

HEALTHLINK

YOUR CONNECTION TO HEALTH & WELLNESS / SUMMER 2025

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to know about
weight loss drugs

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rehab tower on
the horizon

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community health

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» VALLEY HEALTH'S VIRGINIA BRAIN & SPINE
TEAM HELPED PATIENT ANGIE CLOWER RETURN
TO HER DAILY ACTIVITIES, PAIN FREE

 **ValleyHealth**

EXPANDING COVERAGE TO MEET YOUR NEEDS

Spine care is something we don't think about until we need it, whether an issue arises as a result of trauma or a spinal deformity such as scoliosis finally becomes unbearable. Valley Health has an exceptional spinal team that provides both nonsurgical and surgical care, including minimally invasive and complex surgery. As the community grows, our spinal program has expanded to meet your needs.

We also want to highlight the building of our new rehabilitation tower in partnership with the Michigan-based Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation team. Consolidating all our Winchester-based rehab services at one place, located on the Winchester Medical Center campus, will make it easier to receive care.

Also in this issue, we delve into GLP-1s and learn more about our Stronger Together campaign and how the funds raised will aid in improving our community health. We are so close to achieving our \$20 million goal.

We hope you enjoy your summer issue of *HealthLINK* and stay healthy. As always, Valley Health is proud to be your hometown health care partner and friend.

On the cover: Patient Angie Clower received expert care from neurosurgeon Charbel Fawaz, MD, at Valley Health Virginia Brain & Spine.



Mark Nantz in Additional Leadership Role

Valley Health President and CEO Mark Nantz was recently elected as the chairman of the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA). Nantz previously served as the vice chairman of the organization. The VHHA is an alliance of 111 hospitals and 26 health delivery systems that develops and advocates for sound health care policy in the commonwealth. Nantz's term will be for one year.



Valley Health System

Serving Our Community by Improving Health

HealthLink

The magazine of Valley Health System
Serving the Northern Shenandoah Valley, the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and the surrounding areas

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- Tonya Smith, President, Winchester Medical Center

The information contained in *HealthLINK* is not a substitute for professional medical care or counsel. If you have medical concerns, consult a medical professional. A list of physicians, specialists and other care providers is found at valleyhealthlink.com/physicians.

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- Gregory Byrd, MD, Medical Director, Valley Health Medical Group
- Jeffrey Feit, MD, Chief Population and Community Health Officer, Chief Medical Information Officer
- Nicolas C. Restrepo, MD, Quality and Patient Safety Officer
- Kris Maddalena, Chief Nursing Officer, Winchester Medical Center

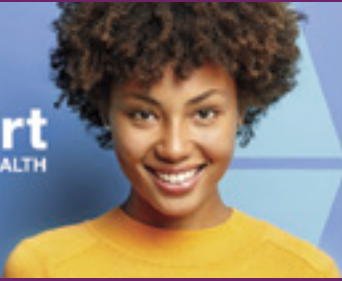
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HealthLink magazine is published three times a year. Its purpose is to provide health and wellness information to the community and to connect area residents with healthcare experts within Valley Health System.

- For more information about the many ways we serve the health and wellness needs of the community, visit valleyhealthlink.com/community.
- For location information, visit valleyhealthlink.com/locations.
- Contact questions@valleyhealthlink.com or 540-536-5325 to be added to our mailing list; view *HealthLink* online at valleyhealthlink.com/news.

MAKE THE MOST OUT OF MYCHART

Valley Health MyChart is a free, easy and secure way to keep tabs on your personal health information.

Benefits:

- **Immediate test results:** View your test results as soon as they're available.
- **Prescription refills:** Easily request refills for your medications.
- **Appointment reminders:** Never miss an appointment and keep track of important health reminders.

New Features:

- **Enhanced scheduling:** Schedule appointments for primary care, mammograms and more.
- **Itemized bills:** Access detailed billing information and pay your bills.
- **Tax documents:** Easily find and view your health care spending documents for tax purposes.
- **e-Check-in:** Save time by scheduling primary care appointments and checking in online.



Download the My Valley Health mobile app at valleyhealthlink.com/mychart or scan QR code to get started.

Training the Next Generation of Health Care Heroes

At Valley Health, we train tomorrow's health care workforce while delivering exceptional patient care. In 2024, we invested \$15.2 million in health care training to help address nationwide health care worker shortages. We currently offer hands-on educational programs at various locations across our health care system for individuals of all ages and stages of their professional career. Several of our schools offer fully paid programs—such as Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and EMT—while others are available at an affordable tuition.



- Our **CNA Program**, located at Warren Memorial Hospital, offers a 10-week course to kick-start a rewarding career in patient care, while **EMT** and **Paramedic** programs in Winchester equip students with the skills to provide critical emergency services.
- Our Winchester Medical Center **School of Medical Imaging** trains aspiring technologists in advanced diagnostic imaging techniques, such as X-ray and MRI, preparing them for certification and vital roles in health care.
- The **Cardiovascular Sonography Program**, also located at Winchester Medical Center, focuses on specialized ultrasound training, equipping students with the skills to assess heart and vascular conditions, leading to rewarding careers in this high-demand field.
- For nursing students and new graduates, Valley Health offers a **Nurse Externship Program** and a **Nurse Residency Program** at most hospital locations, blending clinical experience with mentorship to ease the transition into professional practice.
- Our **Community Pharmacy Residency Program** at Valley Pharmacy, based at Winchester Medical Center and Warren Memorial Hospital, is a yearlong training that develops advanced practice pharmacists skilled in medication management, patient counseling and clinical service expansion, while offering opportunities to serve low-income patients and explore specialties like ambulatory care and pharmacy management.
- The **Shenandoah Valley Family Practice Residency**, located in Warren County, provides a rural-oriented, accredited program for medical graduates, fostering skilled family physicians to serve our region.

Visit valleyhealthlink.com/careers and click on our “Learning Opportunities” tab to enroll and find out more about our educational programs.

Valley Health Expands Cardiovascular Services in Warren County

Warren Memorial Hospital (WMH) is expanding its cardiovascular care to meet the growing needs of the Front Royal and Warren County communities.

In the spring, cardiologist Neal Gaither, MD, of Winchester Cardiology and Vascular Medicine | Valley Health, began providing both routine and complex services at the hospital. Joined by a team of cardiologists and dedicated support staff, Dr. Gaither offers daily office visits, Emergency Department support and in-hospital consultations.

In addition to Dr. Gaither, the team of cardiologists doing rotations at WMH includes James Anderson, MD; Trisha Nashed, MD; and Abu Choudhary, MD. Available procedures include echocardiography (including transesophageal



Neal Gaither, MD

echocardiography, or “TEE”), stress testing, remote monitoring, arrhythmia management (including cardioversion) and treatment of acute myocardial infarction (heart attack), as well as a device clinic to check pacemakers and other devices. More invasive cardiology services include coronary angiography and stent placement.

The cardiac catheterization laboratory staff and interventional cardiologists rotate between WMH and Winchester Medical Center. Winchester Medical Center has a nearly 50-year legacy of nationally recognized comprehensive cardiovascular care. As an acute care

facility affiliated with Winchester Medical Center, WMH aims to bring exceptional and accessible cardiology services closer to the Front Royal community and surrounding areas, which have a large population of older adults at higher risk for cardiovascular conditions.

Cardiovascular services at WMH represent a significant outreach initiative of Winchester Cardiology and Vascular Medicine | Valley Health, in partnership with the Clyde A. Smith Heart & Vascular Center at Winchester Medical Center.

Cardiologists at WMH see patients in the Multispecialty Clinic, Suite 200, located on the main floor of the hospital. Referrals are required for an office visit. To find out more, call the office at **540-636-0627**.

This is the latest expansion of care at WMH. Last fall, vascular surgeon Emily Reardon, MD, began seeing patients in the same office (Suite 200). Dr. Reardon performs outpatient procedures including peripheral angiograms, venous ablations and varicose vein phlebectomies.



LOOKING OUT FOR YOUR EYES

Clare Kelliher, MD, is an experienced ophthalmologist with expertise in complex cataract surgery and ocular surface and corneal diseases. She is now performing surgeries at Warren Memorial Hospital. Dr. Kelliher takes time to educate her patients and enjoys including them in their care plan. To contact her office, call **540-536-5820**.



Ranking Among the Best

For the second year in a row, Warren Memorial Hospital (WMH) received The Chartis Center for Rural Health's **Top 100 Rural & Community Hospital** designation. More than 700 rural and community hospitals across the nation were evaluated for the award, which is based on performance across a broad array of criteria. The hospital's outcomes, cost, and billing process measures ranked in the top quartile in the nation. WMH is one of only two hospitals in Virginia to make the Top 100 list for 2025, with a total index rank of 92.9.

Connecting You to Care

Introducing women's health nurse practitioner Lindsey Ingram, NP

Lindsey Ingram, NP, is a women's health nurse practitioner seeking to help women of all ages better understand and take charge of their health and well-being. She brings a patient-centered approach to her patients at Valley Health Multispecialty Clinic | Commerce Avenue in Front Royal and Valley Health Shenandoah Memorial Hospital Multispecialty Clinic in Woodstock.

Q: Tell us about your background and experience in health care.

A: I went to the University of Pennsylvania for my four-year nursing degree. After that, I worked in inpatient medical surgical units in Illinois for two years. Then I went back to

grad school at Georgetown University to get my nurse practitioner degree.

Q: How did you become interested in women's health, and why is it important to you?

A: I became interested in women's health due to personal experiences in my own life and because I wanted to empower women to be informed about their health care. I think there's a lot of misinformation and scary stuff that people read online. Practitioners can help guide them with their questions and sift through this misinformation.

Q: What are some of your favorite things about your job?

A: I really love the genuine connections that I make with patients and getting to see people multiple times as we make progress on a condition we're working on. It's nice to have that continuity of care and to build relationships with patients. And then it's also nice to hear the success stories.

Q: What was your training like, and what do you bring to your practice now?

A: My classroom work touched on so many different things, including primary care and women's health. This includes care across the entire pregnancy through postpartum; care of adolescents and young adults; sexual wellness and relationships; adult care and screenings for cancers; medical conditions that can affect your periods, mental health and lifestyle; and care for older adults going through menopause.

Nurses bring a special perspective to health care. We are very focused on person-centered care and treating people as unique, sensitive individuals who have other lives outside of what we're doing here in the office. I have always loved how comprehensive and whole-person-centered nursing is.

Q: What would you like your patients to know about you?

A: I'm a very approachable and down-to-earth person. I'm proud of this because it makes people feel comfortable.

"I really love the genuine connections that I make with patients and getting to see people multiple times as we make progress on a condition we're working on."

—LINDSEY INGRAM, NP



For more information, please visit valleyhealthlink.com/ingram.

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Stronger TOGETHER

HEARTS • MINDS • CONNECTIONS



FUNDRAISING GOAL: \$20,000,000 | RAISED: \$17,000,000

Stronger Together is a three-year campaign that aims to raise \$20 million by December 2026. The funds raised will enhance cardiovascular capabilities, expand mental health care for teens and adults, and equip mobile health vans to bring lifesaving screenings, vaccines and health care access directly to area residents.

VALLEY HEALTH LAUNCHED THE SILENT PHASE OF THE CAMPAIGN ON JAN. 1, 2024.

- 454 supporters in year one
- 100 percent of our board members donated to the cause
- Over \$1.1 million given by Valley Health employees to date

HEARTS

GOAL: Expanding and updating current procedure rooms to increase treatment options and reduce wait times.

MINDS

GOAL: Opening a new mental health pavilion that will provide child and adolescent services and expand adult options and access in a supportive, therapeutic environment.

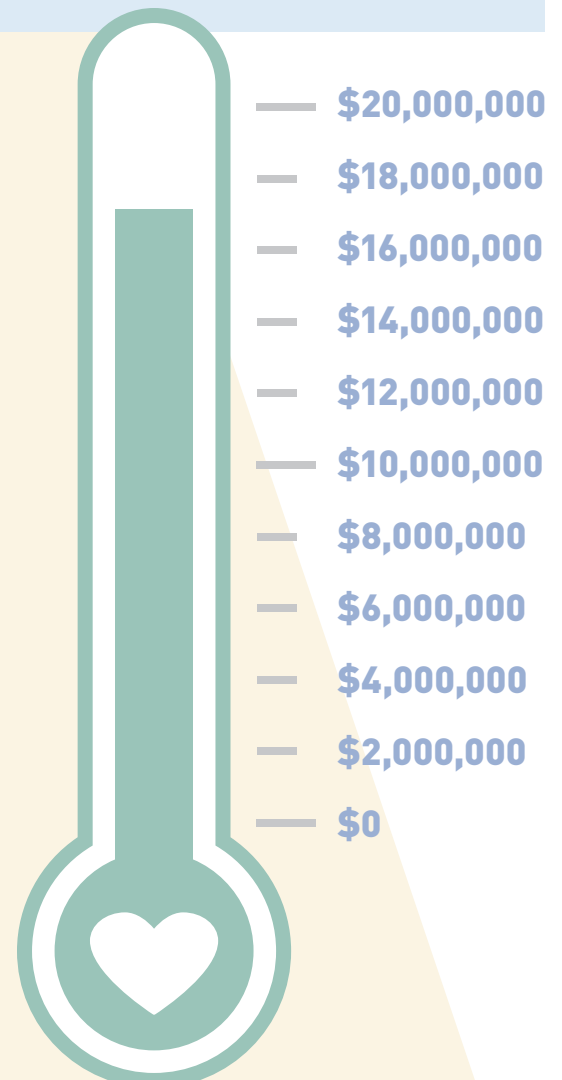
CONNECTIONS

GOAL: Making care possible for anyone, anywhere, by deploying a mobile health mammography unit and mobile health clinic to meet people where they work, worship, and live.

EVERY GIFT TOUCHES LOCAL LIVES

To support the Stronger Together campaign, visit valleyhealthlink.com/stronger.

For more information on Valley Health Foundations, contact the Foundations at 540-536-6939 or donations@valleyhealthlink.com.





RX FOR WEIGHT LOSS

What you need to know about using GLP-1 agonists

GLP-1 agonists—diabetes medications that can also help with weight loss—are making headlines as more people use them to shed excess pounds, control high blood sugar, and even protect against heart disease and worsening kidney disease. If you're considering using such medication, here's what you need to know.

"A good candidate for a GLP-1 medication has been struggling with excess weight despite lifestyle changes, has a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes or has a body mass index over 27, with at least one weight-related medical condition such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, prior stroke or a prior heart attack," says Givi Basishvili, MD, a bariatric and minimally invasive

surgeon in Valley Health's Metabolic & Bariatric Program. "Under proper medical and nutritional guidance, people who use them can achieve not only significant weight loss, but also prevent and sometimes cure weight-associated medical conditions."

GLP-1s include semaglutide (Ozempic, Wegovy), tirzepatide (Mounjaro, Zepbound), liraglutide (Saxenda, Victoza) and dulaglutide (Trulicity). These injected medications act like the natural GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide 1) released into your bloodstream when you eat. GLP-1s work for both weight loss and type 2 diabetes. In diabetes treatment, they signal the pancreas to produce insulin, which helps lower blood sugar. They also reduce the amount of

sugar produced by the liver. For weight loss, they slow down how quickly food leaves your stomach, making you feel fuller longer.

"It causes several effects, including insulin release from the pancreas, slowing stomach emptying and suppressing appetite," says Christopher M. Reed, MD, a bariatric and minimally invasive surgeon in Valley Health's Metabolic & Bariatric Program.

The medications are available by prescription from a health care provider. "Early in the course of treatment, you will need to see your health care provider frequently [sometimes every one to two months] to monitor for side effects and slowly increase the dose," says Dr. Reed. (Side effects can include nausea, diarrhea and constipation and usually improve over time.) "Injections are typically administered by the patient at home. Once on a stable dose, you will still require periodic follow-up." Many people take the drugs long term, he adds. "There is growing evidence that patients tend to regain weight when these medications are discontinued, but lifestyle changes can be helpful in limiting this."

Working with your physician to adopt a healthy diet and exercise routine while using a GLP-1 is key. As not all insurances cover GLP-1s outside of diabetes, it is important to understand your own coverage situation.

"At Valley Health, we have a caring and comprehensive team for patients interested in GLP-1 medications," says Dr. Basishvili. "The best way to get started is to call our office at 540-536-0010 and set up an appointment. Our staff can provide guidance and check your insurance for eligibility. No referral is necessary."

To learn more, visit valleyhealthlink.com/weightloss.



Expert surgical care from Valley Health Virginia Brain & Spine neurosurgeons David Salvetti, MD, and Charbel Fawaz, MD, optimizes outcomes for their patients.

State-of-the-Art Spinal Surgery

VALLEY HEALTH OFFERS ADVANCED SURGICAL TECHNIQUES AND COMPREHENSIVE CARE FOR PATIENTS WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF BACK AND NECK CONDITIONS

VALLEY HEALTH WELCOMES NEUROSURGEON HEATHER KISTKA, MD



Heather Kistka, MD, has joined Valley Health Virginia Brain & Spine. She is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's medical school and completed a residency in neurosurgery at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. There, she was drawn to the multi-

disciplinary nature of care for patients with tumors, subspecializing in neurosurgical oncology. Today, Dr. Kistka has a general neurosurgery practice that includes minimally invasive spine procedures; treating herniated discs, pinched nerves, and brain and spine tumors; and performing carpal/cubital tunnel surgery.

I am so happy I have my life back," says Angie Clower. Thanks to a remarkable spine surgery at Winchester Medical Center in September, she is cooking breakfast again most mornings at the popular diner she owns. In the afternoons, she plays with her six grandchildren.

Those daily activities had become nearly impossible. Clower, 51, owner of the Romney Diner in Romney, West Virginia, developed scoliosis (a side-to-side curving of the spine) and flat back (loss of the natural curve of the lower back) as an adult, leaving her with severe pain in her back, hips and legs. "My legs would go numb, and I would trip," she says. "I had trouble sleeping. I couldn't stay in one position for more than 20 minutes. Now I sleep great."

Clower's successful procedure illustrates Valley Health's comprehensive approach to spine care for a broad range of back and neck conditions. "The depth and breadth of what we offer is on par with any large university medical center," says Charbel Fawaz, MD, a neurosurgeon at Valley Health Virginia Brain & Spine who performed Clower's surgery. He specializes in minimally invasive spine surgery and complex spine procedures.

"Our team of surgeons and support staff have a high level of expertise. Plus, Valley Health offers advanced technology, so patients experience optimal recovery and results," says Dr. Fawaz. "What makes us really happy is that our patients see real improvements in their quality of life. And they refer their family and friends to us."

THE SPINE TEAM

At some point in our lives, 80 percent of us will have back or neck pain. Spine conditions can cause discomfort, numbness and difficulty moving the neck, torso, arms or legs, as well as other symptoms. At Valley Health, the diagnosis, management and treatment of back, neck and other spine-related conditions is the work of a team of neurologists, neurosurgeons, pain specialists, rehabilitation specialists and more. Each patient receives individualized care, says Lee Selznick, MD, chairman of the Neurosciences department and chief of neurosurgery.

"We provide both surgical and nonsurgical care for anyone with back or neck problems," says Dr. Selznick. "As our community grows, we grow with it, adding exceptional providers to neurosurgery, pain

management and physical medicine/rehabilitation. We are also developing clinical pathways to get patients to the right provider and service to optimize their treatment with us and with other providers in the community, including those in primary care, physical therapy and chiropractic care."

In other words, it's a "one-stop spine shop," says David Salvetti, MD, a general neurosurgeon at Valley Health Virginia Brain & Spine with expertise in complex multilevel spine surgery, spinal deformity correction and minimally invasive spine surgery.

"The collaborative structure between neurosurgery, pain management and neurology allows for comprehensive care for each patient," says Rehan Waheed, DO, medical director of interventional pain management at Valley Health and a physician with Valley Health Interventional Pain Specialists. "The neurosurgical team led by Dr. Selznick and Dr. Patrick Ireland, [MD], has been instrumental in our effort to build a full-service spine program. We are committed to this goal as a team and continue to see improved outcomes for the community."

“Valley Health offers advanced technology, so patients experience optimal recovery and results. What makes us really happy is that our patients see real improvements in their quality of life.”

—CHARBEL FAWAZ, MD



Neurosurgeons
Charbel Fawaz, left, and
David Salvetti, right,
with the surgical team
at Winchester Medical
Center.

PAINFUL CONDITIONS, EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

Up to 90 percent of people with back and neck pain do not require surgery. Nonsurgical, conservative options include physical therapy, chiropractic care, medication, hot and cold compresses, and advanced pain management techniques. For about one in 10 adults with back and neck pain, surgery may be the best option. “We consider surgery when we have exhausted all other options,” Dr. Fawaz says.

The range of spine conditions treated at Valley Health includes cervical and lumbar stenosis (narrowing of the spinal canal), herniated discs (slipped or bulging discs), spine injuries and fractures, tumors, scoliosis, arthritis, osteoporosis and more. Valley Health’s spine team also provides revision surgery—procedures to repair or update previous spine surgery if symptoms return or other areas of the spine degenerate or move out of alignment.

Many common spine conditions can be treated with minimally invasive spinal surgery (MISS). “We work through small incisions instead of opening up an incision four, five or six inches long,” Dr. Fawaz explains.

“MISS is the least disruptive way to get to the spine. Instead of cutting through muscle, we can spread apart the muscle fibers, do our work, then remove the ports we work through and close the incision. We don’t cut blood flow. Muscles stay vitalized and healthy for a faster, easier recovery. There’s less pain and it’s less mentally draining.”

Patients may go home the same day or the next day in many cases. They may return to an office job in as little as two weeks and to a more active job and/or more strenuous physical activity in four to six weeks.

Others may require open surgery, including complex procedures, says Dr. Salvetti.

“Complex surgeries are for more severe conditions,” he says. This may include fusion procedures, placing screws and rods to keep the spine in alignment, removing tumors, correcting deformities, fixing a spinal fracture, or revising a prior surgery. “In general, someone with a spine problem that results in back

“ I had trouble sleeping. I couldn’t stay in one position for more than 20 minutes. Now I sleep great.” —ANGIE CLOWER

pain and possibly leg pain but who also has an alignment problem could benefit from complex surgery. If your daily life is consumed by your back issues and the disability they cause, it may be beneficial.”

For some people, the results are dramatic, Dr. Salvetti notes. “People who were incapacitated are back to an active lifestyle,” he says. “It is the improvement in quality of life that we’re after. A good outcome is to see pain reduced by at least 50 percent.”

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

At Winchester Medical Center, surgical suites for spine procedures are equipped with game-changing technology that allows surgeons to achieve a new degree of precision and operative results that reduce pain and improve daily functioning. The neurosurgeons at Valley Health Virginia Brain & Spine, including Drs. Fawaz, Ireland, Salvetti and Selznick along with Heather Kistka, MD, and Robert Maurer, MD, are trained to use these state-of-the-art tools:

- **The Mazor Robotic Guidance System**

“This navigation system brings an unparalleled level of customization and presurgery planning to minimally invasive spine surgery,” Dr. Fawaz says.

The system can be used both during MISS procedures and in the planning and performing of open and complex procedures.

“With Mazor, I can plan the safest angles for inserting screws, the best correction for a rod, and how to work around structures like blood vessels and the spinal cord,” Dr. Fawaz explains. “We can simulate different solutions in advance of the surgery. Without Mazor, we would do this planning in the operating room during a procedure.”

Preplanning can reduce operating time in a complex procedure, so patients spend less time under anesthesia, Dr. Salvetti says. This can make spine procedures possible for older and more frail adults as well as those with diabetes, heart disease and other conditions that might rule out a longer surgery. During a procedure, the Mazor system provides live images of the surgical site, and a special arm guides the surgeon at the precise entry points and angles that were predetermined in the surgical plan.

- **Intraoperative computed tomography (CT)**

This system provides detailed three-dimensional images used two ways: to plan surgery beforehand and in real time for navigation guidance during a procedure.

“The benefits of CT navigation start with safety,” Dr. Salvetti says. “You are working around the spinal cord, around nerves exiting to different parts of the body at every level. This imaging technology allows us to place hardware with even more confidence.”

BACK TO NORMAL

Clower’s procedure took place over two days and included a fusion of vertebrae in her neck and decompression of vertebrae in her lower back.

“I used minimally invasive techniques and deformity correction techniques,” Dr. Fawaz says. “I used robotics for the hardware implantation as well as the intraoperative CT scan and navigation station to confirm everything was in optimal position.”

In late December, Clower returned to the Romney Diner. “My customers were so excited to see me,” she says. But another fan club closer to home may be even more thrilled. “Now I can get down on the floor to play with my grandchildren and pick them up,” Clower says. “I had missed that.”



To learn more, visit vabrainandspine.com or call 540-450-0072.

SURGICAL GOLD STANDARD

A new robotic surgical system augments offerings at Warren Memorial Hospital

General surgeon John T. English, III, MD. Inset: The robotics surgical team.



In January, Warren Memorial Hospital (WMH) began performing robotic-assisted general surgery procedures using the da Vinci Xi Surgical System.

“Compared with conventional laparoscopic surgery, the da Vinci allows the return of wrist motion in minimally invasive surgery,” says John T. English, III, MD, general surgeon at Front Royal Family Practice and Multispecialty Clinic | Valley Health. “This is huge because the procedures can proceed faster and with less tissue tension, which means less pain for the patient.”

The da Vinci Xi Surgical System at WMH has interactive robotic arms that the surgeon controls from a nearby console. Because the da Vinci’s arms are able to bend and rotate with a broader range of motion than the human hand, the system gives the surgeon far greater dexterity than could be achieved using a traditional approach. The stable robotic arms can be outfitted with a range of surgical instruments and can provide unparalleled steadiness and precision for the operating surgeon.



“Some people get the wrong idea when we tell them we have a da Vinci surgical robot,” Dr. English says. “It is important to remember that the surgeon is still doing the surgery, and the da Vinci is nonautonomous. Think of someone playing a great piece of Bach on the organ. The organ is making the sounds, but the organist is the one playing the instrument. In this case, the robot is the organ, and the physician is the musician playing the piece. It is a technology that will be adopted more and more, because it is the gold standard.”

The benefits of the robotic surgical system go beyond flexibility, precision and control. The 3D-HD visualization provides enhanced depth perception and highly magnified real-time visualization of small structures in the body. All of this taken together allows the surgeon to perform a highly complex procedure through small incisions, resulting in less pain, less tissue damage and scarring, and quicker recovery times for the patients.

The da Vinci is designed for use in body-cavity surgeries, primarily abdominal and intra-abdominal procedures such as hernia repairs and surgeries involving the gallbladder, appendix and colon. The first procedures at WMH began in January following extensive staff training in the use of the technology.

Page County resident Marie Amico had a cholecystectomy in January this year, during which Dr. English used the da Vinci robot to remove her gallbladder. Overall, Amico deemed the procedure a “great experience.”

“Dr. English insisted that I take a full week off of work, but honestly, I felt back to normal within a few days,” she says. “I followed his instructions, though. Being able to return to work and normal activities was great.”

“Adding the da Vinci robot keeps Warren Memorial Hospital competitive with other advanced surgical programs in the country,” adds Jennifer Coello, vice president,



Local Students Name da Vinci Robots

In March, 75 local elementary and high school students participated in a unique hands-on learning experience at WMH in which they had an opportunity to learn about and operate the da Vinci Xi and Mako surgical robots. The students also took part in a naming contest for the robots. The winning names were submitted by two Leslie Fox Keyser Elementary School students. “Apollo” was submitted by Avery Bass and was chosen for the da Vinci Xi. “Mr. Armstrong” was submitted by Adrian Hunter and was selected for the Mako.

operations, and administrator, Warren Memorial Hospital. “As we continue to recruit new surgeons to come to the area and join our team, a growing number of them will have been trained in robotics during residency and will be eager to use this innovative surgical system in their practice. Having this technology here at WMH allows us to continue to be at the forefront of providing high-quality care for patients in our community, and that’s what matters most to us.”

The da Vinci Xi Surgical System is the second surgical robot WMH has brought to the community in recent years following the addition of the Mako Robotic Surgical System for orthopedic surgery in 2022. Used for knee replacement surgery, the

Mako has an advanced imaging and surgical planning interface that creates a detailed 3D model of a patient’s knee. Surgeons can customize the procedure to the unique size and shape of each individual knee, allowing them to plan the precise areas for incision while using the steady robotic arm of the Mako to achieve a high degree of accuracy.

“The robot has been an important addition to our orthopedic surgery program at Warren Memorial,” says Mesfin Shibeshi, DO, a fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeon. “The individualized 3D preplanning is exceptional, and the robotic arm is a very stable and precise extension of the surgeon’s hands. This vital tool has helped us assist hundreds of patients achieve long-term relief of knee pain and immobility.”



ADVANCED REHABILITATION CARE CLOSE

Valley Health and Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Partner to Build a New Rehabilitation Tower

In partnership with Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation—one of America’s top 10 rehabilitation centers—Valley Health is building a new state-of-the-art rehab tower on the Winchester Medical Center (WMC) campus. Set to open in late 2026, the \$75 million facility will provide top-quality inpatient and outpatient care close to home with new features for patients and their families.

“Mary Free Bed is a recognized expert in rehabilitation care,” says Tonya Smith, Valley Health chief operating officer and WMC president. “Our partnership with them began in 2024 at our current rehab center on Cork Street in Winchester. Patients will be more aware of Mary Free

Bed at the new rehab hospital. They bring insight, expertise and resources that will help us provide the best possible patient care and recovery.”

KEEPING THE FOCUS ON PATIENTS

Called the Valley Health Winchester Medical Center Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Tower, the three-story facility will provide services to both adults and children.

Outpatient physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy services will be located on the first floor. “We’re bringing outpatient rehab services together in one place,” says Smith. “There will be a beautiful outdoor space with equipment for pediatric rehab, too.”

The second and third floor will feature an advanced inpatient rehabilitation center with 50 single-bed rooms—larger than Valley Health’s current 30-bed facility. But more patient rooms are just the beginning. “The way we’ve designed every aspect is specifically for the rehab patient,” says Kristin Brooks, vice president, system operations, for Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation. “We want to focus on efficiency during their time here. Even the color palette—including Freedom Orange, Mary Free Bed’s signature color, with bright accents in green, blue and yellow—is meant to energize and motivate patients to reach their end goal: going home to the life they love with family and caregivers.”



TO HOME

at Winchester Medical Center

DESIGN FEATURES WILL INCLUDE:

- **Easy access to WMC via a skybridge walkway:** “Patients at WMC who are transitioning to rehab won’t have to be transferred by ambulance,” says Jake Meza, vice president, operations, ambulatory, post-acute and community services at Valley Health. Patients will be able to continue seeing their WMC specialists without getting into a car or waiting until rehabilitation is over—and specialists can easily visit their patients in rehab.
- **Care technology for medically complex cases:** Built-in supplemental oxygen systems (both in patient rooms and in the rehab gym), on-site lung-clearing equipment and on-site kidney dialysis machines

mean the new hospital will be ready for rehab patients who need extra medical attention, says Brooks.

- **Lift systems in hallways and rooms:** “Patients who are unsteady on their feet or not yet able to fully bear their own weight can still practice walking with the lift systems in all units and in hallways,” says Brooks. Some rooms will also have lift systems to move patients safely from their bed to the toilet.
- **Facilities for working on real-life moves:** “We want patients to be able to practice things they would have to do every day at home,” says Brooks. “In the day room, there will be an apartment with a kitchen, laundry room and tub. There’s a car in the gym where people can practice getting in and out. It’s adjustable, moving up and down to simulate the height of your car at home.”
- **Space for loved ones:** “Family and loved ones are so important to patients during and after rehab,” says Brooks. “Our care is designed to integrate them in every way. There’s space in patient rooms if a family member wants to stay overnight, and family and caregivers receive training before a patient is discharged to go back home.” Having high-quality rehab nearby makes it easier for loved ones to visit, get training and support their family member, adds Smith.

INPATIENT REHABILITATION IN OUR COMMUNITY

Typically used by survivors of stroke, traumatic brain injury, and bodily injuries from falls and accidents, inpatient post-acute rehabilitation is an important step in recovery, Smith says. Patients undergo rehab for a minimum of three hours a day with 24/7 nurse support. The typical stay is about two weeks. The rehab tower will offer advanced equipment and treatment routines and feature the most intensive rehab program in the region, meaning families won’t have to drive long distances or choose less-intensive care options because of proximity, Meza notes. “Partnering with a rehab organization with more than 100 years of experience allows Valley Health to rapidly advance care in this important area,” he says. “Receiving care in a rehab hospital can mean a better recovery.”

A not-for-profit, Mary Free Bed operates a flagship rehabilitation hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with additional locations and partnerships throughout Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, West Virginia and now in Virginia with Valley Health. “Our mission is to restore hope and freedom through rehabilitation,” Brooks says. “Every patient we see has experienced a life-altering injury or diagnosis. In those moments, you can lose your independence—and sometimes, your hope. We focus on helping people reclaim both, so they can return home, rejoin their community and truly thrive.”

THE MARY FREE BED STORY

In 1891, a philanthropic group of women passed around a little purse in Grand Rapids, Michigan, asking that anyone named Mary or who knew a Mary contribute a dime toward a free bed at a local hospital for people who couldn’t afford health care. That bed grew to become the area’s first pediatric orthopedic clinic in 1920 and began offering rehabilitation services to adults in 1953. In 2024, Mary Free Bed was ranked in the nation’s top 10 Best Hospitals for Rehabilitation by *U.S. News & World Report*. Today, the Mary Free Bed Guild still governs the hospital and plays an important role in community fundraising.



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