emergency department, where an MRI confirmed that she had suffered an ischemic stroke, which occurs when a blood clot blocks a blood vessel in the brain.

COPING WITH SPASTICITY

After spending 30 days in inpatient rehab, Sonia was referred to Rose Bernal-Larioza, MD, a board-certified physiatrist, who was working at another facility at the time. "When I first met Sonia, she had profound weakness on her left side and in her upper and

lower extremities, and she required a wheelchair," says Dr. Bernal-Larioza.

Sonia also had spasticity, a condition caused by damage to the part of the brain involved with muscle movement, particularly in her left arm. Spasticity, according to Dr. Bernal-Larioza, occurs when there is a miscommunication between the brain and the muscles. This miscommunication causes painful, involuntary stiffness, tightness, and spasms in the affected muscles.

According to the American Stroke Association, approximately 25% to 43% of stroke patients develop post-stroke spasticity (PSS), exhibiting body postures that correlate with the affected muscles. In addition to being painful, spasticity can make necessary daily tasks such as eating, dressing, walking, and caring for personal hygiene difficult or impossible without assistance.

"Though there is no cure for spasticity, there are treatments that can help alleviate symptoms and keep it at a manageable level," says Dr. Bernal-Larioza. "It is extremely important that

we treat spasticity right away so that it doesn't cause permanent contracture."

If left untreated, spasticity not only can become permanent but can cause or exacerbate other health problems. For instance, falls can happen due to bent or stiff knees, and clenched fists and bent elbows or wrists can make maintaining proper hygiene challenging, resulting in skin rashes or infections. All of this can take a toll on both patients and caregivers.

COMPREHENSIVE TREATMENT

After thoroughly evaluating Sonia's condition, Dr. Bernal-Larioza developed and implemented a comprehensive treatment plan that included botulinum toxin (commonly known by the brand name Botox) injections in conjunction with outpatient physical therapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT).

When Dr. Bernal-Larioza joined Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) in 2023, she began seeing Sonia as a patient again.

Sonia Douglas (left) works with Rose Bernal-Larioza, MD, a board-certified physiatrist, to help manage her spasticity symptoms.

WHAT IS A PHYSIATRIST?

"A physiatrist is a medical doctor who diagnoses and treats conditions affecting the brain, nerves, spinal cord, joints, and bones using nonsurgical methods," says physiatrist Rose Bernal-Larioza, MD. "Physiatry is very broad, and we are trained in many different areas."

Also known as physical medicine and rehabilitation doctors, physiatrists must have a broad but detailed knowledge of the human body and how it works in order to treat patients with illnesses and injuries that impact mobility and day-to-day functioning.

Physiatrists care for patients with nonsurgical treatments including trigger-point injections, joint steroid injections, and botulinum toxin injections. They also offer a variety of therapies and work with other practitioners and departments, including physical and occupational therapy, often coordinating and managing a patient's treatment plan.

"Botulinum toxin injections are today considered a first-line treatment for spasticity," Dr. Bernal-Larioza says. "We've found that the sooner we start treatment with the injections, the more effective they are." The injections work by blocking a neurotransmitter called acetylcholine, which signals muscles to contract. When botulinum toxin is injected into spastic muscles, they don't receive those signals and are able to relax.

According to Dr. Bernal-Larioza, while botulinum toxin injections can offer significant relief for about 90 days, it is important for patients with spasticity to have a coordinated, customized treatment plan that incorporates additional therapies, such as PT and OT, and in some cases, bracing and medications. "The injections are great for targeting specific muscles, but botulinum toxin is not a permanent fix because it does not treat the underlying miscommunication between the brain and the muscles," she says. "Therapies like PT and OT help restore brain-muscle communication because you're practicing movements that will promote the rewiring of brain function."

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Sonia remains committed to her treatment plan. "I started OT in 2019," she says. "At first, it was three times a week, then went to twice a week. I've been doing both PT and OT for six years, and they have helped greatly."

She also has had success with her botulinum toxin injections. "The spasticity hasn't been so bad and is almost gone, except for the tightness," she says. "The injections have done wonders for my left arm."

According to Dr. Bernal-Larioza, Sonia's range of motion improves after she receives the injections. For example, before an injection, her elbow might be bent to 90 degrees, a right angle. "A month or two later, I could pull it out and she could straighten it to 180 degrees," Dr. Bernal-Larioza says.

Sonia couldn't be happier with her progress—or her care team. "HMC has been wonderful to me and gives me all the help they can, including referrals," she says. "Dr. Bernal-Larioza is an amazing doctor who is kind and understanding and always takes care of me. Next, she's going to work on my fingers, and I'm excited about that."

*** To make an appointment with Dr. Rose Bernal-Larioza, please call the HMC Orthopedic Center at **413.536.5814**.**

COMMON SPASTICITY POSTURES

Patients with spasticity can have several types of postures, each with its own challenges. Common postures include:

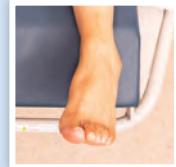
Clubfoot (also known as equinovarus foot)

- Characteristics: Foot turns downward; ankle feels rigid
- Challenge: Unsteadiness while standing



Hitchhiker's Toe

- Characteristic: Big toe bends upward
- Challenge: Putting on socks and shoes



Stiff Knee

- Characteristics: Tightness and rigidity around knee joint
- Challenge: Standing from seated position

Bent Knee

- Characteristics: Knee feels tight and doesn't straighten
- Challenges: Walking and lying down flat



Bent Elbow

- Characteristics: Heaviness or tightness in arm; elbow "catches" or locks
- Challenges: Stretching arm or reaching



Stiff Forearm

- Characteristics: Forearm muscles resist movement; wrist and fingers feel stiff and tight
- Challenges: Essential tasks, such as dressing



Clenched Fist

- Characteristic: Fingers curled into fist or claw shape
- Challenges: Grasping objects and keeping hands clean



Bent Wrist

- Characteristic: Wrist feels tight and locked
- Challenge: Picking up objects

EXPANDING CONVENIENT CARE

THE SPRINGFIELD OUTPATIENT CENTER IS DOUBLING ITS SPACE AND BROADENING THE SERVICES IT PROVIDES.

HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER (HMC)

currently has five departments at its convenient outpatient location on Main Street in Springfield, and it will add four more departments and several more providers from early September through fall. As part of the expansion, HMC is significantly upgrading and modernizing its existing space, doubling its size from 10,000 to 20,000 square feet.

ENSURING GREATER AVAILABILITY

"This marks a new location for HMC, representing a significant step in expanding our presence and enhancing access to care in the region," says Marcel Moniz, MBA, HMC's Vice

President of Ambulatory Operations. "We're introducing new service lines and broadening our scope to better meet the evolving health-care needs of the community. Through targeted recruitment efforts, we've successfully added new physicians to the area, ensuring greater availability of high-quality care." According to Moniz, HMC's goal is to bring more services closer to where patients live and work, making health care more convenient, comprehensive, and patient-centered.

One of the new service lines being introduced is podiatry. As part of that effort, both Chinenye Wachuku-Miranda, DPM, MBA, MEng, Department Head of Podiatry, and Mujtaba Qureshi, DPM,

officially joined the Springfield location as of September 2.

"The Springfield expansion reflects HMC's mission to bring expert specialty care closer to home," Dr. Wachuku-Miranda says. "Patients will benefit from convenient access, easy parking, and coordinated care within the HMC network. Our new location is especially convenient due to its multidisciplinary setup, housing physicians and medical professionals from a variety of specialties under one roof." According to Dr. Wachuku-Miranda, all of these conveniences add up to streamlined, patient-centered care.

The HMC Springfield Outpatient Center also is home to a new Family





Marcel Moniz, MBA



Chinenye Wachuku-Miranda,
DPM, MBA, MEng



Mujtaba Qureshi, DPM



Carlos Herrera, MD, MHA,
FAWM, DABFM, DABOM,
DABLM, CWS-P, HMUHMS,
BC-ADM, CHC, BC-VA, AE-C

Medicine office. Carlos Herrera, MD, MHA, FAWM, DABFM, DABOM, DABLM, CWS-P, HMUHMS, BC-ADM, CHC, BC-VA, AE-C, joined the practice in September and prides himself on delivering comprehensive and compassionate family care. “Every patient is a human being, and every patient is important,” he says. “I treat all my patients as if they were a family member, with love, compassion, and care.”

DEPARTMENTS AND SERVICES

The HMC Springfield Outpatient Center is staffed with experienced, expertly trained physicians and providers offering an array of health-care services:

• Family Medicine: 413.535.4800

This department, which features four physicians as well as support staff, will provide comprehensive health care for patients of all ages, from newborns to seniors. “Our family physicians are trained to diagnose and treat a wide range of conditions while focusing on preventive care, chronic disease management, and overall wellness,” Moniz says. “Whether you need a routine checkup, management of a chronic condition, or care for an acute illness or injury, our team is here to support your health journey with compassion and expertise.”

• Podiatry: 413.535.4943

The new Podiatry department is staffed by Dr. Wachuku-Miranda and Dr. Qureshi, as well as a team of dedicated support staff to provide efficient, patient-centered podiatric care. “We offer a full range of services, including advanced surgical procedures such as forefoot, ankle, and rearfoot reconstruction; diabetic foot care; wound management; sports injury care; and trauma care,” Dr. Wachuku-Miranda says. “Our Springfield office is equipped with modern supplies to support in-office diagnostics and procedures and will be closely integrated with surgical and wound-care services at HMC.”

• Kidney Associates: 413.534.2787

This comprehensive nephrology practice is led by board-certified kidney specialists offering diagnosis, treatment, and management of kidney diseases.

• Neurology & Sleep: 413.736.1500

This practice offers board-certified neurologists specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of neurological disorders, movement disorders/Parkinson’s disease, headaches/migraines, memory disorders, sleep disorders including sleep apnea, and other neurological conditions.

• Rheumatology: 413.534.2682

These board-certified rheumatologists specialize in the diagnosis and

treatment of inflammatory and systemic autoimmune conditions that affect the bones, joints, ligaments, muscles, and tendons.

• CORE Physical & Occupational Therapy: 413.535.4996

This department provides expert, compassionate, comprehensive outpatient rehabilitative care to patients with acute or chronic orthopedic, neurological, cardiac, and pulmonary conditions, including rehabilitation focusing on the management of Parkinson’s disease.

• Lab Draw Services: 413.534.2500, x5243

Offsite laboratory draw services are offered, and walk-ins are welcome.

• Walk-In Care: 413.535.4945

Starting October 20, walk-in patients are welcome for many types of conditions and injuries, from headaches and fever to ear infections, acute asthma symptoms, nausea or vomiting, seasonal allergies, insect bites and stings, and more. “No appointment is needed,” Moniz says. “Just walk in for fast, compassionate care.”

COMING SOON

• X-Ray Services

Patients will have the ability to start visiting the Springfield location for X-rays later this year.

* The HMC Springfield Outpatient Center is located at 2150 Main Street, Springfield. To learn more, please call the individual departments listed or visit www.holyokehealth.com/springfield.



PUTTING SLEEP APNEA TO BED

THE SLEEP MEDICINE PROGRAM AT HMC NEUROLOGY & SLEEP OFFERS COMPREHENSIVE CARE AND A STATE-OF-THE-ART SLEEP LAB.

SLEEP APNEA, a condition characterized by repeated interruptions in breathing during sleep, is one of the most common, treatable, and underdiagnosed sleep disorders in the United States. According to the American Medical Association, while approximately 30 million people in the country have sleep apnea, only about 6 million are diagnosed, largely because they either are unaware of the symptoms or dismiss them as being normal. However, sleep apnea can be dangerous and, left untreated, can be potentially deadly.

The good news is that, once diagnosed, sleep apnea is highly treatable, and proper treatment can greatly improve sleep, health, and quality of life.

RECOGNIZING THE SYMPTOMS

“Snoring is a common symptom of sleep apnea,” says Rani Athreya, MD, ABPN, Medical Director of Sleep

Medicine at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC). “However, it is important to recognize other symptoms and to get a clinical evaluation.”

Rani Athreya, MD, ABPN

Other symptoms include:

- Difficulty initiating and maintaining sleep
- Excessive daytime fatigue or sleepiness
- Frequent daytime naps
- Gasping arousals
- Witnessed apneas
- Waking up with headaches or palpitations
- Cognitive difficulties
- Difficulty focusing

CLINICAL EVALUATION

Some symptoms of sleep apnea can indicate the presence of other conditions—such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease. “That is why an accurate diagnosis is crucial,” Dr. Athreya says. At HMC Neurology & Sleep, that starts with a thorough evaluation in the Sleep Clinic to confirm or rule out other causes.

THE SLEEP LAB

If sleep apnea is suspected, Dr. Athreya orders an overnight sleep study in the Sleep Lab, which has private patient rooms with comfortable beds in a quiet, pleasant atmosphere. A certified sleep technician applies sensors to the patient to track functions such as heart rate, brain waves, breathing, and oxygen levels and monitors the patient from a separate room while they sleep.

*** To make an appointment with Dr. Rani Athreya at HMC Neurology & Sleep, please call **413.736.1500**.**

Meet Our Sleep Lab Techs



Antonio Clarke,
RPSGT



Marangely Pollock Ortega,
RPSGT



Jane Ortega Silva,
RPSGT, RRT



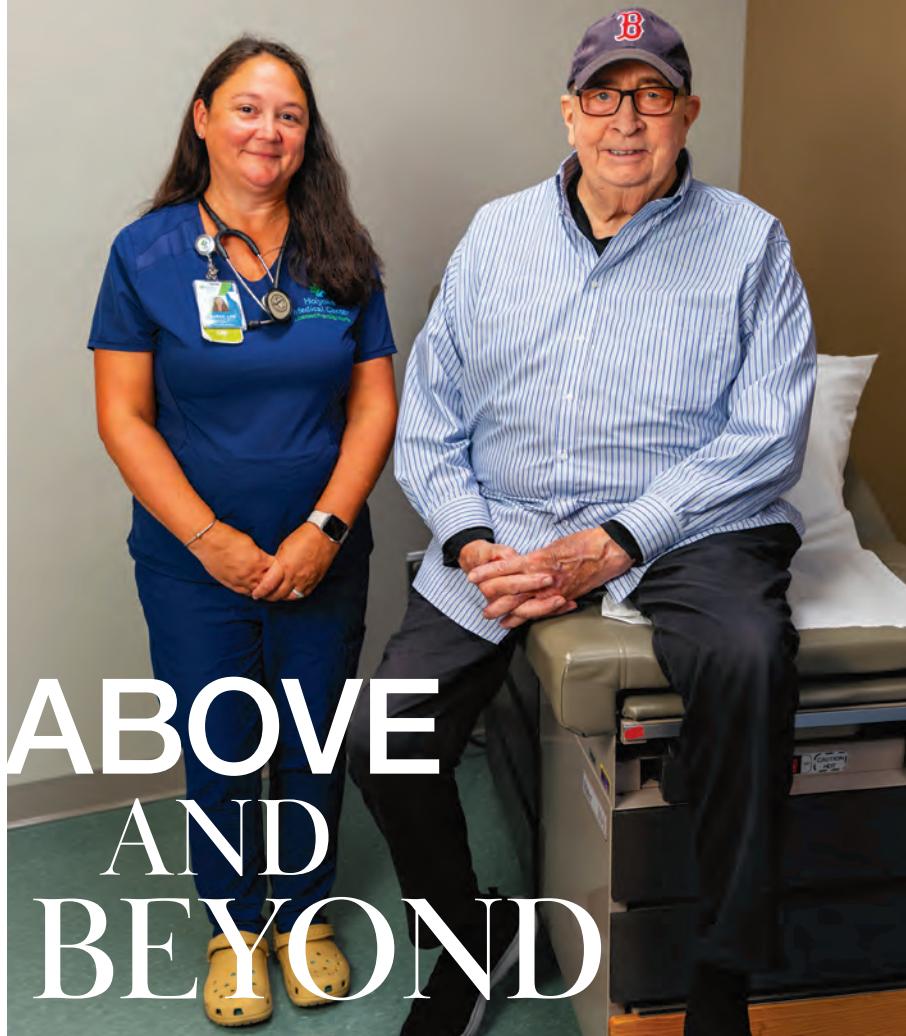
Joetta Rogers,
RPSGT

“If the sleep tech sees that the patient is experiencing sleep apnea, they can start treatment immediately with CPAP [continuous positive airway pressure] or oxygen,” Dr. Athreya says. “In the Sleep Lab, we can also diagnose other conditions, including movement disorders associated with sleep and parasomnias, such as sleep-talking.”

TREATMENT OPTIONS

According to Dr. Athreya, CPAP, which keeps the patient’s airway open by delivering a continuous stream of air through a face mask, is still the gold standard of treatment for sleep apnea. “Some patients are hesitant to try it, but once they do and see how much better they feel, they don’t want to stop,” she says. A small minority of patients can be treated with a dental device that pulls the jaw or tongue forward to open the airway.

The newest treatment for sleep apnea, offered by HMC Neurology & Sleep since September 2024, is Inspire, a surgically implanted device that works by stimulating the hypoglossal nerve to move the tongue, keeping the airway open. Patients must meet certain eligibility requirements for Inspire therapy, including being unable to benefit from CPAP. “The patients we have on Inspire are doing very well,” Dr. Athreya says.



ABOVE AND BEYOND

AT THE HMC PULMONOLOGY CENTER, PATIENT CARE TRANSCENDS TREATMENT.

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL years, Springfield resident Gary Coombs has been treated for interstitial lung disease and pulmonary fibrosis by Miguel Rodriguez, MD, at the Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) Pulmonology Center. In the fall of 2022, Gary was prescribed a new medication that required pre-authorization from his insurance company. Although the pharmaceutical was approved by his carrier, the copay was unaffordable for the retiree.



Miguel Rodriguez, MD

IN SEARCH OF HELP

Knowing that he needed the medication, Gary began looking into what, if any, resources were

available that could help waive or reduce his copay. "I made close to two dozen calls to the manufacturer," he says. "This entailed many, many hours of conversations, as well as numerous faxes and emails over a one-month period. I got nowhere."

Gary decided to call Sarah Maxon, LPN, at the Pulmonology Center to ask if she had any advice. Maxon manages care for patients on specialty medications and biologic therapies. She also coordinates prior authorizations, monitors patient compliance, and serves as a liaison between the clinic, infusion center, and specialty pharmacies.

"When Gary let me know that his copay was unaffordable, I worked with

*** To make an appointment with the HMC Pulmonology Center, please call **413.534.2582**.**

Sarah Maxon, LPN, has been a great support to pulmonary patient Gary Coombs.

the drug manufacturer to enroll him in its patient support program, which offers assistance with copays and high-cost medications," Maxon says. "Unfortunately, he was not eligible for copay assistance through his insurance company."

Maxon was able to help Gary apply for a patient assistance program through a nonprofit organization. He was approved for the program in November 2022, and the very next day, the medication arrived at his door via UPS.

'TIME, ENERGY, AND HEART'

To maintain his eligibility and continue receiving his medication at no cost, both Gary and the Pulmonology Center were required to complete an application annually, which they did. But then Gary had a setback. "This past year, Gary's renewal for the patient assistance program was denied due to changes in income guidelines," Maxon says.

An appeal was submitted, and Maxon stayed in contact with Gary throughout the process. When Gary received a notice of denial, Maxon gave him information about another foundation she thought might be able to help. Gary reached out to the foundation, and within a few days, he was approved for funding to cover the cost of his medication.

Maxon advises patients to speak with their care team if they are having trouble affording their medications. Some pharmaceutical companies have patient assistance programs, though each company and program has different eligibility requirements. "Independent foundations can also serve as a resource," she says.

Gary is thankful to Maxon and the Pulmonary Center for going the extra mile. "The staff truly cares, and it means so much," he says. "They see me as a person, not just an insurance policy. I'm deeply grateful for the time, energy, and heart they put into my care."

PRIMARY CHOICES

EVERYONE NEEDS A PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER.
HMC HAS ONE WHO'S RIGHT FOR YOU.

WHEN IT COMES to protecting your health, finding a primary care provider (PCP) is essential. A PCP is a qualified practitioner, such as an internal medicine or family medicine physician, physician assistant (PA), or nurse practitioner (NP), who focuses on your general health.

Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) has PCPs at six of its locations, with several physicians and advanced practitioners recently joining the organization. Finding a clinician who is right for you at a convenient HMC location is now easier than ever.

BETTER OUTCOMES

Why is having a PCP so important? According to board-certified internist Kartik Viswanathan, MD, Director of Holyoke Medical Group, a PCP is your main point of contact for your health care and an invaluable conduit to health-care specialists. "PCPs help patients stay well by catching health problems early and coordinating care," he says. "Having a PCP helps ensure that patients have better health outcomes, fewer ER visits, and better control of chronic diseases." Several studies support primary care's important role in improving health outcomes.

PARTNERS IN HEALTH

Your relationship with your PCP should be a partnership. "Establishing comfort and trust with a PCP is essential," says Kimberly Bucknor, MD, a board-certified internist who joined HMC in October. "Patients should not be afraid to ask questions or seek clarification, as active

participation contributes to a more informed and successful health journey."

You might think of your provider as the quarterback of your health-care team—the practitioner you see for annual physicals; routine checkups and follow-ups; flu shots and vaccines; preventive medicine, including diagnostic tests and screenings; care for injuries or acute conditions, such as colds or ear infections; ongoing care for chronic illnesses; and referrals to specialists when needed.

PEACE OF MIND

Having a PCP can give you peace of mind because it means that you have a provider who is available to you and who knows your medical history, including injuries, past procedures and surgeries, illnesses, allergies, and family history. Knowing your personal preferences and lifestyle factors also can help PCPs when providing and coordinating care. "Patients who receive primary care from HMC providers will benefit from the integrated physician network that includes various specialists," says Dr. Bucknor, who advises patients not to wait until they are sick or injured to select a PCP.

"While young adults or individuals without known medical conditions may feel that having a PCP is unnecessary, it is advisable to establish a relationship with a primary provider in advance," she adds. "In addition to ensuring that routine preventive screenings are performed to maintain overall health, having a PCP ensures timely access to care should significant medical issues arise."

**Primary Care—
10 Hospital Drive**
10 Hospital Drive,
Suite 106, Holyoke
413.539.6830



Kimberly Bucknor, MD



Adam Qazi, MD



Ashley Landry, PA-C



Lucille Passer, PA

* HMC is accepting new primary care patients. For the first available appointment, please call **413.535.4800**.

Adult Primary Care

2 Hospital Drive, Suite 101, Holyoke | 413.535.4800



Abdallah El Alayli, MD



Kenneth Aquilino, MD



Marian Isaak, MD



Lorenver Po, MD



Ana Roca Mattei, MD



Kartik Viswanathan, MD



Nick Felton, PA-C



Melinda Hurteau, PA-C



Maurice Turner, NP

Adult Primary Care

1962 Memorial Drive, Chicopee | 413.535.4800



Joanna Cichon, MD



Annabel Lee Espinas, MD



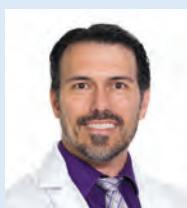
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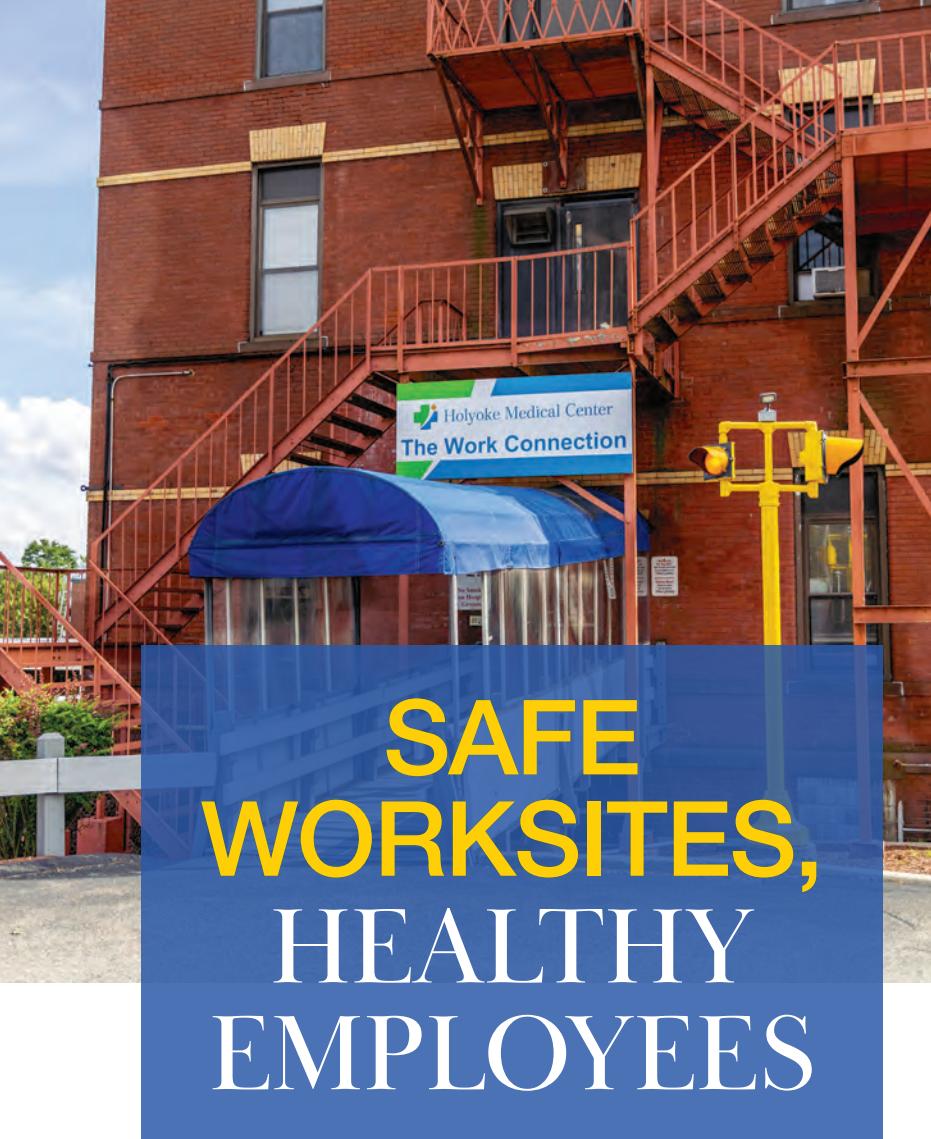
Carlos Herrera, MD



Christina Idowu, MD



Jumana Jaloudi, DO



The Work Connection is located at Holyoke Medical Center, 575 Beech Street, Holyoke.

SAFE WORKSITES, HEALTHY EMPLOYEES

THE WORK CONNECTION WELCOMES A NEW MEDICAL DIRECTOR AND A NEW ERA OF EXPANSION.

THE WORK CONNECTION

at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) is not just a department, it's a one-stop shop for occupational health that has been operating for nearly four decades. It offers hundreds of employers in Western Massachusetts a comprehensive array of services to maintain the health and well-being of their employees and the safety of their worksites. These services

include pre-placement evaluations, Department of Transportation examinations, periodic physicals and medical surveillance, drug and alcohol testing, and injury care.

In August, HMC welcomed Mark Kenton, DO, as Chief of Occupational Health and Medical Director of the Work Connection. Dr. Kenton is board certified in emergency medicine and has more than two decades of experience. As medical director, he has taken on a role that has been occupied for 24 years by Garry Bombardier, MD, who will retire in the near future.



Mark Kenton, DO



Kathryn D. Girardin, AuD

GROWTH AND EXPANSION

"I'm very excited about working at HMC and about my new role—which actually comprises a couple of different roles," Dr. Kenton says. "In addition to being hands-on with patient care, which includes conducting employee physicals, another big part of my job will be to grow the department and to bring in more companies and employers to the Work Connection."

According to Kathryn D. Girardin, AuD, Director of Occupational Health, Speech & Audiology, the Work Connection currently partners with 560 companies.

"Ideally, I'd love to see the department double in size in the next three to five years," says Dr. Kenton, who notes that there are already some projects and changes in the works that will help facilitate that growth.

For instance, the department is in the process of switching from a paper documentation system to an electronic medical records (EMR) system, which will be separate from the hospital's EMR to ensure complete confidentiality of employee medical records. "The EMR should be up and running in early 2026, and this will make the department more efficient and allow us to see more patients," he adds. "This will mean more time for more client businesses."

Like Dr. Kenton, Girardin is excited about the prospect of growth as well as some new services and opportunities the Work Connection is considering or already offering. For instance, the department is looking at ways to help employers update their employee policies. One way it's doing this is by offering lab-based oral fluid drug testing. This offers several advantages over traditional urine testing, including greater versatility (it can be performed in more locations), fewer invalid tests (the testing is observed, unlike urine tests), better detection, and greater speed and efficiency. "This is just one new offering," Girardin says. "We're exploring some others, too."

*** To learn more about the Work Connection at HMC, please call [413.534.2546](tel:413.534.2546).**



{ POWER FOOD }

The Crunchy Carrot

YES, IT'S GOOD FOR VISION. BUT THIS NUTRITIONAL POWERHOUSE IS MUCH MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE.

THE CARROT (*Daucus carota*) is an edible taproot straight from the ground, out of sight and protected from the elements until it's plucked, fresh and crisp. It got its start in what's now Afghanistan around the 1000s. Orange? Predominantly. But it didn't start that way. Before the 17th century, carrots routinely came in varied shades, from purple to yellow to red to white, and some cultivars still do. A genetic mutation allowed farmers to concentrate on the orange carrot most familiar today.

One common belief is that orange carrots were promoted to honor William of Orange, the Dutchman who became England's King William III. Apparently that's fictitious, but historian Simon Schama says Dutch citizens who rebelled against the House of Orange considered the vegetable an offensive tribute to their former rulers. They called orange "the color of sedition." Who knew?

POWER UP

We do know that carrots benefit eyesight (though they don't magically allow you to see at night). A half cup of chopped raw carrots meets 73% of your daily need for vitamin A. You get this essential nutrient when your body converts the carrot's beta carotene. And retinal, the active form of vitamin A, joins with a

protein called opsin to form rhodopsin, a molecule that aids color vision and vision in limited light—and also helps maintain the cornea.

But there's more! The fibers in carrots promote regularity, aid in controlling blood sugar, and help you feel full without having to gorge. They're also useful in clearing the body of cholesterol, lowering heart-disease risk. And if you order right now, the carrot will throw in vitamin B6 (helps convert food to energy), vitamin K1 (good for blood coagulation and bone health), biotin (aids in metabolism), and potassium (helps control blood pressure). All for just 25 calories in that half-cup serving.

Some of carrots' benefits also vary with their color. Red carrots contain lycopene, which benefits heart health—just think red for that red organ. Purple carrots are rich in anthocyanin, a water-soluble pigment that helps protect the stomach against inflammation—think of those famous purple pills for gastrointestinal issues.

BUY/STORE/SERVE

There's little mystery about where to buy carrots. Organic (usually grown pesticide-free) or not, full-size or in the "baby" carrot form that's been popular since the 1980s, they're available in every grocery store or farmers' market.

For multicolored "rainbow" selections, try Wegmans, Whole Foods, Walmart, or Amazon. Choose a plant that's plump and firm to the touch, with few visible cracks and no hair on the root. Frozen and canned carrots are sold, too, but for both taste and nutrition, fresh is superior.

If you can't use all your carrots in one go, keep them in a sealed bag in your refrigerator's crisper drawer. They'll last there for three to four weeks (figure two if they're cut or chopped). And they'll keep better if the green stems are no more. (Those greens can absorb moisture, drying out the carrot.) Don't keep them with apples; they'll turn bitter. If they lose their original hue or turn slimy, they're out the door.

Carrots can be steamed, stir-fried, roasted, braised, boiled, sautéed, or microwaved. You'll find carrot cakes, carrot muffins, carrot puddings, carrot chips, and carrot soups. Carrots also are a key ingredient in the healthy, good-for-the-soul vegetable soups and stews we prize in cooler months. They're a standard go-to for salads (chopped, sliced, shaved, or julienned), and if you search online, you'll find recipes for carrot fries. Best of all, raw carrots are a crunchy, tasty salvation when you're tempted to nosh on sugar-loaded or salt-loaded snacks.

Holyoke Medical Center

2150 Main Street,
Springfield

Our Springfield Location now offers:

- ✓ Family Medicine
- ✓ Walk-In Care
- ✓ Podiatry
- ✓ CORE Physical & Occupational Therapy
- ✓ Kidney Associates
- ✓ Neurology & Sleep
- ✓ Rheumatology
- ✓ Lab Draw Services

Coming Soon...

- ✓ X-Ray Services



HolyokeHealth.com/Springfield