Take the Plunge into Aquatic Therapy

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During 2019 we have continued to see remarkable improvement in our financial picture when compared with the previous year. The organization now has a positive financial position and we look forward to that continuing for many years. This improvement is based on successful physician and advanced practitioner recruitment to Sault Ste. Marie and optimization of our new Electronic Health Record, which is providing much more data upon which to base decisions.

We have welcomed two new family physicians this year, Dr. Amy Korzecke and Dr. James Sawyer, as well as orthopedic surgeon Dr. Austin McPhilamy. We continue to look at filling some physician specialties that we have lost over the last couple of years, specifically urology, oncology and ear nose and throat specialists. We are hopeful these will be filled soon.

We continue on our journey to become a High Reliability Organization and we have reduced the number of potential safety concerns by over 60 percent during the last three years. This can be shown by looking at our surgical site infections for 2019. We have had only two so far this year, giving us an infection rate of 0.18 percent, which is remarkable compared to the 1.0 - 2.0 percent national surgical site infection rate. Kudos must go to our surgeons, our surgical team and our nurses for making this happen!

Overall things are going well at WMH and we look to continue this positive trend into 2020 and beyond.

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The Impact of Your Generosity in 2019

Ever wonder how community donations make a difference at WMH? Community Relations and Development Fund Director Teresa Armstrong provided this update on several key projects from 2019, as well as a little “food for thought” as we enter the holiday season.

**Dialysis**
This project was kicked off by community donors, including the Hudson Foundation, and helped by the addition of state funding. We are pleased to report we were able to purchase 11 new dialysis chairs and 16 new dialysis machines to serve inpatient and outpatient needs for those needing dialysis in the EUP.

**3D Mammography**
Our golf outing fundraiser and employee giving helped support the purchase of 3D Mammography.

**Long Term Care (LTC)**
Thanks to LTC families, staff and generous donations from our community, WMH was able to purchase a new van with a wheelchair lift for our residents. We also received funding from the WMH Auxiliary and grants from the Superior Health Foundation and the Walmart Corporation, helping us to exceed our fundraising goal!

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Your generosity helps us to serve the EUP in ways beyond our budget. Wondering how you might be able to add to this list of advancements? Please show your support on Tuesday, Dec. 3, also known as GivingTuesday.

GivingTuesday is celebrated on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving and the widely recognized shopping events of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. This special day kicks off the charitable giving season, when many focus on their holiday and end-of-year donations.

Learn more about how your support on GivingTuesday can make an impact by following us on Facebook or visit our website at warmemorialhospital.org.

Every Patient Matters, Every Gift Makes a Difference.
Sharon Grovesteen has had surgery on her back three times in the past several years and each time it took a toll on her balance. Even with a walker, the Sugar Island woman was too weak to stand alone, but there was one place where she could regain her strength: the pool.

Her initial reaction when aquatic therapy was first recommended? “You have got to be kidding me,” Grovesteen recalls with a laugh. “What’s that going to do for me? But I tried it and it helped my balance. It is really the best therapy you can do.”

Aquatic therapy is one of the treatments available at the WMH Rehabilitation Center, where Stephanie McLeod and Nikki Brown serve as the two physical therapy assistants who specialize in water workouts. McLeod works with Grovesteen and others who can benefit from the buoyancy that water provides.

“People with total joint replacement or low back pain find they can move more freely and do things they couldn’t do on land because they are relieved of the gravity and weight that would otherwise trouble them,” she explains. In cases where chronic illnesses are the problem, aquatic therapy can also provide more independence and mobility, according to McLeod.

WMH’s pool has several different depths to accommodate different exercises. It has a chair lift for those who cannot manage stairs, as well as the ability to generate a current for added resistance with exercises. The water temp is 95 degrees, which is warmer than a hotel pool but not as hot as a hot tub.

“The warm water helps with muscle soreness and helps people relax while doing exercises,” McLeod explains, but that doesn’t mean there is no soreness later.

“Because you have more freedom to move in the water, sometimes you stretch more and don’t realize the amount of work you are doing, and that can make you sore afterward,” she said.

Grovesteen is a fan of the pool, but it is her physical therapy assistant that she credits with her recovery. “After this last surgery, for the first five weeks of my therapy, Stephanie had to get into the pool with me because I had no balance whatsoever. I love Stephanie. She has the toys to get me better,” she noted.

Those “toys” are some of the devices used in the pool to help patients work particular muscles. McLeod has worked in the pool for six years and is always watching for new approaches to helping the people she sees.

“In June I went to California to complete an aquatics course and I worked with this woman and her therapists and it was fabulous,” she said, referring to Lynda Huey, the person who pioneered water training for Olympic athletes. “While I was going through the course, I came across several new techniques for strengthening and stretching, and I was excited to be able to bring that knowledge back to Sault Ste. Marie.”

McLeod was first introduced to aquatic therapy at WMH on a clinical rotation when she was set up to work with Brown in the pool. Years later, she considers herself lucky to spend every weekday afternoon in the pool.

“Working in the pool, it’s pretty fantastic,” she laughs. “It’s a neat experience but for me, the coolest part is watching people realize what they can do and what they are capable of doing when they weren’t able to do something at home.”

So what advice does Grovesteen have for those considering aquatic therapy?

“Go for it. Work hard and go for it. It’s the best therapy you can do.”
More Than Meets The Eye
Grand Traverse Ophthalmology Clinic delivers specialty care to the EUP

A successful partnership to bring Lower Michigan specialists to the Eastern Upper Peninsula has been going strong for the past 15 years, improving the eyesight of thousands of patients by delivering quality ophthalmic care.

Grand Traverse Ophthalmology Clinic (GTOC) provides medical and surgical care for the eye, addressing issues like diabetes, macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataracts, cornea addition to a visiting optometrist. He was one of the first providers to visit the Soo when the partnership first began.

“I hear it every time I am in the office seeing patients,” he commented. “People thank me for traveling to Sault Ste. Marie to see them so they don’t have to travel to the Lower Peninsula. People really appreciate that we are able to bring our medical and surgical services to the area.”

Delivering those services requires a spirit of partnership between GTOC and WMH. Hospital CEO David Jahn says the relationship has been beneficial to both the hospital and the community.

“This is a successful partnership because we both have a laser focus on providing high quality, safe patient care to those we serve. GTOC is a great group of physicians and we communicate well with them regarding their needs and how we can help them to improve the services they offer,” the CEO said.

From the surgeon’s perspective, Wentzloff says a top-notch staff at the hospital makes all the difference.

“Operating room staff has done a wonderful job to meet our needs for state of the art equipment and supplies. We also find that patients have a lot of feedback or comments on the nursing staff there and all of the people they interact with. War has done a good job of providing a good experience for the patient,” the doctor added.

In addition to Wentzloff, other physicians providing services in Sault Ste. Marie are Daniel Thuente, MD; Matthew Madion, MD; Petra von Kulajta, MD; and Shawn Miller, OD.

To make an appointment with GTOC, call (906) 635-9802 or 800-824-2711

Many surgical procedures are performed in the WMH operating room, including cataract surgeries that are scheduled three mornings of the week. While not all surgical care, and pediatric conditions like crossed eyes or lazy eye.

Jeffrey Wentzloff, M.D., is one of four ophthalmologists who rotate through the Sault Ste. Marie office, in or medical needs can be met in the EUP, Wentzloff said they cover “the vast majority” of needs in Sault Ste. Marie.

One of the locally-offered procedures is multi-focal lens implants that allow patients to see both far away and up close without the need for bi-focals. Another is the implantation of a minimally-invasive stent for those with glaucoma.

“Those were both game changers that have had a big impact on those with cataracts or glaucoma,” Wentzloff said.
An important decision in baby’s first 24 hours

Few people look at a newborn baby and imagine things like liver disease or other serious ailments, but for doctors and nurses on the OB Unit, there is a connection. Encouraging parents to get baby’s first Hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours is for precisely that reason.

Jessica Heyrman, OB and Women’s Health Director, has taken up the challenge issued by the State of Michigan to get 90 percent of all newborns a Hep B vaccine within 24 hours of birth.

“We have been tracking this for the last two or three years and our rate has ranged from 75 to 95 percent, varying from month to month. There’s no real rhyme or reason as to why, although sometimes parents say they want to talk to a pediatrician first,” she explained.

Pediatrician Patricia Newhouse, MD, doesn’t hesitate for a moment when asked about the Hep B vaccine for newborns.

“This is definitely something for all newborns because if they don’t get the Hep B vaccine, there is always a chance that the mother has Hepatitis B and it can be transmitted across the placenta. We have seen babies die if the mother had it and the baby didn’t get vaccinated,” the doctor said.

It’s not unusual for people to be infected with Hepatitis B long before they are aware. Since the virus can be passed by bodily fluids, the excited kisses of friends and family anxious to welcome baby can be a concern.

“There is 30 years of data supporting the safety of this vaccine,” Heyrman said. For those who want to read more, both Heyrman and Newhouse recommend the Centers for Disease Control website.

Rebecca Steele and Jay Akre welcomed baby Jayden in September with the gift of a Hep B vaccine for a healthy future.

“Before the haemophilus influenza type B (HIB), pneumovax and meningococcal vaccines, we had babies dying from meningitis, epiglottitis and pneumonia. We don’t see that anymore. Polio used to be common in this country and now we don’t see it. Smallpox used to kill many people. We were doing well with measles, but we ended up with an epidemic and 1,200 kids got measles, most of them not vaccinated,” Newhouse said.

Michigan had a reported 44 measles cases in 2019, with the nearest reported location in Traverse City. Thanks to a more mobile society, diseases can spread from area to area more quickly.

Many new parents have the chance to ask questions about the Hep B vaccine when they participate in a pre-admission visit of the OB unit.

“We give them lots of information and point them in the right direction if they have further questions,” Heyrman said. The department encourages all expecting parents to visit in advance to prepare for the upcoming birth.
Seven interns welcomed to WMH via Project SEARCH

Call it innovative recruiting. Call it a community service. Call it a unique approach to educating the future workforce. Whatever you choose to call it, you must also call Project SEARCH a success.

Project SEARCH is a collaboration between the EUP Intermediate School District, Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), and War Memorial Hospital that prepares students with disabilities for successful employment.

This is the second year for the locally-operated program, which is part of a larger international effort to provide workplace immersion. In the 2018/19 school year, six students from EUP high schools became interns at WMH.

“There is a shortage of people to fill entry level positions, so we must look at our options for ourselves as much as for anyone else,” WMH Human Resources Director Susan Sliger explained. “We realized that this would be a great way to tap into a market for entry-level employees.”

EUPISD special education administrators and MRS approached the hospital together after receiving notification from Project SEARCH that the EUPISD was selected as a new location. The program is designed for students who are committed to finding employment when they finish school.

“Nationwide, people with disabilities are employed at a rate of 19 percent. The last statistic from Project SEARCH was 77 percent of students who participated continue to be competitively employed in an integrated setting,” explained Kelli Fenlon, Project SEARCH coordinator.

This year, seven students from across the EUP will find themselves learning and working in a variety of departments at WMH, including obstetrics, medical/surgical, oncology, housekeeping, and food service, to name a few. In all, 12 different hospital departments are set up to accept interns.

After a student applies to the program, a skills assessment is conducted to see if they are a good fit. This also includes a student interview and an interview with the parents so the family commitment can be assessed. The program is designed to be a student’s last year of high school, which can be up until the age of 26 in the state of Michigan.

The students tour each department and interview based on their interests and the areas in which vocational assessments indicate they will be successful. Throughout the school year, they will rotate through three different internships. Some students work in more behind-the-scenes jobs, while others are working in clinical areas, too.

“On the medical/surgical unit, they are transporting patients, stocking rooms, monitoring sharps containers, and doing pharmacy runs. In oncology, they may provide warm blankets or water to patients undergoing chemotherapy. It’s really been a win-win for the interns and the departments,” Sliger says.

In addition to their departmental work, the students also spend the first 90 minutes of each workday in the training room learning employability skills. Topics like financial literacy, professional correspondence via email, internet safety, stress management, the social aspects of employment, and teamwork are just a few examples of what Fenlon teaches. Skills trainers Amber Taylor and Jessie Piippo also work with the students in their internship sites.

2019/20 Interns (Pictured from left to right): Alexandra Sheber, Joseph Shaw, Sean Schell, Autumn Geisler, Allison West, Kayla Smith and Scotty LaPonsie
Four-legged therapy: meet Parker!

The WMH Behavioral Health Center has gone to the dogs or more accurately one dog that delivers a unique brand of medicine and relief to both patients and staff. Meet Parker – the one-year-old therapy dog that accompanies Cathy Queen, CTRS, to her job at BHC.

Queen has worked as a recreational therapist for 33 years, the last five of which have been spent at BHC’s Kinross campus. She found the yellow Labrador retriever in the Ohio town where she used to live and integrated her into both her home and work life.

Experienced in training service dogs, Queen decided Parker would make a great therapy dog and personally took on the challenge of getting her trained to help behavioral health patients.

“She started dog obedience training in February,” Queen explained. “She graduated first from beginning training, then intermediate training, and finally passed the advanced training in September.”

Next the duo will visit other agencies to test her skills as a therapy dog in accordance with the Alliance for Therapy Dogs.

According to the ATD’s website, “Our certified therapy dogs undergo extensive testing to make sure that they have good manners and react positively to being touched by strangers. After passing the test, ATD requires that the dog and the handler complete three successful supervised visits in a facility, school, or other public venue where they must successfully interact with strangers in therapy-like settings.”

Parker has already had a fair amount of practice at BHC. During a daily afternoon group therapy session, the Lab often comes out for a visit and spends an hour or so with patients. There are also additional furry cuddles.

“If someone tells us they love dogs and it seems good for them to interact with Parker, we will also stop at other times in the day to see them. They tell me that Parker is the best medicine,” Queen reports.

Parker will be BHC’s first therapy dog. Since it is an employee bringing the animal into the department, there is no concern about an outside dog handler and patient privacy.

“I have had patients make cards for Parker and thank me for bringing her in,” the therapist remarked. “Sometimes a staff member needs a break and they just need to see Parker. She’s a joy to have.”

At the end of the year, each student will either receive a high school diploma, GED, or a certificate of completion, depending upon their educational track.

Graduates from the 2018/2019 program all found work upon leaving the program. Two started jobs at War Memorial Hospital, two at a local nursing home, and two in the hospitality industry.

Parents reported a noticeable difference in their children after completing the internship.

“The Project SEARCH program has helped my son develop appropriate social skills and behavior in the workplace. I have also noticed an increase in his socialization with family and at community events. Being able to be part of a team and having the feeling of being useful and accepted in the working community has increased his enjoyment of life,” one parent wrote.

Another said “My son has really blossomed under the leadership of a once in a life program. His confidence has skyrocketed and he has expressed his appreciation to be included in a place that’s warm, safe, and friendly. He knows of his abilities in a world that will be inclusive of who he is and how he can contribute to it.”