When a Stroke Strikes
Can You Act F.A.S.T.?

Breathe Easy
Our New Sinus Center Can Help

Embrace Your Emotional Health
Why Treatment Really Works

Considering Robotic Surgery?
Choose the Experience of Palomar Health

Promise. Delivered.
Ramona Ambulatory Care Center Now Open
Write from the Top

Dear Friend of Palomar Health,

Here we grow again. Since my last opportunity to share with you through this column, Palomar Health has continued to press forward with several initiatives designed to improve and expand the level of services and care provided to you and your family. I’ve selected just a few of them to elaborate on now.

First, for our friends in Ramona, I share in your enthusiasm surrounding the opening of the new Ramona Ambulatory Care Center operated by Palomar Health and Arch Health Partners. The expanded medical services now offered here was a commitment we made to the citizens in 2004 with the passage of Proposition BB. We took a journey together to honor that pledge, and I am grateful to the many residents and physicians who worked alongside us to realize this goal. (See related story on page 13.)

Next, Palomar Health Downtown Campus is now home to a new Standby Emergency Department (ED) where emergency-trained physicians, nurses and staff are available to treat non-life threatening medical needs 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week. The service is located on the third floor of our historic facility on Valley Parkway in Escondido and provides another important point of care for patients served in that area. I invite you to learn more online at www.PalomarHealth.org/standbyED.

Finally, our four PALOMAR HEALTH expressCORE walk-in health centers, located inside select Albertsons/Sav-on Pharmacy stores, continue to offer convenient, affordable care for minor illnesses and injuries. Palomar Health was the first health system in the state of California to be licensed as a hospital-based outpatient service center. This achievement illustrates our ongoing commitment to improving access for basic healthcare services and strengthening the continuum of care throughout our health district. (See related story on page 12.)

These are all important milestones on our continued journey to build your health system of the future, and I look forward to my next opportunity to share more wins with you. As always, thank you for your trust and support as we grow with you.

In good health,

Michael H. Covert, FACHE
President and Chief Executive Officer
Palomar Health

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FOLLOW US ON:
inside this issue...

SPECIAL FEATURES

4 When a Stroke Strikes, Act F.A.S.T.!
Recognizing the symptoms of a stroke and seeking immediate treatment can help save a life and limit long-term disability. Learn how the Advanced Primary Stroke Centers at Palomar Health are ready for quick response using the best practices for care.

6 Health Education for Seniors
In partnership with OASIS, Palomar Health is offering a wide variety of classes during the months of May–August. Check out our latest programs and register today!

7 Breathe Easy
Do you suffer from chronic sinusitis? Help is here. The new Palomar Health Sinus Center offers advanced comprehensive treatments to restore and preserve your sinus function.

8 Embrace Your Emotional Health
Psychological and emotional health is vital to your overall well-being. Find your balance with help from the Palomar Center for Behavioral Health. Plus, Carol LeBeau reveals her personal triumph over anxiety and depression.

10 Close Up With Carol
Gentlemen, is it time for a tune-up? June is Men’s Health Month and Palomar Health Champion Carol LeBeau is encouraging every guy to get checked out.

11 Promise. Delivered.
Palomar Health and Arch Health Partners deliver on a promise made to Ramona residents with the opening of the new Ramona Ambulatory Care Center. Learn more about the expanded medical services now available in this community.

12 PALOMAR HEALTH expresscare
From ear piercing and hair removal to sports physicals, PALOMAR HEALTH expresscare locations offer seasonal specials to help keep you and your family healthy all year.

13 House Calls
Got questions about childhood ADHD? Wondering if you need to suffer through hot flashes? Palomar Health physicians address these important health issues in our popular “House Calls” column.

14 Beat Back Pain
Minimally invasive spine surgery offers an alternative approach to traditional open surgery with less pain and a faster recovery. Learn about one woman’s journey through spinal fusion just two weeks before her daughter’s wedding.

15 Music is Good Medicine
Have you got the music in you? Discover how music therapy is promoting healing and enhancing quality of life for many patients at Palomar Health.

Find a Doctor
Finding the right doctor is easy at Palomar Health. Just call The HealthSource at 800.628.2880 for a FREE referral. One of our friendly representatives will help you to select from more than 800 affiliated physicians according to your personal preferences and health insurance plan. You can also visit us online at www.PalomarHealth.org/doctor.

16 Robotic Surgery: Expanded Program Features Newest Technology
Considering robotic surgery? Choose the experience of Palomar Health. Meet two women who enjoyed the benefits of this minimally invasive surgery and learn why Palomar Health’s program has expanded to include the latest da Vinci technology.

18 Cause for Applause
Since opening its doors last August, the new Palomar Medical Center has been applauded by patients for its exceptional care, and recognized by industry leaders for its forward-thinking design and construction.

18 Leave the Parking to Us
Palomar Health introduces valet parking at the new Palomar Medical Center.

19 Lasting Legacies through Philanthropy
Local residents leave a lasting legacy through a commitment to the Palomar Health Foundation.

The views and opinions expressed throughout this publication are provided for informational purposes only and do not necessarily reflect those of Palomar Health. Featured articles and classes are not intended to substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, nor are they intended to reflect all possible opinions on a subject. We recommend that all patients seek the advice of their physician or other qualified health provider with any questions they may have regarding treatment options or a medical condition.
When a stroke strikes, recognition of symptoms and early intervention are critical. Also known as a “brain attack,” a stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain becomes blocked or ruptures. This cuts off vital blood and oxygen to the brain cells that control everything we do – from speaking, to walking, to breathing. Acting quickly to get emergency medical care is crucial for saving a life and limiting long-term disability.

At Palomar Health, stroke patients benefit from advanced, comprehensive care that starts even before they enter the Emergency Department and continues through their recovery and rehabilitation. Palomar Medical Center and Pomerado Hospital have each been designated as Advanced Primary Stroke Centers by The Joint Commission and the American Heart and American Stroke Associations. This distinction recognizes centers that follow the best practices for stroke care.

“Being a stroke center means patients will get treated as quickly as possible using national standards of care,” says Richard Schumann, Jr., M.D., medical director for Stroke Services at Palomar Health. “We provide treatment 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week for any type of stroke or neurovascular disease that comes in. Our team handles more than 900 cases a year between Palomar Medical Center and Pomerado Hospital.”

Fast and comprehensive treatment is essential because strokes are the fourth leading cause of death in the United States and a leading cause of serious long-term adult disability.

 Patients who call 9-1-1 are at an advantage because paramedics will start life-saving treatment on the way to the hospital, where a Palomar Health medical team will then be waiting to continue time-sensitive care.

About 80 percent of Palomar Health stroke patients are treated at Palomar Medical Center, where a neurohospitalist – or hospital-based neurology specialist – is now on staff. Having a neurohospitalist in the building also saves precious minutes because the patient will be seen by a neurologist immediately rather than when an on-call neurologist arrives.

”My being in the hospital means there is no delay for the patient in getting a full neurological evaluation,” says Aziz Ander, M.D., a neurohospitalist at Palomar Health. “When it comes to stroke care, we are always mindful of how we can take time off the clock because time saved is brain saved.”

Approximately 87 percent of strokes are ischemic strokes caused by a blood clot blocking blood flow to part of the brain and causing cells there to die. In the first three hours after a stroke, the most common treatment is to give an intravenous clot-busting drug called tPA (tissue plasminogen activator) that potentially can limit brain damage and disability.

“tPA can also be given within six hours by threading a catheter through blood vessels to deliver the drug directly to the clot. At Palomar Health, specialists also can use a catheter to go up the blood vessel to retrieve the clot.

“The ‘door to drug’ time at Palomar Medical Center is about 44 minutes,” says Dr. Ander. “This means that once a patient arrives at the hospital, they are evaluated and treated as appropriate with the clot-busting drug within that average time. The American Stroke Association has set a national target of 60 minutes or less, so we’re beating that goal.”
A much less common hemorrhagic stroke is caused by a blood vessel rupture that bleeds within the brain and damages nearby tissue. Giving tPA would be dangerous because it can increase the bleeding. For that reason, a CT scan is done immediately to determine whether tPA can be given.

“We have the latest in diagnostic equipment,” says Dr. Schumann. “With our CT scans we can do a perfusion study that maps blood flow to the brain, which tells us the size and location of the stroke and whether clot-busting drugs would be helpful.”

After tPA is given, the patient stays in the intensive care unit for 24 hours while stroke-certified nurses closely watch for any signs of neurological changes. Patients then move to a unit devoted solely to neurology patients where a full workup is performed to determine the cause of the stroke, the extent of damage and treatment options. Rehabilitation specialists are brought in within a day.

“Having a dedicated neurology unit makes comprehensive care easier and less disjointed,” says Dr. Schumann. “Diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation can start sooner and the patient’s stay may be shorter.”

Just as swift action is vital with the first signs of stroke, rehabilitation therapy also should start quickly. “Research shows that the sooner you start rehabilitation, the better the outcomes in reducing complications and improving long-term function and quality of life,” says Keyvan Esmaeili, M.D., medical director of the Palomar Health Rehabilitation Institute.

The rehabilitation team includes a physician, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, social worker and nurses who all evaluate the patient.

Addressing one of the first concerns, the speech therapist will assess whether the patient can swallow effectively and not aspirate food into the windpipe. The occupational therapist will want to know the patient’s ability to brush their teeth, bathe, get dressed and manage other personal care.

Some patients may be transferred to the Rehabilitation Institute at Palomar Health Downtown Campus, where stroke patients typically stay from two to four weeks while receiving several hours of therapy a day.

“We provide support for family members and caregivers too,” says Dr. Esmaeili. “Our goal is to improve functional ability for patients so they can get back to their family and enjoy a good quality of life.” To learn more, visit www.PalomarHealth.org/stroke.

May is National Stroke Awareness Month, a time to educate the nation and spread awareness about stroke prevention, symptom recognition and recovery. If you or a loved one experiences sudden numbness or weakness, confusion, trouble seeing, difficulty walking, or a severe headache with no known cause, dial 9-1-1 and act F.A.S.T.

F = Face  Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
A = Arm  Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
S = Speech  Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Does the speech sound slurred or strange?
T = Time  If you observe any of these signs, it’s time to call 9-1-1.

Robert Webb woke up feeling fuzzy-headed one Friday in February, but just figured it was one of those days.

“I felt kind of confused and unsteady,” recalls Robert. “I was really kind of tired, I think. It’s hard to remember because I was so disoriented.”

After lunch and a nap it became clear something was seriously wrong. “I couldn’t tie my shoes and my wife told me I was acting strange,” he says.

Dee Webb saw her husband fumbling with his left hand as though he couldn’t feel it. Robert’s vague morning confusion suddenly seemed ominous. She hurried him to nearby Fallbrook Hospital, where doctors suspected a stroke. Paramedics rushed him to Palomar Medical Center, the closest Advanced Primary Stroke Center.

“The neurologist on staff came in almost immediately,” says Robert. A CT scan was done and the stroke team started aggressive treatment. His stroke was caused by atrial fibrillation, a dangerously rapid heartbeat that had sent a blood clot from his heart to his brain.

After a day in the ICU, Robert was moved into the neuro unit on the seventh floor, where treatment continued and the rehab team helped resolve some breathing difficulties. His numbness and confusion also subsided, and after four days, Robert went home.

He’s under a cardiologist’s care for his heart and feels fortunate about his recovery. Looking back, Robert says he probably should have gone to the hospital sooner. A retired firefighter, he knew the signs of stroke. “When it happens to you, it doesn’t seem as real as when it’s happening to someone else,” he says.

Dee said she was impressed by the care her husband received from everyone on the Palomar Medical Center staff.

“Palomar was wonderful, their treatment, how they took care of the whole family … all of it,” says Dee. “They were always there if we needed anything.”

Join Neurologist Aziz Ander, M.D., for a free class on Wednesday, May 29. See page 2 of Prevention Plus (centerfold) for details.
In partnership with OASIS, a national education organization dedicated to enriching the lives of mature adults, Palomar Health is offering a wide variety of health classes May – August. See this issue of Prevention Plus (centerfold) for more classes designed for all ages.

Sleep Apnea
OASIS – Poway
Wednesday, May 22
1 – 2:30 p.m.
Sleep apnea is a chronic condition that requires long-term management. Left untreated it can increase the risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, obesity and diabetes. Join Richard Schumann, M.D., as he discusses causes and treatment.

Medication Safety
OASIS – Poway
Wednesday, June 5
1 – 2:30 p.m.
Today’s medicines prevent and cure diseases and alleviate pain and suffering. But medicines can also have adverse effects. Join Palomar Health pharmacy residents Belinda Nguyen & Aaron Weigelt as they discuss taking meds correctly, common drug interactions, reliable internet resources and more.

Living with Congestive Heart Failure
OASIS – Escondido
Wednesday, June 19
10 – 11:30 a.m.
Heart failure is a serious long-term condition, but you can live a full and enjoyable life with the right treatment and active attention to your lifestyle. Cardiologist Robert Stein, M.D., will discuss the importance of following your doctor’s recommendations and making proper lifestyle adjustments.

Heart Disease in Simple Terms
OASIS – Escondido
Wednesday, July 17
10 – 11:30 a.m.
The complexity of the heart can make it difficult to understand what happens when it doesn’t function properly. Luanne Arangio-Law, R.N., M.Ed., will discuss the anatomy and physiology of the heart in very basic terms. Learn more about current diagnostic tests, treatment options, necessary lifestyle changes and what to do in an emergency.

Maximizing Your Memory
OASIS – Escondido
Wednesday, July 24
10 – 11:30 a.m.
Join Holly Pobst of the Alzheimer’s Association as she explores how to identify different types of memory, how to recognize mental changes common with normal aging and strategies for improving memory.

Living with Diabetes as a Mature Adult
OASIS – Poway
Wednesday, July 31
1 – 2:30 p.m.
Living with diabetes as a mature adult presents some unique challenges. Join Janice Baker, RD, CDE, as she explores diabetes and the importance of blood sugar control.

Hearing Loss & Emerging Technologies
OASIS – Poway
Wednesday, August 14
1 – 2:30 p.m.
Hearing loss is an increasing problem in today’s society. The demand has resulted in devices of highly functional quality. Join David Illich, Au.D., as he discusses the latest hearing devices available on today’s market.

Common Blood Tests & What They Mean
OASIS – Escondido
Wednesday, August 21
10 – 11:30 a.m.
Join Luanne Arangio-Law, R.N., M.Ed., as she explains common blood tests and what they mean in lay person’s terms.

Exercise Classes

Get Fit and Stay Strong
OASIS – Westmont Town Ct., 500 E. Valley Pkwy., Escondido
Mondays & Thursdays 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.
This fitness class uses bands, weights and the stability ball to increase your bone density, core strength, endurance and balance.

Chair Fitness
OASIS – Joslyn Senior Center, 210 E. Park Ave., Escondido
Wednesdays 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.
Chair exercises can increase your strength, vitality and balance – perfect for anyone who has trouble standing for long periods of time.

To register for classes, call OASIS at 760.796.6020. The fee to attend is $5 / person unless otherwise noted.
Most people know the discomfort of sinusitis and a sinus infection – aching face, headache, stuffy nose, sore throat and fatigue that lasts a couple of weeks.

Each year, nearly 30 million Americans suffer from inflammation of the sinuses, or sinusitis, which can cause an infection. In most cases, a primary care doctor can treat the problem with medication or other therapies.

For patients with advanced or chronic sinus disorders, the new Palomar Health Sinus Center offers the latest in comprehensive treatments to restore and preserve sinus function. All physicians affiliated with the Sinus Center have advanced training in non-surgical and minimally-invasive surgical care of nasal and sinus disorders.

“We created the Sinus Center to provide state-of-the-art diagnostics and treatment to people throughout San Diego County,” says Patrick Fitzgerald, M.D., a board-certified otolaryngologist and medical director of the Sinus Center. “Patients can expect a comprehensive program of both treatment and research.”

For patients who don’t respond to medication, the Sinus Center also offers outpatient surgeries such as Balloon Sinuplasty, in which the physician inserts a small, flexible balloon catheter into the nostril and inflates it to open up blocked sinus passages and drain mucus. All treatments have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and are considered safe and effective.

The Sinus Center is conducting a clinical study that tracks patients over two years to monitor their medical outcomes and satisfaction with surgical and non-surgical practices. If you are currently experiencing a sinus infection lasting longer than 12 weeks or have been treated with one or more courses of antibiotics within the past year, it may be time to ask your physician about the Sinus Center. To learn more, call 800.424.6634 or visit www.PalomarHealth.org/sinus.

It all began with a sinus infection. For nearly a year, Nancy Donn had been feeling miserable – suffering with headaches, fatigue and fuzzy thinking. Then came the morning she awoke in agony.

“My head was on fire,” she said. “I couldn’t see and my eyes were bleeding.” Her neighbor drove her to nearby Fallbrook Hospital, where paramedics raced her to Palomar Medical Center.

Nancy was diagnosed with cavernous sinus thrombosis, a blood clot at the base of the brain caused by a bacterial infection that had started in her sinuses. The mass of infected material was compressing her optic nerve, causing the vision loss.

“This was a very serious, life-threatening condition,” says Dr. Fitzgerald. “She was initially being treated with intravenous antibiotics, but surgery was necessary to save her vision and perhaps her life.”

Dr. Fitzgerald performed an endoscopic sphenoidectomy using special instruments going up the nostrils to open and decompress the infection. No incisions were made and the procedure took about 45 minutes.

“The sinus surgery was the turning point,” Nancy said. “It took awhile for my eyes to clear up but I’m starting to feel like I’m back to normal.”

For a physician referral, or to register for a class, call The HealthSource at 800.628.2880.
Psychological and emotional health are vital to overall well-being and Palomar Health is here to help you and your loved ones achieve that balance. That’s the message the Palomar Center for Behavioral Health wants the public to hear, especially during the Mental Health Awareness Month of May.

“One in four Americans experience a mental illness or substance abuse disorder each year, and half will experience a behavioral health disorder in their lifetimes,” says Susan Linback, R.N., director of Behavioral Health Services. “We are the community hospital and want people to know we’re here for them whatever the problem – medical or psychiatric.”

Whether someone is experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or other psychiatric illnesses, the Palomar Center for Behavioral Health can provide comprehensive inpatient and outpatient diagnostic and treatment services to put them on the path to recovery.

“Treatment works,” says Linback. “With appropriate diagnosis, treatment and monitoring, 80 percent of individuals with depression will fully recover. Treatment of individuals with schizophrenia and other conditions has been shown to improve patient functioning and reduce symptom relapse.”

For anyone who is suicidal, severely depressed, psychotic, or experiencing a mental health emergency, crisis assessment and intervention is available through the Emergency Departments at Palomar Medical Center, Pomerado Hospital and the Standby Emergency Department at Palomar Health Downtown Campus.

Inpatient services for acutely-ill patients are provided in a 25-bed unit at the Downtown Campus and at the 12-bed Inpatient Geriatric Psychiatric Unit at Pomerado Hospital.

“The goal is to stabilize them from the acute reason that brought them in,” says Badalin Helvink, M.D., a psychiatrist and medical director for the Center for Behavioral Health. “The typical length of stay is four to five days at the Downtown Campus and 10 to 13 days at Pomerado Hospital.”

The Palomar Intensive Outpatient Program in San Marcos and the Pomerado Intensive Outpatient Program for Older Adults in Poway also offer a welcoming place where participants can talk openly without worrying about the stigma too often attached to mental illness. That’s what L’Tanya Gordon has found at the San Marcos location.

L’Tanya came to the outpatient program after being hospitalized. She receives help for schizoaffective disorder, a mental illness that caused feelings of anxiety, panic and depression.

“I feel much more confident since coming here,” says L’Tanya. “It used to be that I didn’t know anyone with mental health issues and it wasn’t something I could talk about. But here I’m with other people with similar issues. I can talk about it for the first time in my life.”

The program offers a place where L’Tanya participates in group and individual therapy, receives medication and feels a renewed sense of optimism and control over her life.

“Before I came here my depression was so bad I was just staying in bed all day,” says L’Tanya, who is training to work as a paid peer counselor. “Now I have a reason to get up and get busy every day.”

Participants in the intensive outpatient programs start by attending three days a week for several small-group therapy sessions each day, says Karen Sommerfeld, Ph.D., a psychologist and program manager for the Palomar Intensive Outpatient Program.

“Most of our patients have acute or chronic mental illness and many are disabled, including people who may be working and on temporary disability,” explains Sommerfeld. “We provide support and structured therapy to encourage their independence and to restore their everyday functioning.”

The small-group sessions utilize cognitive therapy and dialectical behavior therapy that teach mindfulness and coping skills. Addiction groups and psycho-educational groups are available, as well as family and individual therapy. Every participant sees a psychiatrist who can prescribe medications if needed.

At the inpatient and outpatient programs for older adults in Poway, the services recognize the distinct mental health issues confronting many seniors.

“The Palomar Intensive Outpatient Program in San Marcos and the Pomerado Intensive Outpatient Program for Older Adults in Poway also offer a welcoming place where participants can talk openly without worrying about the stigma too often attached to mental illness. That’s what L’Tanya Gordon has found at the San Marcos location.
“Seniors are undertreated for depression,” adds Dr. Burns. “For many older adults, there is still a stigma attached to it. They don’t want to bother anyone, and they often view depression as a weakness and not a treatable condition.”

Suicide rates are higher among seniors than any other age group and signs of depression need to be taken seriously. “If they are experiencing depression for two weeks or more, they should seek help,” she says. “If treatment is warranted, it typically will be very successful. Older adults do not need to suffer.”

The Inpatient Gero-Psychiatric Unit at Pomerado Hospital provides help for patients with acute psychiatric disorders that may also involve dementia, and who also may need medical care for heart disease or other illnesses.

The Outpatient Program for Older Adults serves people over age 55 and primarily focuses on depression and anxiety. Participants attend three days a week for four hours each day.

To learn more, visit www.PalomarHealth.org/depression or call Palomar Health’s Behavioral Health Information Referral Line at 800.336.2000.

Q&A with Carol LeBeau

Depression affects the lives of 19 million Americans, including Carol LeBeau, Palomar Health’s “Health Champion” and a longtime advocate of erasing the stigma of mental illness. Carol talked with The HealthSource about her experience living with depression and anxiety.

HS: When did depression first touch your life?
Carol: I was a junior in high school and began experiencing severe anxiety and extreme sadness. There was little in the way of diagnosis or effective treatment, but I was lucky. I cycled out of it several months later and thought it was all behind me.

HS: Was it? Behind you?
Carol: Unfortunately, the symptoms returned 17 years later with a vengeance. Busy with my TV news career, church and community activities, the wheels came off in the form of intense anxiety and “black hole” sadness.

HS: It must have seriously affected your life.
Carol: I was on the verge of tears all the time and overwhelmed by feelings of fear and dread. I didn’t let on to anyone.

HS: Weren’t you a 10News anchor at the time?
Carol: Yes, but I was in such bad shape. It was all I could do to get through my workday. Even the smallest task seemed overwhelming. Eventually, I couldn’t hold it together to do the news.

HS: What was your biggest fear?
Carol: That life as I knew it would be over … that I’d end up like my sweet mother. Mom battled untreated depression and anxiety most of her life and committed suicide at age 53.

HS: How sad!
Carol: It was awful. The worst part? No one talked about it. Had “it” been cancer or heart disease – no problem. Sadly, our family and friends, even our pastor, couldn’t get past the stigma associated with mental illness.

HS: How did you get help?
Carol: A friend gave me the name of a local psychiatric physician who accurately diagnosed my condition. I was treated with anti-anxiety and anti-depressant medication.

HS: And…
Carol: The anxiety subsided and three weeks later, the black cloud lifted! My strength returned and I went back to work.

HS: Sounds miraculous!
Carol: It felt like a miracle. I just wish medication had been available for Mom.

HS: Do you still take an anti-depressant?
Carol: You better believe it! Why would I stop taking the simple pill that allows me to have a productive, joy-filled life?

HS: What should people know about depression?
Carol: There is help. You don’t have to suffer. You are not crazy!

HS: What about the stigma?
Carol: Who decided with all that can go wrong with our bodies, the brain is somehow exempt? Talk about crazy!
My husband, Tom is a good-looking guy … just a little short in the hair department. “It's not that I'm bald,” explains my sweet husband. “I'm follicly-challenged.” But Tom's shiny pate proved to be a blessing in disguise. Because of his receding hairline, it was easy to discover a little “boo-boo” developing atop his head.

Typical guy, Tom put off getting it checked. But the scaly patch continued to grow until I finally insisted he see a dermatologist. I even made the appointment. Long story short, the biopsy found the little lesion was a form of basal cell carcinoma.

Thank God, the skin cancer was found early. Removed by a plastic surgeon nearly two years ago, today the scar is barely visible and Tom is cancer-free. I shudder to think what may have happened had he put off seeing a doctor any longer.

It makes me wonder. Why are guys like Tom (who would never put off servicing his car) so reluctant to take care of their own bodies? Listen guys, the odds are against you. American men live sicker and die younger than American women. Men also die at higher rates from the top 10 causes of death. Why? According to the Men’s Health Network, women are 100 percent more likely to visit the doctor for annual exams and preventive screenings than men!

But there's an easy fix! Many diseases can be prevented or treated when symptoms are caught early. In fact, men's top health threats, including heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, influenza and suicide, are mostly preventable.

Men can begin to take charge of their health by following five basic recommended screenings:

- **Cholesterol**: Men over age 34 should be checked every five years.
- **Blood Pressure**: Check blood pressure at least every two years.
- **Colorectal Cancer**: Begin regular screening at age 50.
- **Diabetes**: Screen for diabetes if you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol.
- **Prostate Cancer**: Men age 50 or older should discuss screening with their doctor.

Still not persuaded? Well, maybe guys need to be convinced that real men need health care. So, I checked in with one of San Diego's most famous “real men” for his perspective.

Billy Ray Smith co-hosts the popular “Scott and BR Show” with Scott Kaplan on San Diego’s “The Mighty 1090.” But the easy-going sports radio guy is probably best known as #54 … the all-pro NFL football star and one of the greatest San Diego Chargers of all time.

Throughout his NFL career, Billy Ray was the picture of health. Now, off the field (and 20 pounds lighter), BR still makes his health a priority. Check out my Q&A to learn more. – Carol LeBeau

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**Q&A with Billy Ray Smith**

**Carol**: How did you stay in top form while playing with the Chargers?

**BR**: I learned from my Dad who also played in the NFL. I used to run with him … even went to the training facility with him.

**Carol**: After 10 years, what made you decide to retire from football?

**BR**: Another lesson from my Dad. He played 13 years and had to have knee replacement surgery. After suffering a torn calf, I decided not to hang on until the very last second and left the game still happy and healthy.

**Carol**: You played at 235 pounds. You’re much leaner today. Is that by design?

**BR**: The first thing I did after retiring was drop 20 – 30 pounds. The extra weight would have taken a toll later on my hips and knees.

**Carol**: You’re still super-fit. Do you work out?

**BR**: I walk with Kim every day and use dumbbells at home 2-3 times a week. I like to run and plan to get back into “hot” yoga. I love getting the sweat going.

**Carol**: What about preventive maintenance?

**BR**: I definitely keep up with my annual physicals. The League provides screenings and does a great job of making sure all the guys get checked.

**Carol**: I know Kim is devoted to a Mediterranean-style diet. How ‘bout you?

**BR**: I’m not on the Kimberly Hunt diet … yet! But I try to emulate her, with a cheeseburger thrown in once in a while.

**Carol**: Hmmm. A cheeseburger with EVOO perhaps?

**BR**: Extra Virgin Olive Oil? Sure, why not?!

**Carol**: What about “junk” food?

**BR**: I love jalapenos … and anything “hot.”

**Carol**: Any tips for handling stress?

**BR**: I honestly don’t know what that is. I’m the luckiest guy on earth. Great friends. The greatest wife and daughter. I talk sports and they pay me for it!
Palomar Health and Arch Health Partners have delivered on a promise made to Ramona residents with the opening of the new Ramona Ambulatory Care Center. Located at 211 13th Street, the 7,600-square-foot facility brings expanded medical services to Ramona and surrounding communities.

With the move to the new building in March, the practice continues to offer primary care while adding urgent care services in the evenings and on Saturdays. And for the first time, radiology services are available so residents no longer need to drive to Poway for an X-ray. The Ramona Ambulatory Care Center is open 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. on weekdays for regular office visits, with urgent care services available from 3 – 7 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Saturdays.

“The most exciting thing about this project is that it was developed and built in response to the needs of Ramona and other mountain communities,” says Victoria Lister, FACHE, executive director of Arch Health Partners. “It has digital X-ray capability, point of care lab testing, and other ancillary diagnostic tests that physicians need to provide a clear diagnosis and treatment plan.”

“We are now providing new services for people who live in Ramona, Julian, Santa Ysabel and the entire region,” says Arch Health Partners’ Medical Director Scott Flinn, M.D.

The new digital X-ray machine also connects physicians in Ramona with hospitals and physicians throughout the Palomar Health system, Dr. Flinn notes. That means that if a patient needs to go to Pomerado Hospital in Poway, doctors there will be able to view the X-rays taken at the Ramona Ambulatory Care Center. “This facility shows Palomar Health’s commitment to the area,” says Dr. Flinn.

The health center was built with funds from the Proposition BB bond measure approved by Palomar Health district voters in 2004.

“I am pleased that we have the opportunity to serve Ramona and the surrounding communities with our new ambulatory care center,” says Michael Covert, FACHE, chief executive officer of Palomar Health. “We committed to the citizens our desire to be of assistance several years ago with the passage of Prop BB and now we have the opportunity to honor that pledge. I am appreciative of the support we have received from our local advisory group to make this center a reality and look forward to its growth in the future.”

Residents and physicians long envisioned an urgent care center for Ramona. Arvie Degenfelder was among those residents who worked with Palomar Health to bring that dream to fruition.

“Our time has come and I’m very excited about this. I know it’s needed,” Degenfelder says.

Degenfelder and her husband moved to Ramona in 1973 and over the years she has seen too many seniors move away to be closer to health-care facilities with extended hours and urgent care services.

“It’s not good for a community to lose people that way,” she says. “It was clear we needed to do something.”

Doctors at the center will continue to accept new patients and same-day appointments during regular office hours Monday – Friday, explains Pernell Jones, MHA, Arch Health Partners’ director of operations.

“We are now available to see patients when they need medical care,” Jones says.

In addition to Ramona, Arch Health Partners has offices in Poway, Escondido, San Marcos and 4S Ranch.

To learn more, visit www.ArchHealth.org.
CONVENIENT, AFFORDABLE CARE

Located inside select Albertsons/Sav-on Pharmacy stores, PALOMAR HEALTH expresscare walk-in health centers offer convenient, affordable care for minor illnesses and injuries to patients two years and older. Certified family nurse practitioners provide treatment for:

- Sore throats and sinus infections
- Cold and flu symptoms
- Earaches and eye infections
- Skin conditions
- Sprains, strains and other minor injuries

We also provide select vaccinations and school, sports and camp physicals. No appointment is necessary, and most services average $62. Some insurance plans are accepted. Check out our seasonal specials and visit one of four area locations today!

SEASONAL SPECIALS*

MAY: Cosmetic Services
Pamper yourself with discounted cosmetic services. Ear piercing is just $25 (regularly $40) and facial hair removal is also $25 (regularly $62) at any PALOMAR HEALTH expresscare during May.

JUNE: Cholesterol Check
Your total cholesterol should be less than 200 mg/dl. Do you know your number? Take advantage of $10 cholesterol screenings (regularly $39) at any PALOMAR HEALTH expresscare during June.

JULY: Youth Sports Physicals
Get ahead of the game this year. Score big with a youth sports physical for just $30 at any PALOMAR HEALTH expresscare location.

AUGUST: School Physicals
Don’t let school sneak up on you. Be prepared with a Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten or First-Grade School Physical for only $50 (regularly $62) at any PALOMAR HEALTH expresscare location during August.

Learn more at www.PalomarHealth.org/expresscare and download a $10 coupon to use toward any sick visit at expresscare.

*Seasonal specials reflect a cash discounted price not applicable to insurance billing.
I suspect my 6-year-old son may have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). What is the best approach for diagnosis and safe, effective treatment?

The first step is to take your child for a complete history and physical exam to rule out other health issues that may contribute to or act similar to ADHD.

Usually, signs of ADHD begin before age seven and about three to seven percent of school-aged children have the disorder. Children with ADHD often have trouble paying attention, are easily distracted and forgetful, and have difficulty following directions. Impulsivity is common, with difficulty taking turns, frequently interrupting others and getting in trouble in class. With hyperactivity, children are fidgety and seem driven to be constantly on the go.

Getting treatment for children with ADHD is vital because their behavior can not only hurt their academic performance, but can also harm their self-esteem and their relationships with parents, teachers and peers.

The initial physical exam and medical history helps eliminate other contributing causes such as hearing or vision problems, allergies, metabolic or mental disorders. Psycho-educational testing may also be performed, since up to 30 percent of children with ADHD have learning disorders. We also assess the child for mood disorders such as anxiety and depression.

This information is used to create an individual treatment plan that often includes medication, counseling, resources for parents and other services depending on the child’s needs.

Two out of three children with ADHD benefit from taking medication. I start with the lowest dose and make adjustments based on outcome progress reports from parents and teachers, as well as talking to the child and closely monitoring any side effects.

We initially see the child every two to four weeks until they are stable, and then every few months. I recommend the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Tip sheet for parents, which offers solutions to everyday problems and positive reinforcement techniques to improve behavior.

To choose a pediatrician affiliated with Palomar Health, call 800.628.2880 or visit www.PalomarHealth.org/doctor.

I am 52 years old and recently started experiencing hot flashes. What are hot flashes and are there any treatment options to relieve the symptoms?

This is a great question because many women just put up with hot flashes, believing they have to “tough out” what can be an uncomfortable and even debilitating symptom of menopause. If your hot flashes are significant enough to disrupt your daily activities, talk to your doctor. There are treatments available.

While the exact cause of hot flashes is unknown, we do know that they are related to the hypothalamus, the area of the brain that regulates body temperature and other functions.

When a hot flash occurs, blood vessels near the skin surface dilate causing your face and chest to flush and feel warm for several minutes. Many women also sweat and feel chills. At night these sweats can wake you from sleep.

Women who are obese, smoke or get little exercise are more prone to hot flashes. Lifestyle changes may help, including exercising five days a week, using relaxation techniques and acupuncture. Wearing loose clothing in layers can also help you manage your body temperature.

You may have heard about some herbal remedies, but few studies have been done to show their safety and effectiveness. You can talk to your doctor about what medications are available. A class of antidepressants called selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors, or SSRIs, can do a good job in reducing mild to moderate hot flashes. For more severe hot flashes, low-dose hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is effective.

If hot flashes are making you miserable, talk to your doctor about your options. You want to do more than just tough it out, you want to thrive.
Marybeth Mitchell thought she knew what to expect when she went in for spine fusion surgery in November. After all, she had undergone back surgery six years before.

This time was different.

"After I woke up from the first surgery I was in such pain I felt like I was going to die," recalls Marybeth. "But when I woke up this time, I didn’t have any pain. I couldn’t believe it."

“I had my surgery at Palomar Medical Center on Friday morning. They got me up with a physical therapist on Saturday morning, and I went home that evening.”

Just two weeks before her daughter Stephanie’s wedding, Marybeth underwent a minimally invasive surgery called Lateral Lumbar Interbody Fusion (LLIF) to correct a painful slipped vertebrae, or degenerative spondylolisthesis, in her lower back. Marybeth’s surgery involved fusion of two vertebrae above an older fusion done in 2006.

The most common method of spinal fusion involves an open surgery with an incision from the back, which is what Marybeth had before. Paul D. Kim, M.D., an orthopedic and spine surgeon affiliated with Palomar Health’s ActivCentre, chose the newer LLIF approach that accesses the spine through a two-inch incision in the side.

“I like this procedure because it’s minimally invasive, you’re not pushing away major blood vessels or bowel, and blood loss is minimal,” says Dr. Kim. “I think it’s a great option for some patients. There’s a faster recovery time that allows them to get back to their lives sooner.”

Marybeth’s shorter hospital stay is typical with an LLIF. In the months following surgery, the vertebrae continue to fuse together. The full fusion can take six months or more, depending on factors such as age, whether the patient smokes, has diabetes or if more than one level was done.

For patients that haven’t found pain relief from nonsurgical treatments, LLIF can be an option for a slipped vertebra, degenerative disc disease, stenosis (narrowed spinal column that presses against the spinal cord), or scoliosis.

“Scoliosis patients often suffer with the pain and difficulty of simple activities such as standing and walking for fear of traditional open surgery,” says Choll W. Kim, M.D., Ph.D., also affiliated with the ActivCentre. “LLIF and minimally invasive spinal surgery techniques offer an alternative treatment strategy that greatly decreases the pain and recovery of traditional open surgery.” (Read more about the benefits of LLIF on page 15.)

By accessing the spine from the side, the surgeon avoids dissecting the low back muscles, cutting bone or moving aside blood vessels. During the surgery, the surgeon inserts a probe into the small side incision. The probe is attached to monitoring equipment so the surgeon can detect and avoid any nerves.

The surgeon removes most of the damaged spinal disc and replaces it with a synthetic cage packed with bone or bone graft substitute. The cage serves as a spacer to restore the proper disc height. Over time, the bone in the cage fuses with the vertebrae above and below it.

The procedure also is called XLIF, or eXtreme Lateral Interbody Fusion, using instruments developed by San Diego-based NuVasive.

A few months after her surgery, Marybeth was feeling so good she had to remind herself to pace her activities while the fusion continued healing.

“I have six grandchildren and I’m looking forward to doing a lot of things with them again – going to movies, Disneyland, having them over for the weekend,” she said. “I stopped doing that because I was in too much pain. Now I can really enjoy them again.”

If you are suffering from back or neck pain, Palomar Health’s ActivCentre offers an integrated approach to treatment. To learn more, visit www.PalomarHealth.org/ActivCentre or call 858.613.6252.

The LLIF (XLIF®) procedure provides greater access to the spine through small incisions on the side of the body.

Discover the Benefits of Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery

Beat Back Pain

Thursday, June 6 6 – 7:30 p.m.
Palomar Health Downtown Campus, Graybill Auditorium

Back and neck pain affect a large majority of Americans at some point in their lives. Learn about the causes, proper diagnosis, and advanced treatment options from leading spine surgeons. To register, call 800.628.2880 or visit www.PalomarHealth.org/classes.

FREE CLASS!
**LLIF Patient Benefits**

- **Reduced Operative Time** – Traditional procedures can take up to five hours. The LLIF procedure can be successfully completed in as little as one hour, reducing the amount of anesthesia time.
- **Reduced Blood Loss and Minimal Scarring** – The less-invasive procedure allows for less tissue disruption, resulting in reduced blood loss.
- **Reduced Postoperative Pain** – The LLIF procedure does not require entry through sensitive back muscles, bones, or ligaments. Many patients walk within 24 hours of surgery.
- **Reduced Hospital Stay** – Patients usually require a stay of 1–2 days in the hospital, compared to several days of immobility and hospitalization typical of traditional open approaches.
- **Faster Return to Normal Activities** – Recovery is typically around six weeks, compared to six months or more with traditional procedures.

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**Feeling Blue!**

**Palomar Health Recognized by Blue Cross and Blue Shield**

Both Palomar Medical Center and Pomerado Hospital have received national recognition for providing high-quality specialty surgical care.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield have designated both hospitals as Blue Distinction Centers for Knee and Hip Replacement. Palomar Medical Center also was honored as a Blue Distinction Center for Spine Surgery.

The Blue Distinction Program by Blue Cross and Blue Shield recognizes hospitals and medical facilities nationwide that demonstrate expertise in delivering quality care in specific medical disciplines.

Hospitals with the designation have met rigorous quality and safety standards, giving consumers a valuable tool to help make more informed health-care decisions.

“Blue Distinction Centers set themselves apart by adhering to best practices in patient safety and surgical care and producing consistently strong outcomes with fewer complications,” says Marcus Thygeson, M.D., senior vice president and chief health officer for healthcare services at Blue Shield. “Blue Shield of California is pleased to recognize the high-quality care that these hospitals and physicians deliver.”

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**Music Therapy Promotes Healing**

Don’t be surprised if you hear singing and music lilting through the hallways at Palomar Health Downtown Campus.

Palomar Health now uses music therapy to promote healing and enhance quality of life. The program began as therapy for patients at the Rehabilitation Institute and has expanded to include the Center for Behavioral Health, Infusion and the Birth Center.

“Our board-certified music therapists serve a variety of patients, using music to help them achieve their therapeutic goals,” says Music Therapist Kat Fulton MM, MT-BC. “Evidence-based practice shows that the use of music within a therapeutic setting addresses a patient’s physical, emotional, cognitive and social needs. It’s not that music cures, but it definitely helps the healing process.”

Credentialed music therapists earn an undergraduate or graduate degree in music therapy and are certified by the National Certification Board of Music Therapists. As the field grows, so does research into its benefits. Whether it’s ragtime, reggae or Rachmaninoff, music can help with pain management, speech, movement and stress reduction.

In partnership with physical therapy, a patient recovering from a stroke can work on regaining arm strength and motion by playing a drum. Likewise, brain injury patients benefit from hearing music as they work on improving the rhythm of their walk.

“Music is valuable in speech therapy because it taps different areas of the brain,” says Virginia Barragan, FACHE, DPT, MOMT, director of Rehabilitation Services. “The automatic response to a song that you have known since childhood often is still there after a stroke or brain injury. We’ve had patients who were barely able to speak. However, when we played the music they liked, they could sing the song.”

Studies show that soothing music can slow breathing and heart rate, helping a patient deal with stress, such as anxiety before surgery. Barragan agreed to try using music therapy at the Rehabilitation Institute after reading the research. “I started out as a cautious skeptic,” she says. “Now I’m a believer.”

To learn more about Rehabilitation Services at Palomar Health, visit www.PalomarHealth.org/rehab or call 800.628.2880.
The term “robotic surgery” is becoming more and more familiar in today’s rapidly evolving health-care environment. After all, most major hospitals now have the technology available to their patients. So, what makes one robotic surgery program stronger than the next? Experience.

Palomar Health is home to the robotics program of choice in North County San Diego. In 2012, nearly 400 robotic-assisted procedures were performed at Palomar Medical Center – where highly skilled surgeons and a supporting surgical team navigate the Operating Room with swift precision as if it were a well-choreographed dance.

The success of the program and increased interest from physicians and patients led to the recent purchase of a second da Vinci Surgical System that offers unparalleled technical precision and faster recovery times for patients. The purchase also broadens the program from one to two hospitals – now also at Palomar Health Downtown Campus.

"Palomar Health has one of the busiest programs in the county that is growing both in the number and scope of surgeries we do robotically," says Kris Ghosh, M.D., medical director of Robotic Surgery. "The new robot allows us to keep up with the growing demand."

The robotics program was introduced at Palomar Health in 2007 and has specialized in gynecologic and urologic surgeries. With the new generation da Vinci Si Surgical System, Palomar Health now has the capacity to offer robotic surgeries for cardiovascular and advanced urologic procedures, as well as for general surgeries such as hernia repair and gallbladder removal.

For patients, the advantages of robotic surgery include smaller incisions, less pain and a faster recovery. For physicians, the da Vinci Surgical System offers advanced technology beyond the capabilities of traditional minimally invasive surgeries.

"With the robot, our vision of the surgical area is much better and we are able to have more delicate hand motion, causing less tissue trauma than with regular laparoscopic surgery," says Sue Ghosh, M.D., a gynecologic oncologist. "The robot also makes surgery on very overweight patients easier."

Dr. Ghosh explains that this is an important issue as the number of obese patients continues to grow. The technology allows the surgeon to bypass fat tissue rather than cut into it, which means a shorter and less painful recovery. "This lets them get back to their lives as soon as a normal-weighted person," she says.

With the da Vinci Surgical System, the physician sits at a console to control tiny surgical instruments and cameras attached to robotic arms inserted into the patient’s body through small incisions. The cameras provide the physician with a high-definition, highly-magnified 3-D view of the surgical area. The console translates the physician’s smallest finger, hand and wrist movements into a full range of motion able to perform complex procedures in small, difficult-to-reach areas with less tissue disruption.

Normal 3DHD Illumination Mode
Firefly Fluorescence Imaging Mode

Dr. Cizmar says that his patients are sometimes surprised at the comparatively brief recovery from robotic surgery. That was true for Deanna Himelright.

"I’ve been doing robotic surgery for about four years," he says. "I started using the robot for hysterectomies but now use it in most of my gynecological surgeries, including surgeries for ovarian tumors, endometriosis and pelvic floor disorders."

The new da Vinci Si robot is equipped with Firefly Fluorescence Imaging, which is particularly useful in some tumor surgeries. The process involves injecting a fluorescent dye that the robot’s near-infrared light illuminates, helping the surgeon identify healthy viable tissue.
“I had a hysterectomy at Palomar Medical Center. This was my first stay in a hospital, my first surgery, my first everything, so I was nervous,” Deanna says. “It turned out I could have gone home the same evening after the surgery. I chose to stay overnight because I didn’t really know what to expect and I felt so cared for at the hospital. Everybody was so kind.”

Deanna went home the next afternoon and was off pain medication within a few days. She was amazed to discover that her four ½-inch incisions were so small they were closed with glue and not stitches. “I was really grateful to be able to do it this way,” she says.

For Deanna, life was back to normal within a short time. That’s not the case for stitches. “I was really grateful to be able to do it this way,” she says. “There’s no real history of cancer in my family. I think we caught it early.”

Nearly a year after the surgery, Paula says she feels great and has had a clean bill of health with each follow-up visit to her doctor. “I’m really not concerned about it,” she says. “I was out of the hospital by 2 p.m. the day after the surgery and was back to work two weeks later. It would have been sooner but that’s when they let me start driving,” Paula says.

“Any time someone has been diagnosed with a malignancy they feel trepidation and fear,” says Dr. Sue Ghosh. “If they have a better experience with the initial part of treatment, go home to their family the next day and are taking only ibuprofen for pain within a few days, their outlook on the next step is better. They’re more prepared for whatever comes next.”

Dr. Ghosh’s patient Paula Vessels had a full hysterectomy with removal of some lymph nodes after being diagnosed with endometrial cancer. Paula said she was glad her recovery from robotic surgery was quick so she could move on to radiation treatments.

“I was out of the hospital by 2 p.m. the day after the surgery and was back to work two weeks later. It would have been sooner but that’s when they let me start driving,” Paula says.

She started a series of six radiation treatments soon after.

“Having a quick recovery with the surgery, I was able to go into the radiation treatment more quickly. To me that was better, to be able to do it sooner and have it done with.”

Nearly a year after the surgery, Paula says she feels great and has had a clean bill of health with each follow-up visit to her doctor. “I’m really not concerned about it,” she says. “There’s no real history of cancer in my family. I think we caught it early.”

Could robotic surgery be right for you? To learn more about our program, visit www.PalomarHealth.org/daVinci.

**FREE CLASS!** Join Brano Cizmar, M.D., as he discusses minimally invasive robotic surgery for various gynecologic conditions. See page 7 of Prevention Plus (centerfold) for class details.
Volunteer.

Share Your Energy—Become a Palomar Health Volunteer.

Your wisdom, passion and experience can be used in a meaningful, life-changing way as a Palomar Health volunteer. We offer a caring, supportive environment, flexible hours and many opportunities at various locations— with or without patient contact. Call today to join our family of volunteers!

Palomar Medical Center 442.281.4074
Palomar Health Downtown Campus 442.281.4073
Pomerado Hospital 858.613.4659

You can also visit us online at www.PalomarHealth.org/volunteer.
Longtime Escondido cardiologist Doug Moir and his wife, Margaret, are excited about the future of health care in their community. Together, they share a passion for Palomar Health, its new hospital, and the incredible level of care made available to them, their friends, neighbors and loved ones. Their enthusiasm led the couple to create their own lasting legacy through a generous estate gift to the Palomar Health Foundation.

“We decided to make a commitment to the hospital because we love Escondido, and we recognize the importance of helping to ensure the best medical care for generations to come,” explained Margaret. “We believe it’s our responsibility to use our time, talents and treasures to help our community,” added Dr. Moir.

Make your own lasting legacy. To learn more about charitable gift planning and how you can make a difference, contact the Palomar Health Foundation at 760.739.2787 or visit www.PalomarHealthFoundation.org.
For a physician referral, or to register for a class, call The HealthSource at 800.628.2880.

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