

Berkshire Health News

News and information for our community

New career opportunities ensure healthcare for the future

Berkshire Health Systems is breaking new ground in reversing critical shortages in nursing and technologist positions

A first-of-its kind program is taking place at Berkshire Health Systems that is designed to ensure our community avoids the national crisis. Throughout the United States, healthcare analysts warn that a shortage of highly-trained nurses, technologists and other vital positions will peak just as 80 million baby boomers begin requiring increased medical care. How community hospitals will care for

a massive and aging population is now among the top challenges in healthcare.

Complicating the issue in Berkshire County is its remote geography and fairly stable population. People living in the region who are licensed and credentialed to fill these positions already work at either Berkshire Medical Center, Fairview Hospital, the Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association or Berkshire Healthcare Systems - the long

term care associate of BHS.

While other hospitals struggle to recruit from afar to fill patient-care positions, BHS has spent the last seven years developing innovative programs aimed at improving the careers of its own employees, while also ensuring a trained and ready staff for future patients. Called Critical Shortage Programs, BHS has so far tapped over 200 employees who have proven themselves at entry level jobs and is financing the education and clinical training they need to step into high-level nursing and technologist positions.

"This was the first healthcare system in the country to start a Critical Shortages Program," said Elizabeth Kirby, BHS director of Education. "What stops a lot of other hospitals from duplicating this is the cost and a lack of administrative support. But from the very beginning, our administration gave this program its full support for two reasons: First, it addresses the healthcare needs of our community by providing a well-credentialed staff to care for them. And secondly, it helps our employees be the best they can be."

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Weight loss surgery: Transforming lives

Jim St. Lawrence wanted to commemorate his late brother's life by doing something to change his own, and on the day of his brother's birthday, he took stock of his weight problem and the health risks that came with it. "That was two years ago, when my weight was out of control and I didn't have the energy to do much at all," St. Lawrence said. "I was pre-diabetic, had sleep apnea and I was concerned about my overall health."

The big step that St. Lawrence took that day was to get in touch with the Berkshire Center for Weight Loss Surgery. It's been two years since that fateful decision and his life has never been the same. After undergoing a gas-

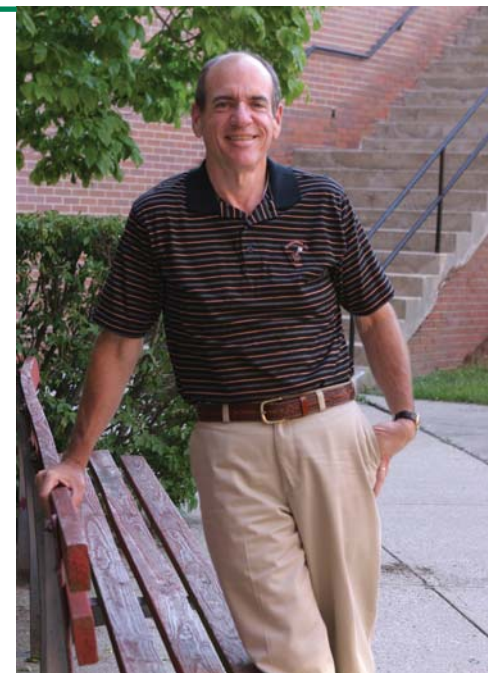
tric bypass procedure, performed by Dr. Andrew Lederman at Berkshire Medical Center, St. Lawrence is trim, healthy and happy, and he said he owes it to the team at the Berkshire Center for Weight Loss Surgery.

"They told me I would have the greatest opportunity to lose weight during the first six months, so I worked hard," said St. Lawrence. "I lost 185 pounds and joined a gym. I had the surgery in September and the following spring, I went back to my golf club, walked in and said hello to some friends. They didn't recognize me. I went from a size 4X to medium, so you can see why they were fooled."

St. Lawrence's story is echoed by

many other patients who have gone through the comprehensive bariatric surgery program provided by the Berkshire Center for Weight Loss Surgery. Heather Holloway works for the US Postal Service, and her six and a half mile walk every work day delivering the mail was getting harder and harder due to her weight issues. "I had the lap band surgery and it went fine, completely changing my eating, for one thing," said Holloway. "Now I mainly eat chicken and fish and a lot of greens, which I love. I haven't gone back to bread and pasta. I've lost 115 pounds and went from a size 20 to size six or eight."

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Jim St. Lawrence lost 185 pounds after his gastric bypass surgery at the Berkshire Center for Weight Loss Surgery.

BMC is a national leader in comprehensive electronic medical record

System enhances patient safety

Dr. Michael Blackman is not a big fan of the hand-off. It increases risk. He's not talking about football. The hand-off he's referring to is related to the care of patients at Berkshire Medical Center. The more hand-offs, the greater the chance of a miscommunication. His answer is BMC's comprehensive electronic medical record system (eCare) part of which is Computerized Physician Order Entry system (CPOE); a tool for physicians and nurses to enter medical orders electronically. The result is streamlined patient care, improved safety and significant reduction in the risk of medical errors. It's the wave of the future, and BMC is leading the charge on a national scale. In fact, BMC is one of only ten hospitals in Massachusetts and among the 4.4% of hospitals nationwide that have CPOE.

"Our comprehensive electronic medical record (EMR) with computerized provider order entry represents a major investment by Berkshire Health Systems in its ongoing efforts to ensure the best care possible for our patients," said Joseph Diver, Chief Information Officer for BHS. Through the CPOE system, when a physician or nurse enters an order, the order is automatically checked against the patient's record for allergies, drug-to-drug interactions, formulary support and related clinical data.

Not only does eCare reduce the potential for errors, but it also minimizes duplicate testing because the record shows what orders already exist for the patient. With historical patient information at the provider's fingertips and improved order clarity, the need for extra confirmatory phone calls is reduced since information needed by the provider to complete an order is

known at the time of ordering.

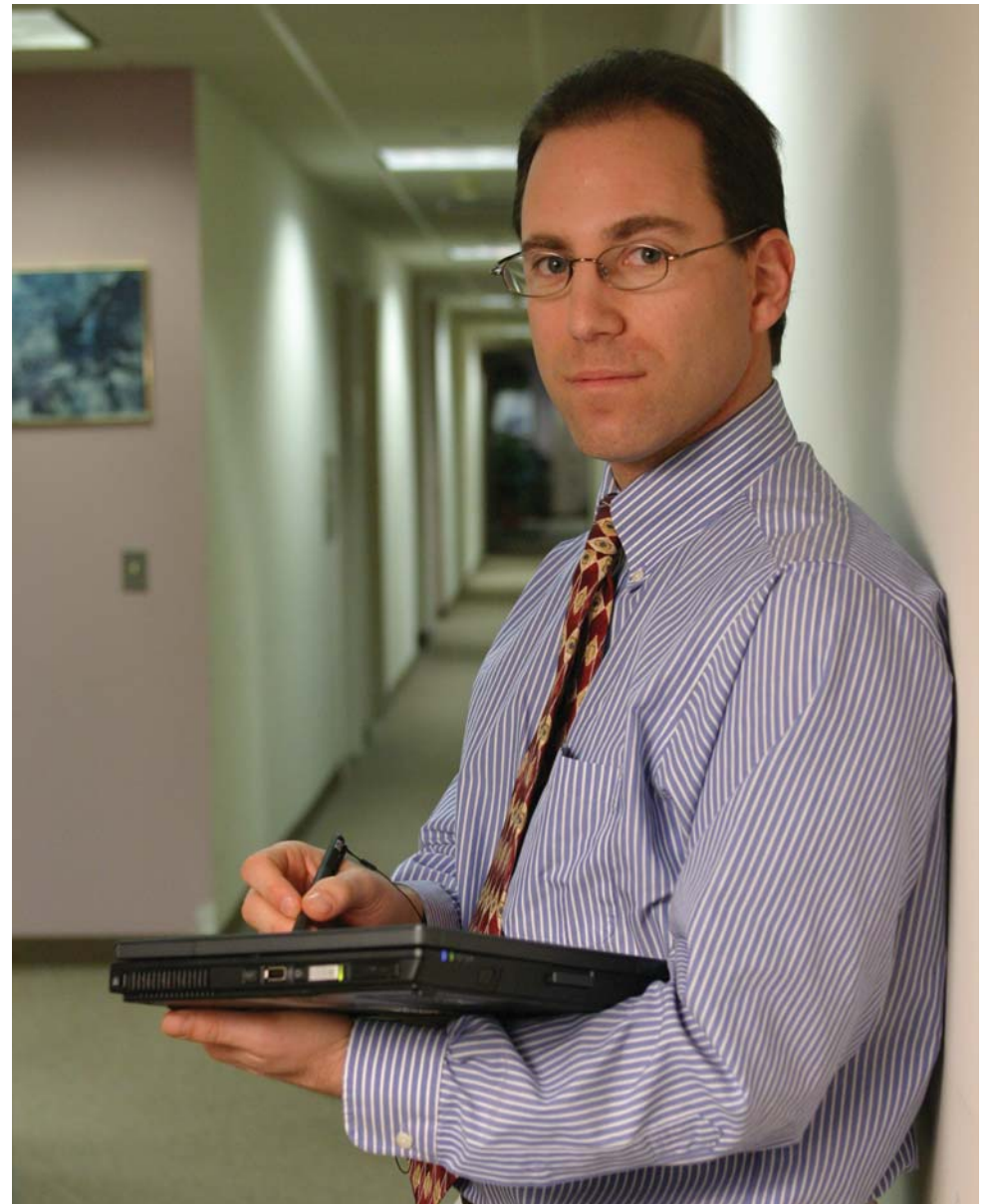
CPOE also improves the medication ordering process. Instead of written or faxed orders, the physician electronically sends an order to the pharmacy, minimizing the potential for error due to hard-to-read handwriting or misunderstood dictation.

"CPOE reduces the risk of a bad information exchange," said Dr. Blackman, BHS's Chief Medical Information Officer. "Anytime there is a hand-off, there is a risk for lack of communication, miscommunication or error. So anytime we have the system decrease the number of hand-offs, we are better off."

CPOE is one step in the process that Berkshire Health Systems is taking to implement a complete EMR in advance of state and federal regulations that may require hospitals to adopt such technology within the next 4-5 years.

Over the past five years, BHS has invested approximately \$15 million on creating and implementing eCare. This included the introduction of MEDITECH (the core electronic record), PACS (the Picture Archival Communications System used for Radiology), online nursing documentation, and automated medication dispensing and closed-loop medication administration. About \$1.5 million was invested in CPOE, which is expected to be in full use in the first half of 2009 at BMC and Fairview Hospital, with implementation underway at community physician practices.

BHS expects to have a fully electronic medical record by the end of 2009. In the process, the eCare system will increase availability and accessibility of information; reduce medication errors; enable gains to operational effi-



Dr. Michael Blackman, the Chief Medical Information Officer for Berkshire Health Systems

ciency; and capture and provide needed information for pay-for-performance and other external reporting requirements.

"BHS is committed to moving forward in the electronic medical record arena," said Diver. "Improved patient safety and enhanced patient care are top priorities for us as an organization, and investing in technology like CPOE and the EMR will ensure that we reach those goals and provide the best possible care to our patients and our community."

Need health questions answered?

Call
BMC's Community
Health Information Center
413-395-7877

www.berkshirehealthsystems.org

Technology in the field: BVNA nurses use laptops for better care

When the Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association began serving patients in their homes, a simple seven word, hand-written note on a pad was a sufficient record. Nurse Elizabeth McCarthy wrote, “Went to care for Mrs. Wm. H. Smith.” She penned those words on March 26, 1901, and the visit to Mrs. Smith’s home became the very first patient record for the then fledgling Berkshire VNA. (Smith was not her real name, which we have shielded, even all these years later, to protect patient confidentiality.)

Over one hundred years and hundreds of thousands of home visits later, the Berkshire VNA, in a healthcare climate whose complexity wasn’t even dreamed of in 1901, has replaced the old paper tablets with laptop computers, carried by each of the nearly 80 clinical staff to all visits and used to provide the most efficient and safe care. “This has improved the coordination of care from hospital to home and from the home to the hospital,” said Shari Gladey, RN. “With the laptop, we have a full, multidisciplinary electronic record right there in the patient’s home. So, the nurse has every physical therapy note, nursing note, easily accessible when needed, which benefits the patient and the care provider.”

Keeping a patient safe and healthy in their home environment is one of the core missions of the Berkshire VNA, and the use of a portable electronic patient record helps to improve patient safety. “One of the big advantages of this system is our ability to track medications, medication interactions and education tools for patients,” said Patricia Eddy, RN. “It’s a huge

benefit for us to have that access, in real time, in the patient’s home, so that we can share that with the patient right away.”

Eddy says the technology also improves communication between the nurse or therapist in the field and the individual patient’s physician. “As the Berkshire VNA provider making the home visit makes changes in the patient’s care plan, through the use of the electronic record, that automatically generates a physician order,” she said.

“Another key aspect of how this improves our ability to provide better patient care is our connection to a comprehensive health network,” said Eileen Myers, RN, Vice President of Home Care Services. “Berkshire Health Systems has made significant investments in its electronic medical record system, which gives the Berkshire VNA provider access to the patient’s hospital care record and helps us to improve the care we provide in the home.”

Arlene Campoli, whose family was a Berkshire VNA client, said, “Having access to the laptop in our home provided a positive impact for both the BVNA nurse and me as a caregiver. It allowed us to immediately compare all of the past information, so that we could quickly see how things were done on previous visits. It also allowed more hands-on time for the VNA nurse to care for my loved one.”

“The Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association’s use of the online documentation system streamlines the communication among the care giving team,” said Joseph Diver, Chief Information Officer for Berkshire Health Systems. “The system is designed to prompt

the care team with requirements of the particular visit to ensure the highest quality of care for all served. This is an exciting time for the VNA professionals and the patients in our community.”

A home care patient may very well see more than one Berkshire VNA care provider, and the use of laptops allows for easier and faster communication between the caregiver team. Each of the units has access to an e-mail system that connects all of the VNA clinicians. “This provides us with enhanced communication among the disciplines and among the team members,” said Myers.

The patients are noticing the benefits of the use of an electronic, mobile system. Many have indicated it has helped to make their care more efficient, and in one case, a patient now regularly clears a section of her kitchen table for the VNA nurse to use when she brings the laptop into the patient’s home.

One of the most obvious benefits of an electronic record in the home relates back to those first seven words written on a tablet by Elizabeth McCarthy. While her handwriting was, overall, fairly legible, not all handwritten patient notes are, and through the laptop system all notes are typed in. This improves patient safety, preventing misreading or miscommunication, and makes the visit to the home much more efficient for the caregiver.

“This is a real win-win for us and our patients,” said Myers. “This is also an evolutionary move for us, with additional components coming in the not too distant future, all of which will further improve the care we provide.”



Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association nurses and therapists use laptop computers in the patient’s home for better, more efficient care (left).

The very first record from the Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association, handwritten in 1901 (below).

2
1901
March 26
April 1

Miss Elizabeth McCarthy
Went to care for Mrs. Wm. H. S
Returned - having cared for Mrs S
several other children -

New career opportunities

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“An Incredible Gift”

Among them is Raymond Webb, RN, a charge nurse in BMC's Emergency Department, who is among 15 nurses selected to participate in a pioneering collaboration with the Elms College in Chicopee in which each nurse will graduate with a bachelor's degree in nursing. BHS is financing all costs associated with the program, including tuition, fees and books. In addition, the nurses are released from work to attend classes without any loss in pay. The Elms College nursing faculty holds classes at the BMC Hillcrest Campus, eliminating even travel as an obstacle.

“BHS is providing 100 percent funding and 100 percent convenience,” Webb noted. “This is an incredible gift.”

A former Navy Chief who earned an RN degree seven years ago after retiring from the military, Webb has spent most of his adult life mentoring and supervising people. A Registered Nurse at BMC, Webb said he realized he would need an advanced degree before he could rise any further at the hospital. But with two teenage sons who will attend college soon, Webb also knew he would not have the resources to fund his own education anytime soon.

“Without a baccalaureate degree, there was no real next step for me,” he said. “I have now been given an opportunity to take my abilities as a nurse and as a leader to the next level. BHS has demonstrated time and time again that they are willing to invest in their people.”

Before retiring from the military, Webb was one of five finalists for the Naval Reservist of the Year award for the entire Navy. Today, his record of success continues with this new BHS opportunity. Following his first semester at the Elms College, Webb posted his straight-A report card on the family refrigerator to signify to his sons his

belief in the importance of education.

“This has opened the door for me”

Like Webb, Marie Mathews, RN, came to nursing following years in a previous career. But once she arrived at BMC, Mathews found her calling. “I absolutely love nursing,” she said, “and I am thrilled to have this chance at an advanced degree. Every time I sit in class, I feel as if it is a weekly celebration of nursing with 14 other people. It is so appreciated.”

At this point, Mathews is not sure whether she will remain as a nurse at the bedside, or if she will pursue a new path as a nursing instructor. A desperate need exists in both areas. The U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services estimates the current nursing shortage nationwide at a quarter of a million nurses. But that number will

double by 2025, the department said. At the same time, thousands of qualified candidates applying to nursing schools are turned away every year because of a severe shortage of nursing instructors.

But whatever road Mathews takes, the way was paved by an innovative BHS program.

“This has opened the door for me,” she said. “I can see all kinds of opportunities around that door, and it's very exciting.”

Anne Marie O'Brien, RN, said she has always wanted an advanced degree. “For me, this has been a 24-year goal. The timing had never been right in the past,” she said, echoing similar sentiments among nurses that young children, family finances and other obliga-

tions had prevented them from obtaining a bachelor's degree in nursing. “But all of a sudden, this opportunity presented itself and everything fell into place. I'm still in shock by the generosity of BHS.”

“The broader world of healthcare”

The Clinical Director of the Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association, O'Brien said that increased education is providing a new perspective to nursing. “As a nurse, it's very easy to focus on your one assignment. But more education opens your mind to the broader world of healthcare.”

The collaboration between BHS and the Elms College to create an RN to

My roots are here in the Berkshires and this is where I want to live ... BHS has given me the opportunity to have a career doing something that I truly enjoy.

— JOHN BRYAN, RADIOLOGY

BSN program is the latest in a seven-year commitment by BHS to head off critical shortages in key hospital areas. Led by BHS

President David E. Phelps, the organization launched its first Critical Shortage Program for Nursing in 2001 after winning a grant from the state Department of Employee Training. Since then, BHS has assumed full financial responsibility for a growing list of innovative education programs for employees that eliminate the financial barriers to higher education and a better job. Along the way, BHS has partnered with Berkshire Community College to enable Licensed Practical Nurses working at BMC and Fairview to obtain their RN certification. BHS even provided nursing instructors to expedite the program. Next step was a partnership with the University of Massachusetts to help RNs obtain a baccalaureate degree. The Critical Shortages Program expanded

beyond nursing to include Radiological and Laboratory Technologists. According to Elizabeth Kirby, the programs are taking many employees from entry level jobs to “the career of their dreams.”

“This is where I want to live”

Among them is John Bryan, who currently works as a Transporter in BMC's Radiology Department bringing patients back and forth from their diagnostic imaging procedures. Accepted into the Critical Shortage Program for Radiological Technologists, Bryan has just completed his first year of education, dividing his time between Springfield Technical Community College for course work and BMC for clinical training. BHS pays for his tuition, maintains his full-time health benefits for the duration of the program, and has guaranteed him a job when he graduates.

“My roots are here in the Berkshires and this is where I want to live,” Bryan said. “I feel very lucky. BHS has given me the opportunity to have a career doing something that I truly enjoy, but I could not have gone back to school without their support.”

Bryan is gradually rotating through all aspects of X-ray – imaging patients from fluoroscopy and critical care units, to the emergency department and the operating room. He is also gaining exposure to the other radiologic modalities such as CT scans, MRI and special procedures. As a student radiographer, he is now part of one of the most dynamic fields in healthcare. Once he obtains his AS degree and technologist license, Bryan can continue gaining advanced expertise in any one of the imaging areas, further expanding his skills and career potential.

“The most gratifying part of this

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Introducing Urology Services of the Berkshires

New BHS urology practice is formed

During 2007, as part of our collective commitment to bring the best possible care to our community, Berkshire Health Systems and Northern Berkshire Healthcare, together with the four urologists currently practicing in Berkshire County, embarked upon a plan to redesign the manner in which urological services are provided locally.

This past March, the two long-standing urology practices in Berkshire County became a single practice within

Berkshire Faculty Services (BFS), providing urological services to patients throughout Berkshire County and establishing the foundation for a comprehensive, state-of-the-art urology program. Under this plan, David T. Noyes, MD, and Paul R. Silverstein, MD, join Stephen R. St. Clair, MD, and Arthur F. Turton, MD, to form Urology Services of the Berkshires, under the leadership of Dr. St. Clair.

The physicians provide care at their already existing Pittsfield and

North Adams offices, as well as at Berkshire Medical Center and North Adams Regional Hospital. This new BFS group is currently recruiting more physicians to expand access to urological services for residents throughout Berkshire County and enhance the services that are currently being provided.

“We are excited about the opportunity our new group will provide to enhance and coordinate urologic services in Berkshire County,” said Dr. St.

Clair. “We anticipate this will also assist in drawing new urologists to the area, bringing additional urologic skills to our community.”

To contact Urology Services of the Berkshires at its Pittsfield office, please call (413) 499-8575, and at its North Adams office, please call (413) 662-2486.

BHS is pleased to be able offer a comprehensive healthcare service such as Urology Services of the Berkshires to our community.



Dr. David Noyes received his medical degree from the University of Vermont College of Medicine and completed residency training at the Medical Center Hospital of Vermont. Dr. Noyes has been practicing in Berkshire County since 1981.



Dr. Stephen St. Clair received his medical degree from George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Science and completed his residency training at Wilford Hall U.S. Air Force Medical Center in Texas. He has served in the Berkshires since 1993.



Dr. Paul Silverstein received his medical degree from New York Medical College, where he also completed his residency training. He has worked in the Berkshires since 1980.



Dr. Arthur Turton received his medical degree from the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and completed residency training at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. He began practicing in the Berkshires in 1979.

Battling the primary care physician shortage in the Berkshires

With a recent national survey showing only 2 percent of students graduating from medical school planning to practice primary care medicine, the bottleneck for patients waiting to see their primary care physicians or to even find a new physician to go to is getting worse. Locally, Berkshire Health Systems, in collaboration with physician practices across the county, has been aggressively involved in the recruitment of new primary and specialty care physicians and Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants. As a result of these recruiting efforts, several new primary care physicians have begun practicing in the region.



Amy Campion, DO

Dr. Amy Campion has joined Suburban Internal Medicine in Lee, in practice with Daniel Cohen, MD, Thomas Consolati, MD, Mark Snowise, MD and Robert Wespiser, MD. Dr. Campion is a board certified family practice physician with extensive experience in pediatrics and women's health. She came to the Berkshires from Capital Care Family Medicine in Slingerlands, New York, where she had served for six years. Previously, Dr. Campion served with St. Peter's Hospital, providing pediatric medical care. Dr. Campion received her medical degree from Midwestern University: Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine and completed her residency training at Albany Medical College, where she was Chief Resident in Family Practice from 2000 to 2001. For more information or to make an appointment with Dr. Campion or one of her colleagues, call Suburban Internal Medicine, 413-243-0122.



Muhammad Gul, MD

Dr. Muhammad Gul is accepting new patients in his practice at the Hillcrest Family Health Center, where he is teamed with Christopher Trancynger, MD and Rebecca Caine, MD in providing primary care services to patients throughout the Berkshires. Dr. Gul received his Medical Degree from Khyber Medical College in Pakistan and completed his residency training at Berkshire Medical Center. He previously served with Habib Medical Complex and Lady Reading Hospital in Pakistan. For an appointment with Dr. Gul or one of his colleagues at Hillcrest Family Health, call 413-499-2051.



Yuri Imanishi, MD

Dr. Yuri Imanishi, a board certified Internist, is accepting new patients for adult primary care throughout Southern Berkshire. She joins Mani George, MD, at Fairview Medical, 27 Lewis Avenue, Great Barrington. Dr. Imanishi comes to the Berkshires from New York City, where she had most recently practiced at St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital. Previously, she had served for many years as a physician with Hawaii Kaiser Permanente, Maui, HI, and with Fallon Clinic, Worcester, MA. Dr. Imanishi received her medical degree from Harvard Medical School in Boston and completed the Brown University Internal Medicine Residency program.

She is board certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine. Dr. Imanishi has clinical interests and experience in geriatric and palliative care medicine. For more information or to make an appointment with Dr. Imanishi or Dr. George, contact Fairview Medical at 413-854-9704.



Kimberly May, MD

Dr. Kimberly May is accepting new patients in need of Primary Care and Rheumatology care and joins Edward Weiner, MD, at Fairview Internal Medicine, 116 West Avenue, Great Barrington. Dr. May is the first of two new adult primary care physicians joining Fairview Internal Medicine, with the second new physician scheduled to arrive in August. In addition to adult primary care, her clinical interests include osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia. Dr May joins Fairview Internal Medicine after retirement from the US Air Force, where she held the rank of Colonel. Her last assignment was Deputy Commander, 79th Medical

Group, Andrews Air Force Base. She has also served as the Chief of Staff at the US Air Force Academy Hospital and Chief Consultant for Internal Medicine Services for the US Air Force Surgeon General, and as an internist and rheumatologist at many other facilities. She received her undergraduate degree from Case Western Reserve University and her medical degree from Wright State University. She completed Internal Medicine residency training at Wright-Patterson Medical Center, Ohio, and Rheumatology fellowship training at Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in Denver, Colorado. She also holds a master's degree from the National War College, and is completing a Masters in Business Administration at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. She is an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and has taught there for more than 10 years. For more information or to make an appointment with Dr. May or one of her colleagues, contact Fairview Internal Medicine at 413-528-8643.

New England Pain Center expands to South Berkshire

New physician joins Center's team

The New England Pain Center has expanded its pain management services to South Berkshire, with a new office at Fairview Hospital, and the addition of Robin Burns Lambert, MD, providing patient care services in both Great Barrington and Pittsfield. The New England Pain Center, based at the BMC Hillcrest Campus, is a multidisciplinary pain management center serving all of Western Massachusetts. The center was founded by physicians committed to bringing the highest quality and most cost-effective outpatient pain management services to the community. The center's staff of physicians, physical therapists, psychologists, nurses and consultants work together as a team to develop an individualized comprehensive plan, designed to minimize suffering, maximize functioning and improve the patient's overall quality of life. Our physicians actively participate in clinical research studies and developments, ensuring that the latest knowledge and techniques are provided to our patients.

Dr. Burns Lambert, a board certified and fellowship-trained Anesthesiologist, joins Andrew DeMaggio, MD at the New England Pain Center. She will provide pain management services to patients in South Berkshire through the Fairview



Dr. Burns Lambert

Hospital office, and will also work at the main Center in Pittsfield, following the departure of Dr. Gordan Kuhar.

Dr. Burns Lambert has served on the Anesthesiology staffs at Berkshire Medical Center and Fairview Hospital. She is board certified by the American Board of Anesthesiology and served a fellowship in Pain Management at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield. Dr. Burns Lambert received her medical degree from Saba University School of Medicine, Saba, Netherlands-Antilles, and completed her residency in Anesthesiology at the University of Connecticut, Farmington. For an appointment with Dr. Burns Lambert or Dr. DeMaggio, ask your physician for a referral. For more information on the New England Pain Center's Fairview Hospital location, call 413-854-9731. To contact the New England Pain Center's main office at the BMC Hillcrest Campus, call 413-445-7246.

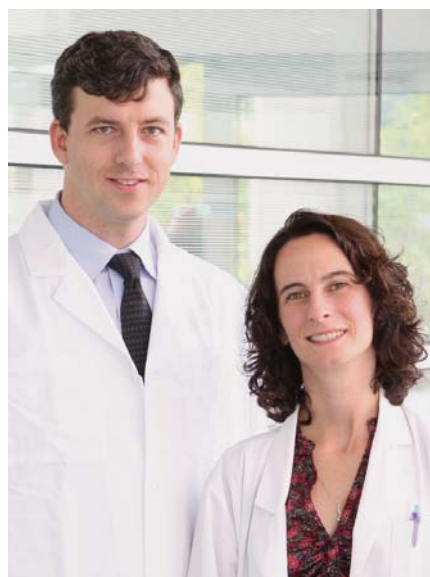
Endocrinology and Neurology Services expanded in Berkshires

Berkshire County now has access to expanded care in two critical specialty fields – Endocrinology and Neurology. With the number of diabetes patients growing each year both locally and nationally, the provision of Endocrinology care has become critical. Berkshire Health Systems has expanded its Endocrinology services with the addition of a new specialist in diabetes and metabolic disorders, Brian Phillips, MD. Across the United States, there is a critical shortage of Neurologists, resulting in longer wait times for patients seeking appointments. BHS has announced the appointment of two new Neurologists – Herbert Gregg, MD, and Emma Weiskopf, MD.



Brian Phillips, MD

Dr. Brian Phillips is board certified in Internal Medicine by the American Board of Internal Medicine and completed a clinical fellowship in Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolism at Brown University, Rhode Island Hospital, in Providence, RI. He received his medical degree from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey – Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and completed his residency in Internal Medicine at Brown University and in Providence. Dr. Phillips's clinical interests include diabetes and thyroid disorders. Dr. Phillips works with Dr. Anna Kozupa and the BHS Diabetes Education Program, an American Diabetes Association-certified program, in providing diabetes care. For an appointment with Dr. Phillips or Dr. Kozupa, ask your physician for a referral or call 413-496-6838.



Herbert Gregg, MD

Dr. Herbert Gregg is fellowship trained in Clinical Neurophysiology from Indiana University Medical Center, Indianapolis and fellowship trained in Headache from the Jefferson Headache Center, Philadelphia. He received his medical degree from Ohio State University College of Medicine and Public Health and completed his residency training at Mount Sinai Medical Center, New York. His clinical interests include treating patients with seizure disorders and epilepsy.

Emma Weiskopf, MD

Dr. Emma Weiskopf was most recently in practice with JWM Neurology, Indianapolis. She completed a fellowship in Clinical Neurophysiology from New York University Medical Center, New York City. She received her medical degree from Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY and completed her residency training at Mount Sinai Medical Center, where she served as Chief Resident of Neurology from 2005 to 2006. Dr. Weiskopf specializes in electromyography and nerve conduction studies and has clinical interests in neuromuscular disease, epilepsy and headache.

Dr. Gregg and Dr. Weiskopf join the BHS Neurosciences Physician Practice, partnering with Ellen Deibert, MD, Laurence Ufford, MD, and Marina Zaretskaya-Fuchs, MD. For an appointment, ask your physician for a referral or call 413-395-7694.

PHYSICIAN HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Paula Aucoin honored by BMC for patient-centered care

The staff of Berkshire Medical Center has recognized Paula Aucoin, MD, with its Most Patient-Centered Doctor award for 2008. Dr. Aucoin is the Director of Infection Control at BMC and an internal medicine physician practicing with the Berkshire Medical Group with a specialization in infectious diseases. She was honored during a special breakfast reception held for the entire medical staff at BMC on March 28th to celebrate National Doctors' Day.

The staff of Berkshire Medical Center submitted nominations for the award. They chose to honor Dr. Aucoin, among the many fine physicians on staff at BMC based on her actions as a role model and physician leader who demonstrates caring through quality interactions with others. The award focuses on communicating with patients and families, involving patients in healthcare decisions, taking the time to talk with patients and listen to their concerns, and working collaboratively and respectfully with all other members of the care team so that everyone can do their very best in addressing patient care issues. These behaviors exemplify a growing philosophical belief that all care activities must be centered around the patients' needs, rather than hospital or individual routines and schedules.

Dr. Aucoin began practicing in the Berkshires in 1982. As the Medical Director for Infection Control at BMC, Dr. Aucoin has overseen a program with exceptional results, and has provided her expertise to the hospital and community on the management of influenza issues and infection prevention. This includes guidance on vaccine distribution, management of potential flu outbreaks and potential future influenza threats. In addition, Dr.



Dr. Paula Aucoin, recipient of the 2008 Patient-Centered Physician Award from BMC.

Aucoin has played an important role in BMC's emergency operations planning.

Dr. Aucoin served for many years as Chairman of the BMC Ethics Committee and continues to serve as a committee member, has served on the Medical Executive Committee, the Department of Medicine's Executive Committee, and on the Patient Care and Quality Committee of the Berkshire Health Systems Board of Trustees. In 2006, the BHS Board honored Dr. Aucoin with the Gladys Allen Brigham Award for her longtime service to the hospital and its patients.

Board certified in internal medicine and infectious diseases, she received her medical degree from Georgetown University School of Medicine, and was fellowship trained in infectious diseases at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. She completed her internship and residency training at St. Vincent's Hospital.

Dr. Sadighi's name placed on BMC Honor Roll

Parvis Sadighi, MD, longtime former Chairman of the Department of Surgery at Berkshire Medical Center, has been placed on the BMC Honor Roll, joining a list of 24 previous honorees recognized for their exceptional commitment to the provision of healthcare to the Berkshire community.

"Dr. Sadighi's service to Berkshire Medical Center spans four decades, from the days he spent as a medical resident here, to his career as one of this area's premiere surgeons, to his lengthy service as chairman of the BMC Surgery Department and coming full circle with his widely respected leadership of the hospital's Surgical Residency program," said Susan Kormanik, Chair of the Berkshire Health Systems Board of Trustees, in presenting the award. "A general, vascular and thoracic surgeon, he is greatly admired by his colleagues for his surgical expertise and technique, as well as his dedication to patients."

Dr. Sadighi received his medical degree from Teheran University Medical School in 1962 and completed his residency training at Berkshire Medical Center in 1970. He was fellowship trained in thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh and later returned to Pittsfield, where he practiced for 35 years. He was named Chairman and Program Director in the Department of Surgery at BMC in 1978. In 2007, after his retirement, he was granted Emeritus status at BMC, recognizing his outstanding service to the hospital and community. Dr. Sadighi practiced with Berkshire Surgical Associates in Pittsfield.

Dr. Sadighi served as a Professor of Surgery at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and as an Assistant Professor of Anatomy at Albany Medical College. He was a



Dr. Parvis Sadighi was added to the BMC Physician Honor Roll in 2008.

member of the Education Committee of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American College of Surgeons, and also previously served as the chapter president. Dr. Sadighi was the recipient of the BMC Surgical Teaching Award five times, in 1979, 1984, 1988, 2002 and 2004. He was also honored with the Community Faculty Educator Award by the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 2006.

Created in 1992 and displayed in the lobby area of BMC, the Honor Roll was established to "recognize in a permanent way members of the medical staff whose work has brought honor and distinction to the profession and to the institution." Previous recipients of the Honor Roll designation are: Daniel Dorman, Herbert Glodt, Franklin Paddock, George Porter, Ralph Zupanec, Robert Cella, Sr., John Gowdey, Rita Jacobs, Samuel Tarnower, Robert Tracy, Peter Nikitas, Clement Curd, Howard Kanner, Alan Michelson, George Vazakas, Raymond Austin, G. Thomas Stowe, Joel Curran, Gerald Haidak, J. Ryder Neary, Robert McInerney, Ricardo Cordon, Elliot Greenfield and Richard Lynch.

An update on ImPACT baseline testing in county high schools

In 2007, Berkshire Health Systems (BHS) invited local high schools to participate in a program designed for student-athletes involved in sports that are high-risk for concussions. The program, sponsored by BHS for the first two years, involves athletes taking a pre-season neurocognitive baseline test called ImPACT.

Developed by doctors at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Sports Medicine Concussion Program, ImPACT stands for Immediate Post Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing. ImPACT is a sophisticated research-based software tool developed to help sports-medicine clinicians evalu-

ate recovery following concussion. ImPACT evaluates and documents multiple aspects of neurocognitive functioning including memory, brain processing speed, reaction time, post-concussive symptoms, and an injury documentation system (www.impacttestoffice.com).

Last summer, many high school athletic directors and coaches were trained on how to conduct the testing with their athletes, and almost 500 athletes have been baseline tested within nine Berkshire County high schools so far. These athletes participate in sports like basketball, football, soccer, baseball and softball, gymnastics, wrestling, ice hockey, downhill skiing and lacrosse.

“We are pleased with the initial level of participation, yet more opportunities exist to protect our athletes further,” said Dr. Ellen Deibert, a neurologist for Berkshire Medical Center and the director of the BMC Concussion Clinic. Dr. Deibert is the only Credentialed ImPACT Consultant (CIC) in Western Massachusetts trained in evaluating and analyzing ImPACT data.

“The increase in concussions and the lack of baseline scores to support treatment reinforce the value and importance of pre-season baseline testing for all athletes involved in high-risk sports,” continued Dr. Deibert.

In 2007, BMC saw 661 concussion

cases in the Emergency Department, which is a significant increase over the 454 concussions treated in 2006.

“Our goal continues to be to ensure that our community’s athletes and individuals are properly diagnosed and returned to play, work or school as safely as possible,” said Dr. Deibert.

BHS and Dr. Deibert are looking ahead to year two of the program and recently held another training for athletic directors and coaches to gear up for the next sports season.

For more information about the BHS-sponsored ImPACT program, please call BHS Community Relations at (413) 447-2775.

Weight loss surgery continued from page 1

The impact on her walking has also been dramatic. “Before the procedure, it was getting difficult, and now it’s fine. One of the people on my postal route stopped me one day and asked, ‘Do you know what happened to Heather?’”

For Rita Wick, a Registered Nurse at Berkshire Medical Center, reaching the four decade milestone made her feel much older than she was, and the biggest factor was her weight. “I always used to feel that I had put the weight on by myself and I can take it off by myself,” she said. “But while I had lost a decent amount of weight on diets, it always came back. Just before my first appointment at the Berkshire Center for Weight Loss Surgery, I fell and sprained an ankle. It was clear to me that at 240 pounds, recovery was much harder work than if I had been lighter, and that clinched it.”

The Berkshire Center for Weight Loss Surgery holds free informational sessions every month, and when Wick attended one she saw someone she knew growing up. “I knew how heavy she’d been and I could clearly see her results from this program,” said Wick.

The health benefits that can result from bariatric surgery are striking, as national and international studies continue to show. They include improvements in or elimination of:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol and high triglycerides
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Respiratory insufficiency
- Sleep apnea
- Asthma
- Acid reflux
- Stress urinary incontinence
- Low back pain, degenerative disk disease and degenerative joint disease
- Social, emotional and psychological comorbidities

In fact, following gastric bypass, many patients no longer require medications for blood pressure, diabetes and other health related issues, and their reduction in health risks is substantial. The patient’s energy level is also greatly improved, as Wick can attest. “I went hiking in Peru with my best friend. I certainly couldn’t have done anything like that before my surgery. We took backpacks and hiked some 40 kilome-

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Rita Wick, a Registered Nurse at Berkshire Medical Center, tried dieting, but always gained back what she lost, and then some. As she approached her 40th birthday, it was time for her to visit the Berkshire Center for Weight Loss Surgery. She underwent gastric bypass surgery, lost significant weight and now leads a healthy lifestyle.

New career opportunities continued from page 4

job is the patients and my colleagues,” he continued. “The patients know we are here to help them, and they are appreciative. And everyone I work with loves their job, is supportive of each other and cares very much about the patients. This is a great environment for a career.”

“Now I have a career”

Amy Fosser agrees. Like Bryan, Fosser formerly worked as a Transporter in the Radiology Department. Before that, she was a Certified Nursing Assistant in a long term care facility. A young mother,

Fosser wanted the best life possible for her daughter and was motivated to improve her career outlook and earnings. “But I needed help getting there,” she said. A graduate of the BHS Critical Shortage Program for Radiological Technologist, Fosser now works full time at BMC, has an exciting career in radiology, “and a much better life.”

“Ever since I was young, I knew that caring for people would be part of my future,” she said. “This program was like a dream come true - the best program ever and way more than I expected. Now, I have a career.”

Recruiting from Within

Over 200 employees have received advanced degrees and new careers with BHS education programs

As the shortage in nurses and technologists continues, hospitals across the country are employing highly-paid agencies to recruit new employees from all over the country to fill vacant positions. At Berkshire Health Systems, administrators have taken a unique approach, looking within their own ranks to identify talented employees and providing them with the education and training needed to obtain career positions.

“BHS is way ahead of the curve,” said Christine Quillen, a registered technologist in Radiography at Berkshire Medical Center and the clinical educator and instructor with Springfield Technical Community College’s Radiological Diagnostic Imaging Program. “I have never worked for a hospital that is so forward-thinking in its approach to answering the growing need for quality, long term employees. Instead of trying to recruit from other areas, it just makes sense that the administration should invest in furthering the education and careers of our own people.”

In fact, BHS President David E. Phelps has recently earned awards from both the Berkshire Area

Health Education Network (AHEC) and Berkshire Community College for his leadership in developing and supporting a wide range of education programs that enable career advancement for many BHS employees.

Joining Phelps in the 2007 AHEC Annual Achievement Award was BCC President Dr. Paul Raverta and Elms College President Dr. James Mullen, who were honored for joining forces to find solutions that will have a significant impact on the community's nursing shortage.

BCC, at its 2008 commencement, honored Phelps with its President's Award. BCC President Dr. Paul Raverta said, "This award is presented to President Phelps for his role in pioneering a new model of collaboration between a major healthcare provider and higher education in order to address a critical shortage of nurses and nursing faculty. I believe that this collaboration is unique within Massachusetts, and, perhaps, within the country. In any case, it is a wonderful example of what can be accomplished when people come together to make a difference."

BHS has so far invested nearly \$4 million in educational programs for its employees. In the last seven years, over 72 employees have graduated from BHS Critical Shortage programs, and another 133 employees are currently enrolled. The BHS programs include the following:

- RN degree program at Berkshire Community College
- RN to BSN program at the University of Massachusetts
- RN to BSN program at Elms College
- Radiology Critical Shortage Program at Springfield Technical Community College
- Laboratory Critical Shortage Program at Springfield Technical Community College
- Nursing instruction at BCC. Over the last four years, BHS has provided a total of eight nursing instructors at BCC to shorten the waiting list for classes.

At the heart of these programs is the belief that more education and training can change lives while also helping the community. To that end, BHS has also been a leader in supporting initiatives beyond the hospitals that emphasize educational opportunities that will help fill the pipeline of future employees. They include:

- A \$100,000 donation to the Berkshire Wireless Learning Initiative that has placed laptop computers in the hands of every middle school student in North Adams and Pittsfield.
- A \$25,000 donation to Conte Community School’s Connected for Success initiative, a 32-week after school program offering academic assistance, enrichment and help developing social skills for students in grades 1 through 5.
- A \$200,000 investment in the Pittsfield Public School’s Allied Health Education Partnership, which exposes students to career opportunities in healthcare and is helping to inspire the next generation of nurses. Berkshire Healthcare Systems, the long terms care associate of BHS, is leading this collaboration with the schools.

Think pink in October: Help prevent breast cancer or detect it early

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time to focus public attention on prevention and early detection. The staff of the Women's Imaging Center at Berkshire Medical Center and Fairview Hospital, in partnership with the American Cancer Society, present some key information on breast cancer, prevention and early detection:

Lowering your risk You can lower your risk of breast cancer by changing those risk factors that can be changed. This includes lifestyle changes, such as: good nutrition with a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and low-fat meals, limit alcohol use, exercise regularly, and maintain a healthy body weight. All of these can decrease your risk of getting breast cancer. Women who choose to breast-feed for at least several months may also get an added benefit of reducing their breast cancer risk.

Not using post-menopausal hormone therapy (PHT) if it's not necessary can help you avoid raising your risk.

Finding breast cancer early Other than lifestyle changes, the most important action a woman can take is to follow early detection guidelines. These include regular self breast exams for women in their 20's, clinical breast exams by a healthcare professional for

women in their 20's and 30's, and for women 40 and older, a yearly screening mammogram.

Current evidence supporting mammograms is even stronger than in the past. In particular, recent evidence has confirmed that mammograms offer substantial benefit for women in their 40s. Women can feel confident about the benefits associated with regular mammograms for finding cancer early.

The Women's Imaging Center at Berkshire Medical Center and Fairview Hospital provide mammography services to women throughout Berkshire County and the surrounding region. The Women's Imaging Center has been designated as a Breast Imaging Center of Excellence by the American College of Radiology's Commission on Quality and Safety and Commission on Breast Imaging. Additionally, for patient comfort, the Women's Imaging Center has the Mammopad, a soft foam cushion that can help with the discomfort some women feel during a mammogram.

If you are uninsured or underinsured, have a high insurance deductible or cannot afford a mammogram, you can still get a yearly mammogram through the Women's Health Network, a program that has provided access to mammography for over 400 women.



BHS Community Outreach Van

Need health insurance?

Want help in reducing your health risks?

Visit the BHS Community Outreach Van, providing health insurance enrollment services and free health screenings.

To find out where the Community Outreach Van is today, visit www.berkshirehealthsystems.org or call 413-445-9215.



Berkshire Health Systems, Inc.

www.berkshirehealthsystems.org

For a mammography appointment, call:

Berkshire Medical Center – 413-447-2451

Fairview Hospital – 413-854-9616

For the Women's Health Network, call 413-447-2378

Weight loss surgery

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ters, all the way to Macchu Pichu." As for turning 40 and feeling older than that, Wick said her weight loss surgery produced a very pleasant surprise. "I recently took my son for a college interview and someone there thought I was the student. I was also 'carded' recently. Now that makes you feel good."

The Berkshire Center for Weight Loss Surgery provides minimally invasive procedures, including gastric bypass and lap band surgeries. The Center's surgeons – Drs. Andrew Lederman and Robert Fanelli – are board certified and fellowship trained.

Sign up today for a free weight loss surgery information session:

Held the first Tuesday of each month at Berkshire Hills Country Club

Call 413-442-2462 or visit www.berkshirehealthsystems.org/WeightLossSurgery to register.

Fairview Hospital opens expanded outpatient clinic in Great Barrington

Fairview Hospital has opened its second satellite rehabilitation clinic in South County at 10 Maple Avenue in Great Barrington. The new facility offers nearly five times the space than available in the previous hospital-based clinic, as well as easier access. On-site parking is readily available and all services are located on one floor, with no stairs, steps or elevators, to make it easier for rehabilitation patients with mobility issues.

The new clinic will offer the same comprehensive program of services that were available at the original hospital location. Hospital-based rehabilitation services are still provided to hospital inpatients at Fairview.

The new outpatient facility allows for expanded services and upgraded therapeutic equipment in its large new gym. Nine new private treatment areas improve patient care. "This is important, not only because it ensures privacy for the patient, but it allows the physical therapist or occupational therapist to establish better communication," said Bobbie Ransom, Director of Rehabilitation at Fairview. "Private

treatment areas allow the patient to more easily deal with the emotional component of the problem. This can be an important part of healing and of our capacity to help the patient."

Fairview Hospital's Outpatient Rehabilitation Clinic is the only Joint Commission-accredited outpatient rehabilitation practice in South Berkshire County. As a result, Fairview's Outpatient Clinic is mandated to meet the highest standards of care in areas such as infection control, patient safety and privacy. Berkshire Health Systems' Biomedical Equipment Team maintains equipment to make sure it is functioning properly and safely.

The new outpatient center is also the largest rehabilitation clinic in South Berkshire, with a team of nine physical therapy and occupational therapy professionals working in a collaborative team environment. "Our evidence-based practice assures that our team has the standard skills necessary, but each member has their own subspecialty and attend professional education programs in specialty areas," said Ransom. "This increases the pool of resources available



Fairview Hospital has opened a new outpatient rehabilitation center in Great Barrington.

to each patient."

In its first month, the new clinic had already experienced a 13% increase in usage due to its more visible location in Great Barrington. "People walk in when they see we are here and we are getting calls from doctors in Florida and

Arizona, referring their patients while they are summering in the Berkshires," said Ransom.

Appointments are available Monday-Friday from 8:00 am to 5:30 pm. Call (413) 854-9740 for information.

Berkshire Health Systems to open dialysis center in south Berkshire

New Fairview site to serve local and transient patients

Patients in need of Renal Dialysis services in Southern Berkshire will benefit from the opening of a new dialysis center affiliated with Fairview Hospital. The Fairview Dialysis Center, a satellite operation of the Berkshire Medical Center Dialysis Unit, is scheduled to open in either the late summer or early fall, and will be located at 10 Maple Ave. in Great Barrington.

"We have experienced consider-

able growth in the number of patients we serve throughout Berkshire County," said David Albert, MD, Medical Director of the new Fairview Dialysis Center. "With the opening of this new unit, we can offer a closer treatment option for residents of South Berkshire, in addition to those patients we see during the height of tourism season who visit the area or have second homes in South Berkshire."

"Berkshire Health Systems is mak-

ing a significant investment in the care of patients in need of dialysis in Southern Berkshire," said Gene Dellea, President of Fairview Hospital. "Fairview is committed to providing our residents and visitors with locally based services, and being part of a comprehensive healthcare network like BHS allows us to continue that tradition."

The Fairview Dialysis Center will be open three days each week when it begins operation, with two shifts. Plans

are to expand the availability in the near future.

In addition to Dr. Albert, the Fairview Dialysis Center will be staffed by Sarah Baumann, RN, Clinical Director; Nurse Practitioner Susan Downey Luhrmann; Jennifer Stover, RN, and Nancy Rossin, RN; and technician Dale Reed.

For more information on the Fairview Dialysis Center, call 413-447-3060.