

# Health Connection



Three Rivers  
Medical Center

PREMIERE ISSUE!

FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT THREE RIVERS MEDICAL CENTER

## An exciting year

### Dear Community,

**A**s CEO of Three Rivers Medical Center (TRMC), I'd like to highlight several developments in 2005—our accomplishments, plans and ways we continue to provide the highest quality medical care. We measure our effectiveness in many ways—determining patient satisfaction, gathering employee input and evaluating management of individual departments. We successfully completed a great year with growth in all hospital services.

We continue to put tremendous effort into the management of our Emergency Department because it represents the “front door” to our facility. Therefore, we must maintain competent physicians and nursing staff. In addition, we're committed to providing effective and timely ancillary services for our patients. To that end, TRMC recently installed a large plasma monitor to display patients' arrival times. This helps our staff monitor wait times more closely. Physicians and staff have already commented on its effectiveness.

We're very excited about the Critical Care Unit expansion scheduled to be completed in 2006. With two cardiologists on staff, we'll provide exceptional cardiac care in our new expanded unit. The unit will house the latest monitoring technology and a centralized nurses station to provide direct nursing care to our patients. Each private room will be enlarged and equipped with modern facilities to provide room for staff, physicians and families. This project is expected to cost approximately \$2.5 million.

We're also excited about our Surgery Department growth in 2005. This is largely due to the addition of new surgeons and the expansion of the Anesthesia Department. We recently added bariatric surgery to complement our surgical services. We replaced our laparoscopic



equipment in the Surgery Department and now have the latest surgical technology for minimally invasive procedures used in general surgery, gynecological, urological and gastrointestinal procedures.

2006 promises to be an exciting year for TRMC, with continued emphasis on medical staff development and the addition of three primary care physicians to our facility. I look forward to working closely with our community.



Thank you,

GREGORY A. KISER, M.H.A.  
Chief Executive Officer  
Three Rivers Medical Center



# Nimble body, nimble mind

## Question:

**To fight memory loss and dementia, it's a good idea to:**

- A. do a crossword puzzle
- B. take up a new hobby
- C. exercise regularly
- D. all of the above

If you answered D, you're right. Scientists now know it takes more than mental stimulation to keep your brain sharp well into your later years. Physical activity gives your body and your brain a boost. A half-hour of moderate exercise—walking, golfing, gardening, performing household chores—on most days of the week can help you think more clearly and feel better at any age.

## HOW EXERCISE HELPS

Exercise increases blood flow to your brain, promoting brain-cell growth, and helps reduce stress—important since chronic stress causes the release of hormones that can damage your brain over time. Some studies suggest exercise increases levels of important chemicals that maintain brain health. Other studies on mice show that exercise appears to delay or prevent plaque development in brain regions used in memory, thinking and decision making.

Regular exercise also helps preserve healthy brain functioning by:

- **Reducing your risk for heart disease.** Exercise lowers homocysteine, an amino acid in your blood that makes

nerve cells in the brain stop working and die.

- **Controlling your blood sugar.** Diabetes is linked with several types of dementia, including Alzheimer's and vascular dementia (common to stroke survivors). Both aerobic and weight-bearing exercises control your blood sugar by increasing your metabolism.
- **Lowering your blood pressure.** Unchecked, high blood pressure can damage blood vessels in your brain and reduce its oxygen supply, leading to a decline in decision making, memory and verbal skills.
- **Controlling your body weight and improving physical fitness.** Studies show a link between dementia and being overweight, possibly because overweight individuals have more cardiovascular risk factors associated with dementia than people at a healthy weight.

## DIVERSITY IS KEY

For the most brain benefits, vary your exercise routine often. It's not how hard you exercise but how many activities you participate in that's key to preventing cognitive decline. Johns Hopkins University found that adults ages 65 and older who were involved in a number of activities (such as walking, biking, swimming, dancing and bowling) experienced less dementia than people who participated in fewer activities. One explanation could be that the variety of activities keeps more parts of the brain active.

So don't worry about how much you're sweating or how vigorously you're moving—just enjoy a variety of activities every day and keep trying new ones.

**W**ith good health habits and a little luck, you may never face a sudden medical crisis. But sooner or later, many of us find ourselves involved in one. Suppose it's chest pain, stomach cramps or a nasty kitchen accident—what's the right response? Should you get emergency help or just go see your family doctor?

A true medical emergency is a situation that's life threatening or could cause permanent harm if not treated immediately. Every minute counts. That's the difference between cases needing instant, emergency room intervention and those your doctor can handle in the office.

Doctors say there are no wrong reasons to call for medical assistance in a real emergency, especially if it's heart related. At such a critical time, don't drive yourself to the ER or get someone else to drive you—it could be dangerous. Plus, you need the expertise and equipment that's in an ambulance.

Below are examples of symptoms that constitute a medical emergency. Call for emergency assistance right away if you or a friend experiences any of them. And remember, if you're ever in doubt, play it safe and get help. It could save a life.

#### **SEEK EMERGENCY TREATMENT ...**

##### **In cases of trauma:**

- uncontrollable bleeding
- wounds with gaping edges



- wounds that involve the face or hands
- wounds caused by a puncture or wounds in which glass, metal or other objects have pierced the body
- severe burns
- head, neck or back injuries
- abdominal injuries or sudden, severe abdominal pain
- problems with movement or feeling after injury
- suspected broken bones
- animal or human bites
- contact with poisonous substances
- sunburn with nausea, vomiting, fever and chills

# When the ER is your best option

## Medical conditions that require emergency care

#### **Any time these symptoms are present:**

- chest discomfort
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- nausea, dizziness, fainting or profuse sweating, especially when combined with chest pain and breathing difficulty—classic signs of heart attack
- sudden numbness on one side of the face or limbs, confusion, slurred speech, vision loss, severe headache or dizziness—all signs of a possible stroke
- severe allergic reactions from insect bites, food or beverages
- sudden or persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- coughing up or vomiting blood
- fainting, dizziness or hallucinations
- convulsions or seizures
- stiff neck with fever or headache
- sudden severe fever coupled with sensitivity to light
- stupor or dazed behavior
- drug or alcohol overdose
- attempted suicide or suicidal threats or statements



# Building for a healthy future

## TRMC expands critical care unit

**T**hree Rivers Medical Center (TRMC) recently announced a 3,400-square-foot Critical Care Department expansion and a 2,000-square-foot renovation project aimed at providing more effective patient care. The project expands patient care areas to include private patient rooms, new patient monitoring, a waiting room for family and a central work area for physicians and nurses. Physicians and staff worked together on the planning and design.

The new addition will be located on the north side of the existing Critical Care Unit (CCU) facing Highway 644. "Continued growth in patient volumes in recent years necessitates this expansion, which will provide much-needed space, convenience for our patients and their families and improved cardiac care through our Critical Care Department," says Gregory A. Kiser, M.H.A., CEO.

"The new addition will cost about \$2.5 million and take about one year to complete," Kiser says. "We ask the community to bear with us during this construction period. By expanding in stages, we expect no interruption in patient care. We'll build the new patient room addition separate from the current one, enabling us to complete the addition before we renovate the existing department. We can then occupy the new space and come back later to finish the old space without interrupting patient care. We're also planning for future growth by constructing this project in anticipation of a second-floor addition in later years."

According to Brenda Hamilton, chief nursing officer, "The new renovated CCU will allow TRMC to provide needed services to the people in our local community and expanded service area. TRMC has two excellent cardiologists. The new facility will allow for improved and more comprehensive treatment of cardiac patients as well

as critical medical and postsurgical patients who require a more intensive level of care."

Hamilton adds, "Our current CCU is staffed with highly qualified, specially trained nurses. Our cardiopulmonary, laboratory, radiology and surgical services are second to none."

Susie Chambers, TRMC board of trustees chair, says, "It's within our mission and vision to continue expanding primary care services, which include providing the best cardiac services in our area. Planning for this new service involved input from the medical staff, board of trustees, results of recent patient satisfaction surveys and feedback from community surveys. We're

glad to be able to expand our medical center and are proud of the quality cardiac care we provide to our community."

The Louisville-based firm of Lockett and Farley are the architects for the CCU project.

### Learn more!

**T**TRMC is a family-centered, acute care hospital accredited by the Joint Commission of Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. For more information, call (606) 638-9451.

# A better kind of heart care

## New guidelines help hearts heal

**T**hree Rivers Medical Center (TRMC) has received recognition from the American Heart Association (AHA) as a Get With The Guidelines (GWTG)–Coronary Artery Disease hospital. The quality-improvement initiative is expected to reduce the risk of recurrent heart attacks by helping hospital staff follow guidelines and procedures with their coronary patients.

Coronary patients in the hospital's program begin with aggressive risk-reduction therapies, such as cholesterol-lowering drugs, aspirin, ACE inhibitors and beta-blockers. They also receive smoking cessation and weight-management counseling and referrals for cardiac rehabilitation. These standards of care are outlined in the AHA/American College of Cardiology secondary prevention guidelines for patients with coronary artery disease.

CEO Gregory A. Kiser says, "This is the first step in our efforts to help save the lives of coronary patients." The AHA's GWTG program is designed to help TRMC implement appropriate evidence-based guidelines for care and protocols that will reduce the number of recurrent events and death in these patients."

According to the AHA, more than 450,000 people suffer recurrent heart attacks each year. Statistics also show that within six years of having a heart attack, about 22 percent of men and 46 percent of women will be disabled with heart failure. Within one year of an attack,



25 percent of men and 38 percent of women will die.

Research indicates that when patients are discharged on appropriate medications such as aspirin, beta-blockers, ACE inhibitors and lipid-lowering medicines, their risk of a second event is reduced.

"TRMC is dedicated to making our Cardiac Unit among the best in the country, and implementing the AHA's GWTG program will make it easier for our professionals to improve the long-term outcome for our cardiac patients," says Joe Bevins, director of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Services.

GWTG is intended to help TRMC's staff develop and implement a secondary prevention guideline process. The program includes quality-improvement measures such as care maps, discharge protocols, standing orders and measurement tools. Designed to be quick and efficient, these guidelines will enable TRMC to improve the quality of care to cardiac patients, save lives and reduce healthcare costs by lowering the recurrence of heart attacks. Projections show that if GWTG were implemented nationwide, more than 80,000 lives could be saved each year.

Three Rivers Medical Center CEO Gregory A. Kiser (left) and Director of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Services Joe Bevins proudly display the AHA award.



[Learn more!](#)

For more information on this program, call (606) 638-9451.

## HEALTHWISE QUIZ

### How much do you know about **asthma**?

Test your knowledge and learn more about asthma.

1

Which of the following statements about asthma is *not* true?

- a. Cockroaches are a major trigger of asthma symptoms.
- b. Asthma can develop at any age.
- c. Approximately 4,000 Americans die from asthma each year.
- d. People with severe asthma should avoid exercise.

2

Which of the following is a risk factor for asthma?

- a. hay fever
- b. chronic sinusitis
- c. obesity
- d. all of the above

3

Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease. According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, the number of U.S. children estimated to have asthma is:

- a. 1.5 million
- b. 5 million
- c. 10 million
- d. 20 million

4

All of the following are asthma triggers *except*:

- a. stress
- b. home appliances that use natural gas as fuel
- c. corticosteroid medications
- d. mold

5

If someone is having an asthma attack, one of the first things you should do is:

- a. Take him or her outside for fresh air.
- b. Have him or her breathe into a paper bag.
- c. Help the sufferer get his or her prescribed asthma drugs and inhaling equipment.
- d. Use the sufferer's Epi-Pen to administer an injection of epinephrine.

# Conspiracy theory

How 5 risk factors join forces against your health

When it comes to heart disease, you know that risk factors like family history and being overweight don't work in your favor. Now, experts say a combination of five factors—a condition called metabolic syndrome—also conspire against you, adding up to a far greater chance of suffering a heart attack, stroke or diabetes.

You have metabolic syndrome if you have three or more of the following problems:

- **abdominal obesity**—a waist circumference of 40 inches or more for men; 35 inches or more for women
- **high blood pressure**—135/85 mm/Hg or higher
- **high triglyceride levels**—150 mg/dL or more
- **abnormal cholesterol**—HDL cholesterol levels of less than 40 mg/dL for men and 50 mg/dL for women
- **high blood glucose or insulin resistance**—a fasting glucose, or blood sugar, level of 100 mg/dL or higher

Studies show people with metabolic syndrome are twice as likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke than people without these factors.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can head off future trouble if you take these steps now:

- **Lose weight.** Losing as little as 5 percent to 10 percent of your body weight can reduce insulin levels and bring blood pressure down.
- **Eat healthier.** Include more fiber-rich foods like whole grains, beans, fruits and vegetables to aid weight loss and lower insulin levels. Reduce the salt, calories and fat you consume.
- **Exercise.** Get at least 30 minutes of moderately strenuous activity most days of the week.
- **Kick the habit.** Smoking increases insulin resistance and worsens many health problems.
- **Schedule regular checkups.** Get timely checks on your blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
- **Consider drug therapy.** Your doctor may prescribe aspirin therapy or medication to control risk factors.



## MATCH GAME

# Finding the right doctor for you and your family

**D**ifferent stages of life bring different medical scenarios. Still, one factor remains a constant: the need for a primary care provider who knows you well and can treat you and your family best. So, how should you go about choosing a primary care doctor?

The first step is to put together a list of candidates. Ask friends, family members, co-workers or people you know who work in the medical community. You'll need to find out which doctors are on your health plan.

Once you've chosen a few candidates, call their offices and find out more by asking:

1. Which hospital does the doctor use?
2. What are the practice's office hours?
3. How far in advance do I have to book a routine visit?

4. If I'm sick, will the doctor see me the day I call?
5. Who covers for the doctor when he or she isn't available?
6. How long is the average waiting room time?
7. What is the office policy on appointment cancellations?
8. What do I do if I have an emergency after office hours?
9. Does the doctor give advice over the phone for common problems?
10. How long will I have to wait for a call back from the doctor or a staff member?

Consider your interaction with staff during your phone calls. Were they friendly, efficient and knowledgeable?

Narrow your list to one or two physicians and make an appointment to talk to them. Most likely, you'll have to pay for these visits. As you talk to the doctor, notice whether he or she pays attention to your questions or seems distracted, giving "stock" answers.

Now you should be ready to choose the doctor who can treat you and your family best—and give you peace of mind.

# Food for thought

## Eating right can help you control diabetes

**I**f you're one of the 16 million Americans who have diabetes, you understand that nutrition should always take center stage. Healthy food choices, along with exercise and medication, are vital to keeping your blood sugar, or glucose, in line and avoiding complications.



hydrate intake, sugary sweets and desserts helps control blood sugar levels. However, you must consume a moderate amount of carbohydrates to supply your body with the valuable energy they provide. But choose quality fuel. Variety among all food groups is key: fresh fruits and vegetables in abundance; beans,

brown rice and whole-grain breads and cereals; lean meat, poultry and fish; and low-fat dairy products.

Drink plenty of water, too, and avoid sweetened drinks. If you drink citrus juice, limit the serving to no more than 6 ounces. If you drink soda, switch to a diet variety.

It's important to stick to proper portion sizes. Learn how to measure and weigh portions. Read food labels, paying particular attention to serving sizes and total carbohydrates. A diabetes educator or dietitian can help you develop an eating plan. By learning to eat properly and controlling your weight and blood sugar levels, you can avoid most diabetes complications.

### WHEN YOU EAT

If you have diabetes, you should eat three balanced meals and two snacks a day. Spacing food and trying to eat meals at the same time each day will help control blood sugar and weight. Eating reasonable portions of carbohydrates throughout the day—instead of consuming all your servings at one meal—will keep blood sugar levels stable.

### WHAT YOU EAT

Planning what you'll eat at each meal will help you keep blood sugar within a healthy range all day. Limiting carbo-

## MEET OUR NEW DOCTOR

The experienced, dedicated physicians of Three Rivers Medical Center can help your family stay healthy. We'd like to introduce you to one of them.



**LAURA VELCU, M.D.**

**Laura Velcu, M.D.**, joins Three Rivers Medical Center (TRMC) and brings a number of skills and qualities, including ambition, dedication to her patients and family orientation. Her specialties are general and bariatric surgery.

Dr. Velcu's resume includes the Carol Davila Medical School in Bucharest, Romania; internships and residencies at Nassau University Medical Center in East Meadow, N.Y.; and a surgical fellowship in complex and minimally invasive surgery at the University of Pittsburgh, Pa., and the Magee Women's Hospital in Pittsburgh. She trained in prestigious laparoscopic and bariatric fellowships at the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio. She also completed a vigorous residency and fellowship program in a Level I trauma center.

Dr. Velcu contributes to medical journals through active research. She is certified by the American Board of Surgery and is a member of the American Society of Bariatric Surgery.

Among her many honors, Dr. Velcu has won multiple regional chemistry contests in school and was chief resident in surgery.

She hopes to establish a successful bariatric program at TRMC and change the belief that you can't receive quality surgical expertise. She says, "I really want to make healthcare better."

Dr. Velcu has already performed more than 2,000 surgeries. Her specialties include the use of minimally invasive approaches in general surgery procedures; treatment of upper and lower gastrointestinal diseases, including gastroesophageal reflux disease; repair of hiatal hernias; treatment of breast disease; skin cancer; treatment of varicose veins and ulcers associated with venous insufficiency; repair of abdominal wall hernias; and weight-loss surgery.

Dr. Velcu chose this community because of its strong interpersonal relationships and caring values. At TRMC, Dr. Velcu can practice a more personal approach to medicine.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Velcu, call (606) 638-3813.

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# Health Connection

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