

# Meridian HealthViews™

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OCEAN COUNTY  
425 Jack Martin Boulevard, Brick

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1 Riverview Plaza, Red Bank

Nov/Dec 2000 • Vol. 4, No. 6

## Diabetes Affects Kids Too

*Children and teens learn that a solid routine is the key to managing their condition.*

**J**anet Applegate thinks her daughter, Victoria, leads a great life. The 11-year-old sixth grader at Wall Intermediate School is a cheerleader, takes dance and gymnastics classes, and plays basketball. And like most children her age, Victoria has a daily routine, but one that also includes measuring her blood sugar levels four times a day, and giving herself insulin injections.

"I was in complete shock when Victoria was diagnosed with diabetes," Janet of Wall Township recalls.

"It was like running into a brick wall, and

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Personal Touch  
in Hospice Unit

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*Meridian*  
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I kept wondering how we would possibly deal with this.”

Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin, a hormone needed to convert sugar, starches, and other food into energy needed for daily life. Complications of the disease may



Victoria Applegate's daily routine incorporates measuring her own blood sugar levels in addition to her many extracurricular activities.

Photo: Chris Mitchell

include heart disease, stroke, vision loss or blindness, amputation, and kidney disease. According to the American Diabetes Association, nearly 16 million Americans have diabetes.

The cause of diabetes is unknown, although genetics and possible environmental factors contribute to the development of Type 1 diabetes. In children with Type 2 diabetes, other factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to play roles in developing the disease.

### Mom Noticed the Symptoms

Victoria was 7 years old when her mom noticed she was urinating much more frequently than usual. She thought perhaps her daughter was suffering from a urinary tract infection. But a visit to the pediatrician and a urine analysis revealed that Victoria had Type 1 diabetes, also known as *juvenile diabetes* as it most often occurs in children and young adults. Type 1 diabetes, an autoimmune disease,

prevents the body from producing insulin — the hormone that ‘unlocks’ the cells of the body and allows glucose (blood sugar) to enter and fuel them.

For about a year after Victoria was diagnosed, her mom gave her the daily insulin injections needed to keep her alive. Gradually, Victoria took over that responsibility and today, Janet says her daughter's daily routine — doing finger stick tests to check her blood sugar levels and giving herself insulin injections — has become as routine as brushing her teeth.

### Making Lifestyle Adjustments

Another important part of Victoria's routine are her quarterly appointments with Santhosh Eapen, M.D., a pediatric endocrinologist in the Pediatric Subspecialty Department of Jersey Shore Medical Center. During these visits, she undergoes a glycohemoglobin test (a three-month average of blood sugar levels) and meets with a registered dietitian and nurse educator to review her diet.

Dr. Eapen treats children from infants to adolescents with diabetes but expresses concern about the

***“My mother never let me feel that I was different from anyone else.***

***We approached diabetes as a controllable condition, not a disease, and we made it part of everyday life.”***

—Kit Canning, Manasquan

increasing number of children he sees with Type 2 diabetes. This is a metabolic disorder resulting from the body's inability to respond to insulin. According to Dr. Eapen, the major challenge of treating children with either type of diabetes is helping them make adjustments to manage the disease as they grow into adulthood.



## Message to the Community

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for welcoming Meridian Health System (in the form of this magazine) into your home every other month. Over the last three and a half years, we have brought you uplifting stories from courageous people in your communities—real people battling breast cancer, recovering from heart attacks, adjusting to disabilities, and learning how to manage their chronic pain.

Unlike some of the local media which have resorted to national wire stories, Meridian continues to bring you local accounts of people you live near and work with—people who can attest to the quality and breadth of services and physicians available to you and your families, right here close to home. We hope the spirit of this magazine has touched your life in some small way—has made you more aware of a safety issue or helped you better understand a nagging medical condition. Above all, we hope that it has given you comfort that all of us at Meridian stand ready to serve you when you are sick or injured, while encouraging you toward better health and safety.

At Meridian Health System, we are committed to caring for all people in Monmouth and Ocean counties. We are proud to say that this past year, Meridian provided over \$48 million to treat members of our community who could not afford their health care. To read about 50 ways Meridian contributes to making our community a better, healthier place, visit our Web site at [www.meridianhealth.com](http://www.meridianhealth.com).

Wishing you a safe and joyous holiday season.

Sincerely,

John K. Lloyd, FACHE  
President, Meridian Health System

“Toddlers usually have very erratic eating schedules or are picky eaters,” Dr. Eapen says. “Older children who are entering puberty have hormonal changes to deal with. Along the way, they have to make adjustments to their medication, diet, and exercise. They often require psycho-social support as well.”

### Staying Up to Date

Catherine “Kit” Canning, of Manasquan, is someone who can

certainly attest to the benefits of developing a well-crafted routine for managing diabetes. The exercise physiologist, who works in the Cardio-Pulmonary Rehabilitation Department and LIFE Fitness Center of Jersey Shore Medical Center, was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes when she was 13 years old.

“My mother never let me feel that I was different from anyone else,” Kit explains. “We approached diabetes as a controllable condition, not a

## Managing Diabetes

The accurate monitoring of blood glucose levels is key in managing an individual’s diabetes. In addition to daily finger stick tests, Barton Nassberg, M.D., an endocrinologist affiliated with Riverview Medical Center, says that the availability of such recent innovations as the glucose sensor can give physicians a better picture of how to treat their patients with diabetes.

“The glucose sensor measures patients’ tissue glucose levels over a 72-hour period and provides a very detailed readout of information that we can use to more effectively manage the disease,” he says.

Dr. Nassberg works closely with the staff of the Diabetes Management Program at Riverview Medical Center to help those with the disease stay on top of the latest developments in treatment and education. Classes offered at both Riverview Medical Center and Medical Center of Ocean County are recognized by the American Diabetes Association (ADA).

Joyce DeJohn, certified diabetes educator at Riverview, notes that the medical center’s program has received special recognition from the ADA for its efforts in the area of gestational diabetes, a condition

suffered by pregnant women who have never had diabetes before but develop high blood sugar levels during pregnancy.

No matter what age a person is when facing the diagnosis of diabetes, education is the key to overcoming the problems associated with the disease, according to Clace Cleaver-Felice, registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator at Medical Center of Ocean County. Learning as much as possible about the ways to control diabetes is crucial, she adds.

Clace explains that the Diabetes Management Program emphasizes lifestyle change and goal setting, and covers such topics as high and low blood sugars, foot care, nutrition, exercise, stress management, medication, and blood sugar monitoring. “Our classes better equip our patients to manage their diabetes on a daily basis and help them prevent the long-term complications of the disease,” she notes.

“We work closely with our Wound Care Program and the Hyperbaric Medicine Program, and we may recommend our patients join the exercise programs at LIFE Fitness, where they can be monitored during exercise sessions.”




Photo: Chris Mitchell

An important part of Victoria's routine is quarterly appointments with Dr. Santhosh Eapen and meeting with a registered dietitian and nurse educator to review her diet.

disease, and we made it part of everyday life. By learning how to control my diabetes with medication, frequent blood sugar finger sticks, exercise, and diet, I could delay the onset of complications.”

Now 33, Kit had been using insulin injections up until a year ago, when she switched to an insulin pump. She says that keeping abreast of the latest developments in diabetes management is fundamental to living a long, healthy life. To that end, she takes “refresher” courses at Medical Center of Ocean County’s Diabetes Management Program, and she has even taught exercise classes for program participants. Kit also assists patients and fitness members with developing an understanding of the benefits of exercise and its impact on blood sugar levels.

 Pati Caldwell

### Meridian Diabetes Care Programs

Jersey Shore Medical Center (Pediatric) 732-776-4467

Medical Center of Ocean County 732-840-3399

Riverview Medical Center 732-530-2555

# Paying Special Attention to Autism

*Early diagnosis and better education about this neurological disorder can lead to faster, more appropriate treatment.*

**L**ori Mooney of Brick knows firsthand the value of detecting autism early on. Her son, Benjamin, was not properly diagnosed until he was 3 years old, which made treatment more difficult. When Lori suspected her daughter, Shannon, also had the disorder, she persevered until a correct diagnosis was made at 14 months of age. Today, both children are receiving specialized treatment and are functioning in school environments. "Early education is vital for children with autism," says Lori, who is president of Parents of Autistic Children (POAC), a Brick-based organization that provides information and events for families with autistic children. "Every child's situation is different. My

son, who is now 8, could read at 18 months but had other disabilities. My daughter, now 5, became very destructive when she turned 1 year and lost whatever speech she had learned. Luckily, we got the right diagnoses, and our children are receiving the necessary treatment."

## What Is Autism?

Autism refers to a collection of neurologically based developmental disorders that can impair an individual's social interaction and communication skills. The disorder can also involve repetitive or restrictive behavior. According to the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), autism is typically diagnosed during the toddler or preschool years when a child may have a noticeable language delay or lack of social development.

Unfortunately, in many cases the cause for autism remains unknown; however, in some cases causes have been found. Additionally, medical tests are not available to diagnose the disorder, and specific medication cannot be prescribed.

## What Can Parents Do?

What should parents do if they suspect their child is autistic? Seek evaluations until they are satisfied with the answers. "Whenever parents are concerned about their child's development, they should discuss the situation with their child's physician, who should recommend a specialist, if necessary," explains Dorothy Pietrucha, M.D., pediatric neurologist

and associate medical director of the Child and Adolescent Evaluation and Learning Disabilities Center. Located at Jersey Shore Medical Center, the Center provides consultative services for a range of disorders, including autism. "The specialist will review the child's developmental history and observe social, communicative, and play behaviors and conduct a complete diagnostic evaluation."

Once autism has been diagnosed, there are several areas that need to be addressed. "Autistic children need special education, addressing their language or behavior issues," says Dr. Pietrucha. "Families also must be trained to work with their child's problem at home because typical parenting skills may not work in this situation. Medical treatment may also be necessary. Some children have additional problems that may require special help so they can function better."



Photo: Martin Petterchak

Lori Mooney, shown with her children, Benjamin and Shannon, says early education is vital for children with autism.

## A Disorder That's Close to Home

Due to the high level of autistic cases in Brick, the CDC recently conducted a study examining the prevalence of autism in the area's 3- to 10-year olds. Seventy-five children were identified as possible cases in the investigation. While the study found high rates of

## Local Assistance for Autism

Parents of Autistic Children (POAC) is a Brick-based organization that provides information about autism, special services, and events for families with autistic children. Another organization, the New Jersey Center for Outreach and Services for the Autism Community (COSAC) in Ewing, also offers support groups and additional autism information.

### Area Autistic Services include:

- POAC Annual Picnic on February 23, 2001, at Georgian Court College in Lakewood.
- POAC Sibling Appreciation Day
- COSAC Parent Support Group: meets on the second Monday of each month at Children's Specialized Hospital in Toms River.
- COSAC help line, 1-800-4-AUTISM or (609) 883-8100: provides autism information and a list of schools, programs, and other services in the state.

For more information about POAC and a direct link to its Web site, please visit [www.meridianhealth.com](http://www.meridianhealth.com).

autism in Brick (4 per 1,000 children), the report concluded that more research needs to be conducted to better understand the disorder. Additionally, local environmental concerns were not positively identified as the cause for the neurological disorder.

***“Parents with autistic children need to know they are not alone.”***

— Lori Mooney, Brick

On a federal level, two health-related bills are pending in the U.S. Senate that, if passed, would establish national autism research centers. The centers would provide autism education, training, and clinical skills for health professionals. Presently, area legislators are lobbying to have one of these centers in New Jersey.

POAC is currently spearheading more immediate educational efforts. These plans involve working with Governor Whitman’s Council on Infantile Autism, which is preparing an educational video for pediatricians and family physicians about the first signs of autism. Future steps include an informative mailing to parents with autistic children under the age of three and a national Web site to incorporate a checklist of symptoms.

“Parents with autistic children need to know they are not alone,” stresses Lori. “There are local support groups, special events, and special educational treatment to assist families dealing with autism.”

↪ Felice Mikelberg

## Taking Care of Business

***Workplace safety. Employee injuries. Keeping costs down. Employers search for options regarding the safety and performance of their employees.***

**L**ike any local employer, Pepsi Bottling Group is always looking for the best way to provide its employees with quality treatment of work-related health concerns, while being mindful of the additional costs incurred by ensuring the safety of its growing workforce. Over the past three years, Pepsi has developed a relationship with Meridian Occupational Health that is beneficial to employees and the company alike.

With clients ranging from small businesses to large corporations, Meridian Occupational Health provides health and safety services, making sure that employees are cared for while on the job and are able to recover from an injury and return to their daily routine as soon as possible. Services provided include treatment and case management of occupational injuries and illnesses, a variety of medical and physical examinations, regulatory compliance assistance, physical therapy, and several diagnostic screening programs.

“At Pepsi, the health and safety of our employees is essential, so we need an organization that can manage our large and diverse workforce,” says David McHale, safety manager of Pepsi Bottling Group. “Meridian is very accessible and constantly attentive to our needs — and they’re always working with our employees to help ensure that injuries are not repeated. This helps keep our employees healthy and our costs under control.”

“Employers who choose Meridian are choosing one-stop shopping for handling workers’ injuries,” says Cynthia Lantz, corporate director of Meridian Occupational Health.

“When an employee comes in, we



Photo: Russ Seuffert

At Meridian Occupational Health, Dr. Steven Crawford (center) and Michelle Flath, R.T., explain a rehabilitation procedure to Louis Devole.

not only evaluate and treat the injury, but can conduct any additional tests, surgery, physical therapy, or hospital admission needed through our resources at Meridian Health System.”

Along with treatment of work-related injuries, Meridian Occupational Health also provides prevention services, which include workplace inspections and trend analysis to pinpoint the trouble areas that can be corrected. “Our goal is to prevent work-related injuries from happening in the first place, so that the time and money spent on them is minimal,” adds Lantz.

“What we find incredibly beneficial is Meridian’s willingness to work within our system, not just to treat injuries once they happen, but also to work with us to meet our needs and ensure the work-related health of our employees,” adds David. “We know that when we send our people over to Meridian, they are in good hands. As an administrator, that gives me peace of mind.”

↪ Michael Valentino

Child Evaluation Center

Jersey Shore Medical Center

732-776-4178

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Workplace Health & Safety

Meridian Occupational Health

732-263-7920

# Laser Surgery Gives Young Boy a Chance at a Normal Life

*A doctor's specialized skills and concern help a 14-year-old boy overcome a severe and disfiguring condition.*

**B**orn in Czechoslovakia, Patrik Jasek is a fairly typical 14-year-old boy. What makes Patrik different from other children his age, however, is that he was born with a condition called *cutaneous arteriovenous malformation* (AVM), a congenital abnormality in which an abundance of blood vessels form in the skin causing a mass and



Patrik Jasek's skin condition is treated with laser surgery conducted by Dr. Andrew Elkwood (left), shown with Patrik and his brother.

Photo: Russ Seuffert

discoloration. The condition is more commonly referred to as a "port wine stain." While port wine stains are not unusual, Patrik's condition is severe, with large red marks not only covering most of his face, but major portions of his body as well.

For Patrik, who now lives with his mother and brother in Secaucus, it's been a difficult condition to live with. The disfigurement is so highly visible that it tends to draw stares and questions from both children and adults. According to Patrik's mother, Jana Krepelkova, people have stopped them in the street to ask if Patrik had been scalded with hot water. "It's been really horrible for him," says Jana, "especially since my other son doesn't have such problems. Many times Patrik would cry to me, 'Mom, you

have to do something!'" Although laser treatment can decrease or even eliminate the condition, such treatments are extremely costly and generally not available in Patrik's homeland.

## Finding Hope in the United States

Last year, while he was still living overseas, Patrik's case was brought to the attention of Andrew Elkwood, M.D., a plastic and reconstructive surgeon on staff who is affiliated with Riverview Medical Center and Jersey Shore Medical Center. Dr. Elkwood's interest in the case and his concern about the lack of treatment options available in Czechoslovakia, helped initiate an effort to bring Patrik here to Riverview Medical Center for laser surgery.

"When I first found out I was going to the United States, I was happy because the surgery would mean a better life for me," says Patrik.

"It was something we had always hoped for," says Patrik's mom. "Patrik had even studied English for three years in preparation for coming to the

approximately seven treatments will be concentrated on his face. According to Dr. Elkwood, AVM is typically isolated to one area of the body, for instance, a dime-size mark on the back of the arm. But AVM can also indicate abnormal growths inside the body including the brain and liver, and it can affect facial development and bone growth, although this has not occurred in Patrik's case.

## It's About Helping Others

Dr. Elkwood, who is performing the laser treatments at no charge, feels that Patrik's case has provided him with a great opportunity to help someone in need — a young man with a condition serious enough to have affected his future opportunities as well as his outlook on life.

"This is why I became a doctor," says Dr. Elkwood. "If you are a good swimmer and someone is drowning, you save him. This is no different. You can't let someone go through life with a deformity if you are capable of rectifying it."

After several treatments, there has already been a noticeable reduction in the severity of Patrik's condition. When the laser procedures on Patrik's face are completed in 2001, Dr. Elkwood will begin treating his arms. Treatment of the rest of his body may not begin until Patrik is older. The

***"You can't let someone go through life with a deformity if you are capable of rectifying it."*** — Dr. Andrew Elkwood, Riverview Medical Center

United States one day for treatment."

Most cases of AVM can be treated by using laser surgery. A series of treatments, which literally burn away layers of skin, are performed over a period of months, allowing the skin time to heal between each procedure. The result is a gradual but significant reduction in redness and some associated malformation. In Patrik's case,

results, however, will at last help Patrik live the life of a typical teenager.

To find a plastic and reconstructive surgeon, call the Meridian Health Line physician referral service at 1-800-560-9990 or visit [www.meridianhealth.com](http://www.meridianhealth.com).

 Diane Gribbin

## Physician Referral

Meridian Health Line

800-560-9990

# Diluting the Smokescreen

*Tobacco use education and cessation programs help teenagers confront peer pressure.*

**T**eenagers are constantly faced with new classes, new friends, and new pressures. Peer pressure, especially when it comes to smoking, increases as a child becomes older. Discussing the facts of tobacco use in school where students are already focused on learning is often a good place to illustrate the dangers of smoking and the effects of second-hand smoke on those around us.

exposed to her parent's second-hand smoke since the day she was born. Her father outlived her. Sadly, he had to live with the thought of what their second-hand smoke possibly did to their daughter."

When Helaine visits a high school to teach a new group of seniors, she's often asked by the students themselves to tell this story - a memorable one they'd heard about from previous

*"Many adults feel that because kids aren't supposed to smoke, they don't. They have a 'not my kid' mentality even if the signs are all there." — Dr. Phillipa Woodruffe, Riverview Medical Center*

## Education Makes an Impact

Helaine Rothman, R.N., a nurse educator with Meridian Community and Senior Services, visits several high schools in Monmouth County every semester as part of each school's senior health education curriculum. Helaine, who specializes in cancer education and teaches students about breast and testicular self-examination, also uses her time in the classroom to discuss the dangers of smoking, chewing tobacco, and second-hand smoke. "I always tell students the same true story about what smoking can do to your health or someone else's," says Helaine. "I had a very good friend who died of lung cancer at the age of 38. I was with her when she got the results of her CT scan, indicating she had a tumor on one of her lungs. Both of her parents had been heavy smokers and her mom had died of emphysema. But my friend had never smoked a day in her life. She had, however, been

seniors. "And that's important," says Helaine. "By the time I see the students, some are already addicted to tobacco. But they want help in getting to stop."

## Local Group Takes Action

The Monmouth County Tobacco Coalition, chaired by Monmouth County Freeholder Amy Handlin, is a group of concerned citizens focusing on the development of tobacco control and preventive initiatives. In addition to seeking 100 percent compliance by merchants on laws prohibiting tobacco sales to minors, and encouraging and recognizing restaurants that establish smoke-free environments, the Coalition has created the TEEN FreshStart smoking cessation program to reduce the number of youths who smoke. This program provides special training for facilitators such as school nurses, guidance counselors, and health educators, who then work directly with teens helping them

to quit smoking.

Phillipa G. Woodruffe, M.D., a Riverview Medical Center surgeon, Coalition member and chairman of the American Cancer Society, Monmouth Unit, feels TEEN FreshStart is extremely important because it is directed specifically toward young people. According to Dr. Woodruffe, when teens are targeted by tobacco companies in their advertising, they often end up hooked for life.

"Many adults feel that because kids aren't supposed to smoke, they don't," says Dr. Woodruffe. "They have a 'not my kid' mentality even if the signs are all there. Smoking teens are risk-takers, which often leads to other risky behavior. What's good about this program is that because it utilizes educators both inside and outside the school system, teens can get to a program where they feel comfortable and can truly quit their habit."

Every day in the United States 3,000 young Americans begin smoking.

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## Startling Tobacco Statistics

- Every year, over 31,000 New Jersey kids under age 18 begin smoking.
- 38% of New Jersey high school students smoke compared with 22% of adults.
- 10% of high school males use smokeless (chewing) tobacco.
- 8.2 million packs of cigarettes are illegally sold to underage smokers.
- Underage smoking has increased 70% during the last 10 years.
- 398,000 children are exposed to second-hand smoke at home.
- Nonsmokers who are continuously exposed to second-hand smoke have a 30% greater chance of developing lung cancer and are 24% more likely to develop coronary heart disease or suffer a heart attack.


*Source: American Cancer Society*

*Continued from page 7*

One half of these youngsters will continue smoking into and throughout adulthood. An estimated five million—around 135,000 children in New Jersey alone—will die from a smoking-related disease. Tobacco use, prevention, education, and advocacy, and the availability of cessation and support programs for underage smokers is crucial to improving these statistics and saving the health of our children.

### Grant Money Available to Local Groups

The Monmouth County Tobacco Coalition, under its Communities Against Tobacco (CAT) initiative, is making mini-grants available to local community groups who wish to develop and implement tobacco control projects, advocacy, education, and awareness programs related to tobacco use in the community. For more information about CAT mini-grants or TEEN FreshStart, please visit [www.meridianhealth.com](http://www.meridianhealth.com).

 Diane Gribbin

## Donations Make a Difference

*Through generous contributions, Meridian Affiliated Foundations helps create and maintain services that provide quality health care in our community.*

**R**uth and George Harms of Brielle realize the importance of area hospitals and the value of giving back. For more than 25 years, their generous gifts have reflected a growing family who utilize Meridian's medical facilities and specific departments, such as heart and cancer, which have personally affected the family.

"While we live near prestigious medical institutions in New York and Philadelphia, I consider it a privilege to have quality health care in my own backyard," says Ruth. "If there's an emergency at 2:00 a.m., I know there are hospitals nearby that I can trust. And because our area is increasing in size, our hospitals need to continually update their state-of-the-art equipment and technology to offer the very best medical care."

Meridian Affiliated Foundations which encompasses the Foundations of Jersey Shore Medical Center,

Medical Center of Ocean County, and Riverview Medical Center, has a long-standing tradition of support and generous contributions from our local residents. The Affiliated Foundations works closely with physicians, clinicians, Meridian's board, auxiliaries, and volunteers to raise the necessary funds to create and maintain services that are critical to the health and wellness of our community.

"We hear every day of the difficult financial times in health care, such as the effect of managed care and the Balanced Budget Act," says Paulette Roberts, executive director of Meridian Affiliated Foundations. "It is the support of people like the Harms who believe in their area hospitals and turn that belief into strong financial support that assists us in improving our facilities, purchasing the latest technologies, and building cancer centers at Meridian hospitals."

Additional priorities at the hospitals include the Family Health Center and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Jersey Shore Medical Center, the new Ambulatory Care Center at Medical Center of Ocean County, and the new Emergency Department and Critical Care Center at Riverview Medical Center.

"Meridian's staff not only treats the patient, they treat the family," says Ruth. "We are fortunate that, with others in our community, we can help make a difference."

 Felice Mikelberg


## Fire Safety Keeps Holidays Happy

*Deck the halls with decorations and celebrations, but don't forget to follow safety precautions to protect your loved ones.*

While the holiday season is a special time for festivities with family and friends, Meridian Health System would like to remind everyone about ways to avoid potential fire dangers. According to the National Fire Protection Association, candles cause an average of 6,700 home fires annually, and one candle can set a Christmas tree blazing in less than 30 seconds.

To ensure your holiday season is as safe as well as happy one, Meridian recommends these seasonal tips:

- **Indoor Holiday Trees:** Purchase a "fire resistant" tree with needles that are deep green in color, hard to pull from the branches, and give off a strong pine scent. Place the tree away from heat sources, such as fireplace, radiators, and heat vents, which can cause it to ignite.
- **Candles:** Keep lit candles away from trees or flammable decorations. If you are using candles, keep them in sturdy holders away from displays and children's reach, and never leave young ones unattended in a room with burning candles.
- **Lights:** Purchase UL-approved tree lights and inspect them first for frayed wires, broken bulbs, and cracked sockets. Do not overload extension cords, and don't link more than three light strands together.
- **Emergency Plan:** Develop an emergency escape plan for your family, including alternative routes and an outside meeting place for everyone to gather after escaping. If you live in a two-story house, keep a fire escape ladder on that floor in a central location. Also, make sure smoke detectors are working properly in every area of your home, including the basement.

 Priya Verma

### Health Care Contributions

Meridian Affiliated Foundation 732-751-5100

*For your convenience, an envelope has been included for a contribution to Meridian Affiliated Foundations.*

*Meridian HealthViews Nov/Dec 2000*

# New Options in Breast Reconstruction

*Patients who have undergone breast cancer surgery now have an alternative for reconstruction: the TRAM flap procedure.*

**A**fter Linda Kaufer underwent a bilateral mastectomy 12 years ago following a diagnosis of breast cancer, the 46-year-old Holmdel resident became a strong advocate for breast cancer survivors, educating herself and others about breast reconstruction. The knowledge she gained led her to make some important decisions about her own medical care. In fact, even prior to her mastectomy, Linda visited a plastic surgeon to investigate the options available for her own breast reconstruction. Linda eventually chose a breast reconstructive implant, but she was unaware that a procedure called *TRAM flap* surgery was available.

Women who undergo breast cancer surgery and then decide to have breast reconstruction often choose a traditional reconstruction method, which requires an implant—a silicone shell filled with silicone gel or saline (salt water) solution. However, silicone implants are now only available to women participating in approved studies, including those who already have a gel-filled implant and need it replaced for medical reasons. Saline-filled implants continue to be available, without restrictions.

According to Peter Hetzler, M.D., a plastic and reconstructive surgeon at Riverview Medical Center, because of the Food and Drug Administration's concerns about the safety of some implants, more emphasis has been placed on surgical alternatives.

## An Innovative Alternative

One alternative approach to breast implant reconstruction following a mastectomy is known as *transverse rectus abdominis myocutaneous* or TRAM

flap surgery. The technique utilizes tissue called a skin flap that is taken from the patient's own abdomen to rebuild the breast. The flap, including skin, fat, muscle and blood supply, is tunneled under the skin to the chest, recreating the breast mound itself, and eliminating the need for an implant altogether.

Linda did not learn about TRAM flap surgery until about four years after her mastectomy. In the meantime, she underwent 12 separate procedures to correct her implants, which were extremely uncomfortable, and had caused a severe *hematoma* (blood clot), destroying her *pectoralis muscle* (the muscle leading from the collarbone to the top of the breast). The implants were unnatural feeling, and says Linda, "never quite right."

When Linda learned about TRAM flap surgery, she made an appointment with Dr. Hetzler to discuss her options and find out if she would be a candidate for the procedure. Dr. Hetzler is board-certified in both plastic and general surgery and has been performing TRAM flap surgery since 1983. He specializes in the procedure and performs TRAM flap surgery at Riverview.

## "More Natural" Results

While TRAM flap surgery may not be for everyone, Dr. Hetzler feels the procedure produces more natural and satisfying results for most patients. "Because it's the patient's own tissue, TRAM flap allows the reconstructed breast to change and age with the patient," says Dr. Hetzler, "It produces higher patient satisfaction due to better aesthetic outcomes and does not present long-term implant complications. TRAM flap also results in an improved

abdominal area as well." He adds, "It is now federally mandated that the procedure be covered by health insurance. The drive for that important legislation began right here at Red Bank."

According to Linda, the successful outcome of her TRAM flap surgery was "that push over the edge back into life again." "All through my cancer, I kept thinking there's a silver lining—and TRAM flap surgery was it," says Linda. "It was both a good and happy surgery. Now I'm not always looking in the mirror and saying 'Gee, I had



TRAM flap patient Linda Kaufer (left) shares her positive experience with Maureen Bracher, R.N., and Dr. Peter Hetzler.

cancer." Since her procedure, Linda has worked with Dr. Hetzler and Maureen Bracher, R.N., nurse manager of Riverview's inpatient Oncology Unit, to further develop the Medical Center's TRAM flap program. Linda continues to help other breast cancer survivors through her work with the support organization, *Reach to Recovery*: [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org), emphasizing that it is important for patients to be aware of every option available to them.

The TRAM flap procedure is more complicated to perform than a reconstructive breast implant, with a longer recovery time and residual scarring at both the abdominal and breast sites. But for many patients, the numerous positive aspects of TRAM flap surgery outweigh those of traditional breast implants.

➔ Diane Gribbin

## Meridian Physician Referral

Meridian Health Line	800-560-9900
Web site	<a href="http://www.meridianhealth.com">www.meridianhealth.com</a>

# Bladder Matters

**Many people hesitate to seek help for a bladder problem, but innovative treatments are available.**

**W**hen 74-year-old Fred Sigrist of Neptune went to Jersey Shore Medical Center for surgery because of bladder cancer, he was a bit anxious about the procedure, even though he knew it was essential for his health. Now, several months later, Fred has adjusted to life following surgery and feels much better. He credits his improved health to the staff at Jersey Shore and especially his doctor. “Dr. James Rotolo is an excellent surgeon who saved my life,” says Fred. “His dedication and knowledge in this area was outstanding.”

The bladder, the organ that stores urine within the body, can be afflicted with several diseases or conditions that cause it to stop functioning properly. The most common conditions are urinary incontinence, bladder

cancer, and urinary tract infections. Although millions of people each year suffer from some form of a bladder disease or condition, according to the American Foundation for Urologic Disease, people often

**“Some people wait a few days to see if the blood or pain goes away by itself, and it might. However, the cause for the problem still remains untreated and can lead to more problems in the future.”**

— Dr. James Rotolo  
Jersey Shore Medical Center

hesitate to speak about or seek treatment for their bladder problem because they are embarrassed (especially for urinary incontinence).

Fortunately, there are signs and symptoms that signal the need to visit your doctor. “Blood in the urine or pain while urinating is not normal – these are two conditions that should be checked out immediately,” says urologist Dr. Rotolo, who is affiliated with Jersey Shore Medical Center. “Some people wait a few days to see if the blood or pain goes away by itself, and it might. However, the cause for the problem still remains untreated and can lead to more problems in the future.”

Treatments for bladder problems range from taking antibiotics for a urinary tract infection to surgery—usually the case for people with bladder cancer. Patients who require bladder surgery receive specialized care to meet their individual needs. “We watch for side effects, check vital signs, monitor bladder retention, and measure how much fluid a

## Pain in The Bladder

Here are some prevalent diseases that affect the bladder and how it functions:

**Bladder cancer** involves the cells that line the urinary tract. Most people with bladder cancer are not at risk of developing a cancer that will spread and become life threatening. However, the chance of recurrence is very high. Currently there are over 2 million people living with bladder cancer.

**Incontinence** is a widespread condition that causes individuals to leak urine. Typically associated with an overactive bladder, loss of bladder control is not a disease but rather a symptom of a problem in the urinary tract. It's important to report this problem to your doctor so the cause can be determined and the course of treatment established quickly.

**Urinary tract infections** are the reason for approximately 8 to 10 million doctor visits annually. The infection occurs when bacteria, usually from the digestive tract, clings to the opening of the urethra, begins to multiply, and then moves to the bladder. If the infection is not properly treated with antibiotics, the bacteria can affect the kidneys.

Source: American Foundation for Urologic Disease

patient drinks compared with the amount that they later output,” says Joyce Henn, a nurse manager at Jersey Shore Medical Center and the person who directed the nurses who cared for Fred. “We also make sure patients and their families are educated about the surgery and any lifestyle changes they need to make for a healthier future.”

## Meridian Physician Referral

Meridian Health Line 800-560-9990  
Web site [www.meridianhealth.com](http://www.meridianhealth.com)

Meridian HealthViews Nov/Dec 2000

Photo: Chris Kitchell

Dr. James Rotolo, here with Fred Jacques, cautions patients to schedule a doctor visit if they have bladder problems.



# Building Better Bones

*It's never too early to begin preventing osteoporosis.*

**B**uilding strong bones, especially before age 30, can be the best defense against developing osteoporosis later in life. Whatever your age, attending a free, three-session course, "Osteoporosis and You," sponsored by the New Jersey Chapter of the Arthritis

Foundation, will give you the knowledge you need to help effectively prevent or control osteoporosis. According to the Arthritis Foundation, millions of Americans are at risk of developing osteoporosis, and while men may also develop osteoporosis, women are four times more prone to contracting this debilitating disease.

*"There are some things in life we just can't control, but fortunately, osteoporosis isn't one of them."* — Peggy Lotkowitz, Arthritis Foundation

Foundation, will give you the knowledge you need to help effectively prevent or control osteoporosis.

## A Debilitating Disease

Osteoporosis is a disease in which bones become fragile and prone to fracture. If not prevented or if left untreated, osteoporosis can progress undetected until a bone breaks. Any bone in your body can be affected by osteoporosis, but these broken bones or fractures typically occur in the hip, spine, and wrist. A hip fracture almost always requires major surgery since it can impair a person's ability to walk and may cause prolonged or permanent disability. Spinal fractures also have serious consequences, including loss of height, back pain, and deformity.

Osteoporosis is largely preventable for most people by taking several steps:

- eating a balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D
- performing weight-bearing exercise
- living a healthy lifestyle, with no smoking or excessive alcohol use
- getting bone density tests and taking medications when appropriate

"National nutrition surveys show that many young women and girls are consuming less than half of the recommended amount of calcium they need to grow and maintain healthy bodies," according to Debra Dobies, R.D., at Riverview Medical

Center. "A calcium supplement approved by your physician may help make up the difference. Sunshine, fortified dairy products, egg yolks, fish, and liver provide our bodies with vitamin D, which we need to help absorb calcium."

Exercise and a moderate lifestyle are always fundamental to good health. If you've been sedentary most of your life, check with your physician before beginning any exercise program.

## Bone Density Test Is Best Diagnosis

A bone density test, also known as DEXA scan, is used to diagnose osteoporosis. Prescribed by a physician, this test is a non-invasive, accurate, and painless way to measure the density of your bones and determine whether you need medication to help prevent further bone mass loss. Fortunately, there are medications available, including estrogen replacement therapy, which can slow or stop bone loss, increase bone density, and reduce fracture risk.

"There are some things in life we just can't control, but fortunately, osteoporosis isn't one of them," says Peggy Lotkowitz, program manager for the Arthritis Foundation. "We encourage young women to join us for these after-work sessions. Learning preventative strategies will help assure them stronger, healthier futures."

 Christine Burke

## Osteoporosis Prevention Begins Before 30

A free, three-session program for all ages:

*Osteoporosis and You*  
Nov. 13, 20, and 27

### Riverview Medical Center

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., includes a light supper.

To register, call Meridian Health Line at 800-560-9990.

### Osteoporosis Testing

Jersey Shore Medical Center	732-776-4698
Medical Center of Ocean County	732-295-6222
Riverview Medical Center	732-530-2305

## We're Wired for Health

*Meridian's advanced information technology allows physicians to monitor patient conditions from anywhere they have Internet access.*

**T**he scenario: A patient suffering from chest pains is admitted to the Emergency Department at Jersey Shore Medical Center. The physician on duty examines and diagnoses the patient, and gives orders to the staff. Fortunately for doctors and patients alike, the physician can now oversee the case long after his or her shift is over — thanks to Meridian's on-line capabilities.

### Increased Information Access

"I can supervise my patients' vital signs 24 hours a day, if needed, from anywhere I have access to the Internet," explains Joseph Mannion, M.D., an internist affiliated with Jersey Shore



Dr. Richard Nobile, president of the medical staff at Jersey Shore Medical Center, is forefront in bring cutting edge technological advancements to Meridian.

Medical Center. "I can also retrieve nurses' notes, lab results, and place orders directly into our computerized system, reducing the chance of possible transcription errors. This service is something that is usually only available

at major teaching institutions. It's really improving our clinical care."

These advancements fit in perfectly with Meridian's fast-moving technology record: Earlier this year Meridian was recognized within the health care industry as one of the "100 Most Wired" health systems in the country by *Hospitals & Health Networks* magazine. "This honor

***"I can supervise my patients' vital signs 24 hours a day, if needed, from anywhere I have access to the Internet."***

— Dr. Joseph Mannion, Jersey Shore Medical Center

demonstrates that Meridian is continually improving its technology for patients as well as for business operating purposes," says Becki Weber, vice president and chief information officer at Meridian.

### Faster, Easier Information Flow

Meridian's technological advancements also include lifetime clinical records, which allow physicians to access a patient's medical information when prescribing medication, on-line insurance verification during registration to reduce delays in service, and wireless laptops for faster patient admittance.

"Our Internet capabilities are part of a technological wave that is revolutionizing the health care environment," explains Richard Nobile, DDS, and president of the medical staff at Jersey Shore Medical Center. "Not only can we retrieve patient information faster and read consultation reports over the Internet,



Photo: Chris Kitchell

Dr. Joseph Mannion demonstrates the latest computer technology at an internal tech fair.

but we can also process medical orders without being in the hospital. As part of our technological commitment, we are even holding paperless medical executive meetings."

### You Have Access, Too

To increase your own information flow, visit Meridian's Web site, [www.meridianhealth.com](http://www.meridianhealth.com), which receives an average of 24,000 visitors each month. The site provides pertinent Meridian information, including our centers of excellence, a physician referral program, and employment opportunities, as well as the latest in local health care and special events in the on-line edition of *Meridian HealthViews*.

"We're very proud that our Web site provides the newest in local medical information and assistance to our community" says Becki.

— Felice Mikelberg

Meridian Web site

[www.meridianhealth.com](http://www.meridianhealth.com)

Meridian HealthViews Nov/Dec 2000

# Do You Know About D.O.s?

*Doctors of osteopathic medicine are more common than you think.*

**W**e all know the initials *M.D.* after a person's name indicate that he or she is a *medical doctor*. But have you ever encountered the initials *D.O.* and wondered what they stood for? Or, if you were told that someone is an *osteopath*, would you know what that meant?

You'll find *doctors of osteopathy* in emergency rooms, family practices, physical therapy practices — almost anywhere. In an effort to celebrate and increase awareness of these physicians, National Osteopathic Medicine Week is celebrated each November.

## Born Over a Century Ago

In 1874, Andrew Taylor Still, M.D., a licensed physician practicing in what was then the western frontier of the United States, first articulated the basic principles of osteopathic medicine. The first college of osteopathic medicine, the American School of Osteopathy, was founded 18 years later, in Kirksville, Missouri. In 1886, Vermont became the first state to license D.O.s. Slightly more than a century later, there are 43,000 D.O.s practicing in the United States, today.

## Equal Training, With an Added Focus on Wellness

Osteopathic medicine is a system of medical care that combines the needs of the patient with the current practice of medicine and surgery. The osteopathic philosophy emphasizes the body's ability to heal itself.

Osteopathy is based on the principle that good health depends on the maintenance of proper relationships among the various structures of the body. True health, osteopaths believe, involves complete physical, mental,

and social well-being, rather than merely an absence of disease.

Robert Sweeney, D.O., director of Emergency Services for Meridian Health System, says his training as an osteopath physician enhances his skill as a specialist in emergency medicine at Jersey Shore Medical Center.

"My training helps me to assess each patient I see as a whole person, not just as an isolated injury," he says. Each individual's entire physical and psychosocial condition — everything I can determine about his or her background in a short period of time — are aspects I consider in deciding how to treat the patient. I involve the whole person in my care."

Doctors of osteopathic medicine are licensed physicians and surgeons who receive additional training in the art and science of musculoskeletal therapy and total-person wellness. A D.O. receives the same four years of medical school training that an M.D. does, but with osteopathic philosophies tied in.

Upon graduation from medical school, D.O.s continue with residency training in any of the medical specialties, from family practice to neurosurgery — the same as M.D.

**Dr. Robert Sweeney says his osteopathic background has enhanced his skills as a specialist in emergency medicine.**



Photo: Chris Kitchell

## D.O.s Are Everywhere!

Since M.D.s and D.O.s enjoy the same practice rights throughout the United States, you'll find them working side-by-side at hospitals everywhere. Because the principles of osteopathy consider the "big picture" when it comes to health care, many D.O.s practice family medicine. However, since osteopaths are also trained in manual medicine for the treatment of musculoskeletal disorders, many osteopathic physicians specialize in



Photo: Russ Seuffert

**Dr. David Idank, here with patient Antoinette Dunnett, uses his osteopathic training in conjunction with physical therapy and physiatry.**

rehabilitation and sports medicine.

For David M. Idank, D.O., becoming an osteopath seemed a perfect complement to his early training as a physical therapist. After graduating from osteopathic school, Dr. Idank also specialized in physiatry, a form of orthopedic or physical medicine that treats injuries to the body's musculoskeletal system. Today, as a physiatrist on staff at Riverview Medical Center, Dr. Idank calls on all of his training to help successfully rehabilitate his patients. "For me, becoming an osteopathic physician has been part of a natural progression. I use my osteopathic training in conjunction with my training as both a physical therapist and a physiatrist. Along with exercise and other rehabilitative therapies, it enables me to bring a special perspective to patient care."

Christine Burke

## Feeling Right at Home

*Terminally ill patients and their families find support, comfort, and caring at the new Meridian Hospice Inpatient Care Unit.*

**S**am Smith, 80, of Brick had been fighting an asbestos-related illness for six months. The disease had turned terminal, leaving him bedridden and in need of 24-hour care. His wife, Elaine, found herself in the difficult position that many of us may someday face.

members. "For those who find a traditional hospital setting stressful or undesirable, our inpatient unit may be an appealing option."

With a skilled medical team, including registered nurses, medical social workers, home health aides, chaplains, and specially trained volunteers, the

***"There just aren't words to express everything those wonderful people did for my husband and my family. He was truly happy there, and that meant the world to me."*** — Elaine Smith, Brick

"He was such a strong man, who lived a long, full life," says Elaine. "It was just so difficult for me both emotionally and physically. As much as I wanted to do everything for him, I just couldn't."

Elaine found her solution at the Meridian Hospice Inpatient Care Unit, located at Meridian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center at Brick. The unit is designed to meet the medical and emotional needs of terminally ill patients and their families. Patients stay in a home-like setting while under the care of the Hospice Inpatient Care team of professionals. The Unit is also the only facility of its kind in Monmouth and Ocean counties.

"We try to provide the patient and family with a 'home away from home' atmosphere to help make a very difficult time a little easier," says Karen Stanton, director of Meridian Hospice. Karen explains that the facility is equipped with a kitchen area, family lounge, private parking, and even sleeping accommodations for family

Hospice Inpatient Care Unit offers both patient and family access to any services and support they need. The hospice team also works with the patient's attending physician to provide the proper care throughout the patient's stay.

Admission to the Hospice Inpatient Care Unit is accepted from any hospital, nursing home, or residential setting, and can be reimbursed by Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance carriers.

"We all felt at home there, and the staff was so caring and attentive to my husband," adds Elaine. "Whether he needed medical care or just someone to talk to, they were always there. There just aren't words to express everything those wonderful people did for my husband and my family. He was truly happy there, and that meant the world to me."

Michael Valentino

### Award-Winning Volunteer

Part of what makes Meridian Hospice so special are the incredible volunteers that dedicate their time and talents every day. Recently, June Schwartz, a hospice volunteer of 14 years, was named "Volunteer of the Year" by the New Jersey Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. June began volunteering at Jersey Shore Medical Center in 1984 and through her dedication and enthusiasm, exemplifies the finest qualities of a hospice volunteer. Aside from her normal duties that involve caring directly for patients and their families, June has made many other contributions to the hospice program, including fund raising, special event planning, office work and most recently, interior design.

In order to create a "home-like" environment in the new Hospice Inpatient Care Unit, June, along with two other volunteers, were instrumental in the planning and decorating of the unit. From finding just the right colors to ironing the curtains, her tireless efforts were also honored by Meridian Health System with the Orion Award for Excellence.

"June touches peoples lives with compassion and understanding that comes from the heart," says Michele Gray, volunteer supervisor, Meridian Hospice. "We are very proud of her and are extremely fortunate to have such wonderful people like June in our program."

**Volunteer June Schwartz's dedication has assisted in creating a home-like environment at Meridian Hospice Inpatient Care Unit.**



Photo: Martin Pettechak

#### Hospice Inpatient Care Unit

Meridian Hospice

732-935-1797

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period of time, disability or death can result. That's why fast treatment — administered as soon as symptoms occur — prevents further damage to the heart and increases the chance for a full recovery.

Remember, a heart attack is a life-and-death emergency. Not all symptoms occur with every attack, and sometimes they go away and return. Make every second count. Reduce your risk by knowing a heart attack's warning signs and how to respond quickly if they occur.

### Round-the-Clock Emergency Care Awaits

The MCOC Care Center is staffed by the same emergency trained physicians, nurses, and technicians as a full-service emergency department. The Center, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is equipped with limited on-site x-ray and laboratory services, defibrillators, crash carts, transport ventilator, as well as EKG and cardiac monitors. "I wouldn't think twice about going to the Center again for treatment," Frank says. "Their staff saved my life."

 Priya Verma

### Urgent Care

MCOC Care Center 732-295-6377

### Most Common Warning Signs of a Heart Attack

If you observe or feel any of these symptoms, call 911 immediately. If you have any questions about your condition, please consult your physician.

- Any uncomfortable pressure, fullness, or squeezing pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back.
- Pain that spreads to the shoulders, neck, or arms.

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## A Different Type of "Triple-A"

*New, minimally invasive procedure reduces risk and recovery time for a serious health problem.*

**A**lthough *abdominal aortic aneurysm* (AAA) isn't a condition that you hear about every day, it still remains a serious health problem in this country. AAA is the 13<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in America, especially for people age 55 and older. To better serve Ocean County's growing senior popu-

most AAA cases, surgery is necessary to repair or remove the aneurysm.

Medical Center of Ocean County and Jersey Shore Medical Center will soon be offering an innovative treatment option called the Ancure™ Endograft® System. *Endovascular AAA* is one of the latest minimally invasive

*"Since the procedure is minimally invasive, recovery is usually easier and the risk of surgical complications is lower."*

— Dr. Frank Sharp, Medical Center of Ocean County


lation, Medical Center of Ocean County is taking the lead to be the first hospital in the county to offer patients a new, innovative procedure for treating AAAs.

An AAA is a bulging or balloon-like enlargement of the aorta, the main blood vessel in the abdomen that supplies blood throughout the body. An aneurysm occurs when the artery wall becomes weak or damaged by accumulated fatty deposits. If left untreated, it can rupture and cause life-threatening bleeding. Eight out of 10 patients with a ruptured aneurysm die before they reach the hospital. In

procedures used to reinforce the walls of the aorta. With the help of x-ray imaging, the procedure is performed by making two small incisions in the groin area and inserting a tube-shaped graft into the aorta. The graft is then permanently positioned inside the bulging walls of the aneurysm to prevent it from rupturing.

"Since the procedure is minimally invasive, recovery is usually easier and the risk of surgical complications is lower," says Frank Sharp, M.D., vascular surgeon at Medical Center of Ocean County. Traditional surgery required a large incision through the abdomen and patients remained in the hospital for seven to 10 days. "Now patients who undergo the new technique are usually out of the hospital in two or three days and resume their normal activity within two weeks," adds Dr. Sharp.

For more information about the early detection and prevention of AAA, call Meridian Health Line at 1-800-560-9990 to be referred to one of our vascular surgeons.

 Priya Verma

- Chest discomfort with lightheadedness, fainting, sweating, nausea, or shortness of breath.

The following are less common warning signs of a heart attack:

- Atypical chest, stomach, or abdominal pain.
- Nausea or dizziness (without chest pain).
- Shortness of breath and difficulty breathing (without chest pain).
- Unexplained anxiety, weakness, or fatigue.
- Palpitations, cold sweats, or paleness.

Source: American Heart Association

# Help Is Just a Heartbeat Away

*Patient survives heart attack thanks to staffs at MCOC Care Center and Jersey Shore Medical Center.*

**W**hen a heart attack strikes, every second counts. Unfortunately, precious time can be wasted if symptoms aren't recognized quickly and emergency care isn't sought right away. Even though MCOC Care Center isn't meant to be a first choice destination for urgent medical crisis such as a heart attack, when Frank Napurano, age 57, recently woke up with severe chest pains, he was thankful that the new MCOC Care Center, a limited-service emergency department located in Point Pleasant, was just a few minutes from his home.

Frank arrived at the Care Center at 5:15 a.m., where emergency staff rapidly diagnosed that he was suffering from a heart attack. Within 15 min-

utes, Scott David, D.O., an emergency physician at Medical Center of Ocean County, gave Frank *tissue plasminogen activator* (TPA), a drug that dissolves the blood clots that cause the majority of heart attacks. Frank was stabilized and transported to Jersey Shore Medical Center for further treatment. "TPA is a wonderful lifesaver, but it needs to be administered rapidly," says Dr. David. "Delay in care will lead to increased tissue damage. Fortunately for Frank, the caregivers at the Center gave it to him in a fraction of that time.

Once Frank arrived at Jersey Shore, a cardiac catheterization was performed by Ronald Rubinstein, M.D., chief of intervention cardiology at

Jersey Shore Medical Center. This procedure involves taking x-rays of the main pumping chamber and arteries of the heart. This test discovered that one of Frank's arteries was 99 percent blocked. Dr. Rubinstein then placed a stent into the blocked artery. The *stent* — a stainless steel mesh tube — acts as a scaffold to hold the artery open for better blood flow. After a four-day hospital stay, Frank went home. "If it weren't for the care Frank received at MCOC Care Center, he might not be alive today," said Dr. Rubinstein.

## Quick Reactions Need Quick Results

According to the American Heart Association, heart disease is the leading killer of Americans today, and heart attacks are the most visible sign of heart disease. A heart attack occurs when the blood supply to the heart is severely reduced or stopped. If the blood supply is cut off for a long

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This free community bi-monthly magazine is prepared by the Communications Team of Meridian Health System. Please call 1-800-560-9990 with any questions or comments. Inquiries or ideas can also be addressed in writing to:

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