

WellBeing

GENESYS

A newspaper for your good health • March/April 2009



Genesys goes to the mat for Clio High School wrestler

Inside

- 3 New technique at Genesys relieves chronic back pain
- 4 After hip reconstruction, man trains for 10-mile race
- 5 Family of four knows first-hand Genesys saves lives
- 6 Premature twins in capable, caring hands at Genesys
- 7 Couple calls Genesys heart team miracle workers

Wrestler undergoes risky surgery to compete again

Seventeen-year-old Clio High School wrestler Kade Roggentine had no clue his sore throat would become the toughest opponent he ever faced. Ultimately, it forced him off the mat and out of competition.

During his third year on the school's wrestling team, Kade was focused on finishing higher than the previous year, where he placed two points shy of earning all state honors. He battled constant tiredness and a sore throat, but wrestled his way to another shot at all state. In the meantime, his parents wanted some answers.

After running a series of tests, Kade's family doctor learned the high schooler's platelet count was dangerously low. Normal range is 150,000 to 400,000 units; Kade's count was an alarming 25,000 units.

His parents kept the news from him until after state finals. "We knew how important this meet was to him and how hard he had worked to get there, explains mom Patty. "At the same time, it was very bittersweet for us watching him at states. We were so worried about his health ... what if he had leukemia or some type of cancer?"

Fortunately, Kade, wrestling in a state of exhaustion, battled to place seventh in the state meet.

Shortly after the competition, his mom and dad broke the news.

"I was upset. I had wrestled since I was 6, and I didn't want to give it up my senior year."

The family went to see Rizwan Danish, MD, hematologist and oncologist at Genesys, who conducted more tests that pinpointed the reason for Kade's low platelet count. He was diagnosed with ITP (idiopathic thrombocytopenia), an extremely rare auto-immune disease that causes Kade's body to attack its own platelets. There is no known reason for this medical condition, and no known cure, Dr. Danish told the family.

"He told us what this meant for Kade," Patty was broken-hearted. "A low platelet count stops the blood from clotting and any injury potentially could cause Kade to bleed to death."

That meant all contact sports – including wrestling – were off limits for Kade, possibly permanently.

Dr. Danish spelled out the treatment options, but none offered an opportunity to wrestle again.

Kade first tried daily infusions of platelets but that didn't work. Steroids were out of the question, and chemotherapy would make him sick for months with no promise of success. The last option was spleen removal but this type of major surgery was too risky given Kade's medical condition.

It was a car accident that changed everything. Kade was not hurt, but if the accident had been more serious, he could have lost his life. That's when he decided to risk surgery.

The odds quickly turned in his favor when the family found Michael Kia, DO, general surgeon on staff at Genesys, who had learned a new technique to remove Kade's spleen laparoscopically, and with one tiny incision in the abdomen. Kade would be the first patient in the state to undergo a single port access splenectomy. Kade doesn't talk much about his whole ordeal, but did note that he trusted Dr. Kia. "He sounded like he knew what he was doing."

The first few days after surgery, "it was hard," Kade admits, but within the next couple of weeks, he started light running. After six weeks, he returned to the mat, and at eight weeks – halfway through wrestling season – he began competing again, fighting his way to an all district title, all region honors and his last opportunity to make all state, where he finished fifth in his division!

When asked about his whole experience, Kade briefly notes ... "I was happy!"

"I was happy!"



First single port access splenectomy in the state performed at Genesys

With this innovative technique offered at Genesys, surgeons successfully can operate through a single entry point (one tiny incision) typically hidden inside the patient's navel. Using special instruments that mimic the movements of hands, surgeons can remove the spleen, gallbladder and appendix safely and effectively. For more information on this procedure, call 810-606-7399.

New technique at Genesys relieves chronic back pain

"So many times I just wanted to give up; I cried all the time because my back hurt so badly," reflects Chesaning resident Sally List.

"I'm a go-getter," but the life Sally attacked with great passion changed drastically after a fall on black ice five years ago.

When stepping out of the school bus she had driven for 30 years, Sally slipped on the icy pavement, banged her head on the cement and broke her arm.

Shortly after the accident, "I started getting terrible headaches and a stiff neck, and it was getting worse," Sally describes. "I finally called my niece and asked her if she could recommend a good doctor."

That's when Sally heard about Avery Jackson, MD, a neurosurgeon at Genesys, and when her life began taking a turn in the right direction. Dr. Jackson conducted an MRI and the "results were disastrous," Sally reports.

"By this time, I literally had to use my hands to hold up my head!" she thinks back.

Dr. Jackson learned the vertebrae in her spine were severely damaged from the fall, and were pinching against her nerves. "I could've been paralyzed if I didn't get help," Sally points out.

Sally needed a series of operations to repair the extensive damage to her back. After three complex surgeries, Sally's spine was secured with 15 screws, four rods and two cages.

Unfortunately, repairing the damage didn't relieve her pain.

Determined to find a method to fix that too, Dr. Jackson learned about a new technique that would spare Sally another major surgery and give her back the quality of life she was missing.

Dr. Jackson obtained special training to conduct this new procedure called spinal cord stimulation. The FDA-approved therapy is used to block pain signals from reaching the brain. The procedure is conducted through local anesthesia. Sally spent one night in the hospital and returned home pain-free – the first time in five years!

Before the procedure, "I never had a good day; my pain level always was eight, nine or 10," she notes. "Now, my pain level is one or two; on bad days, it may get to a three. And I don't take any medication anymore! Before the procedure, I lived on Motrin 800s ... anything to get me through the day.

"I love this new procedure!" she exclaims with enthusiasm.

"Dr. Jackson is much more than my doctor, he's my friend, he's a miracle worker and he's a lifesaver for me!"

Sally's husband was so impressed with the outcome of his wife's procedure, that when he was having back troubles he chose Dr. Jackson and Genesys without hesitation.

"He's very knowledgeable and everyone was very good to us," he remarks.

"I love this new procedure!"



Spinal cord stimulation relieves chronic back pain

This FDA-approved therapy is a safe and effective method to relieve chronic back pain. Neurosurgeons at Genesys can implant under the skin a small wire connected to a power source that transmits low-level electrical signals to the spinal cord and specific nerves, blocking pain signals. Using a magnetic remote control, patients can turn the current on and off or adjust the intensity. Candidates for this therapy are those who have not had success with conservative treatments and those who will not benefit from surgery. Patients can trial the system before they have it permanently implanted. The device also can be removed anytime the patient chooses. For more information on this procedure, call Genesys Neurosurgery Services at 1-800-506-8141.

After hip reconstruction, man trains for 10-mile race

Grand Blanc resident Jeff Davis diligently began training for the 10-mile Crim last year, and was up to nine miles for the first time in his life when he disappointedly was forced to trade in his running shoes for a walking cane.

"I pulled a muscle as I was running in a very hilly area, and could barely walk," he recalls. "I tried some stretches to relieve the pain, and finally went to my primary care physician (Kevin Youngs, MD, family practice physician on staff at Genesys) because I wasn't getting better. He took some X-rays, referred me to physical therapy for two months, but I was getting worse.

"The pain was keeping me up at night," he continues. "I struggled to climb the stairs in my house; I'd have to take one step slowly and lean on the banister all the way upstairs. I had to use a cane and crutches to get around."

He went back to Dr. Youngs who ordered an MRI, which revealed a stress fracture. Dr. Youngs recommended Jeff see Frederick Schreiber, DO, orthopedic surgeon on staff at Genesys.

"I was concerned," Jeff admits. "I knew nothing about him ... this surgery could affect my life. I checked him out on the internet and his credentials looked good. And I asked Dr. Youngs if he would send his mother to him. He said 'yes' without hesitation.

"I'm an engineer and I ask more questions than the average person. My first question to Dr. Schreiber was 'will I be able to run again?' If he had said no, I would've walked and looked for a doctor who would give me the answer I wanted," Jeff reports candidly.

"He told me my bone was shaped like a 'V,' and it needed to be taken care of soon ... tonight!" he remembers. "I needed hip reconstructive surgery immediately.

"My appointment with Dr. Schreiber was on a Thursday at 2 p.m. Two hours later, I'm in the hospital at Genesys scheduled for surgery at 10 a.m. the following day."

On Saturday, Jeff was up and walking around his room with crutches. Dr. Schreiber came in and told Jeff he was recovering so well he could be discharged. "I was back home at 11:30 that same morning."

By Tuesday, Jeff was walking around without his crutches and feeling "pretty good. I didn't need any pain meds, but Dr. Schreiber did advise me to stay on the crutches."

Four months to the day after his surgery, Jeff was out running again with a goal to run in the Crim this year – "it will be my first time running 10 miles," he is excited to report. "I wish I had done this surgery sooner! Every day, I feel better and better.

"Dr. Schreiber told me this was an unusual fracture; he hadn't seen one like mine in 25 years. It was a tricky procedure, but he did a good job. I was real happy with the outcome."

Jeff was so grateful for his care at Genesys that he wrote a letter to *The Flint Journal* thanking Dr. Schreiber and the terrific staff for "the great experience I had.

"Words cannot convey how much relief I have and how much better I feel! The entire Genesys staff did everything possible to make my stay as pleasant as possible."



"Every day, I feel better and better!"

LOOKING FOR AN ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON?

CALL GENESYS ORTHOPEDIC SERVICES

1-888-234-4710

Family of four knows first-hand Genesys saves lives



"The doctors at Genesys are our heroes!"

Good fortune and great care comes in fours, according to the Vincent family. Mom Jennie and her three daughters all will testify that Genesys is the best hospital when it comes to care and compassion. And each has a story they were anxious to share.

The chain of episodes began five years ago with the youngest Vincent daughter, Mary Ann Podjun, who was a patient of Rizwan Danish, MD, hematologist and oncologist on staff at Genesys. She had blood clotting issues and was hospitalized at Genesys when she first met him. "I was in pain and mad at the world when he came into my room and found a way to make me laugh ... and make me healthy again."

When Mary Ann's sister Norma Smith learned she had breast cancer about a year later, she knew Genesys was the hospital for her and Dr. Danish was the doctor she wanted. Norma successfully underwent radiation therapy and chemotherapy, and surprisingly, was joined by her sister, Shirley Lonsbury.

Shirley also chose Genesys and Dr. Danish. "I smoked for 40 years and got bronchitis every year, but ignored it" until her husband insisted she see her family physician because Shirley's condition was not getting any better. That's when the spot on her lung was detected. A team of Genesys specialists immediately stepped forward to confirm her diagnosis. Ahmad Hannan, MD, pulmonologist, worked with Karsten Fliegner, MD, PhD, Genesys cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon, who biopsied the tissue.

"He told me if the surgery was a long one, it was cancer," Shirley recalls. "He planned to have the tissue rushed to the lab to confirm the diagnosis, and keep me in surgery until he got the results. He told me, 'if you were my mother, I would want you to walk out of the hospital with no cancer.' The first thing I asked after surgery was 'what time is it?'"

The prognosis wasn't good. The surgery was almost five hours long. Shirley had small cell cancer, the deadliest kind. It spreads fast and life expectancy is very short.

The next morning, Dr. Danish arrived to meet Shirley and discuss her treatment plan, knowing it was a long shot, but determined to do everything possible to keep the cancer from returning. "He was so compassionate, and so soft-spoken and gentle when he had to tell me what my future looked like.

"He admitted to me the prognosis was real bad; this type of cancer was a fast spreader; fortunately, further tests showed it hadn't spread yet. The goal was for me to get through radiation treatments without the cancer spreading."

That's when Shirley joined Norma for their daily trips to the Genesys Hurley Cancer Institute.

After several weeks of aggressive therapy, Dr. Danish told Shirley she was cancer-free.

Just when the three sisters believed their experiences at Genesys were behind them, their 89-year-old mother, Jennie Vincent, fell and broke her hip, leading to emergency surgery at Genesys in the middle of the night, and, a few days later, an unexpected move to the heart unit at Genesys. Edward Lis, DO, orthopedic surgeon at Genesys, was called in to repair Jennie's hip, and as she was recovering, her heart started beating irrationally.

Fortunately "the white knight showed up" announces Mary Ann. "Dr. Dobies (David Dobies, cardiologist with the Genesys Heart Institute) got mom's medication back on track, and she was back to herself in no time!"

Today, the four women are active, healthy, happy and very grateful to the many specialists at Genesys who got them back to the life they love. "The doctors at Genesys are our heroes!" they all chime in.

Premature twins in capable, caring hands at Genesys



“Genesys did a wonderful job with our babies!”

Shortly after Tanya and Scott Sassack moved to the area, they learned they were going to be parents. And, 19 weeks into the pregnancy, they found out they were expecting twins!

“I had a really wonderful pregnancy ... it was a dream,” Tanya smiles, until she hit week 28 when the tiny, 4’10” mom was placed on work restriction. She experienced another setback two weeks later when she developed gestational diabetes.

She describes this next phase of her pregnancy in a calm and relaxed manner noting, “Dr. Lapa did all the worrying for me (Martin Lapa, DO, OB/GYN on staff at Genesys). “He sent me to a dietitian at Genesys who helped me set up a diet that would help control my sugar level. I felt good the entire time,” she notes. “I knew the risks with having twins, but Genesys monitored me so closely and took so many preventive steps, I wasn’t worried.”

At week 33, Tanya was rushed to the Genesys emergency department where it was learned she was experiencing preeclampsia and the babies needed to arrive right away. (Preeclampsia occurs in 5 to 8 percent of pregnancies. It is a rapidly progressive condition that can affect the health of the mother and babies.) “I still wasn’t worried; I kept thinking Genesys was just being overprotective.”

Gabrielle and Rebekah were born Jan. 29, 2004 by c-section, shortly after the Sassacks arrived at Genesys. Even though Dr. Lapa was enroute to a surgery, “somehow he was able to get back in time to deliver the girls,” Tanya recalls. “I trusted him and I wanted him there.”

Both girls remained at Genesys for a month after their birth, living in the Special Care Nursery. “They had a ‘suck and swallow’ issue so Genesys wanted to keep a close eye on them. (This means they cannot drink and breathe at the same time.)

Every day faithfully, for the next month, Tanya arrived at the hospital in the morning for her daughters’ feedings and stayed

most of the day. Scott would stop by at night after work and stay with his daughters.

“The Special Care Nursery did a really, really wonderful job with our babies,” Tanya notes. “We developed a relationship with the nurses and they developed a real affection for the girls and for us. They always welcomed us and took wonderful care of the babies. They even would put them in the same bassinet together so they could begin forming a bond. They were so dedicated, and the girls thrived under their watchful eyes and nurturing care.

“And Dr. Lapa ... he is a very special guy to us. We are very grateful to him.

“It’s the knowledge, kindness and caring of everyone at Genesys that impressed Scott and me the most,” Tanya continues. “At Genesys, I felt like I was part of the team. We look back on those days and know that without that team at Genesys, the outcome could have been very different. For the gift of our two healthy, beautiful daughters we are eternally grateful!”

Genesys Family Birthing Center records zero neonatal mortality rate

Safety of mothers and babies is the #1 priority at Genesys. Achieving zero neonatal mortality rates and maintaining that goal is why Genesys is rated one of the safest hospitals for childbirth in the country. And, to further improve the care and safety of new babies and moms, Genesys is expanding its Special Care Nursery to a Level IIB. This means Genesys will have the capability to care for higher risk babies – those born at more than 32 weeks gestation and weighing more than 1500 grams, those needing short-term mechanical ventilation, and those needing continuous positive airway pressure. Genesys also is sprucing up its Family Birthing Center accommodations to better reflect the needs of the new parents. For details, call Genesys at 810-606-6387.

Couple calls Genesys heart team “miracle workers”

Davison resident Margaret Klimowicz asked her husband John to give her an unusual birthday gift this year ... she wanted to renew their wedding vows at Genesys, where John literally was brought back to life a few weeks ago.

“This is a new beginning for us,” Margaret tries to retell John’s story but pauses frequently to hold back her tears. Miracles happen every day, and one took place at Genesys, Margaret is convinced.

John was admitted to Genesys for a complication from his lung cancer. He was sitting on the side of his hospital bed when he suddenly collapsed from an unexpected cardiac arrest.

The Genesys team on the oncology unit sounded the CPR code immediately. Within seconds, about 15 clinicians surrounded John’s bedside working like a perfectly well-oiled machine following every lifesaving protocol to restore a heart beat. After 20 minutes, John remained unresponsive. There was nothing left to do to try to restart his heart. That’s when the miracle happened. The team’s tireless efforts were rewarded. When John’s ECG showed a small glimmer of responsiveness, the team harmoniously jumped in place once again, and this time, John’s heart starting beating.

“It was every single member of the code team working in perfect synchronization – doing everything at precisely the right time that saved John’s life,” believes his friend and medical advocate Al Dallaire, RN, a house administrator at Genesys. He had just arrived in Florida for a family vacation when he received the call at 6 in the morning that his friend might be dying. Al stayed on the phone through the entire code, from 1,200 miles away.

John escaped one near death episode, but he still wasn’t out of the woods. His condition was “extremely unstable,” Al describes. His cardiac output was at only 10 percent efficiency.

“My wife and I left Florida right away to come back home, believing we would arrive for a funeral.” Instead, they found an alert, conscious John, with a weak heart but a strong spirit.

“Every member of the team did their best and left the rest to God,” Al believes. “He chose our hands to make this miracle happen. And for John to walk away from this with no neurologic deficits is truly a miracle.”

Today, John’s lungs are free of cancer, his heart is still weak but under close monitoring by cardiologists at Genesys, and he and Al went back on the golf course a few weeks after his near death episode. “I’m working out three times a week and I’m not winded or tired,” John is happy to report.

“God gave us a gift,” Margaret speaks softly as the tears flow. “God was in the ICU at Genesys, saving John. “The care, empathy and concern from the staff was overwhelming. I felt like I was surrounded by my extended family.”

“I give credit to everyone who saved me,” John says. “It was not one single doctor, or one single nurse; it was the whole team ... from my family doctor to my oncologist, my radiation oncologist, my pulmonologist, my cardiologist, my vascular surgeon, my cardiovascular surgeon, and all the nurses and other medical professionals ... everyone at Genesys worked together as a team; that’s why I am here today. They gave me a second chance at life.

“We were given a gift from God and Genesys, and I wanted to start our new life together in the place that gave John his second chance ... Genesys gave us back our life together.”

The couple renewed their vows on the NTICU at Genesys with Al Dallaire and his wife Noreen as witnesses.

“Genesys gave us back our life together!”



Genesys Heart Institute #1

Center of Excellence status, survival rate data and consumer surveys prove year after year that Genesys heart care is the best in the region and among the best in the nation!

GENESYS HEART INSTITUTE

1-888-463-3268

NEED A DOCTOR?

Call Genesys Physician Access

1-800-327-6262



Genesys Heart Institute once again was selected to participate in a worldwide cardiac clinical trial

Since its opening about four years ago, the Genesys Office of Research has been involved with more than 50 clinical trials and hundreds of research studies with one goal in mind – to improve the health of our community.

The Genesys Heart Institute alone has participated in 21 clinical trials. Currently, Genesys is enrolling patients in the Platinum cardiac clinical trial, an international study to evaluate a new drug eluting stent that

will push through tighter spaces in the coronary arteries and penetrate longer lesions. This new stent will help save more victims of heart disease and spare them major surgery.

Only four sites in Michigan and 160 across the world have been invited to conduct this trial.

To learn more about the Genesys Office of Research and its clinical trials, call (810) 606-7722.

Genesys named a top hospital to work for!

Genesys is one of only five health care facilities in Michigan and the only hospital in the region to be named one of the top 100 hospitals in the US to work for.

Nursing Professionals, a national magazine for nursing students, announced its 2009 list of top hospitals that “represent leadership in the health care industry through upholding the importance of healthy living to parents, creating innovative programs and maintaining quality staff.”

“Living with grief: diversity and end-of-life care”

Free teleconference via satellite

Wednesday, April 29, 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Hurley Medical Center’s
Merliss Brown auditorium

Closed captioning provided.

Genesys Home & Hospice Care co-sponsors.

Registration, toll free:
1-888-943-9690, ext. 5010

GENESYS

A member of Ascension Health,
a Catholic-sponsored health care system



NEW TO THE AREA?

Call Genesys for a packet
of information:
810-606-7399