

# GRMC

## HEALTH CURRENTS

ADVANCED MEDICINE. PERSONAL TOUCH.

FALL 2014

PALLIATIVE MEDICINE

## LIFE Care at GRMC

A serious chronic illness is one of life's toughest challenges—both for patients and for their loved ones. A specialized service called Lifelong Intensive Family Emotional Care, or LIFE Care, is now available at GRMC to provide patients and families the extra help needed to cope with a serious illness.



**How can it help?** LIFE Care provides a type of service known as palliative medicine, which is designed to improve the quality of life for patients and their families facing the problems associated with serious or life-threatening illness. The goal is to prevent and relieve suffering by early identification and treatment of pain and other physical symptoms. Treatment also focuses on the emotional and spiritual issues that the patient and family may be experiencing.

**Facts to understand** LIFE Care is different from hospice. Hospice is a service for individuals needing end-of-life care. Hospice patients can benefit from palliative medicine to make

their final months more comfortable and to provide a support system for the family. However, LIFE Care also provides a valuable service to people who are being **actively treated** for their disease in the hopes of a cure or of prolonged life. When delivered alongside active medical treatment, LIFE Care can help people with cancer, AIDS, multiple sclerosis, chronic lung disease, serious heart disease and kidney failure who are on dialysis. LIFE Care services can be instituted at the earliest stage of a serious illness or condition and continue for months or even years before other care plans, like hospice, are needed.

LIFE Care treatment does not mean patients and their families have to give up their physicians. The LIFE Care professionals do not replace primary care physicians but, instead, work with them to provide the best possible medical care for a patient's illness. This expanded treatment team will include a patient's primary care physician plus

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Guadalupe Regional   
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At the forefront of GRMC's LIFE Care is Charles Nolan, MD. Moving his practice to Seguin in early August, Dr. Nolan comes from University Hospital in San Antonio where he practiced for years as a nephrologist (kidney specialist), supporting their transplant unit. It was through this experience that he realized the importance of palliative medicine, advance care planning, and providing answers and pathways to patients and their families dealing with serious or life-threatening illness.

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the LIFE Care team, consisting of a palliative medicine physician, nurses, social workers, chaplains, pharmacists, dietitians and others.

There is no need to wait to start LIFE Care. Palliative medicine services can begin as soon as a patient is diagnosed with a serious illness and is starting treatment. Research shows that people with serious illnesses who get simultaneous palliative medicine services experience:

- Improved pain and symptom control
- Improved communication between healthcare providers, patients and families
- Better emotional and spiritual support
- Increased strength to complete necessary medical treatment

**Personalized care** LIFE Care is now available at GRMC, which started in early August. Under the leadership of Charles Nolan, MD, nephrologist, palliative medicine services are now available on both an inpatient and outpatient basis to assist members of our community with support and comfort when they are suffering with chronic or serious illnesses.

"The GRMC LIFE Care program will provide one-on-one care specially tailored to the needs of our patients and their families by

providing guidance, education and support services needed to provide the best possible medical care for their illness," says Dr. Nolan.

A patient's physician may recommend LIFE Care services; if not, patients and families can still call to set up a consultation with our LIFE Care team. Remember, palliative medicine enhances the quality of life and may positively impact the course of any chronic illness.

For more information, call LIFE Care at GRMC at **830.401.7474**.

**LIFE Care at GRMC can help patients and loved ones manage chronic illness. Call 830.401.7474 to schedule a consultation.**

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# Emotional and community support

BLUEBONNET TRAILS PROVIDES MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AT GRMC

Tending to emotional health is just as important as healthy physical activity. Managed properly, both emotional and physical health can help to improve overall quality of life. Overall quality of life is at the forefront of the new partnership between GRMC and Bluebonnet Trails—a community organization that aids and supports individuals with mental health and developmental disabilities.

Chris Mata, LCSW, BCETS, Director of Behavioral Healthcare at GRMC's Teddy Buerger Center and Heritage Program, provides insight on the development, partnership and benefits of the new service with the Bluebonnet Trails Extended Observation Unit (EOU).

## **Q** What is the partnership with Bluebonnet Trails?

**A:** Bluebonnet Trails Community Services provides mental health services in Guadalupe County. Aaron Diaz, LMSW-AP, Bluebonnet Trails clinical director, approached me and GRMC about a greater community need for increased crisis intervention services through an EOU at GRMC. Construction is underway at GRMC's East Campus for a permanent location for Bluebonnet Trails to lease staff and manage a six-bed unit. This will allow a patient in a mental health crisis to receive inpatient crisis services after being discharged from the emergency room.

## **Q** When and how do individuals see a benefit from a visit to the Bluebonnet Trails EOU?

**A:** An individual who is identified as needing a mental crisis intervention can arrive at Bluebonnet Trails or GRMC's emergency room. The individual will be assessed, treated and then discharged from GRMC to be admitted to the Bluebonnet Trails EOU on GRMC's campus. This

allows the patient to benefit from crisis stabilization, prompt psychiatric intervention and family involvement through treatment. Prior to the GRMC and Bluebonnet Trails partnership, it could take up to 72 hours before a patient received psychiatric intervention.

To learn more about the partnership with GRMC and Bluebonnet Trails, contact the Teddy Buerger Center at **830.401.7367**.

## **Q** Who's involved with the plan of care?

**A:** The Bluebonnet Trails EOU employs full-time master's level social workers, or licensed professional counselors, and registered nurses. The staff utilizes telemedicine to connect to a psychiatrist for 24-hour care. Linking patients to aftercare services helps them reduce the chances of experiencing another crisis.

## **Q** How does this benefit others in our community?

**A:** The EOU allows law enforcement to continue to stay in our community rather than having to transport a patient to San Antonio for hospitalization. Families can stay in contact with their loved one who is receiving treatment.

## THE DOCS ARE IN

GRMC is pleased to welcome a new radiology group to our medical community. Steven Swearingen, MD; Doug Smith, MD; and Greg de la Iglesia, MD, are well known to this region already through their long-standing practice in San Marcos. The recruitment of Murray Shapiro, MD, and Cameron Gates, MD, completes the group and brings additional fellowship training in interventional radiology and musculoskeletal imaging.



Steven Swearingen, MD



Doug Smith, MD



Greg de la Iglesia, MD



Murray Shapiro, MD



Cameron Gates, MD

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

## Making a difference

It is my honor to serve as part of a leadership team for our ever-growing healthcare organization, whose scope certainly transcends that of simply being a hospital. GRMC is, in fact, a hub of healthcare in Seguin and for much of our surrounding region. We are quite the unique organization—the only city/county hospital in Texas and one of the few noncorporate, nonprofit, community-centered independent healthcare organizations in our region. While we have accomplished much over the past decade, we continue to be excited about the future.

For the past many months, we have conducted a professional, comprehensive survey of our patients, physicians, staff and community to ask what makes us different. The answers we received were amazingly consistent, noting the hospital's impressive medical expertise coupled with the equally important aspect of compassion and caring. This newsletter highlights achievements in both spectrums—from ultramodern technology and procedures performed at GRMC to the hands-on services we are now providing through palliative medicine, mental health interventions and more. We believe that our newly introduced positioning statement of “Advanced Medicine. Personal Touch.” truly captures the essence and mission of GRMC and our staff.

GRMC has never been stronger financially or from the variety of services than it is today. But we know it is the community that makes us who we are, and we will continue to advance the care we are capable of giving by adding providers and services, as well as never forgetting that it is our personal touch that makes us GRMC.

Robert Haynes, FACHE, CEO



Robert Haynes, FACHE, CEO

## SERVICE SUCCESS UPDATES

CARDIAC CATH LAB ADVANCES  
**1,000 PROCEDURES!**

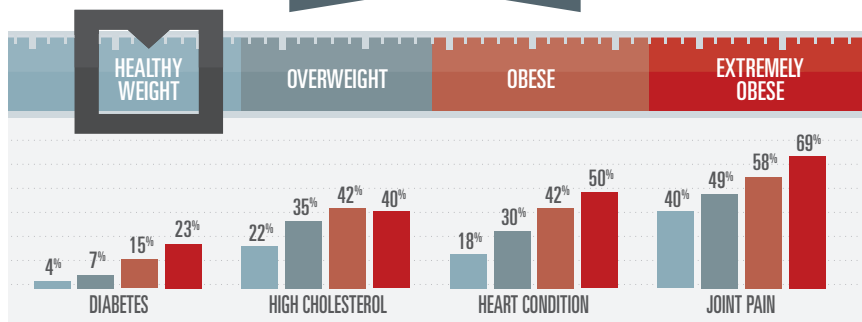
GRMC is not missing a beat with advancements in cardiac health. The Cardiac Cath Lab has successfully completed over 1,000 procedures and is taking on more complex cases to better serve our patients. For questions about the lab or to find a cardiologist, call **830.401.7170**.

DA VINCI ROBOTICS  
**200 SURGERIES!**

GRMC's robotic-trained surgeons have completed over 200 procedures with the da Vinci robotic surgical system. Learn more about da Vinci in the Spring 2014 issue of *Health Currents* at [grmedcenter.com](http://grmedcenter.com), or call our physician referral line at **830.303.4846** to connect with a robotic surgeon.

## WEIGHT and DISEASE RISK

Approximate percentages of people reporting health conditions in each weight category



Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality