

for your health

Your resource for healthy living from Lowell General Hospital

No Pain Is the Gain— For Patients at LGH Pain Management Center

There it is again—intense and nagging, making every task more difficult than it needs to be. Chronic pain. It can affect every aspect of your day. But with specialized treatment, chronic pain no longer has to be a way of life. The Pain Management Center at Lowell General Hospital offers comprehensive advanced treatment for even the most difficult to manage chronic pain. Last year alone, the Pain Management Center helped nearly 5,000 people with serious pain live happier, more satisfying lives.

Since beginning the program in 1986, G. K. Dwarakanath, MD, Director of the Pain Management Center at Lowell General, has been the only full-time pain specialist in the Merrimack Valley. “Most patients we see have tried other methods of pain relief with poor results. It is very gratifying to know that often we can eliminate or drastically reduce their pain, so they can focus on the pleasures of life and become functional again.”

A Variety of Pain Can Be Treated

At the Pain Management Center, help is available for a variety of medical conditions that are often resistant to pain control, including:

- back pain
- arthritis pain
- shingles
- RSD (reflex sympathetic dystrophy)
- pain caused by cancer
- headaches
- other chronic pain.



This year alone, Dr. G. K. Dwarakanath (right) and Dr. Shihab Ahmed (left), have helped more than 5,000 people find relief from serious pain at the Pain Management Center.

Ann Johnson of Dracut credits the Pain Management Center with helping relieve her severe arthritis pain—allowing her to get back to her many activities, including volunteering at Lowell General Hospital. “At one point the pain in my neck was so bad I couldn’t even lift my head,” remembers Ann. “But after six weeks of treatment, I could actually go back to work. It was wonderful.”

“Our understanding of the biology of pain and its causes has just exploded over the last decade. This has allowed us to make great strides in helping our patients,” says Shihab Ahmed, MD, an experienced pain specialist who recently joined the center.

continued on page 7

Managing Pain for Life

Learn comprehensive pain management techniques from the experts at Lowell General Hospital. Understand the biology of your pain and get information on advanced treatment and alternative methods to control it. This program features certified pain management specialists G. K. Dwarakanath, MD, and Shihab Ahmed, MD, of the Pain Management Center at Lowell General.

Managing Pain for Life

January 26

6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Clark Auditorium

(at Lowell General Hospital)

Registration is required.

Register at 978-937-6464 or

www.lowellgeneral.org.

INSIDE:

An Effective Approach to Lymphedema Care | 2

Breast Reconstruction: Attractive Alternative | 4

Antibiotics: Not Always the Best Medicine | 7

Relief for Wounds that Won't Heal | 8

Calendar of Events: See page 5

Free Program!

An Effective Approach to Lymphedema Care

You've overcome cancer and are feeling fine when you begin experiencing swelling of an arm or leg. What could be causing this to happen? You are probably experiencing lymphedema. Although not typically a painful condition, it can be an uncomfortable and frustrating reminder of a recent battle with cancer.

What Happens When Someone Has Lymphedema?

Lymphedema is a chronic disease that causes swelling of an arm, leg, or other body part. This condition is caused by an impaired lymphatic system.

The lymphatic system, which is located throughout the body, works from the body tissues back to the circulatory system. When the lymphatic system is damaged or not functioning properly, fluids build up in the tissues of an extremity, causing various degrees of swelling.

There are two types of lymphedema. Primary lymphedema has no known cause, while secondary lymphedema is caused by an impairment to the lymphatic system. This is usually the result of injury, infection, cancer surgery, radiation therapy, or complications due to obesity or vascular disease.



Julie Dahlberg, MSPT, and Dan Briedel, OT/L, explain the cause of lymphedema to a patient in the lymphedema center at Lowell General Hospital.

As lymphedema progresses, patients may develop fibrosis (hardening of the skin), limited mobility, and have an increased risk of infection. "For many patients the feeling of heaviness in the limb and their decreased ability to move it normally can make average daily tasks seem next to impossible," says Lowell General physical therapist Julie Dahlberg, MSPT. "Lymphedema management can help relieve some of these symptoms."

New Option Heightens Treatment Success

Until recently, there were few options available for lymphedema patients. Treatments were not highly effective and prevention was underrated. However, a viable, new treatment is helping lymphedema patients proactively manage their condition. Complete decongestive therapy (CDT) is a combination of light massage to drain lymph nodes and vessels, compression bandaging, exercise, skin care, and patient education.

Initially, patients must regularly attend CDT sessions with a specially trained, licensed physical or occupational therapist. Once this highly effective combination therapy minimizes fluid retention in the affected limb, patients are then taught to use the same techniques at home for continued results. "It takes time and a commitment on the patient's part," says Lowell General occupational therapist Daniel Briedel, OT/L. "But if you really stick to the treatments, the results can be wonderful." ■

Managing Lymphedema:

Lowell General and You

Lowell General Hospital now offers the only lymphedema management program in the Merrimack Valley area.

Through the generous support of TeamWalk for CancerCare and the collaborative efforts of the Cancer Center and Rehabilitation Services at Lowell General, Greater Lowell patients now have access to the most effective care available for lymphedema.

For more information on lymphedema and treatment options, please consult your primary care physician or oncologist, or call Rehabilitation Services at Lowell General Hospital at 978-937-6232.



“EECP Gave Me Back My Life”

Angina patients benefit from “natural bypass” treatment

After undergoing open-heart surgery, Paul Burns was still suffering from extremely painful angina. He had nearly constant chest pain, and even the simplest tasks, like getting dressed, left him exhausted.

He was taking 10 to 12 nitroglycerin tablets every day, with little relief. At just 60 years old, he was an invalid confined to his house.

Three months later, Paul is walking at a brisk pace on the treadmill in the Cardiac Rehabilitation Center at Lowell General Hospital. He now spends his days grocery shopping, visiting his nieces and nephews, and enjoying dinner out at a restaurant. He is down to two nitroglycerin tablets a day—or sometimes none at all—and can go days on end without pain.

What made such a difference? It was “EECP”—or enhanced external counterpulsation—a new, nonsurgical treatment that is changing the lives of many people with angina.

“EECP gave me back my life,” Paul says. “I feel better physically and mentally, like a whole new person. I don’t

know what I would have done without it.”

“A Natural Bypass”

Often referred to as a “natural bypass,” EECP is a treatment option for many chronic angina patients who—like Paul Burns—are not medically suitable for a first or repeat surgery. Unlike bypass surgery and angioplasty, EECP is done on an outpatient basis and carries little or no risk.

Studies show that more than 75 percent of patients completing EECP treatments experience relief of symptoms, including reduction of angina attacks, less dependence on medication, and greater tolerance for exercise.

EECP may be appropriate if:

- you have angina—chest pain—or its equivalent
- nitroglycerin does not provide adequate relief from your angina
- you have been told that you are not a candidate for bypass surgery or angioplasty
- you underwent bypass surgery or angioplasty in the past and angina has returned
- you are a woman with small coronary vessels.

“For many patients who thought they had exhausted all hope of alleviating chronic angina, EECP may provide a viable treatment option,” says Richard Birkhead, MD, FACC, Chief of Cardiology Services at Lowell General.

How It Works

Patients lie comfortably on a padded bed while a series of adjustable cuffs, similar to a blood pressure cuff, are wrapped around the calves, lower thighs, and upper thighs. The cuffs are inflated in sequence up the legs, the pressure helping to push the blood from the feet and legs

to the heart.

“Counterpulsation” means that the EECP system is pumping when the heart is resting, increasing blood flow to the heart. The timing of the inflation and deflation of the cuffs is matched to the rhythm of the heart, helping the heart fill and empty and decreasing the heart’s workload.

Each therapy session lasts about an hour, and most patients go to 35 one-hour sessions, once a day, over the course of a few weeks.

For Paul Burns, those few weeks made all the difference. “EECP let me get back to a normal life.” ■

Thanks to the EECP treatment program at Lowell General Hospital, Paul Burns’ quality of life has significantly improved.



A physician’s referral is required for EECP and it is covered by Medicare and most major insurance plans. For more information, call the EECP Center at Lowell General at 978-937-6481 or visit www.EECP.com or www.lowellgeneral.org.

Breast Reconstruction: An Attractive Alternative

When you look good—you feel like you could take on the world. So is it any wonder many breast cancer survivors are choosing an alternative procedure that helps them look their best and improves their self-image?

“Breast reconstruction is a way for women to regain a semblance of their former body image and create a positive outcome to a difficult situation,” says Loreen Ali, MD, an aesthetic and reconstructive plastic surgeon on staff at Lowell General Hospital.

A Safe Option for Breast Cancer Patients

According to Dr. Ali, who has a special interest in helping patients recovering from breast cancer, reconstruction is a safe and viable option for women who have mastectomies. In addition, many women choose to have surgery after a lumpectomy or on an unaffected breast to restore a natural, symmetrical look.

Choosing the breast reconstruction option that is best for you is a very personal decision. Some women feel comfortable with a less invasive expander and implant reconstruction option, while others choose an alternative approach—referred to as TRAM (transverse rectus abdominis myocutaneous) flap—that uses muscles and tissue from the abdomen or back to recreate the breast.

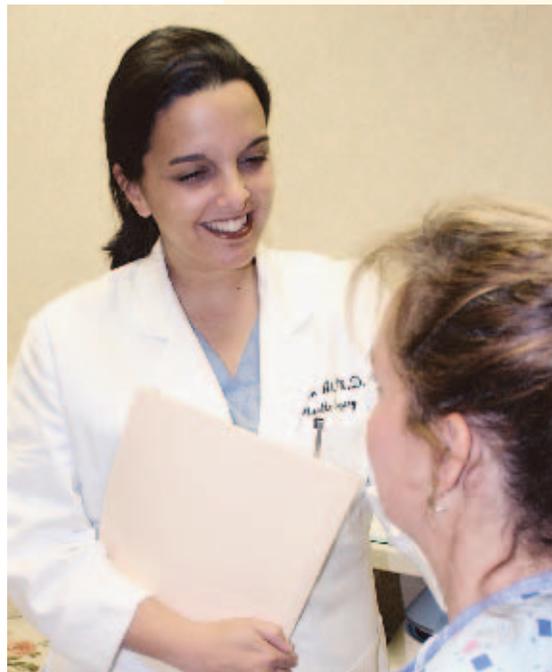
Patients Decide the Timeline

Dr. Ali suggests that patients discuss options with their physician at the time of diagnosis. This allows the general surgeon and reconstructive plastic surgeon to work together as a team—likely to perform skin-sparing breast surgery in preparation for reconstruction.

The choice of immediate or delayed reconstructive surgery is a very personal one. “Many women find it comforting (at the time of surgery) to go to sleep with a breast and wake up with a breast,” says Dr. Ali.

While immediate reconstruction has some advantages and may minimize initial visible trauma from the mastectomy, Dr. Ali stresses that women who have had mastectomies in the past should not rule out this life-affirming procedure. “Even years later, many women are viable candidates for reconstruction.” ■

Dr. Ali is an aesthetic/reconstructive plastic surgeon in Chelmsford. She is accepting new patients and may be reached at 978-256-7697.



Dr. Loreen Ali, a reconstructive and aesthetic plastic surgeon on staff at Lowell General, discusses breast reconstruction options with a patient.

Think Pink: Breast Health and You Program

Do you have questions about breast health? Want to know more about performing breast self-exams? Maybe you are thinking of breast augmentation or reconstruction? The Think Pink: Breast Health and You seminar will answer these questions and others—to help you be healthy and stay that way. Our experts will discuss breast health topics that every woman needs to know—from performing self-exams to strategies for maintaining breast health. Aesthetic and reconstructive plastic surgeon Loreen Ali, MD, will discuss the many choices available for women interested in breast augmentation or reconstruction.

Think Pink: Breast Health and You Program

March 10, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Clark Auditorium—at Lowell General Hospital

For more information or to register, call at 978-937-6464.

Calendar

POST
and
SAVE

Classes & Upcoming Events

Health Education and Wellness Programs

Unless noted, you may register for all health education and wellness programs at 978-937-6464 or log on to www.lowellgeneral.org.

■ Childbirth Education

Prepare for the arrival of your family's newest member! Lowell General offers Hypnobirthing, Prepared and Refresher Childbirth, Breastfeeding, Infant Massage, and Sibling classes. Please register early, as many classes reach maximum enrollment several months before they begin. Call 978-937-6511 or log on to www.lowellgeneral.org.

■ Prenatal Yoga

This seven-week yoga class will utilize stretching, modified yoga postures, breathing, and relaxation techniques to help honor and support the body during pregnancy and the birthing process. This course is taught by a certified Kripalu Yoga instructor. Medical permission is recommended. Fee: \$70.

Meets Mondays, March 7 to April 18, 5:45 to 7 p.m.

■ Infant Massage

Parents learn special strokes and moves to soothe and stimulate babies ages 4 weeks to 6 months. Fee: \$60—includes two sessions and instruction book.

Meets two days, March 9 and 16 or May 4 and 11, 10 to 11:30 a.m.



■ Baby-Sitting Basics

Designed to help develop baby-sitting skills for boys and girls age 10 and older. Topics include: basic safety issues, first aid, growth and development, baby-sitter activities, bottle-feeding, bath time and bedtime, care and handling of infants, and more. Fee: \$30.

Meets one Saturday, January 8, February 19, March 19, or April 16, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

■ The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program at Lowell General Hospital

New sessions begin this spring. Classes meet from 6:30 to 9 p.m. plus one all-day Saturday session. Fee: \$350—some insurance plans reimburse. Call 978-937-6415 to register.

Nutrition Education

Registration is required for all Nutrition Education classes. Unless noted, you may register by calling 978-937-6227.

■ Body Fat Analysis

Monitor weight loss or muscle development. Includes weight recommendations, calorie needs, and exercise guidelines. Fee: \$15.

■ Nutrition Counseling

Learn healthy eating habits for weight control and disease management with a one-on-one consultation with a registered dietitian. A physician's referral is required.

■ Filtering Through the Fads

Registered dietitians will help you sort through the "low carb" dieting craze. We will discuss which diets have been proven safe and effective, and help you understand nutrition lingo. Fee: \$5.

To register, call 978-937-6054.
January 18, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Diabetes Education and Management

Our registered dietitians provide information and guidance on prevention and management of diabetes. Registration is required for all classes. Unless noted, the fee is \$5 per lecture and you may register by calling 978-937-6227.

Carbohydrate Counting and Diabetes

Do you know how many carbohydrates you need each day and which foods raise your blood sugar? We'll show you how to incorporate healthy carbohydrates into your diet while controlling your blood sugar levels.

January 27, 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Heart Health and Diabetes

Learn about how diabetes affects your heart health. A registered dietitian will review the relationship between nutrition and diabetes and discuss the role of low-fat eating in the diabetic's diet. Topics will include label reading, dietary fiber, fats, and exercise. To register please call 978-937-6054.

February 17, 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.



FREE Diabetes Prevention and Management Workshop

Join the staff at Lowell General Hospital for the first annual workshop for diabetes prevention and management.

Diabetes has now reached epidemic proportions, affecting nearly 18 million people in the U.S. today, including children.

Our team of experts, including an endocrinologist, a podiatrist, and a registered dietitian, will help you fight the diabetes epidemic and win!

Everyone is welcome to join this FREE Workshop, which will include interactive discussions, food demonstrations, and information on other FREE diabetes resources. To register call 978-937-6464 or log on to www.lowellgeneral.org.

March 9, 6 to 8:30 p.m.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Lowell General Hospital offers many support groups that provide support and education to members of the community. For more information, call 978-937-6425.

New Mothers Support Group

This is a drop-in support group for new mothers who can come with questions and concerns and meet other mothers and babies.

Meets Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to noon

Down Syndrome Support Group

Parents of children with Down syndrome support each other and enrich the lives of their children so they may reach their fullest potential. Parents of children of all ages are invited. Children are welcome.

Meets the third Monday of each month, 7 to 9 p.m.

Arthritis Support Group

Sufferers learn and share information to better deal with their condition.

Meets the second Friday of each month, 8 to 9:30 a.m.

Perinatal Loss Support Group

This group provides support and comfort when your family has suffered a loss through miscarriage, ectopic, stillbirth, or neonatal death. Call Linda Jezak at 978-937-6324 for more information.

Meets in the Lowell General Hospital chapel the third Tuesday of each month, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS

Lowell General Hospital offers the area's only support groups helping children deal with a loved one's cancer. For more information, call Cammie Caron at 978-937-6129.

For Children and Adolescents

Teen Bereavement Support Group

Meets the second Tuesday of each month, 3 p.m.

"What About Me?" (Ages 11 to 17)

Meets the second Wednesday of each month in January, March, and May, 4 p.m.

"What About Me?...Jr" (Ages 7 to 10)

Meets the second Wednesday of each month in December, February, and April, 4 p.m.

Antibiotics: Not Always the Best Medicine



When your child is sick, your first reaction may be to ask your doctor for antibiotics. However, researchers believe overuse of antibiotics has helped to create bacteria that resist antibiotics, making bacterial illnesses, such as malaria and pneumonia, difficult to treat.

Bacteria and Viruses

Antibiotics kill most bacteria, but leave behind a few that can resist it. Each time you take unnecessary antibiotics, you increase the chance that you may later become ill from the resistant bacteria.

Researchers say that it's normal for these resistant bacteria to develop, but they have become too common too quickly. One reason is the poor use of antibiotics.

"It is important for you and your child to take antibiotics when they are needed and to take the entire prescription, as directed. But keep in mind antibiotics are not always the right course of action," says Dan Nguyen, MD, of Chelmsford Family Practice. "Your physician is the best judge of when antibiotics need to be prescribed—and when it is best to let your body use its natural healing abilities."

For example, antibiotics cannot cure viruses. In general, viruses cause colds, the flu, coughs, bronchitis, and sinusitis. Rest, plenty of fluids, and time are often the best medicine for these conditions.

What You Can Do

To help keep antibiotics working:

- Try not to pressure your doctor to prescribe antibiotics. Be prepared to wait out some infections.
- Follow the medicine's directions.
- Finish the medicine, even if you start feeling better.
- Never save or share unused antibiotics.

Tips to Prevent an Infection

- Wash your hands often. Hand washing can prevent the spread of infection.
- Exercise, eat right, and get plenty of sleep to naturally strengthen your immune system. ■

Dr. Nguyen is a primary care physician with Chelmsford Family Practice in North Chelmsford. He is accepting new patients and may be reached at 978-251-3159.

Pain Management Center

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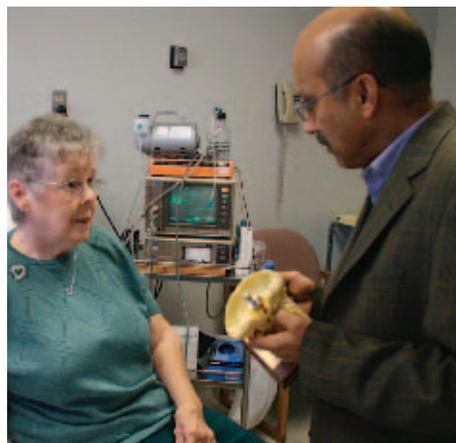
This progress has led to a variety of new advanced interventional pain management techniques, including injection therapy and indwelling pain pumps that introduce medications directly into the space outside the spinal fluid sac. These provide effective relief without the drowsiness and side effects of oral medications.

Other treatments include:

- nerve blocks, to temporarily numb various nerves throughout the body through local injections
- intralesional injections, to decrease pain and promote healing for shingles
- transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), to increase your body's own anti-pain substances through electrical nerve stimulation.

Complementary Medicine Also Offered

The center's comprehensive approach combines advanced pain management techniques with complementary



Patient Ann Johnson of Dracut, pictured with Dr. G.K. Dwarakanath, credits the Pain Management Center with helping relieve her severe arthritis pain.

methods of pain relief such as physical therapy, massage, and psychological counseling to help patients understand and overcome their chronic pain. "At the Pain Management Center, we are committed to reduce the suffering and increase the quality of life for our patients," says Dr. Ahmed. ■

Meet the physicians at the Pain Management Center at Lowell General Hospital.

G. K. Dwarakanath, MD, is the director and founder of the Pain Management Center. He is certified by the American Board of Anesthesiology in both anesthesiology and pain management, and is certified by the American Board of Pain Medicine.

Shihab Ahmed, MD, has specialized in pain medicine at some of the most prestigious medical facilities in the Boston area. He is board certified by the American Board of Anesthesiology in anesthesiology and pain management.

Need a Doctor? Call Our Physician Referral Line at 1-800-544-2424.

WHO WILL BENEFIT?

Hyperbaric treatment provides beneficial healing effects for many conditions including:

- diabetic foot ulcers, chronic venous ulcers, and pressure ulcers
- refractory osteomyelitis, or infection in the bone
- radiation tissue damage
- underwater diving accidents
- fire victims and firefighters suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning
- reclus spider bites and other serious insect bites
- gangrene—a condition where the tissues die or are severely damaged.

To find out if The Center for Wound Healing is right for you, speak to your physician or call 978-275-1390 and ask to speak with one of our staff.

Relief for Wounds that Won't Heal

Lowell General Announces Area's First "Center for Wound Healing"

For more than 5 million Americans today, everyday activities are a challenge because of wounds that won't heal.

Chronic, or nonhealing, wounds affect every aspect of their lives, from walking to grocery shopping to getting a good night's sleep. Help is here.

Lowell General Hospital's new Center for Wound Healing was created to bring relief to people suffering from the pain and discomfort of chronic wounds. Located at Lowell General Hospital's Drum Hill Center in Chelmsford, The Center for Wound Healing offers a comprehensive, multidisciplinary treatment to all types of chronic wounds, including diabetic ulcers, venous ulcers, pressure ulcers, radiation wounds, and wounds due to poor blood flow or other underlying medical conditions.

How It Works

The Center for Wound Healing provides hyperbaric oxygen therapy, a medical treatment that allows patients to breathe pure oxygen while lying inside a pressurized chamber. Typically, patients feel no differently than when lying in bed. They may listen to music, watch television or movies on the VCR, or nap throughout therapy.

"When 100 percent oxygen is delivered at increased pressure, it increases the amount of oxygen delivered to organs and tissues in the body," explains Paul Burke, MD, a vascular surgeon at The Center

for Wound Healing. "This improves the effects of certain antibiotics, activates white blood cells to fight infection, and promotes the healing process of chronic wounds."

For the most effective treatment, patients typically receive 30 to 90 minutes of therapy every day for several weeks.

The Care Team

The care team at The Center for Wound Healing includes a physician team practicing in various medical specialties, as well as nursing staff with training in wound, ostomy and continence care, hyperbaric oxygen therapy, and critical care. These physicians and nurses work in collaboration with a patient's primary or referring physician to develop a personalized treatment plan. ■



Karen McNulty, Hyperbaric Technician, readies a patient for treatment at The Center for Wound Healing.

for
your health

*Your resource for healthy living
from Lowell General Hospital*

<http://www.lowellgeneral.org>
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