Meritus Medical Center Achieves Magnet® Recognition

HEALTH INFORMATION FROM MERITUS HEALTH

STROKE: A LOCAL COUPLE’S STORY

ANNUAL WELLNESS VISITS

OPIOIDS: A CAUTIONARY TALE
Meritus Medical Center recently achieved Magnet® Recognition, the national credential for nursing excellence from the American Nurses Credentialing Center. Studies show a Magnet® Recognized hospital delivers higher patient satisfaction with nurse communication, availability of help and receipt of discharge information.

**MERITUS MEDICAL CENTER RECEIVES MAGNET® RECOGNITION**
- Only 8 percent of all U.S. hospitals have achieved Magnet® Recognition
- The only hospital in western Maryland and the tristate region to receive the recognition
- One of seven Maryland hospitals to achieve Magnet® Recognition.

**7 MARYLAND MAGNET® RECOGNIZED HOSPITALS**
- Anne Arundel Medical Center
- MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center
- Mercy Medical Center
- **Meritus Medical Center**
- The Johns Hopkins Hospital
- University of Maryland Medical Center
- University of Maryland Shore Regional Health (UMSRH)

**OTHER MAGNET® RECOGNIZED HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS**
- Mayo Clinic
- Cleveland Clinic
- MD Anderson Cancer Center
On a drive home from a West Virginia trip, Amber felt dizzy. By the time she and her husband arrived home, Amber had the worst headache she could ever recall. Soon after, she lost strength and sensation on her right side. "My husband and son were asking me questions, but I couldn’t put together a sentence," says Amber.

Amber’s husband Randy, a former paramedic, knew she was having a stroke. When they arrived at Meritus Medical Center’s emergency department, the stroke team sprang into action. From vital signs and a CT scan to blood work and a teleconsult by a University of Pittsburgh Medical Center neurologist, the team made every minute count. “People were flying around," said Randy. "I knew we had come to the right place."

Because of the expert stroke care at Meritus Medical Center, Amber regained her speech in a few days and experienced no other post-stroke conditions.

THE AHA MOMENT

As a nurse, Amber knew that her diabetes and high blood pressure played a role in her stroke. While recovering in the hospital, she met Allison, an inpatient certified diabetes educator. “She made me realize I had to own my diabetes," says Amber. Allison suggested easy switches for foods and gave Amber a meal plan. “It’s easy to get depressed and anxious, but Allison was so encouraging," says Amber.

For Amber, her stroke was a “what’s it going to take" moment. Today, she’s 50 pounds lighter, no longer on insulin and her blood pressure and blood sugar levels are much lower. With her medical background, she plans to help others manage chronic conditions.

ACT FAST

Amber emphasizes that everyone should know the signs and symptoms of stroke. And she adds, "Where you go for stroke care is so important." Meritus Medical Center recently received Primary Stroke Center redesignation from the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems.

Know the common signs of stroke, think FAST (see below) and call 9-1-1 to improve your chances of a positive outcome.

USE FAST TO REMEMBER THE WARNING SIGNS OF STROKE

- **Face:** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **Arms:** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **Speech:** Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is his/her speech slurred or strange?
- **Time:** If you observe any of these signs, call 9-1-1 immediately.

Source: National Stroke Association
THE IMPORTANCE OF ANNUAL WELLNESS VISITS

For many of us, an annual physical exam at our doctor’s office covers pressing needs, but leaves little time to discuss less urgent health and mental health issues.

To encourage a more in-depth discussion, Medicare introduced annual “wellness” visits. During these separate appointments, your nurse, care manager or provider collects information on your medical and social needs and includes these details in your care plan.

“These annual wellness visits allow primary care providers to develop a more comprehensive understanding of their patients,” says Douglas Spotts, M.D., FAAFP, Meritus vice president and chief population health officer. “And it empowers you, the patient, to play an important role in the future of your health.”

PHYSICAL EXAM VS. WELLNESS VISIT

You may think a “yearly wellness visit” is an annual checkup, but this second appointment is very different and patients on Medicare should know what to expect.

“This is a yearly medical assessment of your health that is afforded to any Medicare recipient,” says Dr. Spotts. “It does not take the place of your annual physical exam recommended by your provider.”

The purpose of the wellness visit is to enhance your plan to stay healthy. During the visit, a nurse, care manager or primary care provider will conduct a health risk assessment, make lists of your medications and medical equipment, review screening schedules and discuss a preventative health maintenance checklist.

“Social determinants of health such as the loss of a spouse, loss of income or changes in lifestyle are the kinds of things that can be uncovered during this visit that may otherwise have gone unknown,” says Dr. Spotts.

The Medicare Annual Wellness Visit is free to Medicare beneficiaries and is covered once every 12 months. More details are available at medicare.gov/coverage/yearly-wellness-visits. To find a primary care provider near you, visit meritushealth.com.

WHAT’S INCLUDED IN THE MEDICARE ANNUAL WELL VISIT

- Health risk assessment
- Patient medical history and family medical history
- Review of medications and medical equipment
- Preventative screening schedule and health maintenance checklist
- Referrals to health education or preventive counseling services
- Advance care planning
Opioids: A Cautionary Tale

Prescription opioids such as hydrocodone, oxycodone and oxymorphone are a class of drugs used to treat moderate to severe pain. Physicians may prescribe opioids after a major surgery or injury or for some cancer patients.

While opioids can effectively relieve pain, the widespread prescribing practices related to opioids has resulted in an epidemic of prescription pain medication misuse.

**OPIOID MISUSE**

According to psychiatrist Matthew Wagner, M.D., of Meritus Behavioral Health, problems related to prescription pain medications arise when a patient is prescribed opioids, but later develops tolerance as a result of long-term use. This causes an escalation in dosage, which in turn can lead to physical dependence.

Why are opioids so addictive? Opioids bind to and activate opioid receptors in the brain and body and release dopamine which causes a strong feeling of pleasure. This release reinforces the act of taking the drug and can result in addiction.*

**KNOW YOUR OPTIONS**

Dr. Wagner recommends you ask your doctor about any medications prescribed, especially opioids. It’s OK to ask about non-opioid alternatives (see at right) and to make sure your doctor is prescribing the best pain medication to treat your needs.

“If a patient is in pain, it’s the doctor’s responsibility to treat it, but that’s not necessarily an opening for opioids to be prescribed unless they are the best solution for that individual,” says Dr. Wagner.

**ADDICTION SUPPORT**

The physicians, nurses and staff at Meritus Medical Center treat and care for patients with addictions on a daily basis. Recently, the hospital introduced a proactive way to screen for substance use and addiction. Emergency department nurses now screen everyone 18 years and older and offer appropriate patients a brief intervention by a peer recovery coach, and if needed, provide a referral to an addictions specialist.

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use and addiction, call the National Drug Helpline for 24/7 addiction support at 888-633-3239.

*Source: NIH, National Institute on Drug Abuse

**PAIN RELIEF WITHOUT OPIOIDS**

- Over-the-counter pain relievers such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory (ibuprofen) or an acetaminophen like Tylenol®
- Other prescribed non-opioid pain medications
- Injections such as nerve, trigger point, radiofrequency and epidural injections
- Physical exercise
- Relaxation techniques like yoga, belly breathing and guided imagery
- Physical therapy
- Massage therapy or acupuncture
- Counseling for support and to learn healthy habits of living to help manage pain

Meritus Medical Center emergency department nurses now screen everyone 18 years and older for substance use and addiction and offer appropriate patients an intervention by a peer recovery coach.
FARM FRESH GOODNESS

Did you know produce picked at the peak of ripeness is at its nutritional best? Joseph Fleischman, Meritus Medical Center’s executive chef, prefers the farm freshness of local fruits and vegetables. “Produce from the farmer’s market almost always tastes better,” says Chef Joe. “And the vivid colors are a reflection of the nutrients they contain.”

HERE ARE CHEF JOE’S FAVORITE IN-SEASON FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:
- Asparagus
- Kale
- Arugula
- Beets
- Broccoli
- Chard
- New potatoes
- Radishes
- Rhubarb
- Strawberries

Find Chef Joe’s recipes for Asparagus and Goat Cheese Frittata and Strawberry Rhubarb Compote at Meritushealth.com/recipes.

Meritus Medical Center Farmer’s Market, open every Tuesday from April–October, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., is located at Robinwood Professional Center Atrium, 11110 Medical Campus Road.

Your Health Matters offers you information to successfully manage your health, with healthy lifestyle choices, prevention of chronic diseases or management of your chronic conditions. The information offered here is not meant to take the place of health care providers. Share your thoughts or comments by emailing web@meritushealth.com.