

# hello **Healthy**

CELEBRATING THE HEALING POWER OF HUMANKINDNESS • SUMMER 2018

## **Weight-loss surgery at Mercy Hospital**

One man's amazing journey leads to a whole new life

## **The patient experience:**

We're all in this together



Memorial Hospital



Mercy Hospital Southwest

**MERCY AND MEMORIAL HOSPITALS:**  
connecting to our patients and community through humankindness



# We are all the patient experience

For the more than 3,000 physicians, nurses, staff, and volunteers of Mercy and Memorial Hospitals, the patient experience means delivering on our promise—to unleash the healing power of humanity.

As Kern County's largest health care organization, we often talk about percentiles, data, and goals, but ultimately, it is all about treating our patients and their families with kindness. We are dedicated to something more than medicine: the overall health of every person—mind, body, and spirit. Our healing mission to treat every patient that visits one of our care centers with dignity, respect, and compassion is woven tightly throughout our daily work.

In April, we celebrated Patient Experience Week

by recognizing the exceptional work of our care teams and staff. From surgical technicians to transportation, administration to housekeeping, we all play an important role in the patient experience.

We are grateful for the kind letters and messages patients and loved ones share with us about the care they receive at Mercy and Memorial Hospitals. They serve as a reminder of why we do the work we do and why we choose to work at Dignity Health—to create that exceptional health care experience and spread humankindness.

Have a story about great care at Mercy and Memorial Hospitals? We'd love to hear it!  
Email [jessica.neeley@dignityhealth.org](mailto:jessica.neeley@dignityhealth.org).

## “ IN YOUR OWN WORDS

**Sally:** *“I was totally blown away by the care that I received while I was at Memorial Hospital. From the receptionist all the way to the nurses and the doctor, the care they provided was beyond anything I had ever experienced before. I was treated like a human being instead of a number. I have already been telling everybody I know what a wonderful place [Memorial Hospital is] for the best care around.”*

*“The doctors and nurses in the Mercy emergency department saved my life. They were personable, yet professional, and they were competent and determined. They had everything under control, including me. The place ticked like a fine-tuned clock.”*

**Allyn:** *“I had our first baby at Memorial Hospital via emergency C-section. The staff were so amazing that we preferred to have our second baby at Memorial Hospital too. The staff and employees...are indeed the miracle workers on 34th Street.”*

**Larry:** *“Every person I dealt with at Memorial Hospital was pleasant. I was particularly impressed with all the assistants in the Cath Lab.”*



**Pam:**

*"My experience at Memorial Hospital... was nothing but amazing. Each and every [person] knew I had a goal to attend my daughter's wedding...and everyone helped me accomplish that. Thank you to everyone who helped me get better!"*

*"We are so grateful for the care my wife received at Mercy Hospital Downtown. We would like to thank the entire staff for the prompt, courteous, and informative services provided to my wife. At each step of the process—from entering the emergency room to being admitted to the hospital—the staff were friendly and helpful, and they helped put my wife at ease with their upbeat attitudes and smiling faces."*

**Daisy:** *"My experience was great [because of] my labor and delivery nurses, Liz and Stephanie. Thank you so much—I really appreciate everything you did for me and my baby. The world needs more nurses like you that genuinely care for their patients and love their job."*

**Tina:** *"I was very pleased with the care I received at Memorial Hospital. You have very kind nursing staff. I really liked my nurse, Ann. She had a smile the entire time I was there."*

# Saving brains, saving lives

Memorial Hospital offers specialized services for complex neuro disorders

When you're dealing with a life-threatening brain disorder, minutes matter.

Dignity Health's three Primary Stroke Centers at Memorial Hospital, Mercy Hospital Downtown, and Mercy Hospital Southwest are certified by The Joint Commission, which means that the services provided are tailored to meet the unique and specialized needs of stroke patients.

The Sarvanand Heart and Brain Center at Memorial Hospital is also proud to offer the most comprehensive neurology services in Kern County. Memorial Hospital's team of renowned neurologists provides special expertise in a variety of complex conditions affecting the brain.

Over the past decade, Memorial Hospital has made significant advances to its neuroscience program, including the addition of an eight-bed Neurological Critical Care Unit (CCU). The Neuro CCU is dedicated to treating patients with life-threatening brain conditions such as stroke, brain aneurysms, epilepsy, and meningitis.

Michele Shain, Senior Director of Memorial Hospital's Neuroscience and Cardiovascular Services, says the addition of this department means targeted care for critically ill patients.

"Neuro patients are different than some of the other patients that we care for," Shain explains. "We believe these patients should be cared for with an expertise specifically for them. This, in turn, can greatly improve their outcomes."



## Be prepared!

Visit [dignityhealth.org/bakersfield/stroke](https://dignityhealth.org/bakersfield/stroke) to:

- Get more information about Dignity Health's neurology services—including its three Primary Stroke Centers at Memorial Hospital, Mercy Hospital Downtown, and Mercy Hospital Southwest.
- Learn the symptoms of a stroke.
- Take a free stroke risk assessment.
- Get connected with a neurology expert.

**CLICK** 

## Beat-the-clock stroke treatment

Memorial Hospital's Sarvanand Heart and Brain Center also boasts some of the most advanced techniques in the treatment of stroke.

Memorial Hospital is a Joint Commission-certified stroke center and has earned Gold Plus Target Stroke Recognition from the American Stroke Association (ASA). Mercy Hospitals have also received Gold Plus Target Stroke Recognition by the ASA.

"We've built our program and processes and have been able to maintain an exemplary level of care over the years," Shain says. "It has to be a dedicated, focused effort."

Memorial Hospital has a team of highly skilled doctors available to rapidly respond and evaluate a patient presenting with stroke symptoms. When it comes to stroke care, time is of the essence. It's estimated that every minute a stroke goes untreated, roughly 2 million brain cells die.

Interventional neurology specialist Kiron Thomas, MD,





Kiron Thomas, MD, in the biplane interventional suite at Memorial's Sarvanand Heart and Brain Center.

## Specialists in neuro critical care

Patients in the Neurological Critical Care Unit (CCU) at Dignity Health – Memorial Hospital are cared for by a uniquely qualified doctor called a neurointensivist.

This type of hybrid physician is a neurologist with special training in treating critical care patients. These doctors, alongside a team of specially trained nurses, use standard intensive care unit (ICU) protocols and specialized neurological monitoring to manage critically ill patients and identify problems before permanent neurological injuries occur.

Memorial's Neuro CCU is led by Venkata Dandamudi, MD, a neurointensivist and interventional neurology specialist. According to Dr. Dandamudi, his department spent months studying the best-run ICUs across the country and now emulates those programs here at home.

“Neurocritical care is a game-changer, no question about that,” Dr. Dandamudi says. “More than ever, we are in a better position to help our patients. This is great for the community, and we ought to be proud. What we have started here is something completely different. Dignity Health and Memorial Hospital have done a terrific job putting this together in the right format, where it in fact makes a difference in the outcomes of our patients’ lives.”

Venkata Dandamudi, MD, and Kiron Thomas, MD, neurology specialists at Memorial Hospital.



is director of Memorial's stroke program. He says acting with urgency can mean the difference between life and death.

“The quicker you can deliver treatment, that could be the difference between whether the patient returns to meaningful, productive life or not,” he says.

Doctors at Memorial Hospital are able to administer lifesaving medication for stroke patients, on average, within 48 minutes of arrival. That's under the goal of 60 minutes, placing Memorial among the national benchmarks for its performance.

Memorial also uses cutting-edge technology to ensure that patients with neurological disorders receive the best care possible. One such device is in the biplane interventional suite.

This state-of-the-art device employs two rotating cameras to create 3-D views of blood vessels leading to patients' brains, helping doctors provide better treatment of clots that lead to stroke, as well as treat brain aneurysms. Currently, Memorial Hospital is the only hospital with this technology between Fresno and Los Angeles.

*“All these advancements have made a big difference, giving patients a lot more hope.”*

—Kiron Thomas, MD

# Surviving a stroke



## Care in the nick of time

Thomas Moshier is a man you can count on. He's always taken care of his family and friends the best way he could, says granddaughter Nicole Leishman.

"Growing up, whenever I was sick, he'd bring me 7UP and crackers," she says. "Anytime we ever needed him, he was always there and willing to help."

It's only fitting that his family and his friends at Dignity Health – Memorial Hospital (Moshier's son is a member of the Cath Lab team at Memorial) were there for Moshier when he faced a life-threatening stroke.

### A 'saving grace'

Moshier's story begins on Nov. 1, 2017, when his wife, Gloria Moshier, found him lying on the shower floor. She called 911, and an ambulance rushed Moshier, then 79, to Memorial Hospital for emergency stroke treatment.

Most strokes—including the one Moshier had—occur suddenly when the brain's blood supply is blocked by a clot. The longer the

brain goes without oxygen-rich blood, the greater the risk of severe complications.

At first, Moshier couldn't move part of his left side. Leishman feared he might be permanently paralyzed, even if he survived. But the specialized stroke team at Memorial Hospital worked quickly to remove the clot from Moshier's brain. Almost immediately, Moshier could move his left hand.

"That was his saving grace," Leishman says. "The stroke team at Memorial was able to get him in so quickly and get it taken care of."

Moshier's recovery hasn't been easy. He needed a feeding tube for a while. He also underwent extensive physical and speech therapy. The stroke has made it hard for him to speak. Still, his speech is improving. And overall, his quality of life is much better than the family thought it could be, Leishman says.

"Now he can do a lot of things," she says. Recently, Moshier fixed a car and a vacuum cleaner. Leishman expects he'll keep getting better. You can count on Moshier for that.

"That was his saving grace. The stroke team at Memorial was able to get him in so quickly and get it taken care of."

—Nicole Leishman



Adora Calistro is the only licensed continuous long-term monitoring EEG technician in Kern County. She works with patients at Memorial Hospital who have conditions such as epilepsy.

## Meet our brain detective

Giving new hope to patients with neurological disorders is one of the main reasons Dignity Health – Memorial Hospital's lead EEG Tech Adora Calistro has devoted herself to the neuro field for the past 35 years.

As the only licensed continuous long-term monitoring EEG technician in Kern County, she works with patients who have conditions such as epilepsy. Calistro administers an electroencephalogram (EEG) test to evaluate the electrical activity in the brain and pinpoint abnormalities.

She likens her work to that of a detective, unraveling mini-mysteries in the brain.

"Proper monitoring of brain events is vital to patient care," Calistro says. "It helps doctors deliver a correct diagnosis and prescribe proper medications, which ultimately means more productive lives for patients. To me, that's what it's all about."



# A new direction

A car crash, career change, and blossoming romance led Greg Ruloph to the Weight Loss Surgery Program at Mercy Hospital

For many people struggling with their weight, committing to a healthier lifestyle can be a painstaking journey. Greg Ruloph's story is no exception.

It began when he nearly lost his life while carpooling to work as a correctional officer near Reno, Nevada. Ruloph was involved in a car crash that left him with numerous serious injuries.

For the next year, Ruloph endured a grueling recovery that limited his ability to be active. And while he always carried extra weight, it was during this period that Ruloph gained even more. At his heaviest, he tipped the scales at 375 pounds.

"I was always a big-boned and heavy guy, but while I was recovering, I basically just had to sit around with nothing more I could do but watch television and eat," he says.

## A calling—and a new love

It was also during his recovery that Ruloph found a new career. During his treatment, he saw the need for more male nurses and decided to move to Bakersfield to pursue a nursing degree. Little did Ruloph know at the time that a degree wasn't all he'd be pursuing.

While studying at Bakersfield College, Ruloph crossed paths with fellow nursing student Sherri Morton. The pair formed a



Sherri Morton and Greg Ruloph grow fresh herbs as part of a new healthy lifestyle.

friendship that soon blossomed into more, and it was Morton who encouraged Ruloph to look into weight-loss surgery—a procedure she had several years earlier.

"I was his biggest cheerleader," Morton says. "I knew how frustrating it was to eat healthy and exercise and still not see the weight come off."

"I was so tired of feeling unhealthy," Ruloph says. "I had tried it all—Atkins, Weight Watchers, fasting—and nothing worked. So one day I stepped on the scale and said, 'Nope, today is the day.'"

## A life-changing decision

After talking to his doctor, Ruloph decided to attend the Mercy Weight Loss Surgery Program. During the free seminars, he was able to better understand his surgical options, along with requirements before surgery and what to expect afterward.

Ultimately, Ruloph made the decision to have a surgical weight-loss procedure called a sleeve gastrectomy, in which the stomach is reduced to about 15 percent of

its original size. The procedure was performed at Mercy Hospital.

"I went from being hopeless to having some hope," he says. "I prayed about this a lot, and I really feel like the Lord blessed me."

In the week following his weight-loss surgery, Ruloph lost 20 pounds, bringing his total weight loss so far to an impressive 75 pounds. He says his main objective is better overall health, but he's hoping the scale will reflect his hard work.

"I'm eating to live now and not living to eat."





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**New hope  
for neuro  
patients**

**Breakthroughs  
bring better  
treatments for  
complex brain  
conditions.**

**See page 4.**



Read about why Greg Ruloph chose bariatric surgery. **See his story on page 7.**

## Excellence in weight-loss surgery

Are you considering having weight-loss surgery? Here are just two of the many reasons to have it done at Mercy Hospital:



Our Mercy Weight Loss Surgery Program is accredited by the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery. That means we're known for treating our patients with exceptional care and for providing them with the tools they need to succeed.



We've also been named a Blue Distinction Center by Blue Cross and Blue Shield. This award is given to bariatric centers with excellent quality programs and patient safety records.

### Want to know more?

We offer free bariatric surgery seminars the first Wednesday of every month. The seminars will help you decide if bariatric surgery is right for you. Call **661.632.5117** to register.

**CALL**



**Blue  
Distinction®  
Center**  
Bariatric



## Hello humankindness®

We hope you enjoy this issue of *HelloHealthy*. Comments about the publication can be directed to the Marketing and Communications Department:

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