



Positioning for the Future

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



In keeping with the mission and the forward thinking of our Founders who created the People’s Benevolent Hospital nearly sixty-eight years ago, we have embarked on a historic and ambitious project, not merely to keep up with the demands of healthcare, but more importantly, to position Northern Maine Medical Center to be a leader in healthcare.

As we look to sustain the future of healthcare in our region, we strongly believe that it is imperative that we take strategic risks so as to be poised to provide the very best in healthcare quality, technology and experiences for the people of the St. John Valley. At the core of our strategic plan, we launched a historic four-story expansion last May. It will offer many amenities for the patient experience, efficiencies in care and enhanced facilities in a number of areas including: the Operating Room, Psychiatry, the Laboratory and Oncology.

We recognize that it is of paramount importance that we remain focused on advancing quality at all levels of the organization thus, we have continued to garner numerous accolades at the national level, a testament to the commitment and dedication of our entire staff.

We acknowledge full well that our work is a continuous and lifelong journey and that we cannot do it without our community partners. We are grateful for your feedback which guides our decisions. Your support is of paramount importance in helping us to create and ensure a future for healthcare in which health, wellness and disease prevention are a top priority. We hope you are inspired by the stories within this report and we encourage you to actively provide feedback about your healthcare experiences in the year ahead.

Best Regards,


Peter J. Sirois
 President and CEO


 Board of Trustees Chairperson





It Takes a Dedicated Team

Crystal Condo, Northern Maine Medical Center's (NMMC) Patient Financial Advocate, works with individual patients on a daily basis to assist them in navigating available financial resources and match them with what best meets their unique needs.

Tyrone Charette is one example of the many patients who have been fortunate enough to receive guidance and assistance from Crystal Condo over the past year. Although he was covered by Medicare related to a disability condition, he was not eligible for a supplemental insurance policy due to income guidelines.

For Mr. Charette, the ordeal began two years ago when he experienced a fall, causing a serious hip injury, followed by a second fall two months later. After the second fall, an abnormality was noted on the hip x-ray by Dr. Erik St. Pierre during his evaluation. "I thank God for Dr. St. Pierre" said Mr. Charette. Further diagnostic testing in the Emergency Department revealed the presence of more abnormalities, not only in his hip, but in his spine as well. The findings started a cascade of events including a flight to Boston's Dana Farber Cancer Institute for further evaluation.

Mr. Charette's healthcare expenses quickly began to mount. Crystal Condo was consulted and was successful in securing a one-year \$10,000 grant through the Health Well Foundation, which helped to defer a major portion of the cost for chemotherapy and some of the outpatient medications expenses.

Mr. Charette said, "I'm doing excellent right now and I am so thankful for my family who backs me up 100%." He is also appreciative of the financial support he has

been afforded by the Edgar J. Paradis Cancer Fund for the numerous trips he has taken to complete a course of radiation in Presque Isle and consultation in Boston. Although the next step for cancer treatment is the return to Boston for a stem cell transplant, he says that what he is most worried about is not the transplant, but the ability to come up with \$400 a month to purchase insulin to manage his diabetes.

When Condo learned of the insulin needs, she took immediate action to advocate for Mr. Charette; she was able to ensure temporary access to insulin while working with the Care Manager, Stacy Raymond and Primary Care Provider, Dr. Kissonie Bair, and assist Mr. Charette to apply to the Medicare Savings Program. She said, "The more information we can get to the public the better because there are so many wonderful grants available and it makes such a huge difference to our patients living on a fixed income." Accessing entities such as the Patient Access Network Foundation, the Health Well Foundation and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Condo reports a total amount of coverage obtained for patients at \$310,950 for the year 2019.



*Stacy Raymond,
Care Manager*



*Dr. Blair Kissonie,
primary care physician*



*Dr. Erik St. Pierre,
ED physician*



Linda Gagnon



The improvement is like night and day since I had the procedure done. I have no more reflux at night and I sleep better!"



Dr. Shahriar Anousfar

Center for Gastrointestinal Health

Up to 30% of patients who suffer from heartburn and reflux do not get relief from medication. Many have concerns about taking anti-reflux medication long-term and want to avoid surgery.

An alternative treatment for gastroesophageal reflux, called Stretta, is now available at Northern Maine Medical Center. Stretta treats the underlying cause which is a weak muscle between the stomach and esophagus. This non-surgical procedure significantly reduces symptoms and can help a majority of patients reduce or stop taking medications completely.

Dr. Shahriar Anousfar, general surgeon at NMMC is specially trained and experienced in assessing and treating conditions of the gastrointestinal system.

Linda Gagnon from Madawaska is one such person who has experienced the benefits of Stretta. Mrs. Gagnon came to NMMC's Center for Gastrointestinal Health with years of symptoms affecting her quality of life, despite taking medication to manage the symptoms. Every time she ate, she experienced pain and frequent vomiting. After diagnostic testing to fully assess her condition, Dr. Anousfar determined that Mrs. Gagnon was a candidate for the Stretta procedure.

After three months of weaning from medications and close monitoring, Mrs. Gagnon no longer takes medications.



Delmen Pelletier

Delmen Pelletier, another patient who has experienced the benefit from undergoing the Stretta procedure, was tired of having to sleep on wedges and having his medications frequently changed and adjusted to try to manage his symptoms which he had been experiencing for years. His primary care provider referred him to Dr. Anousfar for the Stretta procedure. He is now nearly off all of his medications and eating like before.

Women's Health: Pelvic Physical Therapy Now Offered at NMMC



left to right: Robyn Violette, DPT and patient, Cecile Tardif

A new treatment option to support women's health, using physical therapy, was introduced at Northern Maine Medical Center (NMMC) in 2019. The new service is an option to meet the needs of women who are experiencing conditions of the pelvic floor muscles.

Robyn Violette, DPT, evaluates and treats women presenting with the musculoskeletal disorders that can occur in women throughout their lifespan. Trained in pelvic floor physical therapy, and possessing a specialized understanding of the physiological differences and the impact of hormones on these conditions, Robyn Violette says, "Women need not suffer in silence with their symptoms. We can help them with some simple, yet effective treatment."

Several techniques are used by Violette such as: education, pelvic floor exercises and manual therapy.

Patients may access the service through a referral from their primary care provider. To speak with Robyn Violette, and to learn more, call **207-834-1524**.



Designated by the National Rural Health Association for a **third consecutive year** for success in overall performance, NMMC's outstanding employees are what make the exceptional patient care possible. The results of meeting the requirements of a Top Hospital means the community can count on the delivery of services from an engaged and remarkable work force who have a vision to make a difference in the lives of those in their care. NMMC is the only hospital in the state of Maine who has earned this top distinction again this year.

Preventing Hospital Readmission with Meds-to-Beds Program

Nothing is more important for a successful recovery than understanding and managing medications safely after discharge from the hospital. The transition from the hospital to home is one of the most risky situations patients will encounter, especially as it relates to medication safety. With this in mind, the Meds-to-Beds Program was implemented to ensure a smooth transition home and to reduce and eliminate the risks to the patient. Typically, when a patient is discharged from the hospital after the management of an acute condition, existing medications are changed and new ones are added, contributing to the complexity of a medication schedule.

With bedside delivery of medications, patients receive a one-on-one visit from a pharmacist who can reinforce

education and resolve issues that may otherwise arise after discharge. The program also eliminates the need for patients to make a stop at the pharmacy on the way home. With the high cost of medications, often, the pharmacist can troubleshoot or make a referral to the hospital's Financial Advocate prior to the patient ever leaving the hospital. The cost of medications is one of the leading causes of patient noncompliance to medications and cause for readmission to the hospital. Most commonly, either the medication is not covered by insurance or the copay for the medication is too expensive for the patient.

Call to learn more about NMMC's Meds-to-Beds Program at **207-834-1690**.



Rita Funk (left) receiving instruction from pharmacist, Amy Vaillancourt.

Care Does Not End at the Door

When a patient is hospitalized, there is an admission date and a discharge date to mark the event. The dates by no means are a beginning, or even an end, to the patient experience at Northern Maine Medical Center (NMMC).

On what was thought to be a routine home visit to Yvette Hebert after she was discharged from the hospital, registered nurse, Jamie Tardif, encountered a situation which can be described as less than routine. She discovered a change in the patient's vital signs, warranting the need for action. To add to the complexity of the matter, the situation transpired during the evening hours, when resources are limited.

The nurse communicated with the hospitalist on duty about Mrs. Hebert's need to be assessed for a significant change in her blood pressure and to possibly resume previous antihypertensive medications. With community drug stores closed, the nursing supervisor and hospital pharmacist were consulted to determine an action plan to safely manage the patient. The patient was unable to drive herself to the hospital and her family was out of town at the time. Nurse Tardif drove Mrs. Hebert to the hospital where she was assessed and ultimately prescribed a new medication. Without the means to return home, the nurse from the Emergency Department, Jessica Walker, drove Mrs. Hebert home, saw to it that she received her new prescription, set up her pill box and settled her in her apartment for the night, in addition to leaving instructions with the family, who would resume care the next day.

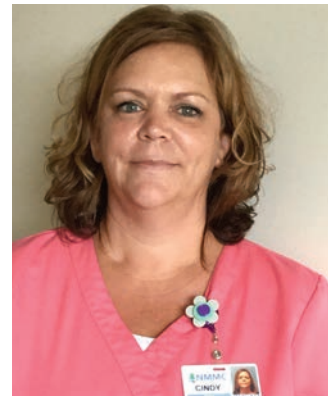
Without the critical thinking and quick intervention of the staff to advocate for the patient, Mrs. Hebert was at risk for serious consequences from an undiagnosed and untreated condition. The actions of the staff working collaboratively, resulted in a safe and positive outcome for Mrs. Hebert and peace of mind for the family.



Dr. Joseph, ER physician



Dr. Freston



Cindy Hafford, nursing supervisor



Jessica Walker, RN



Jordan Albert, pharmacist



Jamie Tardiff, RN (right) and Yvette Hebert.



For a fourth consecutive year, the hospital was recognized for clinical quality, operational excellence and economic impact on the surrounding areas, across eight pillars of hospital strength: inpatient market share, outpatient market share, cost charges, quality, outcomes, patient perspective and financial stability to determine the overall score.

NMMC Behavioral

DAISY Award

This recognition is for every day heroes.

Sandra Peterson said she didn't understand what was happening to her last winter, but she was sure of one thing -she was very sick and needed help. When she decided to seek care at NMMC's Emergency Department, she described herself as being in a very dark place and feeling helpless.

"No pills or drugs could help me -just someone with a big heart and tender loving care. Jeannine Hobbins took the time to calm and comfort me. I am forever grateful for her care. She gave me time, understanding, warmth and compassion". Nurses may be nominated for recognition in the DAISY program by patients, families, and colleagues by simply sending an email to: daisy@nmmc.org



Sandra Peterson with Jeannine Hobbins, RN

*“WHEN “I” BECOMES “WE”
ILLNESS BECOMES WELLNESS”*

- Shannon L. Alder



*front left to right -
Raven Reynolds,
Andrea Dumond,
Connie Malmberg
Standing: Crystal
Hughes, Tonia Pelletier,
Angie Cyr, Courtney
Deprey, Erin Plourde,
Heidi Michaud, Kim
Paradis, Lee Babin*

Out of the Darkness Suicide Awareness Walk

Suicide is a national health problem that takes an enormous toll on family, friends and co-workers, in fact, the entire community. The walk is held internationally each year with the primary focus of raising awareness about suicide and highlighting the public's role in prevention efforts. According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), suicide almost always has multiple causes and many times these causes go unrecognized and untreated. afsp.org/walk

Health Services



left to right: Alicia Soucy, MHNP; Melissa Stoliker, MHNP; standing-Andrna Christopher, MHNP; Crystal Hughes, LCSW-cc

Expanded Access to Mental Health Services

Mental illness can be pervasive and it knows no cultural, social or economic boundaries. It can be covert and can often go undetected by a friend, a family member or a clinician. Most people will admit to some level of affliction throughout one's life. Hence, opportunities for the detection, diagnosis and treatment of mental illness must be made accessible from multiple pathways in order to provide the broadest and most effective reach.

The Behavioral Health Team was expanded to the Acadia Family Health Center this year in order to provide greater access to care for the child and adult populations. In synch with the Community Health Needs Assessment action plan, the team has engaged with community partners to raise awareness about mental illness and to *Smash the Stigma*.

The Yellow Tulip Project

NMMC teamed up to Smash the Stigma around mental illness by planting vibrant yellow tulips throughout the community. The Yellow Tulip Project, a Maine based nonprofit organization, was created to diminish the stigma surrounding mental illness, to build strong communities and to spark conversation about how to decrease the suicide rate.

www.theyellowtulipproject.org



Front Left to right -Ericka Saucier, LSW; Andrea Dumond, LSW; Kim Paradis, RN; Peyton Hebert, LSW; Parise Dubai, RN; Sarah Soucy, RN Back row: Janice Anderson, RN; Jodi Cote, MHNP

Cara Pinette, Medical Assistant, Behavioral Health - packaging yellow tulip bulbs for planting



Big Time Better

Paul Gagnon, a resident of Frenchville, was experiencing pain and restriction of movement related to a painful knee and knew he had to do something to correct the situation. He said he consulted with his primary care provider, Debra McGlaughlin, FNP, and spoke with several people in his community prior to deciding about where to seek care. In June, he underwent total knee replacement surgery at Northern Maine Medical Center by Dr. John Hallberg.

Mr. Gagnon said, "Before my knee surgery, my activities were really limited. I couldn't go up the stairs without limping and favoring my left leg. When I played the base pedals of the organ in church, it would cause me pain. I even had pain when I drove my car."

He said he had no regrets and praised everyone that he came into contact with while hospitalized.

He reports that he has been able to resume all of his activities. "All in all, my life is now big time better since my surgery!"



Grade "A" Safety Rating -2019

Northern Maine Medical Center was awarded an 'A' grade in the fall 2019 Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade initiative, a national distinction, recognizing NMMC's achievements for protecting patients from harm and providing safer healthcare.

The Leapfrog Group, an independent national watchdog organization, driven by employers and other purchasers of healthcare, is committed to improving healthcare quality and safety for consumers and purchasers

The 'A' safety grade reflects the safety of surgical procedures, the consistency of nursing practices, physician precision and cost efficiency.





The Journey

Norma Miller, and her husband Leo, have not only experienced a long emotional journey, but a literal one as well. It began in 2012 when Norma was diagnosed with lung cancer. Residing in Connecticut at the time of the diagnosis, they sought answers from the medical community for a treatment plan which initially consisted of surgery to remove part of one of her lungs. After a long and tumultuous period navigating the healthcare system, they learned Norma was 'cancer free', but it would not last.

Three short years later in 2015, a second diagnosis of cancer of the lung would be made. Ever grateful for their son's assistance, she was referred to Yale University where she was determined to be an eligible candidate for immune therapy with a drug called Keytruda.

Originally from Allagash, they decided in 2017 to return to northern Maine where much of their family still lived. Although they described the time at Yale University 'the greatest experience in the world', they recognized how valuable the support of family was in times such as these, so they relocated to St. Francis, Maine where she continued the immunotherapy. In 2018, she underwent radiation treatment and in July of 2019 she was once again declared cancer free.



Norma said, "It has been a long journey. I have an amazing family and their support has been great throughout this entire experience. I never thought once about giving up -I didn't have time." When she speaks with others who are discouraged along their journey, she reminds them that they must keep a positive attitude in order to get through the ups and downs, which she and her husband have experienced more than their fair share.

Norma continues to receive close monitoring with Dr. Kristin Hartt, Dr. Allan Espinosa and the Oncology team at NMMC. She and her husband are enjoying the new home they built with their amazing support system surrounding them.



Dr. Kristin Hartt and Dr. Alan Espinosa

Improving the Lives of Residents



Forest Hill was the recipient of the Bronze -Commitment to Quality Award by the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living for its commitment to improving the lives of residents through quality care. The recognition honors members across the country that have demonstrated their dedication to improving quality of care for seniors and persons with disabilities.

The national recognition is a result of the work accomplished by the team of individuals at Forest Hill who dedicate themselves to caring for the residents as members of their own families. It's what they do every day and the recognition is a demonstration of their commitment to consistently improving processes to ensure strong communication and to deliver the best possible quality care to the residents and their families.

Bronze applicants must demonstrate their ability to implement a performance improvement system. To meet this objective, the team focused on an area they knew would improve the quality of life for their residents -decreasing the number of residents experiencing pain. At the onset of the initiative, 22% of residents reported experiencing moderate to severe pain, usually chronic in nature, therefore more difficult to manage. Once opportunities were identified, specific education was provided on the use of best practices for pain management as well as alternative treatment strategies modified to the individual need of residents. On a daily basis, reports were reviewed by the team to determine pain levels. Although some improvement trends were noted, the team was not satisfied with the results; it was apparent that more action needed to be taken. A sensory cart was created as another alternative to create a calming environment, relieve stress and thereby relieve pain, using such modalities as music, soft scents and hand massages to provide more comfort.



Forest Hill ended the year with a five-star rating across all five of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services star rating. The entire report may be viewed at the Nursing Home Compare website at www.nursinghomecompare.org



at Forest Hill



The national recognition is a result of the work accomplished by the team of individuals at Forest Hill who dedicate themselves to caring for the residents...

Myra Albert, RN (below), was recognized as one of the best and brightest in Maine's long-term care community at the 2019 Excellence in LTC Awards Program where the Maine Healthcare Association honored deserving caregivers across the state for their dedication, performance to provide quality of care and life across the long-term care continuum. As charge nurse at Forest Hill, Myra's dedication is unmatched in her commitment to caring for the residents, family members and the staff.



Critical to the Patient Experience

A historic 15,600 square foot expansion, vital to the continued success of the hospital, was launched in May. The project positions the hospital to be a state-of-the-art facility for the residents of the St. John Valley, well into the future. It is also an investment in modernization, imperative for recruitment of surgeons and other professionals, as well as the preservation of service lines necessary to maintain a strong and healthy sole-community hospital. The construction of a four-story expansion will enable the renovation and enhancement of other clinical and support spaces, in addition to the critical nature of building new operating rooms.

Ground floor: The cafeteria will be enlarged, modernized and relocated adjacent to the main kitchen to create efficiencies in work flow and staffing, enabling the expansion of business hours resulting in improved accommodations for family members, the public and employees who work the late shifts.

First floor: The Laboratory will be more centrally located in the vicinity of the Radiology Department; the relocation will create several benefits for the public: a more efficient space and workflow, improved privacy, a shared reception area reducing duplication and a common reception area. The space vacated by the Laboratory will be renovated for the Cardiopulmonary Department, making it more convenient for patients.

Second floor: A new gym area will be created for the inpatient child psychiatric unit as part of the treatment program. The length of Northern Maine winters are a barrier to the physical outlet needed for the mental health of patients. It will also be utilized on occasion by the Adult Psychiatry population.

Third floor: Along with the new operating rooms, the endoscopy area will be relocated to this level to take advantage of efficiencies provided by the sharing of clinical personnel as well as procedure and recovery space, also making it more convenient, private and comfortable for patients and family members. The space vacated by the endoscopy service will be repurposed for a space that offers more privacy and confidentiality for the care and treatment of oncology patients.

The new construction supports the legacy of the hospital's founder, Father Aime Giguere, who made a dream come true nearly seventy years ago.



The new state of the art OR expansion will fundamentally change the way we provide surgical services to our community.
Shahriar Anoushfar, DO, FACS, FACOS,
General Surgeon



The state-of-the art facility will offer an amazing experience for our patients in the delivery of surgical and endoscopic care.
David Coffman, DO



The long awaited new operating rooms will improve our surgical capabilities. The volume, quality and range of surgical procedures will be increased and patient safety and satisfaction enhanced.
Andrew Hallberg, MD, Orthopedic Surgeon



Ensuring Local Access to Care for the Future

The demand for physicians in rural America continues to be in high demand and insufficient to serve the population's needs.

To combat the impact of the physician shortage, NMMC has aligned itself with the Frank H. Netter, MD School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University, to provide a rural track for medical students.

Dr. Michael Sullivan, Site Director for Medical Student Education & Director of Internal Medicine Curriculum *"It gives us a sense of pride and accomplishment to train the next generation of physicians. As an academic hospital, the partnership with the medical school puts NMMC on the map and creates important benefits for patients, students and providers."*

Dr. Kristin Hartt said, *"It is a win-win situation. Having students onsite brings an infusion of new life and vigor to the staff and the organization which can only benefit our*

patients. It keeps what we do every day fun and fresh."

David Pisciteili - *This has given me a deeper appreciation for rural medicine and the patient-physician relationship. Moreover, I've felt like family here and made many new friends.*

Jess Malhotra - *Northern Maine Medical Center has become my home away from home. I have learned so much and can't wait to use these skills as a future physician. I will miss Fort Kent and all of the wonderful people here.*

Leia Fecteau - *My time in the LIC program here has been amazing and I'll never forget it! I believe this experience is superior to my peers' back in Connecticut in a number of ways.*

Zoe Froking - *Being a student at Northern Maine Medical Center has been an incredible experience. Both the medical staff and the patients were eager to be involved in my education. The hospital and community were incredibly welcoming!*





JAMES THIBODEAU



NORMAN FOURNIER

Dedicated Service

“Northern Maine Medical Center has been so fortunate to have such devoted and talented board members. Norm Fournier and Jim Thibodeau are two of our board members who will be dearly missed. They exhibited true passion for our patients by dedicating so much of their time and talent to make certain NMMC remained a financially sound and high-quality hospital. Without their leadership, NMMC would not be the exemplary hospital it is today”

— Peter J. Sirois, President and CEO



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RETIRING MEMBERS OF THE NMMC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

With a combined 46 years of service, Norman Fournier and James Thibodeau have retired from the Board of Trustees.

Both believe that the hospital, along with the University of Maine at Fort Kent, are central hubs of the community and serve a critical role in the economics and health of the community. Fournier said, “The hospital is a much-needed service and must be kept vibrant and alive for the residents of the St. John Valley.” Nearly 30 years on the Board, Mr. Fournier believed being a member was a way in which to give back to the community.

Mr. Thibodeau recalls being a construction worker on the 1960’s addition to the hospital. He followed in his father’s footsteps in his service to the hospital and served a total of 16 years. He said, “It was an honor and a privilege to serve; I felt the hospital is a critical service and it brings a sense of professionalism to our community.”

On behalf of the entire organization, NMMC is grateful for Mr. Fournier and Mr. Thibodeau’s forty-six years of support and leadership.