Charlotte Jacobsen spent most of the past decade in a chair in her living room.

“My knees bothered me for 20 years, but for the past 10 they were so bad I rarely left the house,” says the Truman, Minn., resident.

That was hard on Jacobsen — and on the people who love her.

“It’s difficult to watch your parent just sit and not be able to help her,” says Lisa Izen, Jacobsen’s daughter. “It was hard on my dad, too. He’s a goer, and she couldn’t do anything.”

Pain kept Jacobsen from joining her husband, Jack, at their grandchildren’s sporting events and Christmas programs. It kept her from walking through a grocery store or shopping mall. Eventually, even walking from her house to her car was so painful that Jacobsen would be out of breath afterward.

Izen, her three sisters and her father all tried for years to convince Jacobsen to have knee replacement surgery. But in spite of the limits pain put on her life, Jacobsen refused.

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“I was afraid,” she says.

But then something happened that scared her more than surgery. When Jacobsen was home alone, she fell and couldn’t get up on her own.

“I knew then that something needed to be done,” she says.

Izen knew it, too. So she called Fairmont Medical Center — part of Mayo Health System and scheduled an appointment for her mother to meet with Lael Luedtke, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon.

“It took me three days to tell Mom I’d scheduled the appointment,” says Izen. “But, she agreed to go.”

After her appointment, Jacobsen called Izen with the news that she was having both of her knees replaced.

“Some people thought I was nervy to do both at once, but I knew if I did them one at a time I probably wouldn’t go back for the second one,” says Jacobsen.

On June 1, 2010 Dr. Luedtke and Stephen Berthelsen M.D., also an orthopedic surgeon, replaced Jacobsen’s knees. They operated at the same time.

“Surgery was not as bad as I was expecting,” says Jacobsen. “And I was surprised that I was able to be on my feet so soon again afterward. They had me standing the next day.”

She was also surprised to learn that she gained an inch of height after surgery.

“My legs were so bowed that when they straightened them during surgery, I grew,” she says.

Jacobsen spent just over a week at the hospital before returning home to recover. She then completed six weeks of physical therapy at Truman Senior Living to help regain her strength and mobility.

In addition to the therapists she worked with, Jacobsen says her family played a major role in her recovery.

“Jack has become an excellent chef,” she says. He took on cooking and cleaning duties during her recovery.

“And I couldn’t have gotten through it without my girls. My family takes very good care of me.”

Jacobsen says the staff at Fairmont Medical Center also take good care of her.

“I cannot say enough good things about Dr. Luedtke,” says Jacobsen. “She’s just the nicest person and has a super personality. And Dr. Berthelsen was also wonderful.”

Now that she’s back on her feet, Jacobsen is making up for lost time. She joined a health club, has been taking walks and has gone shopping several times.

“On her first outing, she went into a shop and came out with a new purse,” says her husband. “Then she went into Mankato and hotfooted it around the mall with our daughters. I told her I’m not sure I’m going to like this!”

For Jacobsen, shopping is a whole new experience. Not only has she gained an inch, but she’s lost some weight.

“Having surgery sure changed my outlook on life,” she says. “A few months ago, I could hardly walk. Now I’m getting ready to dance at my granddaughters’ weddings.”

Dr. Luedtke wishes more people would take the leap Jacobson did.

“Unfortunately many people, and particularly women for some reason, put off surgery well beyond what they should,” says Dr. Luedtke. “They are often living with pain that is much greater than the pain from the surgery they fear. Surgical pain passes fairly quickly and with the commitment to therapy, people can live much fuller lives. Making an appointment to discuss surgery does not obligate anyone to undergo surgery and can be the first step to addressing their fears and having a better quality of life.”

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Routine exam leads to rare diagnosis

Jill Burmeister’s last routine exam turned out to be anything but.

“Two years ago, I was in for a regular preventive exam and mentioned a few symptoms I was having,” says Burmeister. Based on the symptoms, Myrna Peters, a certified family nurse practitioner at Fairmont Medical Center, ordered a test of Burmeister’s hormone levels.

The results showed Burmeister’s prolactin level was slightly elevated. The hormone level can be high for many reasons, including stress or taking certain medications. Rarely, elevated prolactin levels are caused by a tumor on the pituitary gland.

“Because my levels weren’t that high, we decided to watch them and do more testing if they continued to rise,” says Burmeister. When Burmeister returned for her exam the following year, Peters repeated the test.

“My levels were higher,” says Burmeister. “Myrna wanted to do an MRI to rule out a tumor.”

Instead, the MRI revealed a large tumor on Burmeister’s pituitary gland. Though most are non-cancerous, large pituitary tumors can press on the optic nerve and cause blindness.

“In 13 years of practice, this is only the third pituitary tumor I’ve seen,” says Peters, who referred Burmeister to Mayo...
Myrna Peters, a certified family nurse practitioner at Fairmont Medical Center, says annual exams are important, even if you’re feeling healthy.

“Yearly exams allow you to monitor your health over time,” says Peters. “They also give you an opportunity to develop a relationship with a provider. It’s helpful to have someone who knows you and your medical history, especially if you face a health problem at some point.”

To get the most out of your annual appointments, Peters says you should be sure to tell your provider every symptom you’re having — even those that seem small or insignificant.

She has one more piece of advice.

“Make sure you find a provider who takes the time to truly listen to your concerns,” says Peters. “That’s often the most important part of an exam.”
Now accessing Mayo Clinic:
Center for Social Media is about connection

Are you a cyberfan of Mayo Clinic?
Mayo Clinic has been a pioneer in using social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as YouTube and several blogs, to connect with patients and provide valuable health information.

Now, a new Center for Social Media at Mayo Clinic will help other organizations take those connections to the next level.

“For years, other health care organizations have pointed to Mayo Clinic as an example they’d like to follow,” says Lee Aase, one of the center’s leaders. “Through the Center for Social Media, we’ll provide resources to other institutions and nonprofits in the health care arena, helping them learn how they can effectively use these tools.”

The new center will provide training, consulting and coaching, conferences and other resources for health care organizations. The Center for Social Media also will work internally, serving as an access point for Mayo Clinic employees to share business strategies, ask questions of leaders and suggest ideas.

“Mayo Clinic believes individuals have the right and responsibility to advocate for their own health, and that it is our responsibility to help them use social media tools to get the best information, connect with providers and each other, and inspire healthy choices,” says John Noseworthy, M.D., Mayo Clinic president and CEO. “Through this center we intend to lead the health care community... improving health care quality everywhere.”

Mayo Clinic Book of Home Remedies helps families manage health care at home

Mayo Clinic recently released Mayo Clinic Book of Home Remedies, a 208-page guide to staying healthy and treating health issues at home. The book offers advice from the world’s leading medical experts on a variety of topics, including managing conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure; how to treat a common cold; and what to stock in your home medicine cabinet. The book also includes information on a number of foods that can help improve health and wellness.

Mayo Clinic Book of Home Remedies is organized alphabetically, with a short, easy-to-understand overview of each topic. In addition to the overview, there is a list of home remedies for each topic, as well as information on when to seek medical help for the condition. The simple solutions in the book have the potential to help families save hundreds of dollars in medical costs each year.

“Common ailments often have simple cures,” says Philip Hagen, M.D., a preventive medicine physician at Mayo Clinic and the book’s medical editor in chief. “Mayo Clinic Book of Home Remedies helps readers decide what they can safely treat at home, and what warrants a visit to their health care provider.”

The Mayo Clinic Book of Home Remedies can be purchased by visiting www.bookstore.mayoclinic.com, and is available at online retailers and at bookstores nationwide.
The familiar chopping sound overhead alerts us: Mayo One is flying again.

Perhaps the medical flight crew is heading to the scene of an accident, or to another hospital for patient transport. But they’re not simply taking people from one place to another; they’re bringing the expertise of Mayo Clinic to the scene.

“Our goal is to start Mayo’s standard of health care before the patient even gets to Mayo,” says Neil Wienk, aviation site manager for Mayo Clinic Medical Transport. Collectively, Mayo One helicopters complete an average of five flights every day.

Mayo Clinic Medical Transport is made up of 57 ground ambulances, four helicopters and one fixed-wing jet. The helicopters are based at three sites, Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Immanuel St. Joseph’s — Mayo Health System in Mankato, Minn., and Luther Midelfort — Mayo Health System in Eau Claire, Wis. The fourth helicopter is a backup used when the others need maintenance.

Thanks to new technology and ongoing research, Mayo One is part of the most advanced medical transport services in the country.

New helicopter and new technology

In May 2010, a new, Rochester-based Mayo One helicopter was put into service.

“All of our helicopters are safe,” explains Wienk, “but we’re starting to outgrow the older models, both medically and by aviation standards.”

The new helicopter exceeds all National Transportation Safety Board safety recommendations, including a system to identify obstacles in the flight path, a traffic collision avoidance system, and night vision goggles.

“Night vision goggles sound like a whizbang tool, but we wouldn’t use them if they didn’t truly enhance safety,” says Wienk. “With night vision goggles, even in pitch black conditions you can see 80 percent of what you see during the day.” All three members of the helicopter crew wear the goggles, so that the paramedic and flight nurse can inform the pilot of obstacles from their vantage point on the helicopter.

When it began using night vision goggles on all its helicopters in 2006, Mayo was one of only a handful of civilian air medical services in the country to have all crew members aboard the helicopter use night vision goggles.

On the new helicopter, the traffic collision avoidance system is comparable to airline industry systems, alerting the pilot of aircraft in its vicinity; and the “terrain awareness”
tool tells the pilot where the obstacles are in their flight path and the height of the obstruction in relation to the altitude Mayo One is flying. Unlike commercial flights, Mayo One sometimes has to land on highways or in rural fields, for example, making the technological advancements even more important for safety.

“This equipment and new technology are really an investment into the safety of our patients and our flight crews,” says Wienk. “And to be sure we’re being good stewards of our medical and financial resources, we have a medical director that reviews our calls — whether it’s ground, helicopter or jet. We’re very prudent in how we use each of them.”

Research to improve care
In another effort to use resources wisely, several Mayo-based research studies are evaluating best emergency transport practices and the new safety equipment. Current studies include an assessment of flight crews’ ability to recognize medical shock and its effect on patient care, and in the future hope to conduct an examination of the safety benefits of night vision goggles.

Previous research has already improved patient care provided during medical transport. For example, after evaluating how medical helicopters were dispatched, the process was changed so that helicopters can launch critical minutes sooner. Another study looked into the feasibility of carrying blood and plasma on board an aircraft for en route transfusion — something that few emergency helicopter services carry today. As a result of the study, all Mayo One helicopters are now equipped to carry blood, and the newest Mayo One aircraft in Rochester also carries plasma.

“Between the training for the pilots and medical crews, and the equipment and technology, the newest Mayo One is really one of the most sophisticated and advanced medical helicopters in the country,” says Wienk. “Mayo Clinic crews had input for the specification company to design the patient portion of the aircraft, so that everything was customized for our unique capabilities.”

Using the newest technology isn’t just about meeting safety recommendations. Like all of Mayo Clinic’s efforts, it’s about putting the patient first. “The NTSB recommendations aren’t yet mandated,” says Wienk, “but we’ve voluntarily put them into place to make our emergency transport care better and safer for everyone.”

Portions of this article were used by permission from Mayo Clinic’s research magazine, Discovery’s Edge.

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When Bonnie Lenz, of Rochester, Minn., started radiation, her physician told her there were no ifs, ands or buts. She was definitely going to lose her hair.

“I had so many tumors that they had to radiate my whole brain,” says Lenz. “Losing my hair was not a maybe. It could be gone in three days. It could be gone in a week.”

The timeline was almost more than Lenz could bear.

“When I heard three days, I was devastated,” she says.

Fortunately, Lenz had somewhere to turn for help. Mayo Clinic’s Erickson Hair & Skin Care Center, located in the Eisenberg Building on Mayo’s Rochester campus. The center sells wigs and other head coverings, educational materials and skin care products to patients who are experiencing the cosmetic side effects of medical treatments. Staff at the center also provide ample doses of hope and reassurance.

“When patients first come in, they’re feeling vulnerable and overwhelmed,” says Ann Richards, the center’s supervisor. “Our goal is to help take care of the external self so that they can better take care of the internal self. When you look good, you feel better.”

Patients at the center seem to agree. Richards says nearly every patient walks out of the center smiling — including Lenz.

“The girls at Erickson’s were so helpful, so thoughtful and so caring that by the time I left, I didn’t care if I lost my hair or not. I knew that they were going to make me pretty again,” says Lenz.

In addition to selecting a wig, Lenz also took a skin care class offered at the center. A licensed cosmetologist taught Lenz how to apply makeup to cover radiation burns and mimic the look of eyebrows, which many patients also lose during treatment.

“It can be hard for patients to look in the mirror and see evidence of their disease,” says Richards. “We help them find ways to address the cosmetic side effects, which can have a real impact on their mental and physical health.”

The center provides services to 600 new patients each year, most of them women between the ages of 40 and 60. Some of the center’s products and services are free to Mayo Clinic patients, including consultations and some wigs and head coverings.

“The staff helped me try on several wigs and they never, ever talked about the price,” says Rochester native Sheila Sibley Walsh, who was treated for breast cancer. When Walsh selected a wig and asked what she owed for it, she was surprised by the answer.

“They said, ‘Nothing,’ ” recalls Walsh. “I just got tears in my eyes.”

Walsh says it was important to her to look as unchanged as possible during her treatment. She worked full time except during surgeries or chemotherapy and didn’t want to scare her grandchildren, who had lost a grandmother to breast cancer. She also wanted to avoid pitying looks from people.

“People mean well, but I just didn’t want that,” says Walsh. “I wanted to feel like me and keep life as close to normal as possible. The wig helped me do that. Even some coworkers and friends didn’t know I had cancer. I was so grateful, I delivered a huge bouquet to the Erickson’s staff and told them nothing except my husband and my son made such a big difference in getting through this.”

Editor’s note: Bonnie Lenz lost her battle to cancer on Nov. 14, 2010.
Fairmont Medical Center and Mayo Clinic:

A strong team in era of health care reform


Even with a new health care bill signed into law in March 2010, these are uncertain times.

You may wonder how the complex health care reform law will affect your care at Fairmont Medical Center, and what it means for Mayo Health System and Mayo Clinic. Below, Hometown Health asked Marie Morris, M.D., chief medical officer of Fairmont Medical Center, and Robert Nesse, M.D., CEO of Mayo Health System, to explain.

Hometown Health: What does the Affordable Care Act mean for Fairmont Medical Center and Mayo Health System?

Dr. Morris: One of the most promising aspects of the law is that it emphasizes primary care as the central hub of an individual’s health care over a lifetime. For years, Fairmont Medical Center has provided lifetime care to our patients, working together with our colleagues at Mayo Clinic when needed for specialty diagnosis and treatment.

Dr. Nesse: We believe the law is a good start. Some components are starting as pilot projects, and the law’s success will depend on how those projects play out. These projects present an exciting opportunity for Mayo Health System to be part of setting the direction of health care in this country.

Hometown Health: What kinds of opportunities will Mayo Health System be involved in?

Dr. Nesse: For years, the U.S. health care system has rewarded “doing more,” medically, to treat a problem rather than working together to help a person stay healthy. One of the key concepts of the health care reform law is called “pay for value” health care, and it’s something that Mayo has been advocating for years.

Basically, pay for value care keeps people healthy — or helps them get better — in a timely fashion, without hassles, and without a significant financial burden. We’re looking at being part of pilot projects to test long-term care plans for people with chronic conditions, an incentive system for keeping patients out of the hospital, and others.

Hometown Health: Will the new law affect patient care at Fairmont Medical Center?

Dr. Nesse: What you may notice is an even closer alignment with our colleagues at Mayo Clinic and other Mayo Health System sites. We plan to exchange expertise with colleagues more regularly, share services, and work together for every patient’s best interest no matter where you are — whether in Fairmont, Rochester or at another Mayo Health System location.

Dr. Morris: In what may feel like uncertain times, our patients can rest assured that both Fairmont Medical Center and Mayo Clinic are committed to working together for their health and well-being.
Telepsychiatry

A new mental health care option at Fairmont Medical Center

It could be your mother, your brother, your best friend. Or, it could be you.

The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that in a given year, about 1 in 4 American adults — close to 60 million people — have a diagnosable mental disorder such as depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder. Mental disorders consistently rank as one of the nation’s top five most expensive medical conditions. The costs to individuals and families are also great.

Finding treatment can be a challenge, especially in smaller communities like Fairmont where the number of mental health care providers is limited.

To help address this challenge, Fairmont Medical Center (FMC) now provides online mental health care services through a partnership with a Fargo, N.D., company called Psychiatry Networks. Known as telepsychiatry, the method has been used to provide mental health care to members of the military and people living in areas without access to mental health services.

“We’re pleased to be able to provide high-quality mental health care services via the Internet,” says Kim Johnson, director of clinic services at Fairmont Medical Center. “We think this mode of care will be especially attractive to younger patients used to communicating in a virtual environment.”

Telepsychiatry appointments are scheduled just like any other appointment at Fairmont Medical Center. But instead of meeting with a provider face-to-face, telepsychiatry patients meet with a provider via a secure, real-time, audiovisual connection in a private room.

“We’ve successfully provided treatment to thousands of patients representing nearly every type of mental health disorder,” says David Lopez, M.D., psychiatrist and president and CEO of Psychiatry Networks. “Telepsychiatry is an exciting, effective new way to provide much-needed health care to patients in smaller communities and beyond.”

Dr. Lopez says many patients appreciate the anonymity of meeting with a provider online.

“Unfortunately, there is still a great deal of stigma associated with mental illness and that often prevents people from seeking treatment,” says Dr. Lopez.

Johnson says virtual private networking and encryption technologies are used to protect patients’ privacy. Session notes and medical records are also secure.

To schedule a telepsychiatry appointment, call the FMC Psychiatry/Psychology Department at 507-238-8598.
Mayo Health System has been actively planning the implementation of an electronic medical record since 2006. An EMR can improve patient safety, make processes more efficient and lower costs over the long term. Fairmont Medical Center will implement the MHS EMR this year. By the end of 2011, all MHS sites will be using the same EMR.

“With 17 hospitals and 75 clinics, this has been a big undertaking for Mayo Health System,” says Marie Morris, M.D., chief medical officer of Fairmont Medical Center. “It’s important to implement the EMR as a group, rather than as individual organizations. That way, we can share resources, and having systems in place at multiple MHS locations allows us to better communicate with each other.”

Below, Dr. Morris answers questions about the MHS EMR.

**What are the benefits to patients of an electronic medical record?**

**Dr. Morris:** Your medical information will be in one easily accessible location. The MHS EMR will include a list of medications you take and any allergies you have, which will help to prevent unintended drug interactions. For example, if you are prescribed a medication that is not compatible with another medication you already take, the EMR will bring that conflict to your provider’s attention. If you are allergic to a medication and you’re hospitalized, the allergy information will be prominently displayed for your health care team.

The MHS EMR also will help give providers access to up-to-date research and treatment guidelines. If you are diagnosed with a particular condition, the provider can check the latest news about it and find treatment recommendations.

If you receive care at another location within Mayo Health System, your electronic medical record can be accessed by those providers and will be updated with information about the care you receive so your Fairmont Medical Center providers have all of your health information.

**How do you ensure confidentiality of patients’ medical information?**

**Dr. Morris:** Protecting patients’ medical information is extremely important to Fairmont Medical Center and Mayo Health System. Unauthorized access to health information violates our policies and is against the law. We’ve taken steps to secure MHS EMR information with password-protected devices that allow us to monitor who accesses patient records.

**Will the information in my medical record be used to study diseases or be used to determine the best care for a condition?**

**Dr. Morris:** Yes, but only in a general sense. Mayo Health System and Mayo Clinic will be able to monitor how different diseases and conditions are treated and how patients respond to treatment. This can help us quickly identify illness trends and determine which treatments work best.

However, confidential medical information such as a patient’s name will not be shared with researchers or outside groups, including other providers, without written permission from patients.

**Will patients notice anything different at appointments?**

**Dr. Morris:** You will notice your provider typing information into a computer rather than writing in a paper chart. At first, this might take a little longer.

**Will patients have access to their electronic medical records?**

**Dr. Morris:** Not right away, but this is something we are planning for the future.
Dermatology Clinic now available at Fairmont Medical Center

If you have a suspicious mole, eczema or a teenager with a challenging case of acne, you no longer need to leave the area for diagnosis and treatment. Mayo Clinic dermatologists now provide care at Fairmont Medical Center.

“We offer comprehensive medical and surgical dermatological services, ranging from mole checks and treatment of skin diseases to surgical removal of benign growths and skin cancers,” says Neil Shah, M.D., a dermatology fellow at Mayo Clinic and one of the physicians who provides care in Fairmont. “We’re looking forward to adding cosmetic procedures, including Botox®, soon.”

Marie Morris, M.D., chief medical officer at Fairmont Medical Center, says patient demand prompted the medical center to bring in dermatology services.

“We knew that we had a number of patients who were having to travel for dermatology appointments,” says Dr. Morris. “We’re pleased to be able to offer our patients world-class medical care from Mayo Clinic physicians right here in Fairmont.”

Appointments are available from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. every Saturday.

“The Dermatology Clinic has been busier than we expected,” says Dr. Morris. “We’re hoping to add more days soon.”

Dr. Morris says Fairmont Medical Center is committed to providing the medical services area patients want and need, and she encourages community members to speak up about services they would like to see at the medical center.

“We want to hear from our patients,” says Dr. Morris. “If you feel we should add a service, please tell us.”

To schedule an appointment at the Fairmont Medical Center Dermatology Clinic, please call 507-238-8889.