

HEALTH NEWS *from*

SUMMER 2018

st mary's

REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER



*Terri Schultz
tells about her
experience with
daVinci surgery.*

The daVinci[®] difference

Robotic-assisted surgery
arrives, supporting faster,
smoother recoveries

Also inside:

ASK THE DOCTOR

Help for irritable
bowel syndrome

UNHAPPY FEET?

Understanding
diabetes-related
nerve damage

Compliments of



St. Mary's
REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

FROM THE **CEO**



Robotic-assisted surgery has come to St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, and it is already making a big difference for patients like Terri Schultz, who is featured on our cover. In this issue of *Health News*, you can learn more about this minimally invasive surgical approach and how it can help support faster recoveries, along with other patient benefits. We thank Terri for sharing her experience, and we are excited to be able to offer this advanced technology to our community.

In other stories, we tell you on page 5 about peripheral neuropathy and why it's important for people with diabetes to be aware of this condition. We also bring you information about irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) in our "Ask the Doctor" column, as well as helpful health tips and reminders on the next page.

Last but not least, in our announcement below, we're pleased to highlight our gift shop and the volunteers who dedicate their time to creating a welcoming experience at St. Mary's. Whether you come to the hospital for yourself or to visit a friend or loved one, our volunteers make a big difference every day. We thank them for their special contribution and invite you to stop by the gift shop the next time you're here!



Krista Roberts
Chief Executive Officer

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Special finds ... in a freshly renovated space!

Come see what's new at St. Mary's Volunteers Gift Shop, where we've given our space a new and updated look! You can find special gifts and many other items, ranging from home décor, fresh flowers and candy to cookbooks, jewelry, soap and lotions. The gift shop is open **Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.** Proceeds benefit the hospital volunteers and the projects they support.

Are you interested in volunteering at St. Mary's?
Visit stmarysregional.com/volunteer to learn more.

Could you have diabetes and not know it?

According to a 2017 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated 30.3 million people in the United States have diabetes, and nearly a quarter of them (23.8 percent) are undiagnosed. Type 2 diabetes, which is the most common form, is often hard to spot early on, the CDC says.

Certain factors – such as excess weight, family history, inactivity and others – can put you at greater risk. The CDC says type 2 diabetes most often affects people over age 45, but more and more younger people are also developing it. Talk with your doctor about your risk factors. A simple blood test can tell if you have diabetes.



For helpful tips on eating well, getting fit and feeling good, check out our wellness portal at stmarysregional.com/staywell.



Pollen's late-summer punch

Even though spring pollen is long gone, allergy season is not over yet. A major cause of sneezing, itchy eyes and congestion that can start around this time of year is ragweed. This common plant usually grows in rural areas, but its pollen may be spread by the Oklahoma winds. It can cause allergy problems beginning in August and last into autumn.

The American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (ACAAI) says that keeping your windows closed, at home and in the car, can help reduce your exposure to ragweed pollen. Also, over-the-counter allergy medicines may help treat symptoms. If you have concerns, see your doctor.

Why you need to manage chronic stress

For most of us, stress is an unavoidable part of life. In healthy doses, it can motivate us to perform at work, school and in other important situations. But too much is not good and over time may lead to serious health issues, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, anxiety and others, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The NIH says that common signs of stress may include difficulty sleeping, increased alcohol and other substance use, being easily angered, feeling depressed and having low energy. Activities like exercise,* or staying connected with others, may help manage stress. If you're feeling overwhelmed, ask for help from a healthcare professional, the NIH says.

*Before starting a new exercise routine, consult your doctor.



Could your belly pain be *irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)*?



According to the International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal

Disorders, there are between 2.4 and 3.5 million annual physician visits for irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) in the United States. St. Mary's Chief Medical Officer and family medicine physician **J. Michael Pontious, MD**, has helped many patients with this disorder in his 33 years of practice. Here he provides some insights.



Q. What is IBS and what are the symptoms?

IBS is a disorder affecting the large intestine, which can cause abdominal pain and other problems. A telltale sign of IBS is going back and forth between constipation and diarrhea. Symptoms can be triggered by different factors, including diet, lifestyle and stress. If people don't control the stressors, IBS can cause chronic symptoms.

Q. How can this disorder be managed?

The first step is to figure out what is setting it off. If diet is a factor, controlling IBS may involve modifications such as increasing fiber, or staying away from food triggers like high-fat or spicy foods. If stress is contributing, it's important to address the cause. In some cases, medication can help with gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms.

Q. Could IBS lead to colorectal cancer?

This is a common concern, but it's important for patients to know that IBS does not increase the risk of colorectal cancer. With that said, there can be certain GI symptoms that may be related to other more serious diagnoses. For example, persistent nausea, vomiting or bleeding may be signs of a different problem, and should be assessed by a gastroenterologist.

Q. What should I do if I have concerns?

Talk to your doctor about your symptoms and what may be causing them. Often, patients with IBS suffer with anxiety, and it's important not to ignore this. It takes a conscious effort to manage IBS, but by controlling the triggers, people can live with this disorder. ■

For help finding a doctor call Direct Doctors Plus® at 580-249-3741, or visit stmarysregional.com/find-a-doctor.

DIABETES AND NERVE DAMAGE:

Are your tingling or numb feet trying to tell you something?



James Stough,
DPM

About one-third to one-half of people with diabetes have a type of nerve damage known as peripheral neuropathy, according to the National Institutes of Health. This condition involves the nerves affecting the legs and feet, and sometimes the arms and hands. If blood sugars remain elevated for a long time, this can compromise the arteries and blood flow, leading to nerve damage, explains James Stough, DPM, a podiatrist with St. Mary's Physician Associates.

In addition to tingling or numbness, symptoms of peripheral neuropathy can include pain or burning in the feet, which may get worse at night. In some cases, patients may lose feeling in their feet. Other times, it may feel like they're wearing socks, even when they're barefoot, Dr. Stough says.

"The best treatment approach is appropriate management of diabetes," Dr. Stough emphasizes. "That is the number one treatment." If left untreated, symptoms can worsen. For patients who lose sensation in their feet,

problems may develop because they don't recognize heat or cold or pain.

They may not notice if they are standing in bath water that is too hot, or if they have a stone or sharp object in their shoe. This can lead to problems like skin ulcers and infections. In more extreme cases, bone infections and possibly amputation may result. If you have peripheral neuropathy, Dr. Stough says it's important to inspect your feet every day for cuts and other problems, and use a mirror or have another person check the bottoms of your feet. Also, he advises testing your bath water with your elbow to make sure it's not too hot.

To some degree, nerve damage is irreversible, says Dr. Stough, but treatment and proactive care can help. Most importantly, if you are diagnosed with diabetes it's essential to keep your blood sugar under control and see your doctor regularly. ■

Do you have concerns about symptoms affecting your feet or need help managing your diabetes? For assistance finding a doctor, call 580-249-3741.



INTRODUCING **robotic**

St. Mary's Regional Medical Center now offers the daVinci Surgical System to provide advanced, minimally invasive treatment for a wide range of conditions - from hernias and gall bladder issues to diseases of the esophagus, stomach and colon, including cancers. Benefits of this surgical approach can include less pain, shorter hospital stays, less risk of complications and quicker return to work, among others.

How does it work?

A common misconception is that the robot is performing the operation, but in fact the surgeon controls the entire procedure, says E. Keith Cole, MD, FACS, a general surgeon with St. Mary's Physician Associates. "The robot is a sophisticated tool in our hands," he explains. It provides "this unbelievable technology" to expand and enhance what surgeons can do, he says.

With daVinci, tiny instruments are inserted into the body through small incisions, usually less than a half-inch long. A miniature camera sends detailed 3D images to a monitor in the operating room. The pixilation and visualization are "tremendous," offering 10 times magnification, with the option to zoom for even more detailed views, Dr. Cole says.

The highly advanced robotic instruments are jointed like the human wrist, but with greater ability to bend and rotate, and they are controlled

by the surgeon. "Improvements in instruments, ergonomics and visualization allow us to do surgeries we couldn't before with minimally invasive techniques," says Dr. Cole. This can open up minimally invasive treatment to a whole new group of patients.

Getting back to your routine sooner

The recovery from robotic surgery depends on the patient and procedure, but people can usually return to most activities within two weeks, Dr. Cole says. Also, less pain can mean less exposure to narcotics and the potentially harmful side effects these drugs may cause.

Robotic surgery is not an option for everyone, and a full line of traditional surgery services continues to be offered at St. Mary's, but the availability of daVinci can offer a compelling treatment alternative for some people. More types of surgery continue to be added to those that may be performed with the daVinci robot, Dr. Cole says. ■

Individual results may vary. There are risks associated with any surgical procedure. Talk with your doctor about these risks to find out if robotic surgery is right for you.

Meet the robotic surgery team



E. Keith Cole, MD, FACS, Medical Director of Robotics Program



M. Craig Bozeman, MD, FACS



David W. Shepherd, MD, FACS

-assisted daVinci® Surgery

“daVinci brings the best of modern surgery to St. Mary’s.” – Medical Director of Robotics Program E. Keith Cole, MD, FACS

Terri’s amazing rebound with daVinci

Terri Schultz, 48, was having problems earlier this year with terrible stomach discomfort and bloating that would often have her doubled over in pain after she ate. Her primary care doctor referred her to Dr. Cole for specialized care, and it was determined that her gall bladder was not functioning properly. On March 28, she underwent robotic-assisted surgery at St. Mary’s to have her gall bladder removed.

The procedure started right on time at 7 a.m., and “everyone was wonderful,” Schultz says. At about 10 a.m. that same day, she was discharged from the hospital and went home to recover. “I was really surprised at how good I felt afterward,” she says. “I caught myself overdoing things because I felt so good.”

She had four little incisions that she says healed very quickly. The pain was minimal, and she was able to manage it mostly with ibuprofen. After a week, she was back at work, and her stomach pain was resolved. She went on a girls’ trip soon after and was able to eat and have fun, with no worries.

Before this experience, Schultz had heard of robotic surgery but did not know a lot about it. “I can’t believe how smooth it was,” she says. “I was really amazed by the whole process.” ■

To learn more about robotic-assisted surgery at St. Mary’s, visit stmarysregional.com/robot.

Feeling better since her surgery, Terri Schultz can enjoy favorite pastimes like fishing.



Enjoy the
SUN
safely

Use sunscreen to protect yourself and your family from skin cancer

There are things you can do to help protect yourself and your family.



One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime.*

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Seek Shade

The sun is the strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. so be sure to wear protective clothing (long-sleeved shirt, wide brimmed hat and sunglasses) and sunscreen or stay in the shade during this time.



Sunscreen

Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that has an SPF of 30 or higher and is water resistant and that will protect you from UVA and UVB rays that cause premature aging and burn your skin. Too much exposure to either can increase the risk of skin cancer.



How to use sunscreen

Apply generously (about a palmful) to exposed areas – arms, legs, neck and face and don't forget your ears, hands, feet and underarms.

People at a possible higher risk for damage related to sun exposure include:

- Fair skinned
- Naturally blonde or red hair
- Freckles
- Spend a lot of time outdoors
- Have had skin cancer before
- Have a lot of moles
- Burn easily before tanning

Learn more about skin cancer prevention at stmarysregional.com/skincancer



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CANCER CENTER

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HEALTH NEWS FROM ST. MARY'S REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Krista Roberts, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer

David Jamin, FACHE
Chief Financial Officer

Lori A. Boyd
Director of Marketing

Anthony Rodebush, FACHE
Chief Operating Officer

Rachelle Burleson, DNP, APRN-CNS
Chief Nursing Officer

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