

NEW ORGANIZATION SPECIAL FEATURE

Collaborative Environment of Care Leads to New Neuroscience and Spine Institute

By Vanessa Hastings



A collaborative effort between Wyoming Medical Center and a group of physicians has set the hospital's neurosciences program on an exciting new course, making a special kind of care available to Wyomingites for the first time.

"We have already put together a strong neurosciences program for Wyoming," says CEO Pam Fulks. "The next step is to integrate the program into a cohesive set of services that bring added value to patients."

As a member of Voluntary Hospitals of America, WMC

recently took advantage of the organization's services to pinpoint the components necessary for such an endeavor. VHA consultants found that the hospital and the physicians involved have already cultivated those elements, including enthusiasm for developing the service line and a strong commitment to enhancing quality.

VHA has since provided direction for further unifying the program, identifying continuity and coordination of care as vital aspects in delivering seamless service. Neurologist Dr. David Wheeler, who shares a leading role with neurosurgeon Dr. Joseph Sramek in establishing the Wyoming Neuroscience and Spine Institute, says he and his colleagues possess a number of qualities that give them an advantage in helping meet and even exceed that challenge.

"From the standpoint of credentials and academic achievements, we are comparable to many better-known facilities and, in my experience, from a personality and patient-care standpoint, we are way out in front of many around the country I have encountered," he says. "I am humbled by the skills, expertise, outstanding training and singular dedication to excellent patient care evinced by the other members of this team."

Dr. Brian Wieder, a complex neurospine surgeon, says the feeling is mutual. "Dr. Wheeler's and Dr. Sramek's credentials are impressive. They have the background to make this happen. They have earned my respect and support, and I share in the effort to make this vision a reality."

The institute's advanced technology and wide variety of specialties, which range from neuroradiology to neurosurgery to psychiatry, provide the capability to diagnose and treat traumatic injuries as well as conditions such as stroke and epilepsy. Rehabilitation services help make the program the most comprehensive of its kind in the state.

"What we have to offer here is extraordinary," says Carol Nelson, director of the service line. "We are in a small community yet have services that you can only find in larger metropolitan areas. The quality of our staff and physicians is phenomenal."

One of the qualities that sets the institute apart from even larger programs throughout the country is a willingness to collaborate among everyone involved. Neuro team members never hesitate to consult professionals

from other disciplines such as cardiology and speech pathology, and those experts offer their advice freely. Interventional neuroradiologist Dr. Boris Karaman finds this practice refreshing.

"In a lot of places (physicians are) competing for patients, or they don't want to share their expertise. What I find at Wyoming Medical Center is the one overriding concern, the one question that everybody asks is, 'What's best for the patient?'" he says, adding that the lack of ego among his colleagues results in brief but detailed, technical discussions that answer that question and expedite treatment.

WMC administration and staff share the physicians' philosophy, laying solid groundwork for providing patients with the continuous, coordinated care VHA envisions. "We are extremely pleased at the cooperative effort of these folks involved," Fulks says.

Dr. Wheeler finds the partnership satisfying, as well. "Clinicians are the best able to creatively visualize how to deliver better services to our patients, while the hospital partnership maintains appropriate economic

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and political perspective, increasing the probability of long-term success and growth on both sides of that equation." Much work remains. Planning and streamlining the venture have

become top priorities and depend on a number of factors, including scope of services, location and other resources.

VHA also has emphasized the importance of branding and marketing the service line, tasks the hospital's Community Development Office has already begun to undertake. The department's plans include using direct mail and educational opportunities to target referring physicians and emergency room directors and employing billboard and print advertising to appeal to consumers.

While a first-rate promotional campaign certainly contributes to a service line's success, Dr. Karaman knows that in the end, results speak louder than words. "Just roll up your sleeves, do a good job for the patient, always ask the question, 'What's best for the patient?'" he says. "Act on that, and the marketing will take care of itself."

Physician Referrals can be made by calling (800) 442-2222 or visit www.wyomingneurospine.com

Meet Our Physician Leaders



Joseph G. Sramek, M.D.
Board Certified Neurosurgeon



Brian H. Wieder, M.D.
Board Certified Neurosurgeon and Complex Spine Surgeon



David B. Wheeler, M.D., Ph.D.
Board Certified Neurologist



Ryan T. Swan, M.D.
Board Certified Psychiatrist



Boris Karaman, M.D.
Board Certified Radiologist and Neuroradiologist



Clayton E. Turner, M.D.
Board Certified Orthopedic Spine Surgeon