

New Orthopedic Suite Enhances Patient Experience

Nationwide, more and more attention is being paid to the impact that patients' surroundings have on their recovery. Warm, appealing, attractively decorated spaces help to create a healing environment that soothes the spirit, promotes an optimistic outlook and has a positive therapeutic effect.

Just that kind of healing environment is now available to patients who have had orthopedic procedures such as joint replacement surgery at Clara Maass Medical Center's Orthopedic Spine and Joint Institute.

Thanks to a gift from the Medical Center's Auxiliary, a large, airy room has been decorated in serene colors and outfitted with furnishings that include chairs specially designed to provide maximum comfort for those who have undergone surgery. With warm hardwood floors, a cream colored leather sofa, decorative sconces and art on the walls, the space provides a lounge-like setting

for socializing with fellow patients or visiting with family and friends.

"Having a room like this is very important for our patients at Clara Maass," said Dr. Frank Femino, head of Orthopedics. "For the most part, people who have had full joint replacements are not sick people. They are healthy people who have some discomfort as they recuperate following surgery. This room will function much like a 'living room' during that period, a place where they can enjoy one another's company in pleasant surroundings, as well as a place where they can do their physical therapy."

The Orthopedic Spine & Joint Institute at Clara Maass occupies its own unit within the hospital, designated exclusively for orthopedic procedures that can include such surgeries as knee or hip replacements. Orthopedists involved with the program follow established protocols that have been proven to lead to improved clinical outcomes. Education is an essential component of the program, which is designed to



Dr. Frank Femino, Division Director of Orthopedics and CMMC Auxiliary President Grace Ann Purdue do the honors!

lessen anxiety before surgery and enable easier rehabilitation afterward.

Members of the Clara Maass Orthopedic Spine & Joint Institute health care team talk individually with each patient, discussing exactly what can be expected both before and after surgery. Patients also watch educational videos and even attend a pre-operative orientation class prior to surgery. Through the Institute, patients also have the

chance to meet other people who will be undergoing the same surgery.

A rehabilitation gym starts patients on the road to recovery quickly following surgery. Patients at the Institute even wear their own clothing instead of hospital gowns, adding further to the comfortable atmosphere, and amenities such as the services of a hairdresser and manicurist are a standard part of the program.

KNEE REPLACEMENT PUTS LOCAL MAN BACK IN THE TREES

When he arrived in Dr. Frank Femino's office, Nutley resident Robert Dey had already undergone nine knee surgeries, beginning when he was a 15 year old ice hockey enthusiast. By the time he reached the age of 46, the former Marine was living with constant pain.

"I couldn't function," Dey says. "I was limping and dragging my leg all day. At night I couldn't sleep because the pain was so intense."

Furthermore, the condition of his knee was making it hard for Dey to do his job. An arborist for the Township of Nutley, he spends his days planting, pruning and taking down trees. It is a physically demanding business that often finds him climbing

ropes and working 60 feet above the ground.

He had seen other doctors, but without finding the relief or the answers he sought. Then his brother-in-law, an oral surgeon, suggested he talk to Dr. Femino.

"Dr. Femino was great. He took the time to listen, to check everything out, to explain my situation and what the options were."

When Dr. Femino recommended a total knee replacement, it didn't take Dey long to reach a decision. "I called him back the next day and said, 'let's do it.'"

Dey entered Clara Maass Medical Center on February 15th, a Tuesday, and by Friday he was in the Medical Center's "Bridges" rehabilitation program for physical

therapy. After 12 days in the hospital, he went home.

"At three weeks, I was walking without a walker or a cane. I exercised at home on the treadmill every day and went back to Clara Maass for physical therapy three days a week for eight weeks.

I've got to tell you that the staff who helped me, Kathy Kelly, Kathleen Mercer and Gloria Barbone, are just the best, most caring people in the world. As glad as I was to be moving on, I knew I was going to miss them. After my last physical therapy session, I sang them an Andrea Bocelli song – in Italian."

And on April 25th, just under 10 weeks after surgery, Robert Dey was back on the job – climbing trees.

