

Connections

A health and lifestyle publication from NorthShore University HealthSystem | Fall/Winter 2022 | northshore.org/connections



New Cartilage, New Life

**Innovative Cartilage Transplant
Preserves Knee Joint** Page 6

Q&A

Coping After a Traumatic Event

News about tragedies in our communities can bring on shock, horror or disbelief, and, sadly, these incidents are becoming more frequent—and closer to home. We talked with NorthShore Clinical Psychologist Lindsay Fazio, PhD, Director of Behavioral Science and Director of Physician Wellbeing, who offered tips for coping.

Q What emotions should we expect after experiencing a traumatic event?

Whether you were present during a traumatic event or heard details about it, you may experience a range of emotions. Those might include anger at the perpetrator, confusion over the person's motives, sadness for those who were hurt or killed, and fear of being in the wrong place at the wrong time yourself someday. The unpredictable nature of these types of incidents adds to our fear and threatens our sense of safety and security.

Q What can we do to ground ourselves and clear our thoughts?

Be sure to eat, sleep, exercise and follow your normal daily routine as much as you can. Routines can be grounding and provide stability in uncertain times. While it may seem counterintuitive to think about taking care of yourself first, you can't be of service to others if you're not considering and meeting your own needs.

Q How can we gauge when we—or those close to us—need extra support?

People often experience stress reactions when exposed (even through media) to events such as shootings or mass violence. Changes in mood, energy level, appetite and sleeping habits are important signs of mental distress. Watch for intense emotional reactions, such as anxiety or a strong need for retribution. When necessary, point individuals to licensed professional counselors who can provide needed support.

Q What other coping methods do you suggest?

While it's important to stay informed, media portrayals of shootings and mass deaths have been shown to heighten anxiety. Limit your exposure and take a break from news sources. You also can lean on friends and family for emotional support. Remember to focus on your strengths. Maintain practices that you've found to provide emotional relief. Remind yourself of people and events that are meaningful and comforting.

Read More

Learn how to help children cope with traumatic events at northshore.org/g2 by reading "How to Talk to Your Children About Tragic Events" on *Healthy You*.



Tune In

Hear more from Lindsay Fazio, PhD, by listening to NorthShore's *Healthy You* podcast episode "Coping After Tragedy: Highland Park Parade Mass Shooting" at northshore.org/g1.



Clinical Psychologist **Lindsay Fazio, PhD**, provides support in her role as NorthShore's Director of Behavioral Science and Director of Physician Wellbeing.

Inside This Issue

4. Beating the Odds with a Breast Health Assessment

Genetic Testing After Mammogram Leads Patient to Focus on Prevention

6. New Cartilage, New Life

Innovative Cartilage Transplant Preserves Knee Joint

10. Unstoppable in the Face of an Aneurysm

A Remarkable Recovery with NorthShore Against All Odds

12. Expanding Neurological Care in the Suburbs

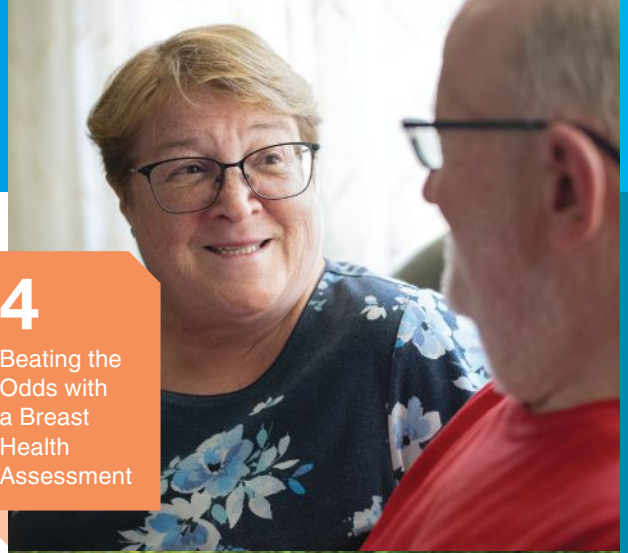
NorthShore Neurological Institute Expands to Northwest Community Healthcare

14. Mom with Leukemia Has Special Delivery

Diagnosed in Her Third Trimester, Expectant Mom Required Urgent Delivery

4

Beating the Odds with a Breast Health Assessment



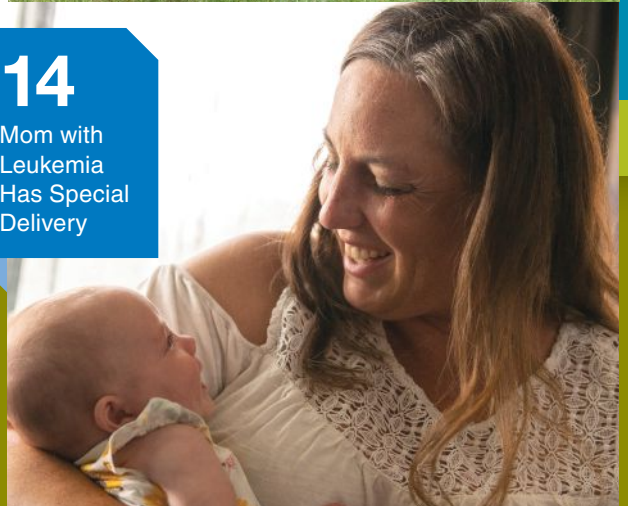
10

Unstoppable in the Face of an Aneurysm



14

Mom with Leukemia Has Special Delivery



Supporting You 24/7

From rec league to professional athlete, patients love the ease and convenience of NorthShoreConnect to communicate with physicians and schedule appointments. Sign up at northshore.org/g13.



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Connections, Volume 15, Issue 2

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ON THE COVER: **Stephanie Smith-Schellhorn** lived with knee pain for years before turning to NorthShore Orthopaedic & Spine Institute's regenerative medicine expertise to replace cartilage in her knee joint.

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BEATING THE ODDS WITH A BREAST HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Genetic Testing After Mammogram Leads Patient to Focus on Prevention

By Susan J. White

Taking NorthShore's Breast Health Assessment was a game changer for **Beth Taylor**, seen here with her husband, **Gary**. A simple saliva test confirmed that she carried a BRCA pathogenic variant, putting her at higher risk for breast and ovarian cancer.



The convenience of a genetic test offered at her annual mammogram may have saved Beth Taylor's life.

With a significant family history of cancer—her mother battled ovarian cancer and her great aunt had breast cancer—Taylor, 62, of Evanston, shifted her focus to prevention.

Before her scheduled mammogram, Taylor completed a NorthShore Breast Health Assessment questionnaire to determine whether she would meet the criteria for genetic testing. For Taylor, that meant simply providing a saliva sample following her mammogram.

HIGH RISK REVEALED

When the results arrived three weeks later, Taylor learned she carried a BRCA pathogenic variant, which put her at higher risk for breast and ovarian cancer. Taylor was supported by a NorthShore genetic counselor who walked her through options and referred her to NorthShore Surgical Oncologist Catherine Pesce, MD.

"It wasn't a hard decision for me to move forward with surgery given my family history," said Taylor, who opted to have a double mastectomy and an oophorectomy to remove her ovaries.

"She easily could have gotten breast cancer in the next few years, so to help her prevent that whole experience and take the risk off the table and get on with her life is very rewarding," said Dr. Pesce, who holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. "I really believe genetic testing is the future, and NorthShore makes it so easy, offering it right there when patients get their mammogram."

MAKING GENETIC TESTING EASY

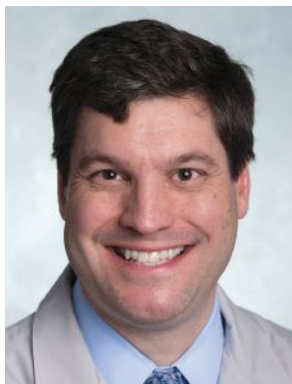
Patients can complete a Breast Health Assessment questionnaire before their scheduled annual mammograms at NorthShore and Swedish Hospital breast cancer screening locations.

"We're continually striving to lead the way with advances in medical genetics that bring real benefits to our patients in real time," said Peter Hulick, MD, the Janardan D. Khandekar, MD, Chair of Personalized Medicine and Director of the Mark R. Neaman Center for Personalized Medicine. "Offering genetic testing as part of our comprehensive breast health assessment will help many women avoid a future cancer diagnosis."

INSPIRING OTHERS

After successful surgeries, Taylor is encouraging relatives to get tested and openly shares her health journey with them.

"If I can save one woman by sharing my story, I've done my job," said Taylor, who credits her husband, son and work colleagues with offering her tremendous support.



NorthShore Surgical Oncologist **Dr. Catherine Pesce** performed Taylor's double mastectomy and oophorectomy. Offering genetic testing as part of NorthShore's breast health assessments "will help many women avoid a future cancer diagnosis," said Chair of Personalized Medicine **Dr. Peter Hulick**.



Are You Due for a Mammogram?

For women in the United States, breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death. Breast cancer screening can help detect this lethal threat at an earlier, more treatable stage. However, many women have put off mammograms because of the coronavirus. As a result, breast cancer diagnoses have dropped by more than 50% during the pandemic.

Mammography is your best defense against breast cancer. Talk with a provider about your personal breast cancer risk factors. Together, you can decide when it's best to start getting mammograms and how often you should go back for screening. You can start by connecting with our Center for Breast Health at northshore.org/g5.

Know Your Risks

NorthShore's Breast Health Assessment takes only five minutes to complete. Your provider will use this information to determine whether you're at inherited risk for developing breast cancer and offer you the genetic testing options that best meet your specific needs.

The questionnaire is only available via NorthShoreConnect. To learn more, go to northshore.org/g3.

NEW CARTILAGE, NEW LIFE

Innovative Cartilage Transplant Preserves Knee Joint

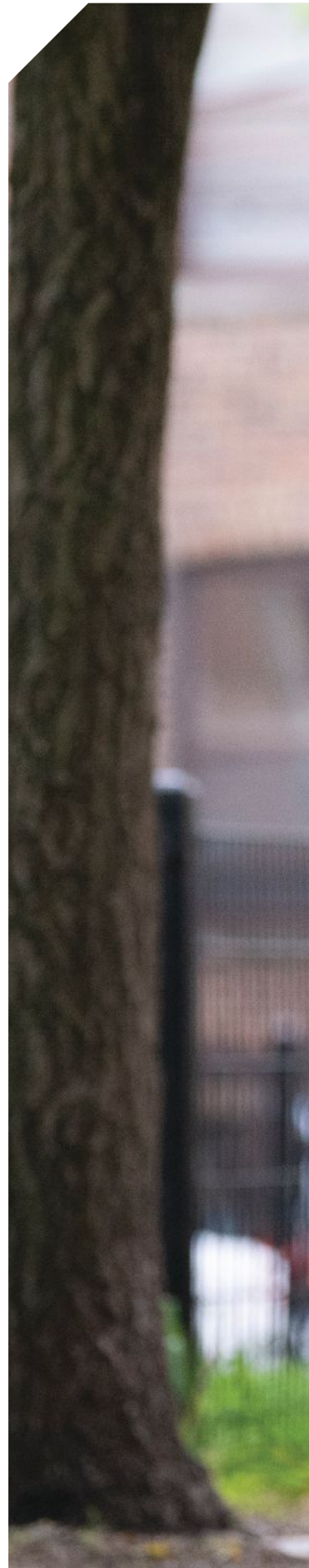
By Susan J. White

A history of knee problems plagued Stephanie Smith-Schellhorn, vestiges of her younger days as a competitive dancer and volleyball player. It was pain she repeatedly shoved aside until one morning, at the height of the pandemic, she could barely get out of bed and take a step.

“The next day, I thought, ‘I can’t go on like this,’ and I headed to a NorthShore Orthopaedic Immediate Care,” said the busy 37-year-old professional from Evanston.

By the time she arrived at the walk-in clinic, Smith-Schellhorn’s knee had ballooned to twice its size. The care team immediately scheduled her for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and an appointment with Orthopaedic & Spine Institute Surgeon Patrick Birmingham, MD.

continued on page 8





After a knee cartilage transplant, **Stephanie Smith-Schellhorn** is back to an active lifestyle, which includes pain-free cycling. Before the procedure, her knee had ballooned to twice its normal size.



Since her knee surgery, **Stephanie Smith-Schellhorn** has an easier time with daily activities, such as reaching the highest cabinets while cooking in her kitchen.

“

I wish I had done this sooner.... I felt 100% confident I was in good hands.

—Stephanie Smith-Schellhorn, orthopaedic surgery patient

”

Find Immediate Care

Treatments for knee problems include medications, physical therapy or, in some cases, surgery. Meet our expert team at northshore.org/g9, or to schedule an appointment, call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1265).

continued from page 6

Imaging tests revealed that a substantial amount of cartilage, the shock-absorbing tissue that cushions the knee joint, was missing. Dr. Birmingham likened it to a pothole in a road.

“If left alone, this could damage the other side of her knee and lead to severe osteoarthritis,” explained Dr. Birmingham, who holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine.

REGENERATIVE POWER

As an expert in regenerative medicine, Dr. Birmingham understands the power of using the body to repair itself. Stem cell therapies, cartilage transplants and platelet-rich plasma injections are a few of the promising answers for young adults like Smith-Schellhorn who want to preserve their joints.

“We talked about my quality of life and whether I wanted to consider a shorter,

quick fix that might leave me needing a knee replacement in my early 40s, or if the cartilage transplant and longer recovery and rehabilitation would be a better option,” recalled Smith-Schellhorn, who chose the latter without hesitation.

Last December, after securing the right donor cartilage match, Dr. Birmingham skillfully removed the damaged section of bone and implanted healthy new cartilage into Smith-Schellhorn’s knee socket.

The procedure went perfectly—the donor cartilage is now growing and adhering to bone—but her rehabilitation was demanding: six weeks of no weight-bearing activity and using crutches for 10 weeks.

“Honestly, I wish I had done this sooner,” said Smith-Schellhorn. “I was prepared to shop around for a second opinion, but Dr. Birmingham and his physician assistant explained everything in great detail, and I felt 100% confident I was in good hands.”

MILLENNIAL CAUTIONARY TALE

As millennials continue their active lifestyles and flock to high-intensity workouts, the conversation about joint pain needs to be broadened from a symptom of aging to what is available now that will repair and prevent osteoarthritis or an operation, said Dr. Birmingham, a nationally recognized sports medicine specialist and team physician for the Chicago Bears.

“Certainly, not everyone is the right candidate for regenerative medicine treatments, but healthy, younger adults like Stephanie typically have the best outcomes,” he said. “Millennials who experience joint pain for more than a week should be urged to get an evaluation. Patients should understand that sometimes joint pain can surface decades after an injury and that

delaying treatment can cause irreversible harm.”

No longer needing to push pain aside, Smith-Schellhorn is back to hiking, riding bikes and even gracefully navigating airports in heels during business trips.

“I like walking, hiking, riding bikes and my Peloton, and I want to be able to keep up with the best of them,” said Smith-Schellhorn. “It was a long process, but I think of it as an investment in my health. I’m fit for the journey now.”



Dr. Patrick Birmingham is a sports medicine specialist and team physician for the Chicago Bears.



When to Get Help for Knee Pain

Your knee is the largest, strongest joint in your body, with many moving parts. Cartilage, ligaments and tendons cushion and stabilize your knee bones. Surrounding muscles provide strength. Meanwhile, your kneecap, thighbone and shinbone glide smoothly along as you step or bend.

Because of this complexity, knees are easily injured. Pain, swelling and inflammation can make movement difficult—and keep you from activities you enjoy.

Seek medical care if symptoms are severe, linger longer than three days or reappear several times within a month. You should also book a visit if you’re limping, see swelling or can’t move your knee through a full bend.

You can start with a primary care sports medicine physician or visit northshore.org/g8 to find a NorthShore Orthopaedic & Spine Institute Immediate Care location.

Nationally Ranked Care Inspired by You

NorthShore Orthopaedic & Spine Institute is nationally ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*. The annual “Best Hospitals” survey recognizes hospitals that excel in treating patients with the most challenging medical conditions.



Nothing makes **Peggy Levine** happier than spending time with her grandchildren, **Emily and Ethen Silvers**. She feels "about 95%" back to normal after a brain aneurysm that was treated at the NorthShore Neurological Institute.

“

The therapy and the nurses were amazing.... And Dr. Ares, he's our hero.

—Peggy Levine, neurosurgery patient

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UNSTOPPABLE IN THE FACE OF AN ANEURYSM

Making a Remarkable Recovery with
NorthShore Against All Odds

By Brian Justice

Like other baby boomers with grown children, Peggy Levine of Skokie had a lot to look forward to last year as she prepared for a wedding celebration for one daughter and the birth of a grandchild to another.

Celebratory plans were well underway until one morning in June when Levine, 62, got a headache so intense that she called 911. Less than six hours after making that critical call, she was under the expert care of NorthShore Neurosurgeon William Ares, MD. Levine had suffered a brain aneurysm, a weakness in the blood vessel walls inside her brain, and it had ruptured.

UNCERTAINTY AND INNOVATION

Levine's husband Larry recalls the perilous situation his wife was in when he arrived at NorthShore Skokie Hospital's Emergency Department, where the ambulance had taken her.

"They told me that she basically had a 50-50 chance," he recalled, "and it was hell."

Adding to her tenuous condition was the development of hydrocephalus—excessive pressure on her brain caused by a buildup of spinal fluid. And to make matters worse, the aneurysm was located at the back of her head.

"Only 2% of aneurysms occur there," explained Dr. Ares, who holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. "It's unusual that we have to repair an aneurysm in that area."

Instead of opening her skull, Dr. Ares used a minimally invasive revolutionary procedure called "coiling" to repair the hemorrhaging aneurysm. Using computer-assisted X-rays, Dr. Ares inserted a thin catheter into an artery in Levine's leg, then threaded it up and into her brain where the aneurysm was repaired.

ROAD TO RECOVERY

Forty-three days later, Levine was discharged from the hospital and began her arduous journey to healing through speech, physical, occupational and balancing therapy. She has almost no memory of being hospitalized, but she vividly remembers rehab.

"The therapy and the nurses were amazing," she said. "And Dr. Ares, he's our hero."

Remarkably, a little more than a year after making that 911 call, Levine said she feels "about 95%" back to her old self.

"A very small number of people do really well after an aneurysm rupture," Dr. Ares said. "Peggy's had an absolutely incredible outcome. Much better than we anticipated when we first saw her."

Levine's steadfast commitment to recovery is driven by determination to ride a bike, drive a car and play with her grandchildren. And she's back to her favorite activities—walking, gardening and photography—with a renewed spirit.

"My daughter bought me a bracelet that says, 'unstoppable,'" Levine said. "I wear it every day as a reminder of how much I've achieved and what I'm always determined to be."

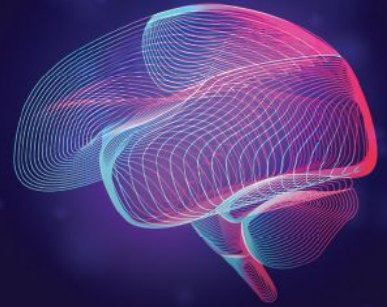


NorthShore Neurological Institute Neurosurgeon **Dr. William Ares** repaired Levine's aneurysm through a minimally invasive procedure.



Advancing Care

To read more about our advancements in minimally invasive brain procedures, visit northshore.org/g10. To make an appointment, please call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1266).



Quick Action Is Critical

Brain aneurysms are not uncommon—as many as 30,000 Americans have them per year. But when one ruptures, blood leaks into the brain and may trigger sudden symptoms. Knowing how to recognize these symptoms could save your life.

A rupture is a medical emergency. Watch for these red flags:

- Headache, which may be sudden and severe
- Numbness
- Loss of feeling in the face, especially if on one side only
- Double vision or other vision changes
- Pain above or behind the eye
- Neck stiffness
- Loss of consciousness

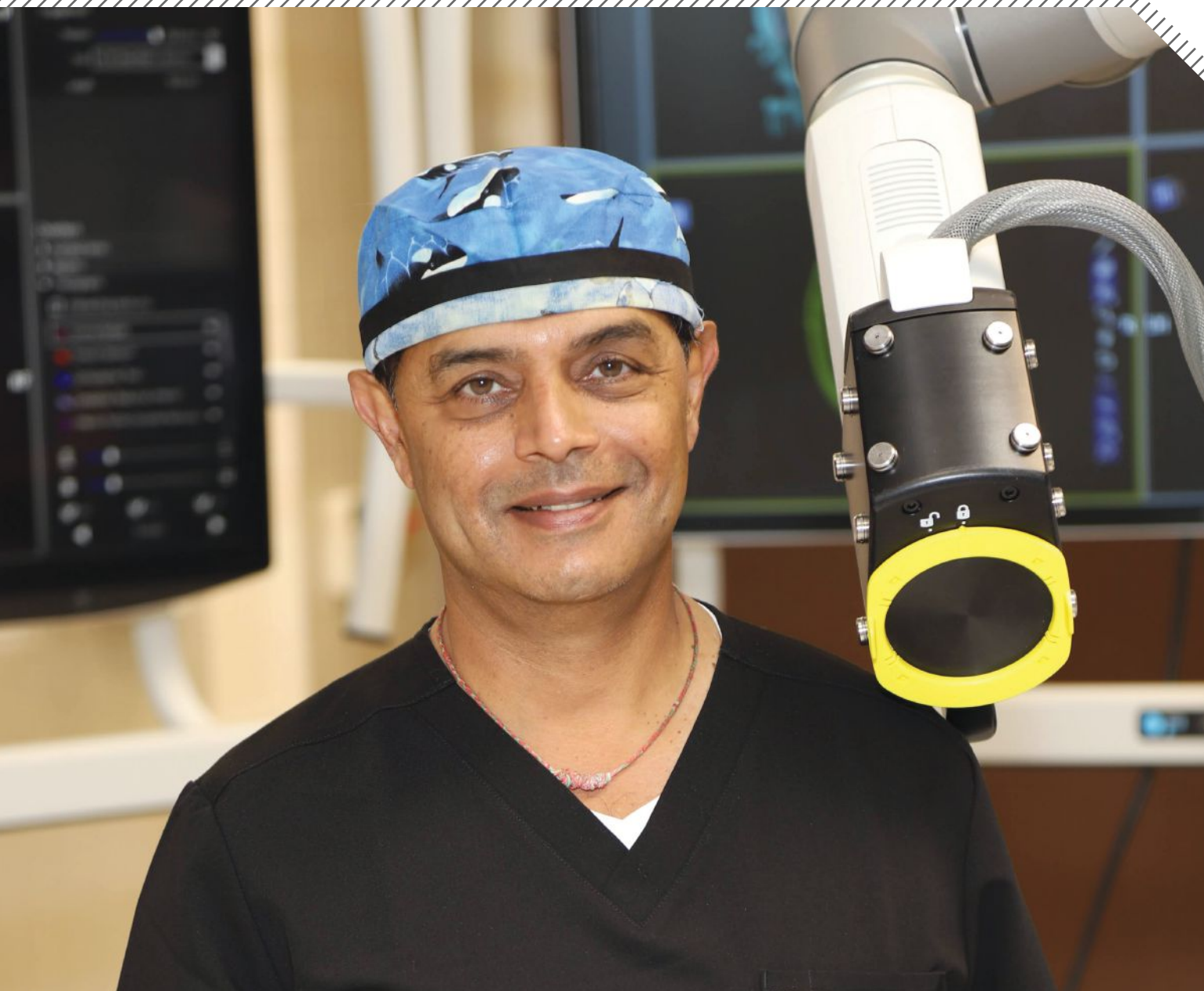
Many aneurysms never cause these kinds of problems. But those that do can be dangerous—even deadly—so call **911** right away.

EXPANDING NEUROLOGICAL CARE IN THE SUBURBS

NorthShore Neurological Institute Expands
to Northwest Community Healthcare

By Barb Hailey

Dr. Amin Kassam, Chair of Neurosciences at Northwest Community Healthcare, explores one of the new NorthShore Neurological Institute operating rooms.



A new, integrated neurosciences program at Northwest Community Healthcare (NCH) in Arlington Heights will expand the services of the NorthShore Neurological Institute (NNI) in Chicago's northwest suburbs and beyond.

With more than 60 physicians on staff, NNI is widely recognized for its innovative use of technology and leadership in quality improvement and practice-based research. The new program at NCH will bolster that reputation by bringing revolutionary treatment procedures, patient-centered neurological care, physician education and technological innovation.

Leading the expansion is Amin Kassam, MD, Chair of Neurosciences at NCH, partnering with Julian Bailes, MD, and Susan Rubin, MD, Co-Directors of NNI.

"Dr. Kassam's leadership and dedication to providing exceptional patient experience in minimally invasive neurosurgery further establishes NNI as a regional, national and global destination for expert neurological care," said Dr. Bailes, who also serves as Chairman of the NorthShore Department of Neurosurgery.

Dr. Kassam is an internationally renowned neurosurgeon who has pioneered novel and innovative procedures, such as endonasal skull base surgery, conscious surgery, and new technologies in brain mapping and optical robotic surgery. Additionally, he is one of the world's leading neurosurgeons in endonasal, keyhole and minimally invasive procedures.

Having performed multiple first-in-human procedures, Dr. Kassam said another benefit of the program is the advanced training for physicians with a team that has worldwide experience and a track record of training the trainers.

"Patients will receive some of the most advanced care in a venue that's built as a global destination site for some of the most complex cases," Dr. Kassam said.

"The goal of this expansion is to deliver the best compassionate and team-based care possible today, while building the next best care for tomorrow."

UNRIVALED, INNOVATIVE, PERSONALIZED CARE

The new neurological program will serve as a collaborative environment that brings together an integrated team of specialists, including neurologists, neurosurgeons, neuro-oncologists, neuroradiologists, and ear, nose and throat surgeons.

Dr. Kassam likened the patient to serving as the "Chairman of their healthcare board," supported by family serving as their "board" and the medical team as their "executive team."

The program's personalized approach will also include the following special features:

- Convenient, in-person access to the patient's care team—at the same time



Dr. Julian Bailes and Dr. Susan Rubin, Co-Directors of the NorthShore Neurological Institute

in the same place—which allows for prompt answers to questions and treatment plans delivered on a smart board before the patient leaves the office

- Integrated operating rooms with next-generation communication, visualization and robotic technology
- A dedicated stroke lab with an imaging bay and dedicated MRI (magnetic resonance imaging)
- Technology-enhanced outpatient clinic with sensory-enhanced design to optimize neural stimulation and passive rehabilitation



Dr. Amin Kassam collaborates with a colleague on a complex patient case.

Connect with Us

Please visit northshore.org/g11 to learn more about Dr. Kassam and the new neurosciences program at NCH. To schedule an appointment, call **(847) 618-4430**.

“

I couldn't have had a better care team.

—Ashley Conley,
NorthShore Evanston
Hospital patient

”



“I'm so thankful for everything,” said Ashley Conley, holding baby Harlow.

MOM WITH LEUKEMIA HAS SPECIAL DELIVERY

Diagnosed in Her Third Trimester, Expectant Mom Required Urgent Delivery

By Susan J. White

Proactive,
Personalized Care

Please visit northshore.org/g12 to learn more about NorthShore's Department of Maternal-Fetal Medicine.

The juxtaposition of joy and fear that Ashley Conley felt was overpowering. On a fateful February afternoon, she gave birth to a healthy baby girl—and immediately started chemotherapy for a rare and aggressive leukemia.

“It’s kind of a blessing this happened while I was pregnant,” said Conley, of Cary, who has three other children. “I credit the baby with saving my life and me getting help quicker.”

A SIGN OF SOMETHING WRONG

Conley was 32 weeks pregnant when she experienced unusual bruising and nose bleeds. She initially assumed she had low iron, but when her gums began to bleed, she and her husband, Kurt, knew her symptoms should be evaluated. It was a Sunday evening when she had her blood drawn.

Early the next morning, Conley received a call urging her to get to Evanston Hospital immediately. Within minutes of her arrival, NorthShore Hematologist-Oncologist Amy Wang, MD, shared the devastating news that Conley had acute promyelocytic

leukemia (APL) and that her baby would have to be delivered as soon as possible. NorthShore’s Maternal-Fetal Medicine (MFM) physicians assured her that, though premature, her infant should do well via care in NorthShore’s Infant Special Care Unit.

“Hours matter at this point,” Conley recalled being told as a comprehensive team of oncologists and MFM and critical care specialists began carefully planning her complex treatment and the safe delivery of her baby. Conley’s life-threatening condition put her at risk of severe bleeding and clotting complications while giving birth.

“The good news with APL is that it’s highly curable if we get patients over the hump in the first month or two, when mortality is highest,” said Dr. Wang.

SPRINGING INTO ACTION

Conley was given blood products to increase her platelet levels before delivery,



NorthShore Hematologist-Oncologist **Dr. Amy Wang** was instrumental in Ashley Conley’s leukemia treatment.

and also received her first dose of all-trans retinoic acid (ATRA), an oral medication to treat APL.

But her platelet levels continued to drop, and her care team knew they had to move fast, transferring her to the Intensive Care Unit and preparing for induction and delivery in that unlikely location.

A team of about 30 clinicians—physicians, nurses and

anesthesiologists—expertly managed Conley’s care during hours of labor and acute blood loss until she delivered a healthy baby girl. Baby Harlow Rose was quickly whisked away to the Infant Special Care Unit. Within an hour of giving birth, Conley was given her first intravenous chemotherapy treatment.

Erin Tran, MD, an MFM specialist who cared for Ashley and delivered Harlow, said she was optimistic the baby would do well given Ashley’s previously uncomplicated prenatal course, the relatively advanced gestational age and reassuring fetal monitoring during labor.

In reflecting on the rare case, Dr. Tran said Conley “is a patient I will never forget.”

Critical Care Specialist Todd Dodick, MD, said it was clear that the safest place for Conley to deliver would be in the Intensive Care Unit.

“Everybody came together and did whatever it took to ensure a healthy delivery for the mom and baby,” he said.

ROAD TO RECOVERY

Conley was hospitalized for a month to continue receiving chemotherapy that thankfully put her leukemia in remission. She continues to receive outpatient treatment under Dr. Wang’s direction to keep the APL in remission long enough to be cured.

“My boys are so excited to have a little sister, and I’m so thankful for everything,” Conley said. “I couldn’t have had a better care team.”

About 30 NorthShore care team members helped Ashley Conley deliver a healthy baby girl after a shocking leukemia diagnosis. Members of her NorthShore care team included, from left, Staff Nurse **Blair O’Connor**, Staff Nurse **Anne O’Brien**, **Dr. Mehraboon Irani**, **Dr. Erin Tran** and **Dr. Todd Dodick**.



10772M



However you hurt it, **we can fix it.**

When you hurt your bones, joints or muscles, NorthShore Sports Medicine specialists are here for you, committed to caring for you safely. We're the Official Healthcare Partner of the Chicago Blackhawks. Our physicians treat the Chicago Bears too. In fact, we help keep everyone in top form.

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Orthopaedic & Spine Immediate Care

No appointment needed

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