

Healthy

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This issue:
**CHRONIC
PAIN**

TV PERSONALITY &
RECORDING ARTIST

*Kristin
Chenoweth*

MANAGING
MÉNIÈRE'S DISEASE



FOR *Kristin*
Chenoweth

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

The Emmy and Tony Award winner talks about the medical condition that almost ended her career.

KRISTIN CHENOWETH has enjoyed a remarkable career as a singer and actress since leaving her hometown of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, and arriving in New York City in 1993. Her powerful soprano voice has been featured in Broadway stage productions that include *Wicked* and *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*. She's starred in TV shows such as *The West Wing* and *Glee*. And she recently released her latest album, *For The Girls*. It's a heartfelt tribute to the greatest female singers throughout history and features guest artists Dolly Parton, Reba McEntire, Jennifer Hudson and Ariana Grande. But what is perhaps even more remarkable is that, for almost her entire professional career, Kristin has achieved all this despite suffering from Ménière's disease, a disorder of the inner ear that can cause dizzy spells and vertigo. *Healthy Community* recently spoke to Kristin to hear her story of perseverance in living with this chronic medical condition.

When did you first think something was medically wrong?

I was in my 20s, dancing in a rehearsal room in New York City. When I finished dancing, it felt like I was still spinning. My head began to pound and I threw up. After suffering for a couple of years, I finally found a doctor who diagnosed me correctly. After three days of medical testing, I discovered I had Ménière's disease.

What are the symptoms that you normally experience?

Usually, it starts with a migraine headache. I often say the feeling of having a migraine is like getting a brain freeze if you drink something that's cold too fast, but then it doesn't end. At other times, I can just wake up with vertigo. What really stinks is that there are no warning signs. It just happens spontaneously. Fortunately, there are some things I can do to prevent an attack. For example, I sleep on an incline. I can't sleep flat because laying my head down affects my inner ear. I also use a nasal rinse, and very rarely drink alcohol. Salt is a real trigger, so I'm on a low sodium diet. I've also noticed that my condition seems to be connected to

abrupt changes in the weather and the barometric pressure, so I keep an eye on both. All of these preventive measures help me manage my condition. However, what is so frustrating about Ménière's is that you can follow the exact routine and still have an attack.

How has Ménière's affected your life and career?

In my 30s, I thought my career was over. But by knowing my triggers and taking care of myself, I've been able to manage my condition for the most part. To be honest, my greatest difficulty today is explaining to producers in my business what my disease is and how it affects my body.



Tell us about your work with the 2019 Migraine World Summit.

The event took place in Los Angeles, and I was happy to be there to share my story. I believe people there who also suffer from migraines and Ménière's disease or other chronic pain conditions understood my frustrations and could find support by hearing my story. When people come together and discuss their issues, that can be a real source of healing.

Looking ahead, what projects are you working on now?

Well, I'm scheduled to star in new musical called *Death Becomes Her*, which is based on a 1992 movie starring Meryl Streep and Goldie Hawn. I'm also involved in a project about Brownie Wise, the woman behind the man who created



“When people come together and discuss their issues, that can be a real source of healing.”

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Right: Kristin's seventh album *For The Girls* pays homage to the women singers who influenced her career. **Below right:** Kristin at the theatre that bears her name in Broken Arrow, OK.



Tupperware. Brownie Wise was doing “Me Too” way before anyone had ever heard of “Me Too.” I also filmed a Netflix movie coming out later this year called *Holidate*. And, if I can, I'd like to mention my support for two charities that are dear to my heart. One is an annual Broadway Bootcamp that I started in 2015 in Broken Arrow. It provides young Broadway hopefuls with the opportunity to take classes, hold performances and learn from top mentors in the entertainment industry. The other is my partnership with the Broken Arrow Performing Arts Center (BAPAC) Foundation. It's the cornerstone of the arts district in my hometown, and I'm really proud of it.

Any final piece of advice?

I want everyone who is suffering from migraines or Ménière's disease or chronic pain in general to know that they're not alone. It's also important to share what you're going through with those you love and trust. I've found that having that kind of emotional support provides me with the strength to carry on. ■



Making the Pain Go Away

CHRONIC PAIN can have a debilitating effect on the quality of life. Pain management physicians can help alleviate patients' pain and often identify the underlying cause. Community Healthcare System hospitals offer pain clinics where patients can receive evaluations and a variety of treatments.

“We have a big tool kit to treat someone with pain,” says Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist Nikhil Shetty, MD, who cares for patients in the Pain Center of St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart. “It's important to be evaluated by a pain physician to look at each of the possibilities and develop an individualized treatment plan for that person.”

More conservative approaches to pain management often prove successful, Shetty says. These may include physical therapy, stretching or even over-the-counter medications or ointments. Common outpatient procedures may include epidural injections, nerve blocks or radiofrequency ablations.

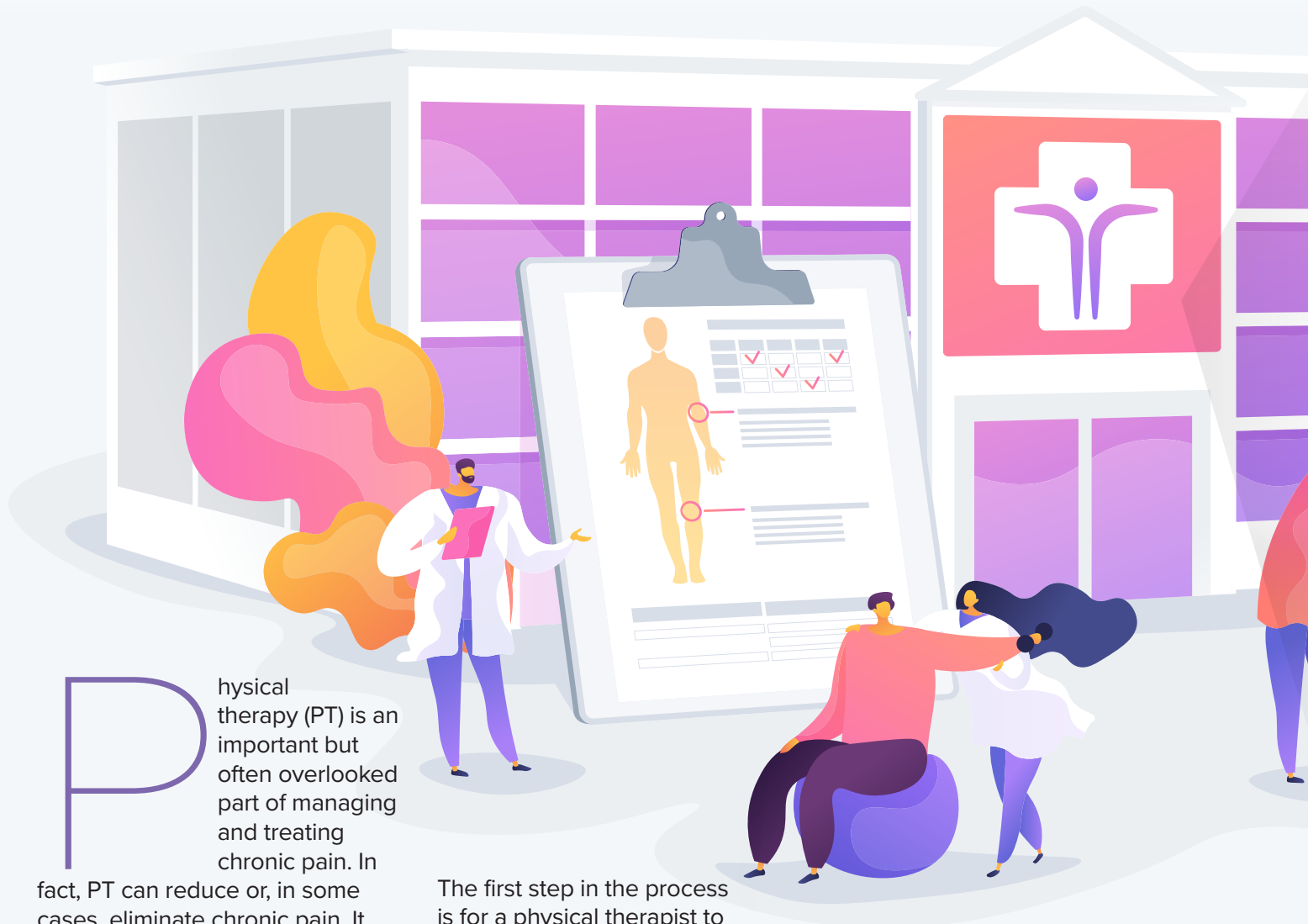
Pain Centers Offer Relief



To learn more about Pain Management services at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System: Community Hospital, St. Catherine Hospital and St. Mary Medical Center, visit COMHS.org/services/pain-management. For a physician referral call 219-836-3477 or 866-836-3477.

Physical Therapy:

A Smart Choice If You Are Experiencing Chronic Pain



Physical therapy (PT) is an important but often overlooked part of managing and treating chronic pain. In fact, PT can reduce or, in some cases, eliminate chronic pain. It can also greatly improve the quality of life of patients by helping them be more active and independent. Physical therapists are specially trained to teach exercises and techniques that help patients regain their strength, mobility, balance and range of motion. They are experts not only in treating pain, but also identifying its source.

The first step in the process is for a physical therapist to perform an evaluation. An individualized treatment plan is then developed to address the patient's specific challenges and goals, either on an inpatient or outpatient basis, depending on the patient's needs and the severity of the condition. Your physical therapist has a wide variety of therapeutic strategies and treatment options to choose from.

Manual Therapies

Manual therapies can include stretching and soft- or deep-tissue massage, which can decrease pain and promote healing by helping muscles relax and boosting circulation.

Exercise

In many cases, physical therapy involves working out on specially designed equipment such as a treadmill, stationary bike, parallel bars, steps/stairs, poles, pulleys, free weights, and other ergonomic aids. All of these different exercises can be used to strengthen muscles and improve flexibility to heal painful joints.

Ultra-sound

This therapeutic technique delivers deep heating to the soft tissues of the body, including muscles, tendons, joints and ligaments.

Hot & Cold Therapies

Treating pain with hot or cold can often reduce inflammation, relieve pain and promote healing. However, knowing which situations call for heat, and which for cold, can be important. In general, ice is used to treat acute injuries or pain in order to reduce inflammation and swelling. Heat, dry or moist, works in the opposite manner. It promotes circulation and is often used for muscle pain or stiffness.

TENS

(Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation) This therapy uses low-voltage electrical current that comes through electrodes attached to the skin to provide pain relief.

Education Is Key

One of the most important responsibilities for a physical therapist is teaching patients proper techniques and providing information they can use after their therapy has concluded. These techniques may include proper posture alignment when walking and sitting, lifting techniques, ongoing exercises and strength training. Equipped with this information, patients can continue their therapy at home, improving their health and significantly increasing their ability to manage their pain or stop a reoccurrence.

Physical Therapy

Physical therapy can be arranged with a physician referral through the hospitals of Community Healthcare System or any of the many outpatient facilities across Northwest Indiana. Visit COMHS.org/therapy-services for more information.

Although PT is usually arranged through your primary care physician, in many cases, your health insurance will often cover physical therapy without a physician referral. Be sure to check with your provider and with your health insurance administrator. ■

Sources: APTA, Healthline.com



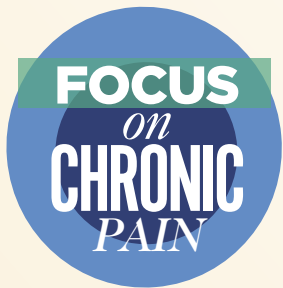
Find Relief from ALLERGIES

Kristin Chenoweth was diagnosed with Ménière's disease (see story on page 2) after seeing an otolaryngologist, more commonly known as an ENT, a physician who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the ear, nose and throat. Allergies are one of the most common disorders that ENTs treat every day, especially if patients are suffering from nasal congestion, post nasal drip, recurring sinusitis (inflammation or swelling of the tissue lining the sinuses), or a cough that won't go away.

If you suffer from allergies, you're not alone. More than 100 million Americans suffer from allergies. The most common allergies include hay fever and allergic reactions to insect bites, food and drugs. Allergy symptoms typically include sneezing, itching of the nose and eyes, a runny or stuffy nose, and watery, red or swollen eyes, but the symptoms can vary depending on the type of allergic reaction. Allergic reactions can affect your airways, skin, digestive system, sinuses and nasal passages. The reactions can range from mild to severe, even life-threatening. If you think may have allergies, don't suffer needlessly. Talk to your primary care physician about your symptoms. ■

Find Relief from Allergies

For a list of ear, nose and throat specialists or otolaryngologists in your area, call the free physician referral line for the hospitals of Community Healthcare System, 219-836-3477 or 866-836-3477. Online, click on COMHS.org/find-a-doctor.



Finding The Help You Need To Treat **Chronic Pain**

Your Guidebook from Community Healthcare System

**ALL THE
WAYS
WE CARE**



ARE YOU LIVING WITH chronic pain? If you are one of the 50 million Americans who do, Community Healthcare System is here to make sure you or a loved one don't suffer needlessly. In this article, we provide helpful information about the four most common types of chronic pain—arthritis, nerve pain, lower back pain and migraine headaches—as well as guide you to the medical professionals who can provide the help and expertise you need.

Arthritis

About 54 million American adults have some form of arthritis, and that number is climbing as baby boomers grow older. Simply put, arthritis is inflammation of the joints. There are 147 joints in your body, and almost any joint in the body can be affected, but arthritis usually strikes in the hands, hips, knees, feet and spine.

Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is the form of the disease most prevalent in people 60 and older. This degenerative joint disease occurs when there is a breakdown of cartilage in the joints. The less cartilage there is, the greater the pain. In the worst case, bone rubs against bone. The pain and stiffness associated with osteoarthritis can be severe, even debilitating.

There is no known cure for osteoarthritis, but there are several

remedies that can relieve or eliminate the pain. For example, a physical therapist can create a customized exercise plan that can strengthen the muscles around the joint, increase your flexibility and reduce your pain. You can also consult an occupational therapist, who can teach you the techniques that put less stress on your joints during daily activities.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is an autoimmune disease that occurs when the lining of a joint becomes inflamed. It's a serious, painful and often debilitating condition. Treatment usually involves a combination of medications, regular exercise and physical therapy. Surgery is another possibility.

► **Which Medical Professionals To See:**
Your primary care provider or a rheumatologist



Nerve Pain

Nerve pain, also known as neuropathic pain, is usually experienced as a stabbing, prickling, burning or tingling sensation. Often caused by damage or irritation to a nerve, neuropathic pain can be the result of a variety of medical issues. Medications such as anti-depressants and pain relievers are usually the first treatment used to relieve nerve pain. Electrical stimulation is another option in some cases. When the nerve pain is caused by diabetes, managing the disease is often the first priority. Cold packs and splinting can be used for carpal tunnel.

Diabetic Nerve Pain

Up to 70 percent of people with diabetes will suffer from nerve damage. If you are a diabetic and are experiencing burning or numbness in your feet, see a medical professional immediately.

Autoimmune Diseases

A variety of autoimmune diseases can produce symptoms of nerve pain. These include multiple sclerosis, lupus and inflammatory bowel disease.

Carpal Tunnel

Carpal tunnel is a common condition that causes pain, numbness, tingling and weakness in the hand and wrist. It occurs when too much pressure is placed on the median nerve in the wrist.

Fibromyalgia

About four million American adults suffer from a condition called fibromyalgia, which causes pain all over the body as well as fatigue, sleep problems, and mental and emotional distress. Fibromyalgia can also cause a higher sensitivity to pain.

► **Which Medical Professionals To See:** Your primary care provider (for all), or an endocrinologist (*diabetic nerve pain*), a rheumatologist (*diabetic nerve pain and fibromyalgia*) or an orthopedist (*carpal tunnel*)

Lower Back Pain

About 80 percent of American adults experience low back pain at some point in their life. In fact, more than 25 percent of adults say that they've experienced low back pain during the past three months. Back pain that lasts more than 12 weeks is considered chronic. About 20 percent of people who experience low back pain will develop chronic back pain. In those cases, a physical therapist can use a variety of techniques to relieve the pain and then, after the pain decreases, teach exercises to keep the pain from returning. In the most severe cases of back pain, surgery may be an option. Lower back pain has several causes, including:

Disc Degeneration

A common cause of low back pain, this condition occurs when the discs that act like shock absorbers in the spine wear out. Herniated or ruptured discs occur when the discs in the spine become compressed and bulge outward or rupture, irritating a nearby nerve.

Sciatica

Sciatica occurs when a herniated disc or bone spur compresses the sciatic nerve, the longest nerve in the body. The sciatic nerve branches from the lower back through the hips and then down each leg. The most common symptom is pain that radiates from the lower back down the side of the legs. Numbness, tingling and weakness in the leg can also occur.

Spinal Stenosis

This painful condition occurs when the spinal canal, located in the lower back, narrows and reduces the space for the spinal cord and nerves, which causes leg pain, numbness and/or tingling.

► **Which Medical Professionals To See:** Your primary care provider, a physical therapist or an orthopedist

Migraine Headaches

Recent studies estimate that 12 percent of adults in the United States have experienced a migraine headache and four million have chronic migraines. The severe throbbing pain of a migraine, usually felt on one side of the head, is often accompanied by nausea, vomiting and extreme sensitivity to light and sound. The attacks can last for hours, even days, and can be completely debilitating.

Fortunately, both pain-relieving and preventive medications are available if you suffer from migraines. You should definitely talk to your provider about taking preventive medications if you are experiencing four or more migraines a month. Lifestyle changes, such as having a regular sleep schedule, getting plenty of exercise, and reducing stress, can also help prevent migraines or reduce their severity.

► **Which Medical Professionals To See:** Your primary care provider or a neurologist

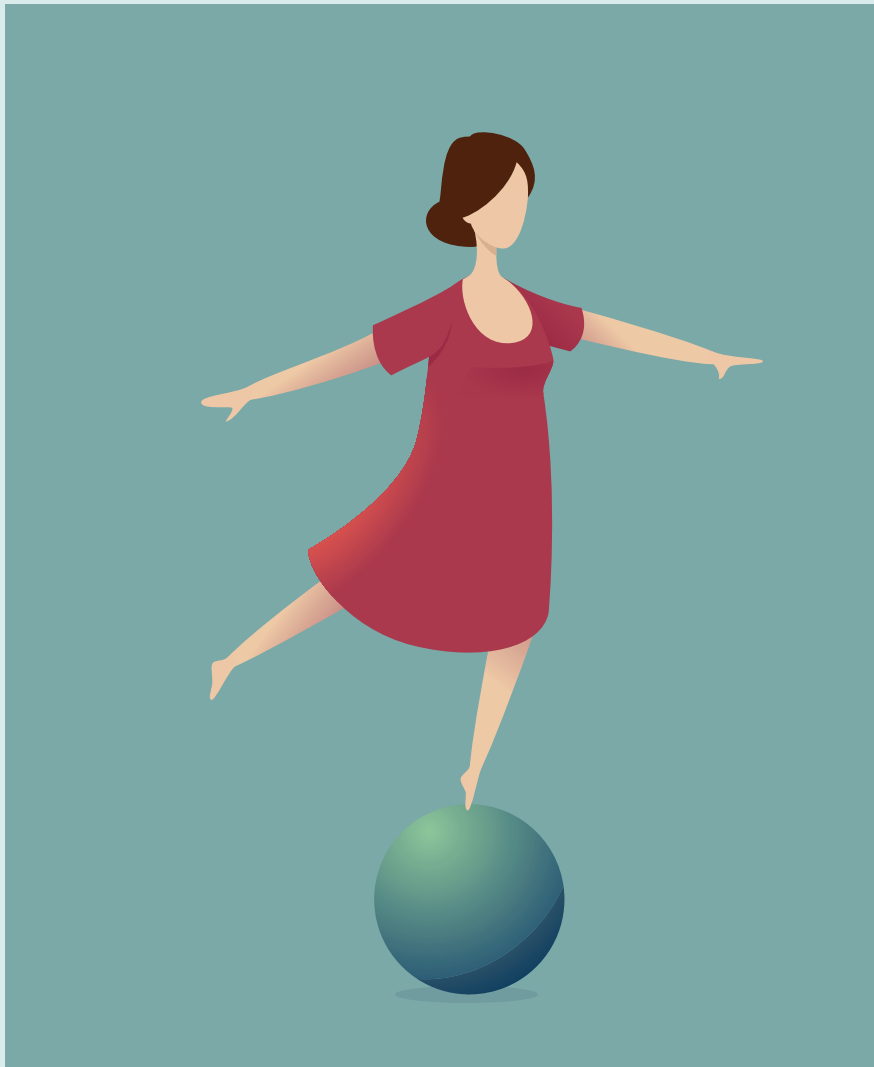
Find a provider



Visit our free online directory at COMHS.org/find-a-doctor or call 219-836-3477 or 866-836-3477.

Sources: CDC, migraine.com, Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic, webMD

Balancing Act



Dizziness therapy can help to
rebalance your life

by Debra Gruszecki

AS A WOLF LAKE Terminal lab technician, Roberto Cervantes relies on chemistry to tell when a

product is in balance or needs an adjustment. He had always been an active person, but had to slow down recently when he started experiencing dizzy spells. One day he felt so woozy that he fell as he bent over to tie his shoes. That got his attention and he realized that maybe he needed an adjustment.

“I needed to know what was causing this,” Cervantes says. He visited his primary care doctor who suspected Cervantes had a balance disorder.

After an MRI and a head scan ruled out other potential disorders of the brain and spinal cord, Cervantes was referred to the Dizziness and Balance Clinics of Community Healthcare System. The hospital system operates five such centers across Northwest Indiana: Community Hospital, Munster; Community Neuroscience & Sports Medicine Center, Schererville; Community Outpatient Center, St. John; St. Catherine Hospital, East Chicago and the Valparaiso Health Center of St. Mary Medical Center, Valparaiso.

“I felt better after two sessions,” Cervantes recalls. “I told my therapist, you’re my miracle.”

St. Catherine Hospital outpatient physical therapy supervisor Geoff Ritter says Cervantes was diagnosed with benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV). BPPV is a condition created when tiny calcium crystals in the inner ear shift to another part of the ear responsible for maintaining balance. When this shift happens, a person can feel as if the world around them is spinning.

Ritter taught Cervantes a series of positional maneuvers and exercises to shift the stones back where they belonged to help regain balance control. Vestibular rehabilitation is a specialized form of therapy used to improve balance and reduce dizziness symptoms associated with inner-ear/balance disorders.

I felt better after two sessions,” Cervantes recalls. “I told my therapist, you’re my miracle.”

Dizziness can lead to falls and that can lead to higher mortality rates, more injuries and more hospital admissions. Fall risk and avoiding falls is a big area of focus, says Dave Hudak, director of Outpatient Services at St. Mary Medical Center.

“Effective physical therapy can significantly help reduce your risk of falls by improving lower extremity strength and balance,” explains Hudak.

The healthcare system’s Dizziness and Balance Clinics use



NeuroCom® balance equipment diagnostic technology to test different sensory systems in an individual to help identify reasons for their balance deficits. A specific and appropriate exercise program is then developed for each individual.

“Accurate diagnosis is integral to effective and successful treatment and outcomes,” explains Lisa Sheehan, supervisor of Physical Therapy at the Community Neuroscience & Sports Medicine Center. “We can evaluate for BPPV which is very common in the elderly population and causes dizziness, imbalance and increased fall risk. The majority of our patients complete this testing as a part of the evaluation process.”

The elderly aren’t only susceptible to balance disorders. Balance function involves effective use of information from our vision, muscles and joints and vestibular system (inner ears) for control under changing situations. Vision impairment, lower body weakness, Vitamin D deficiency, foot pain,

Above: Physical therapist Geoff Ritter works with Roberto Cervantes using the Biodes Balance System™. The advanced technology is a balance testing and training machine that provides the therapist feedback on the patient’s posture, stability, weight-bearing load per side and risk of falling.

medications such as tranquilizers and antidepressants, diseases such as Parkinson’s, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s and cardiac conditions can impair sense of balance.

“Prevention is key,” Ritter says. If you’re feeling weakness, experience frequent dizziness or falls, struggle with walking on gravel, grass or a routine task, it’s a good idea to talk with your doctor.”

Physical and occupational therapists create individualized, results oriented treatment plans that focus on decreasing dizziness, enhancing balance and improving functional independence and safety in your life. ■

Find Your Center



To learn more about Dizziness and Balance Clinic services at five convenient locations, visit COMHS.org.



Life after Weight Loss Surgery

What to know about undergoing a bariatric procedure

by Elise Sims

JACKI OSENKARSKI had been trying to lose weight on her own for as long as she could remember. She was overweight as a child, teen and adult. Through the years she had attended different weight loss programs determined to lose weight by herself. In the beginning she would lose weight quickly then hit a plateau and stop losing altogether. She eventually would quit and eat her way back up to her starting weight and then gain even more.

“I was unhealthy, unhappy and extremely frustrated,” Osenkarski says. “I was a type 2 diabetic, taking five shots of insulin each

day. I was on two different blood pressure medications, cholesterol medication and more totaling 15 different medications. My weight was taking a toll on my heart health.”

This unhealthy cycle continued until she attended a Healthy 4 Life seminar in April of 2019, and her yo-yo dieting finally came to an abrupt halt. There she learned that Community Healthcare System’s Healthy 4 Life individualized care program of medical weight loss, bariatric surgery, lifetime wellness, fitness, dietary and psychosocial counseling helps to ensure that patients stay healthy; lose weight and keep it off. With on-site locations at St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart and Community Hospital



Above: Jacki Osenkarski was frustrated with her own weight loss attempts before hearing about Healthy 4 Life’s best practices’ approach to individualized care.

Right: After attending a free weight loss seminar, Osenkarski learned that Healthy 4 Life’s individualized care program of medical weight loss, bariatric surgery, lifetime wellness, fitness, dietary and psychosocial counseling helps to ensure that patients stay healthy; lose weight and keep it off.

in Munster, the Healthy 4 Life program offers convenient access to comprehensive services necessary for long-term weight loss success.

“I cried when I realized I wouldn’t be alone anymore,” Osenkarski explains. “At Healthy 4 Life, everyone truly cares about you and helped me find the right weight loss choice for me. I had a whole team behind me: my surgeon Dr. Stanish, my bariatrician Dr. Haddadin, nurses, dietitians and exercise coaches to offer so much support and encouragement. A year after gastric bypass surgery,



I have lost 90 pounds (and counting).”

Beyond just the number on the scale, though, her surgery has dramatically improved her health: she no longer needs insulin or cholesterol medications and she has reduced the number of

“At Healthy 4 Life, everyone truly cares about you and helped me find the right weight loss choice for me. I had a whole team behind me.”

medications she takes to control her blood pressure. Her overall health and energy levels have improved, too.

“I have way more energy for my grandchildren,” Osenkarski says. “On a trip to Disney World, I was able to get on and off the rides without a struggle and walk so much easier around the park.”

Those improvements didn’t come without careful planning and consideration, along with a supportive network of family, friends and healthcare providers.

“At Healthy 4 Life, our patients are treated like members of our family” says Debi Pillarella, director of Bariatric Services. “Everyone on our staff is passionate about helping patients improve their health and empowering them to adapt a healthier lifestyle.”

Many weight loss programs rely on significant unrealistic restriction and focusing the patient on having more willpower, explains Osenkarski’s bariatrician Fadia Haddadin, MD, on staff at St. Catherine Hospital in East Chicago and Community Hospital.

“In contrast, we use experts in a variety of disciplines (dietitians, exercise physiologists, bariatric nurses, weight loss physicians called bariatricians, bariatric surgeons (for those interested in surgical weight loss) and

psychologists, to come together using the evidence and best practices known to individualize each patient’s plan for the rest of their life. Losing weight is not that hard. Honestly, keeping the weight off is the biggest challenge.”

There are three keys to successfully keeping that weight off, according to Haddadin.

“Desire is first and foremost,” she says. “Our most successful patients tell us they were over being unhealthy, having extra weight, etc., and wanted to do this for themselves.”

“Second, they need to follow our advice to a T,” she says. “Those who follow the program guidelines do very well long term. Those who only halfway follow the plan, get halfway results.”

“It’s also important to stay connected,” Haddadin says. “Having a powerful medical, surgical and integrated health team all located in one place so each patient stays on track and has accountability is key. Patients who attend their follow up appointments do much better than those who do not. In addition, Healthy 4 Life offers monthly support groups and newsletters with recipes and Facebook LIVE events to stay connected.” ■

Become a Healthier You



Attend a free webinar or seminar “Weight Loss Surgery Is It Right for Me?” to learn more about individualized options for losing weight. Classes are held monthly through Community Hospital, Munster, St. Catherine Hospital, East Chicago and St. Mary Medical Center, Hobart. Go to COMHS.org/overit to learn more.

TMIST target:

personalizing women's care

Local women have access to national breast cancer trial through the Community Cancer Research Foundation

by Elise Sims

PINK RIBBONS worn around the world serve as a symbol of unity in the fight against breast cancer and search for a cure. Those well-known ribbons also remind women of some important current recommendations: women 40 and older should have a yearly mammogram and an annual breast exam by a doctor or nurse practitioner, along with a monthly self-breast exam.

The Community Cancer Research Foundation through the hospitals of Community Healthcare System is now enrolling women in a new trial offered by the National Cancer Institute (NCI), called the Tomosynthesis Mammographic Imaging Screening Trial (TMIST).



The study aims to compare two types of digital mammography, 2-D and 3-D, for breast cancer screening. It also looks at whether certain women should have their screening mammograms annually or every two years.

“There has been much debate on this,” said Amber Kindt, RN, administrator, Community Cancer Research Foundation. “How often you screen, who benefits and who doesn’t, but our main goal is to help women with advanced breast cancer detect their cancer early and increase their chances of survival.”

TMIST researchers are enrolling healthy women, ages 45 to 74, who are already planning to get routine mammograms in the study. By taking part in TMIST, the more than 164,000 planned participants

We are hopeful that this trial will help us to better understand the potential benefits of looking for breast cancers in women with no symptoms.

will provide critical information that will help researchers learn how to most effectively screen women for breast cancer and in the future, make more informed decisions about screening. To date, across the nation more than 22,000 women have enrolled in the trial.

Mammography trial screenings are currently taking place at St. Mary Medical Center's Women's Diagnostic Center in Hobart and Community Hospital's Women's Diagnostic Center in Munster. The TMIST study is being coordinated through the Community Cancer Research Foundation by dedicated fellowship-trained breast radiologist Mary Nicholson, MD.

"We are hopeful that this trial will help us to better understand the potential benefits of looking for breast cancers in women with no symptoms through the use of tomosynthesis that is, 3D mammography," says Nicholson, who serves as regional director of Breast Imaging Services for Community Healthcare System. "Global experience with 3D mammography leads us to believe that it can show breast cancers,



especially 'aggressive' ones, earlier than 2D mammography, and this trial with thousands of women should help to define how much earlier."

TMIST is important to the future of breast cancer screening because it aims to provide knowledge about how to move beyond the current "one size fits all" approach to mammography where women are screened the same way based on age specific guidelines. The trial will help radiologists adapt a more personalized approach that tailors mammography for each woman based on her own genetics and individual risk factors for developing breast cancer.

"We are anticipating that through the TMIST study, we will learn more about the relationships among age, menopausal and hormonal status and breast density to the development of breast cancer," Nicholson says. "About 95 percent of breast cancers are NOT genetic, so more information is needed regarding why it happens to so many women every year. Until we can prevent breast

Above: Dr. Mary Nicholson serves as principal investigator for a trial offered by the National Cancer Institute (NCI), called the Tomosynthesis Mammographic Imaging Screening Trial (TMIST). The study aims to compare two types of digital mammography, 2-D and 3-D, for breast cancer screening.

cancer, our strongest weapon against it remains the detection of it at the earliest time we can."

The Community Cancer Research Foundation has been making a difference for cancer patients for more than 20 years. Through trials sponsored by the Foundation, local patients have been among the first to benefit from treatments that have helped to improve survival and are less invasive.

"The next step for those women who are interested in participating in the trial is to contact our office," Kindt says. ■

Want more information?



For a listing of active clinical trials at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System, visit www.mycrcf.com/trials.asp or call the Community Cancer Research Foundation, 219-836-6875.

Aging out of Pediatric Care

Knowing when your growing child
is ready for adult wellness

by Karin Saltanovitz

IT HAPPENS SO FAST. One day your child is taking his first steps and the next he is driving a car.

It may feel like just yesterday your baby had his first visit with the pediatrician, but as your child grows and develops, he will need to fly from the pediatric nest and start seeing a physician who treats adult patients.

For parents and some children, making this transition can be a bit overwhelming. For pediatricians, it is a sign of success.

“The best part of my job is watching my patients grow up and embark on their journey of being independent functioning adults,” says Chantal Walker, MD, a pediatrician with the Community Care Network. “I love to hear what colleges or universities they have been accepted to or what their plans are for the future. As children become older, their pediatrician in addition to being a physician, can become a mentor or confidante. Trust is extremely important in the doctor-patient relationship.”



Walker adds that when her patients leave the practice it is not always for the last time.

“I have been practicing long enough that some of them return with their own children,” she says.

Look at the primary differences between the medical specialties:

- A pediatrician offers specialized care throughout the developmental needs and milestones of children. They often see patients for their entire childhood and well into adolescence, typically from birth up to age 18.



Above Left: Internal medicine physician and pediatrician Ragini Bielski, MD, says between the ages of 13 and 15 children start answering more questions for themselves and getting used to the idea of being more personally responsible for their health.

Above Right: Community Care Network pediatrician Chantal Walker, MD, says as children become older, their pediatrician—in addition to being a physician—can be a mentor or confidante. Trust is extremely important in the doctor-patient relationship.

- A family practitioner is a pediatrician and internist combined into one specialty and cares for both children and adults.
- An internal medicine physician cares for adults.

Community Care Network physician Ragini Bielski, MD, who specializes in both pediatrics and internal medicine, sometimes has the opportunity of caring for the whole family.

When children are between the ages of 13 and 15, Bielski recommends parents start talking with them about making the change from a pediatrician to an adult wellness physician.

For children with chronic conditions, it's important to start looking for an adult medicine physician a year or two in advance.

“This is the age when children start answering more questions for themselves and getting used to the idea of being more personally responsible for their health,” Bielski says. “As they grow older they must feel empowered to discuss topics with their doctor even without a parent, so that they can develop good habits into adulthood. By age 17, it's good to start looking for an adult doctor so your child has a smooth transition of care.”

This is especially the case if there is a history of chronic medical issues that will follow the child into adulthood.

“Waiting until the last moment is not the right time,” Bielski says. “For children with chronic conditions, it's important to start looking for an adult medicine physician a year or two in advance.”

To find the right physician for your child at any age, schedule a consultation to learn more about the physician's practice.

“Consider your overall philosophy of medicine and what kind of care you are seeking. It's important that you and your provider agree on common goals such as vaccinations, up-to-date medical guidelines, and whole body wellness and preventive care,” Bielski says. “If you don't agree on these topics, it will make it hard for the doctor to give you advice;

similarly it will be hard for you to agree with your doctor.” ■

Want more information?



For more information about Community Care Network's providers, visit our free online directory at COMHS.org/find-a-doctor or call 219-836-3477 or 866-836-3477.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE



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Chenoweth



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Community Message

Working toward better health

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an important reminder of the significance of health and community, and of having access to expert care when you need it most.

One of the ways we are reaching out to help build healthier communities is through our new digital magazine, *Healthy Community*. Each quarter we will post current information to COMHS.org that aims to improve the quality of life and health in Northwest Indiana. Education is an essential component of our healthcare continuum that spans the spectrum from illness to wellness.

We also will provide valuable information about leading edge diagnoses, treatments and medical research available through the hospitals of Community Healthcare System. You also will meet patients whose lives have been saved and enhanced by advanced technologies, access to national research trials and studies or important new initiatives in care.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of *Healthy Community*. When it comes to your health, we're all in this together. ■



Donald P. Fesko, president and chief executive officer, Community Foundation of Northwest Indiana, Inc.



When it comes to your health and well-being, we are all in this together

A challenging situation such as COVID-19 has emphasized the need for us to continue to focus and work together toward a healthier tomorrow.

At the hospitals of Community Healthcare System, you will find the right combination of skilled medical professionals, innovative technologies and education that can help you and your loved ones live life to the fullest. Count on quality care, close to home:

Community Hospital
901 MacArthur Blvd | Munster

St. Catherine Hospital
4321 Fir St | East Chicago

St. Mary Medical Center
1500 S. Lake Park Ave | Hobart

Community Stroke & Rehabilitation Center
10215 Broadway | Crown Point

COMHS.org

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