Bon Appétit!
Hospital Food that's Fresh & Flavorful
You Talk, We Listen
Putting Patients First
Write from the Top

Dear Friend of Palomar Health,

There’s an old proverb that says, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” At Palomar Health, I feel like we’ve taken that saying to heart over the years. In addition to building the hospital of the future, we’ve spent time seeking out well-respected health-care partners to help us present the best array of services and continuum of care for our patients as we focus on “patients first.”

There is great power in collaboration. When Palomar Health builds positive relationships with quality providers and business partners to expand our care network, our patients benefit. Our health-care teams work together toward a single goal – to achieve the best possible outcome for each patient.

Palomar Health has been fortunate to collaborate with exceptional health-care partners, such as our longstanding relationships with Rady Children’s Hospital and Kaiser Permanente. Recently, Palomar Health joined forces with Mayo Clinic, a prestigious and respected provider of medical services. Palomar Health’s relationship with the Mayo Clinic Care Network allows Palomar Health-affiliated physicians to consult with Mayo Clinic experts, providing our patients an additional perspective on their care. Through this relationship, we’ve implemented Mayo-developed pain management and medication delivery protocols for our orthopedic patients; resulting in reduced pain, shorter hospital stays and a lowered-risk of infection. In addition, our Cardiovascular Center of Excellence committee is working with their Mayo Clinic counterparts on cardiac protocols, processes and efficiencies to improve patient care.

Above all, we care about the quality and safety of the care we deliver. In doing so, and meeting the expectations of the community we serve, we recognize the value of collaboration.

As we begin 2015, I’m looking forward to continuing to work with our health-care partners, and more importantly, assuring that we are “patient-first” focused in providing safe patient care and high-quality services, which is what we do best.

In good health,

Bob Hemker
President and Chief Executive Officer
Palomar Health
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On the Cover
Palomar Health is turning “hospital food” into a resort-style experience that keeps patients happy and staff coming back for more. Discover how chefs at Palomar Health use fresh, local ingredients and serve food on your schedule, putting patients’ needs first. Read the full story on pages 4–5. (Photo of Sheradon Kalani Smith taken by Martin Mann.)

PreventionPlus
Get smart! Palomar Health is offering more than 50 community health-education classes during January – April. From childbirth and breastfeeding to heart health and weight loss, we have a class for every age and stage of life. See the centerfold insert for details. View our classes online at www.PalomarHealth.org/Classes, or call 800.628.2880.

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.

To choose a physician, or to register for a class, call Palomar Health at 800.628.2880.
Think it's tough trying to plan and prepare dinner for your family of four every day?

Imagine turning out as many as 900 meals — all day, every day. That’s the responsibility of the Food and Nutrition Services (FANS) staffs at Palomar Health’s three facilities.

“The kitchen at Palomar Medical Center is open from 7 a.m. — 7 p.m. Patients can order food any time of day,” says Sheradon Kalani Smith, FANS manager at Palomar Medical Center. “We serve breakfast all day long. Same with lunch and dinner.”

Palomar Health wants its patients to enjoy their dining experience and not be forced to endure stereotypical boring hospital food. This starts by giving patients a choice, says Jim Metzger, district director of Hospitality at Palomar Health.

“Unless there are dietary restrictions, the menu choices are patient based. The meals at Palomar Medical Center are all served room-service style, just like at a resort destination,” Metzger says. “Patients simply pick up the phone and call for service. This way, they’re not disturbed if they’re in the middle of a nap or simply not hungry at a certain time. They can eat what they want, when they want it.”

The room service meals have been so popular that there are plans to expand that standard to Palomar Health Downtown Campus and Pomerado Hospital within the next 12 months.

“We want to take this positive feedback and patient experience and transplant it to our other facilities,” Metzger says.

For patient meals at all three Palomar Health campuses, FANS managers bring in local, sustainable foods, making meals both appetizing and attractive.

“We make almost everything to order. We always try to make sure it’s fresh and hot when it gets to the patients,” Smith says. “Presentation is always important, too. The plate is neat and clean with food placed in the middle and always garnished with a lemon wedge or parsley.”

The extra effort extended by Palomar Health Food and Nutrition Services seems to be paying off in patient satisfaction.
“Recently, I was stopped in the elevator (at Palomar Medical Center) by a family visiting a patient who said we had the best food service they’d ever experienced,” Metzger says. “They said it was just like staying in a resort. That’s the kind of response that tells us we’re succeeding.”

Palomar Health receives daily feedback from patient surveys, allowing them to share their hospital stay experiences.

“We analyze the food service surveys as they are received and we have the opportunity to look at patient ideas and suggestions and roll that forward into next month’s menu planning at all three Palomar Health campuses,” Metzger says.

Patient surveys show that the food service at all three facilities has made dramatic improvements every month for more than 14 months in a row.

“When it comes to freshness, flavor profile, temperature of the food and speed of service, all of these things are implementations of patient suggestions in areas that we could modify,” Metzger says. “We want to provide a food environment that our patients will find comparable to restaurant dining.”

For Javier Guerrero, FANS manager at Pomerado Hospital, one of the biggest challenges is to keep the menu interesting.

“I want to bring new ideas to the menu so patients and employees don’t get tired of the food,” Guerrero says. “We do a four-week cycle menu for patients and have special (menu) days several times a week.”

Much of what is on the hospital menu is based not only on patient feedback, but also on what is available in the seasonal local market. Palomar Health’s FANS’ motto is “fresh is best.”

“In keeping with the Healthier Hospitals Initiative, we’ve gone to fresher ingredients. So, for example, instead of serving frozen zucchini or frozen entrées, we have fresh vegetables and many of the entrées are made from scratch,” says Kelly York, FANS manager at Palomar Health Downtown Campus.

The Healthier Hospitals Initiative is a national campaign that urges hospitals to improve the health and safety of patients and staff by serving healthy fresh and sustainable foods and beverages, while reducing waste and energy use.

“We try to buy locally and regionally. When we can get food from the field to the table or the patient’s tray (in a short amount of time) it’s not only a better nutritional value, but it tastes better, too,” Metzger says.

Palomar Health makes a concerted effort to use and serve foods that are a renewable resource, paying attention to what’s in season.

“We are comfortable changing menus according to the growing seasons of local fruits and vegetables,” Metzger says. “It allows us to look at what’s available for menus in two months, three months or six months from now.”

Patients, visitors and staff all seem to notice the difference.

“Everyone seems to enjoy the vegetables because they are so fresh,” Guerrero says, noting that no frozen entrées are served at his location.

With an eye always on health and nutrition, Guerrero and the other FANS managers make sure all foods are grilled or baked. Sauces are usually light and clear (as in the popular lemon sauce) or made from fresh ingredients, such as homemade marinara.

“There are ways to make something crunchy without frying it, zesty without salting it and tasteful without loading it with sugar,” Metzger says.

The FANS managers know that everyone likes dessert, at least occasionally, and so they try to offer patients a variety of delectables for every taste and diet.

Desserts are more than just the bland gelatin or flavorless pudding of traditional hospital food.

At Palomar Medical Center, patients can finish a meal with New York cheesecake, lemon cake or a variety of ice creams, including soy ice cream for those patients with dairy restrictions.

Guerrero tries to keep patient desserts healthy and on the light side. A frequently requested favorite dessert is the Greek yogurt parfait with fresh strawberries and mangos.

All three hospitals bake their own cookies, including popular varieties like peanut butter, chocolate chip, oatmeal and chocolate coconut.

At certain times of the year, including holidays, special treats are available, such as Thanksgiving pumpkin pie or Christmas cupcakes.

“We are listening to our patients daily,” Metzger says. “Our eyes and ears are in the patients’ rooms every day to monitor their satisfaction and make sure they’re enjoying the food service at Palomar Health.”

3,142 gallons – Milk
4,490 lbs. – Atlantic Salmon
8,866 lbs. – Tuna, White Albacore
39,390 lbs. – Eggs, liquid
28,887 lbs. – Pork
25,291 lbs. – Cheese
36,767 lbs. – Beef
82,752 lbs. – Poultry
399 lbs. – Tofu
12,126 lbs. – Romaine Lettuce
8,988 lbs. – Broccoli Florets
5,640 lbs. – Bananas
3,420 lbs. – Tomatoes

To choose a physician, or to register for a class, call Palomar Health at 800.628.2880.
After a year of stress, healing and fierce determination, Judy Casillas has come full circle.

Last March, the 72-year-old Valley Center resident underwent triple bypass surgery at Palomar Medical Center. Today, she is once again on the cardiac floor of the hospital – but not as a patient. Now, she is volunteering as an ambassador for cardiac patients and families.

“Everyone was so wonderful to me while I was a patient,” Judy says. “I wanted to pay it forward. I wanted to do something for others. So if I can answer their questions or make them feel better by telling them about my good experience, then I’m happy.”

Judy’s “good experience” began about a year ago. After she finished exercising, she felt a “dry, shortness of breath as if I was walking fast in a Santa Ana,” she says. “I just thought I was out of shape and it wasn’t that bad.”

However, a high blood pressure reading and worrisome results of an EKG sent her to Palomar Health Cardiologist Christopher Gilbert, M.D., who discovered problems with Judy’s arteries. It was determined she needed an angiogram and possibly an angioplasty to open her arteries.

On March 27, in preparation for her procedure, Judy was stretched out on the table in the catheterization lab at Palomar Medical Center listening to her favorite Elvis Presley tunes. Suddenly, she felt that same breathless discomfort that she experienced after exercise.

Cardiac Surgeon Surin Mitruka, M.D., was called in and told Judy one of her arteries was 98 percent closed and he needed to perform open heart surgery the next day to repair her clogged arteries.

“My heart went pitty-pat. I thought, ‘Uh-oh, this is not good,’” Judy recalls. “But, when Dr. Mitruka came in and we talked, I felt very calm. He has such a calming way about him. He explained things so I could understand it and I knew I was in excellent hands.”

As a cardiac surgeon, it’s Dr. Mitruka’s role to explain the procedure to the patient, and to ease them into the proper state of mind.

“Through my experience, what I’ve come to appreciate is that the patient and the family are usually stunned at the diagnosis and in a state of disbelief. They have encountered the unexpected and are anxious and concerned about what it means,” Dr. Mitruka says. “If I am abrupt and curt and use big words they don’t understand, it makes the situation worse.”

It’s been proven, he says, that surgical outcomes are better if the patient is calm and confident going into a procedure. So, he puts on what he calls a “Zen mask” and quietly and gently talks to the patient and their loved ones.

“I tell them I have all the information and I know the facts of their case and I say calmly, ‘So, here’s the situation,’” he says. “I never tell a patient that surgery is their only option. When they know they have options, you can see the calm and peace that descends on them. I told Judy, as I tell all of my patients, I was certain I could get her through this. But, the recovery would be up to her.”

After her successful surgery, Judy was in the hospital for six days. Her post-surgical adjustment wasn’t always easy.
“When I got home, it was difficult because I couldn’t do as much as I wanted to do,” Judy says. “I have always been very independent and it was hard to let other people do everything for me.”

She admits she suffered from some mild depression after her hospital stay, which is common for patients after major heart surgery. For Judy, cardiac rehab was the ideal antidote.

**Ninety percent of a patient’s recovery “happens in their head,” Dr. Mitruka says. “If you want to get better, you will!”**

“It was so calming and reassuring to be in rehab with people who had gone through some of the same things,” Judy says.

Wendy Atchley, cardiac rehab supervisor at Palomar Health Downtown Campus, calls Judy “the model patient.”

“When she first joined the group I don’t think she knew how cardiac surgery was going to change her life. But, she was committed to doing whatever she had to do to get healthy,” Atchley says. “Judy always attended class with a smile and personally met every new patient, giving them positive words of encouragement.”

Patients usually begin cardiac rehab a few weeks after their surgery, meeting three times a week for a total of 36 sessions. The purpose of cardiac rehab is to get a patient stronger. But, it’s also about teaching patients how to prevent this from happening again.

“There are things you can control like nutrition, stress management, weight loss and quitting smoking. But you can’t do anything about how old you are, family history or gender,” Atchley says. “We try to get patients to change the things they can in order not to have another cardiac event.”

When Judy first entered cardiac rehab, she wasn’t walking as fast as she wanted to. But, by the time she finished rehab, “I could keep up with anybody,” she says, noting that she tries to walk twice a day for 30 minutes at a time.

Judy’s cardiac rehab group bonded and fed off of each other’s progress and success.

“Judy was that little piece of glue for the group, holding them together,” Atchley says. “Judy was definitely the ringleader.”

Cardiac rehab wasn’t like any gym Judy had ever experienced.

“I worked out but I wasn’t worn out, I was exhilarated! There was music and the camaraderie of people,” Judy says. “Every time I went to cardiac rehab I felt like I was going to visit good friends.”

Patients don’t always realize the psychological benefits they derive from cardiac rehab and how it can escalate their return to health.

“Patients often come in here depressed and frightened, but if they complete the program, we often see them transformed by the time they leave,” Atchley says.

The fact that Judy has made such an impressive recovery is no surprise to Dr. Mitruka.

“Judy is someone who loves life. She has a purpose and she wanted to get better and move on,” Dr. Mitruka says. “She has a family who loves her and this whole experience was just a minor bump in the road for her.”

Although cardiac rehab is not mandatory, Dr. Mitruka always encourages his patients to at least try it after surgery. He tells patients that cardiac rehab will help them, but most of all it will help them help themselves.

“Sure, rehab will get you stronger and back on your feet. But, the underlying purpose is not physical because you would get stronger anyway,” Dr. Mitruka says. “The real benefit of cardiac rehab is the psychological healing that needs to occur so you can move on with your life. Just like Judy has.”

Anyone who has met Judy agrees that her volunteer job as a cardiac patient ambassador is perfect for her.

“Judy sees her new role on the cardiac floor as what’s supposed to happen,” Atchley says. “She’s very inspiring.”

Judy Casillas calls Dr. Mitruka her guardian angel.

See page 7 of Prevention Plus (centerfold) for heart health classes offered by Palomar Health during February’s heart month.

To learn more, visit PalomarHealth.org/Classes.
It’s been said two heads are better than one, and when Palomar Health and Mayo Clinic work together, it brings tremendous benefits. Being a member of the prestigious Mayo Clinic Care Network gave members of Palomar Health’s Cardiovascular Center of Excellence committee the opportunity to participate in an on-site knowledge exchange last October with Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Palomar Health representatives from cardiothoracic surgery, anesthesiology and nursing staff from the operating room and intensive care unit toured the dedicated cardiac floors at the Arizona campus and met their Mayo Clinic counterparts to share challenges and best practices. The two cardiac teams interacted about certain protocols, techniques, efficiencies and processes.

“This cross-pollination, where we learn what they do, will be beneficial to Palomar Health,” says Cardiologist Roger Acheatel, M.D., the Palomar Health physician sponsor for the Mayo Clinic Care Network. “We can learn certain techniques from them which we can incorporate into our system. Being able to learn what another system does, along with trading values and ideas cannot help but be beneficial to us.”

Some discoveries were made around how Mayo Clinic creates a continuum of care and the makeup of a dedicated surgical cardiac care team, including a videographer that records surgeries.

“They watch the videos, like a football team does, to see what they did well and what they could do better,” says Palomar Health Cardiac Surgeon Jeffrey Rosenburg, M.D., noting that the result is improved efficiency.

However, this visit is just one step in building a valuable relationship between the two medical groups.

“The next step is to bring the Mayo team here and get their suggestions on efficiencies, processes and protocols. The exchange didn’t begin and end that day,” says Palomar Health Cardiac Surgeon, Surin Mitruka, M.D. “We are leveraging the robust and storied Mayo history and experience to move Palomar Health successfully into the future.”

“The real purpose of the on-site visit was to get information to help us achieve a Center of Excellence status,” says Dr. Rosenburg. “We went to discuss and compare best practices with a leading cardiovascular center in order to help us achieve the best results at Palomar Health.”

The on-site visit to Scottsdale not only benefits the clinical staff of Palomar Health, but also its patients.

“Taking this step to align with Mayo Clinic and to engage in information exchange really benefits the people of North County San Diego,” Dr. Mitruka adds. “Patients at Palomar Health are essentially gaining access to the skills and experience of two medical staffs at two institutions.”
Palomar Health Presents

An Evening with Mayo Clinic

Focus on Atrial Fibrillation

February is American Heart Month – do you know how to take care of your ticker? Join Palomar Health and Mayo Clinic for a powerful learning experience focused on atrial fibrillation – the most common type of abnormal heart rhythm. From signs and symptoms to diagnosis and treatment, our leading experts will share the information you need to help get your beat back.

Keynote Speaker
Win-Kuang Shen, M.D.
Chair, Cardiovascular Diseases
Mayo Clinic Arizona

Presenter
Navinder Sawhney, M.D.
Palomar Health Electrophysiologist
Escondido Cardiology Associates

Thursday, February 19
6 – 8:30 p.m.
Vintana
Crystal Ridge Room
(Second Level, Lexus Centre of Escondido)
1205 Auto Park Way
Escondido, CA
FEE: $40 / person

6 – 6:30 p.m.
Welcome & Registration

6:30 – 7 p.m.
Dinner

7 – 8 p.m.
Mayo Clinic Presentation

8 – 8:30 p.m.
Question & Answer Session

To register, call 800.628.2880 or visit www.PalomarHealth.org/Classes.

Palomar Health and Mayo Clinic.
Working together, for you.

Working together. It’s the key to better health care for you and your family. That’s why the doctors at Palomar Health and Mayo Clinic have joined forces to resolve your hard-to-solve medical problems.

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www.PalomarHealth.org/Mayo
What do you look for in a reliable community pharmacy?

Professionalism, dependability and convenience are probably at the top of your list. Palomar Health’s new outpatient pharmacy services offer all of these, and more.

“We want to make our pharmacy your pharmacy,” says Cedric Terrell, director of Pharmacy Services at Palomar Health.

The first Palomar Health outpatient pharmacy is now open to the public at Palomar Medical Center and accepts most health insurance plans. By 2016, an outpatient pharmacy will open in the Pomerado Outpatient Pavilion next to Pomerado Hospital, providing service to hospital patients and Arch Health Partners.

The most important goals of the new outpatient pharmacy are to provide customer convenience, along with medication adherence and compliance, so the Palomar Health pharmacy team has developed the popular in-house Meds-to-Beds program at Palomar Medical Center.

Meds-to-Beds is a concierge bedside service that delivers discharge prescriptions to patients prior to leaving their hospital room at no additional cost to the patient. Thus, eliminating the need to stop at a pharmacy on the way home. Currently, the Meds-To-Beds Program is offered only at Palomar Medical Center. By 2016, the service will be available throughout the acute care hospitals.

“We believe our service is a huge benefit to our patients,” Terrell says. “It’s not uncommon for patients to leave the hospital and then forget to get their prescriptions filled. It’s often days before they remember they need their prescription. And, by that time, they may experience real harm to their health.”

Nationally, 75 percent of original prescriptions written are filled, and out of that, only 50 percent are taken as originally prescribed, Terrell explains.

“By offering a more personalized and convenient prescription service, our patients can focus on their healing,” Terrell says. “Upon request, a pharmacist goes through a patient’s prescription profile with the patient and their loved one at the bedside and explains the benefits of their medication, why it’s important to take it, what side effects to expect and what to do if their therapy is intolerable. Through a comprehensive service like ours, we can help reduce the number of recurrent medication-related adverse events seen in our emergency department.”

Palomar Medical Center Pharmacy NOW OPEN to the Public

Palomar Medical Center
Outpatient Pharmacy Hours:
Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Saturday, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Sunday, 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Drug abuse often starts in the medicine cabinet with prescription medications.

“(Drugs) are available for anybody who goes into the bathroom cabinet – family, friends or even the plumber,” says Nancy Roy, Palomar Health community outreach liaison, noting that San Diego County and the Drug Enforcement Agency are committed to helping communities keep their homes safe by ridding their medicine cabinets of expired, unused and unwanted drugs through the Drug Take-Back program.

Until recently, the Prescription Drug Take-Back program scheduled two days a year for the public to anonymously turn in their old medications at locations throughout the county.

However, it became apparent that safe disposal of drugs should be a year-round effort. Now there are permanent receptacles located in the county making it simple for the community “to get rid of their old medications before they get into the hands of people who will sell them for money or use the drugs themselves,” Roy says. “It’s all anonymous, no paperwork, no questions asked.”

Properly disposing of unused and expired medications protects the environment and prevents drug abuse and illegal misuse.

Permanent drug disposal receptacles are available free to the public during normal business hours at facilities in North County. Bring your items to one of the stations, no questions or forms required.

For more information and to find all drug disposal stations in San Diego County, visit: http://www.sdsheriff.net/prescription-drugs/dropbox.html.

New Doc

Neurologist Chunyang Tracy Wang, M.D., joined The Neurology Center in July and has privileges to practice medicine at Palomar Medical Center and Pomerado Hospital.

Prior to joining the medical group, Dr. Wang was an attending physician at Cooper University Hospital and assistant professor of Cooper Medical School, at Rowan University, N.J.

Shortly after graduating with honors from Harbin Medical University in China, Dr. Wang went on to pursue a master’s degree in pharmacology at the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

She conducted extensive research on viral pathogenesis at the University of Kansas Medical Center and also at the Department of Tumor Virology at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Wang completed her internship and neurology residency training at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia where she was chief resident.

She completed a fellowship in clinical neurophysiology at Hahnemann University Hospital in Philadelphia and an epilepsy fellowship at University of California, San Diego.

Board certified in psychiatry, neurology, clinical neurophysiology and electrodiagnostic medicine, Dr. Wang was the recipient of many academic honors and awards, including the Distinguished Thesis Award and the American Association of Neurology Scholarship.

In addition to seeing general neurology patients, she specializes in treating a variety of epilepsy patients, including pre-surgical evaluation, intracranial epilepsy monitoring, inpatient long-term EEG monitoring and refractory epilepsy. She also conducts electrodiagnostic testing, such as nerve conduction study.

Dr. Wang, who also speaks Mandarin, lives in Carmel Valley with her husband and two children.

For a free physician referral, call The HealthSource at 800.628.2880 or visit PalomarHealth.org/Doctor.
Getting discharged from the hospital after successful treatment of an illness is always a good thing. But staying healthy and out of the hospital is even better.

That’s why the Care Transitions program is working with patients and community resources to reduce the 30-day hospital readmission rate by 20 percent for Medicare patients.

The program is part of the Affordable Care Act and mandates that hospitals look for new and innovative ways to deal with health-care needs, especially for Medicare beneficiaries.

Palomar Health received a Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services award to pilot this program, in partnership with 13 other San Diego hospitals and the Agency for Aging and Independent services (AIS).

The first 30 days after a patient is discharged from the hospital are the most critical in preventing a patient readmission.

“It is during this time frame that interventions can be activated to prevent a hospital readmission,” says Joe Parker, a registered nurse and lead coach for the Care Transitions program at Palomar Health.

In-patient Care Transition coaches at Palomar Health screen fee-for-service Medicare patients to determine if they are high, moderate or low-risk for 30-day readmission. High-risk patients have Care Transition coaches automatically assigned to them.

There are three coaches assigned to Palomar Medical Center and two to Pomerado Hospital, with the anticipation that more than 2,800 patients will meet the criteria to be managed in this program.

One of the goals of the Care Transitions program is to empower the patients and enable them to take ownership of their health care.

“We want them to know when to call a doctor, how to make an appointment and what signs or symptoms of their disease to look for,” Parker says.

Once the health-care coach identifies any social, financial or clinical needs that could cause the patient to be readmitted, referrals and connections to the proper resources are made.

By promoting collaboration between acute care hospitals and community-based organizations and making sure the patient has consistent primary care follow-up, the Care Transitions program hopes to reduce the readmission rate.

“One of the major reasons for hospital readmission is that today’s health care is very fragmented,” says Regina Carrillo, registered nurse and project supervisor for Palomar Health’s care Transition team. “The elderly may not be technologically savvy or may have cognitive or sensory deficits, which makes it difficult for them to navigate the system.”

Lack of social support, difficulties with financial resources and medication confusion may also lead to clinical problems and readmissions, Carrillo says.

In 2010, 17.3 percent of patients at Palomar Medical Center were readmitted within 30 days. That number has been driven down to 15.4 percent since the Care Transitions program began in April 2013. It’s hoped the number of readmissions will go even lower as the program continues to assist patients.

Even the smartest of us probably don’t know what we don’t know. That’s especially true when it comes to caring for the elderly.

The seventh annual Support Our Community Seniors Training & Tool Box of Resources – SOCS Box – is a must for anyone who cares for, visits or volunteers with seniors.

“We want to reduce senior isolation and the stigma often associated with mental health issues,” says Kay Stuckhardt, community outreach liaison for Palomar Health. “This training provides volunteer visitors with practical tips and a wealth of community resources.”

This year, the session’s featured topics are avoiding senior scams, Alzheimer’s disease and preventing seniors from falling.

“Unfortunately, seniors are often victims of scams and rip-offs making it a perpetual problem,” Stuckhardt says. “We want to show visitors where to turn when a senior they know has experienced a crime or scam problem.”

“We gear our seminars to people who touch the lives of seniors, such as Meals on Wheels volunteers, who see the same people every week,” Stuckhardt says.

At the SOCS Box training, participants will learn not only how to identify certain signs of a mental or health problem, but also where to turn for help. At the event, many organizations that offer senior resources will share information and be available to answer questions.

Although the featured presentations change every year, the Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention Training is repeated annually.

This year’s SOCS Box Training & Tool Box of Resources session will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 29 at the San Marcos Community Center, 3 Civic Center Drive, San Marcos. The session will include a complimentary lunch.

The seminar is free, but registration is required by Jan. 23. Register online at www.PalomarHealth.org/Classes or call Palomar Health at 800.628.2880. Please register early as space is limited.
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To learn more, call 888.738.2452 or visit PalomarHealth.org/expresscare.

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 760.739.3081
Pomerado Hospital 858.613.4659

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Q&A

Forget dieting and exercise! Why not make 2015 a happier New Year with a little attitude adjustment? According to Palomar Health Psychiatrist Benjamin Hidy, M.D., change is possible. I asked him if turning that frown upside down could contribute to better health.

Carol: Are happy people healthier?
Dr. Hidy: While research is inconclusive, we do know people who manage stress successfully can improve their overall health, both mentally and physically.

Carol: Why is that?
Dr. Hidy: People who are content – at peace – tend to feel more confident in stressful situations and don't become quite as overwhelmed.

Carol: Conversely, how does unhappiness affect health?
Dr. Hidy: Depression, as a clinical diagnosis, can lead to hypertension, obesity, diabetes and other diseases.

Carol: Are we hard-wired to be either one or the other?
Dr. Hidy: It's not as simple as genetics or environment. A lot of factors from upbringing to whether the barista got your coffee order right influence how we view the world.

Carol: Can we change our wiring?
Dr. Hidy: You can choose to change habits, recognize thinking patterns and reactions to situations. It's hard work but it's worth it.

Carol: How do you start?
Dr. Hidy: I recommend working with a professional. Often medication and/or psychotherapy can help begin the process.

Carol: Do you believe happiness is tied to circumstances?
Dr. Hidy: Actually, people who are happiest have a good sense of who they are. They're not tied down by expectations, debt and "stuff." The sense of freedom is liberating.

Carol: Sounds wonderful. How do I get started?
Dr. Hidy: First, find time each day for yourself. Engage in activities and surround yourself with people who make you feel present, competent and valued.

Carol: And if you suspect your unhappiness may be depression?
Dr. Hidy: Please, see your doctor! Depression is an illness that needs medical treatment.

Pat Brown, weathercaster for 10News, is an inspiration for all. She is consistent in her approach to life. Pat Brown is San Diego’s favorite weathercaster – for good reason. Pat Brown delivers the weather on 10News with accuracy, clarity and a positive spirit that’s hard to resist. With a twinkle in her eye, a lift in her voice and her signature sunny smile, you have to wonder can cold fronts, high-pressure systems and Doppler radar images make someone that happy?

The short answer is yes! As a friend and media colleague, I’ve known Pat Brown for 25 years and believe me, she’s the same Pat on and off the air. Since I tend to be one of those moody, melancholic, glass-half-empty people, I’ve long admired and envied Pat’s perpetual positivity. What makes her so chronically cheerful?

“I love what I do,” exclaims the winsome weathercaster. “When you’re talking about the weather, it’s a beautiful thing. God’s the artist and I get to tell the story!” (See what I mean?!) Pat admits she was definitely born with “happy genes,” but believes her upbringing stirred those genes to expression. “I was blessed to grow up in a loving family.” But Pat adds she also chooses to be happy, no matter her circumstances.

“I’ve had huge down events in my life – losing my Mom, getting divorced and being laid off. It hasn’t always been easy.” But each time her world spins out of control, she stays anchored with encouragement from her friends and hope from her faith. “Maybe,” Pat muses, “I’m not always happy, but I’m usually content.” Pat is also intentional about finding joy in life. She keeps her life simple … not a lot of “stuff” and free from debt. “I love to read, travel and learn. I’m happy when my mind is stimulated.” She also revels in life’s simple pleasures – a good night’s sleep, being outdoors, volunteering and her cool cats, “Romeow” and “Buddy!” According to Palomar Health Psychiatrist Benjamin Hidy, M.D., Pat exemplifies a lifestyle conducive to joy and contentment. “Pat is clearly comfortable in her own skin,” says Dr. Hidy. “Her happiness is not tied to material possessions, wealth or achievement. She finds time for herself and has a good sense of who she is in the world.” Pat says she’s also grateful and doesn’t take life for granted. “I get up every morning and thank God for another day.” Then she enjoys her favorite breakfast, (granola and yogurt with pomegranate seeds!) with her kitties sprawled on her lap.

But Pat Brown is not only happy. She’s healthy. And it begs the question; can a sunny outlook mean fewer colds and less heart disease? Do hope and curiosity somehow protect against hypertension and diabetes?

Dr. Hidy says research on this new avenue of public health is presently inconclusive, but, he says, evidence shows stress and depression can harm the body. (See my Q&A with Dr. Hidy at right.)

Full of excitement at the prospect of a weather system that might bring rain, Pat Brown continues to delight her viewers with her trusted forecasts and unbridled joy. – Carol LeBeau
I’m a 50-year-old man and lately I’ve been feeling fatigued, weak and a little depressed. My wife complains about me being very moody. Could these be symptoms of low testosterone?

Low testosterone levels in men, also known as hypogonadism, is a highly underdiagnosed and undertreated common medical condition. Risk of low testosterone starts increasing around the age of 45. There are certain medical conditions that are associated with higher risk of hypogonadism such as diabetes, obesity, chronic pain or chronic illness. Certain medications such as opioid pain medications, if used on a daily basis, are also likely to lower testosterone levels. Daily consumption of alcohol, sedatives or opioid drugs and cannabis are additional risk factors.

Testosterone is a hormone that affects many aspects of a man’s health. Men with low testosterone levels are not only likely to have higher risk of sexual dysfunction (low libido and erectile dysfunction), but they are also more prone to developing weight gain, weakness and fatigue, depression, osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes and potentially heart disease.

Testosterone replacement comes in two main categories: transdermal (topical gel forms or patch) or injectable (intramuscular).

Ask your doctor for the necessary blood test to confirm the diagnosis of hypogonadism and to discuss the risks and benefits of various treatment options. Your doctor may consider referring you to an endocrinologist, if needed.

One of my carotid arteries is partially blocked. Is there a minimally invasive way to remedy this?

There are two carotid arteries, one on each side of the neck, that supply blood to the brain. A build-up of fat and cholesterol deposits on the inside of the arteries, called plaque, can narrow or block the arteries. When one or both of the carotid arteries are narrowed, blood flow to the brain is decreased and the risk of stroke increases.

To prevent a stroke, your physician may recommend that you have a repair of a blocked carotid artery. At Palomar Health, two procedures are offered: Carotid endarterectomy (CEA or the surgical removal of the plaque) or carotid stenting.

To place the stent (a small, expandable mesh tube), a catheter is inserted into a large artery (usually the femoral artery in the groin) and threaded to the carotid artery under X-ray. Through this catheter, a tiny balloon and the stent will be moved into the artery. The balloon is placed inside the stent and inflated which opens the stent, pushing it into place against the artery wall opening the blockage. The stent acts as scaffolding to keep the artery open and prevent plaque from causing strokes.

Carotid stenting offers a less invasive approach than CEA, which can be particularly desirable in patients with other complex medical conditions. Carotid stenting can be performed without full anesthesia, reducing recovery time and stress on the heart and it takes less than one hour.

Carotid stenting has been FDA-approved for more than a decade and has demonstrated equivalent outcomes compared with endarterectomy (CEA). As a fairly novel procedure, there are few well-trained, experienced carotid stent operators. In this regard, Palomar Health has taken the lead in San Diego County.

**New Cholesterol Guidelines: What You Need to Know**

**Pomerado Outpatient Pavilion, Education Classroom**  
**Thursday, April 2**  
6 – 7:30 p.m.

Join Family Medicine Specialist Scott Miller, M.D., as he discusses the latest cholesterol guidelines and how poor results may put your health at risk, and even cause blocked arteries.

**FEE:** Free – registration required
A Secret
Worth Sharing

Palomar Health Provides Comprehensive Care for Women

Staff at the Jean McLaughlin Women’s Center for Health and Healing often muse that they work at “the best kept secret in North County.”

Open for more than six years, it is time to get the word out.

“We are more than an imaging center. We are a comprehensive women’s center that is very patient focused,” says Kathleen Flores-Dahms, M.D., one of three female radiologists at the center, located at the Pomerado Outpatient Pavilion in Poway. “We work as a team to treat the patient. That’s what makes this center a rewarding place to work and beneficial to the patients.”

The Women’s Center was created to treat a woman’s body, nourish her mind and rejuvenate her spirit. At the center, the most advanced technologies are combined for diagnosis and treatment, with personalized, compassionate care provided in a serene, healing environment.

“We can provide resources – digital screening, nurse navigation and genetic counseling – that you only expect to see at a much larger medical facility, and we offer it here,” says Cheryl Cina, licensed cancer genetic counselor at the Women’s Center. “There are a lot of people who could benefit from our services.”

The center also provides diagnostic ultrasound and DEXA scan bone density testing for men, who are treated in a separate area.

Some of the services the Women’s Center offers include:

Diagnostic Procedures
Breast ultrasounds and stereotactic/ultrasound guided breast biopsies are performed using the most advanced diagnostic technologies.

Certified Breast Health Navigator
As an oncology-certified registered nurse and breast health patient navigator, Susan Gimbel’s role is to educate, advocate and support. She is available to all women at the Women’s Center at no charge.

At a screening, Gimbel can meet one-on-one with a woman to answer questions about breast health, address concerns and teach self-exam.

“If a biopsy is recommended, I call the patient and explain the biopsy procedure. This helps alleviate a lot anxiety and worry,” says Gimbel, who also contacts patients with their biopsy results, offering support and resources.

“The personal attention, the follow-up and the all-female staff sets us apart from other imaging centers,” Gimbel says.

Cancer Genetic Counselor
Every woman who comes to the Women’s Center for a mammogram is asked to complete a questionnaire about family medical history. If the family history of cancer is strong enough, the patient can have genetic counseling with Cheryl Cina, one of just a handful of cancer genetic counselors in San Diego County.

Cina meets with the patient and reviews her medical history and family medical history. Based on this information, she may make other screening recommendations such as starting mammograms earlier or adding an MRI to the screening.

If tests are necessary, Cina orders them and interprets the results, assessing the patient’s risks.

Genetic counseling can help guide the treatment for a newly diagnosed cancer patient, sometimes changing the type of breast cancer surgery.
“If a doctor recommends a lumpectomy for a newly diagnosed patient with breast cancer and that patient tests positive for an aggressive BRCA gene mutation, she may want to consider a bilateral mastectomy instead of a lumpectomy,” Cina explains. “That would hopefully spare her from going through another cancer diagnosis and surgery later.”

**Women Treating Women**
The all-female staff seems to be appreciated by the patients at the Women’s Center.

“As women, many of us have had to deal with the same issues that our patients are going through,” Dr. Flores-Dahms says. “I think patients take comfort in receiving advice and care from a woman.”

**Support Services**
From women’s cancer support groups to classes on childbirth preparation or osteoporosis, the Women’s Center offers education and personal support by qualified instructors and facilitators.

“For a woman diagnosed with breast cancer, we educate, support and guide her through the entire process,” says Cathy Dykstra, supervisor for the Jean McLaughlin Women’s Center. “We are a comprehensive imaging center. We navigate our patients from pre-diagnosis through survivorship.”

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**Meet Our Imaging Team**

Director of Women’s Imaging at the Jean McLaughlin Women’s Center, **Kathleen Flores-Dahms, M.D.**, (center) joined the imaging team in 2000 after radiology residency training at the University of California, San Francisco and a Head-to-Toe MRI fellowship at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center. With her special interest in women’s and cancer imaging, she helped develop the Women’s Imaging program at Palomar Health and implemented breast MRI and MR guided biopsies.

**Jennifer Purdy Mayberry, M.D.**, (right) has 15 years of experience in diagnostic radiology, specializing in women’s imaging and breast interventional procedures. She completed her surgical residency at Brigham and Woman’s Hospital in Boston, initiating her desire to pursue women’s health issues. She completed a radiology residency at Oregon Health Sciences University.

**Margaret Lee, M.D.**, (left) has been with San Diego Imaging since 2002. After her diagnostic radiology residency at the Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology at Washington University School of Medicine, she completed a dedicated breast imaging fellowship at Mallinckrodt where she developed her expertise and passion for women’s imaging.

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**Oh Baby!**
Life is all about change and that includes a place where life is born – Palomar Health’s Birth Centers.

“We are realigning the birthing services at the Palomar Health Downtown Campus and updating the facility to make the birthing experience even better for families,” says **Beth Remsburg-Bell**, director of Perioperative and Women’s Services at Palomar Health.

Last July, the post-partum or mother-baby area was consolidated into one location on the seventh floor. Along with 29 mother-baby beds, all-private rooms with bathrooms and showers, there is also space for an infant treatment area, photographer and patient consultants.

Labor, delivery and recovery and scheduled obstetric surgeries are located on the fourth floor.

There are now separate staffs on the fourth and seventh floors.

“This provides efficiency so pediatricians and our lactation consultants only have to go to one location,” Remsburg-Bell says. “This consolidation brings the services to patients in an easy and effective way.”

The seventh floor also has a new role – guest service relations. The greeters help promote safety and security for the unit, plus offer a much-appreciated friendly face to the families.

“The birth center relocation allows families to have easier access to the services and helps us speed up discharge. All of these things are a benefit to the family,” Remsburg-Bell says.

The fourth floor labor and delivery area begins its renovation this month with new floors, wall coverings, artwork, a new greeter station and nurses’ desk. The project is scheduled for completion in nine to 12 months.

Maternal Fetal Care (formerly Perinatal Services) which partners with UCSD, moved to the third floor of the Downtown Campus in November.

About 1,400 babies are delivered each year at Pomerado Hospital, while Palomar Health Downtown Campus delivered about 3,700 babies last year.
Palomar Medical Center continues to earn recognition as a hospital of the future. Last fall, the facility was named fifth on a list of the top technologically-advanced hospitals in the world by Top Masters in Healthcare, an online site for professionals in the health-care field.

However, it’s imperative to understand why technology is important to Palomar Health.

“At Palomar Health, we don’t do high tech just for the sake of doing high tech. We do technology when it’s advantageous to our patients and it improves their lives,” says Kris Ghosh, M.D., medical director of Robotic Surgery at Palomar Medical Center. “We make sure that (the technologies) offer a clinical advantage for our patients.”

The following technological programs and advancements are what help distinguish Palomar Health in the world of modern medical technology.

Robotic Surgery Programs

Palomar Health has been performing robotic surgery since 2007, longer than any other medical facility in the community, and is the first in the county to have the new da Vinci Xi robot.

In October, the Xi was added to the Si robotic surgical system, offering multi-quadrant surgery and an increased range of motion. This gives patients and surgeons more surgical capabilities and enhanced performance.

Some of the procedures requiring multi-quadrant surgery for which the Xi may be appropriate include gynecological cancer including endometrial cancer and ovarian cancer; colorectal, adrenal, bariatric and cardiothoracic surgery.

Up until last May, the da Vinci Si Robotic System was used primarily for urology, gynecology and general surgery. That’s when thoracic surgery was added to the list of minimally-invasive procedures that could be performed via robotic surgery.

“The addition of the Xi enables us to do more complex procedures in a minimally-invasive way. From a facility standpoint, having two robotic systems gives us the ability to perform more procedures in a timely way,” says Rosemary Ross, district director of Surgical Services, Cath Lab and Radiology at Palomar Health.

“The Xi is state-of-the-art and I think being the first in San Diego County to use it reflects our leadership and our vision of where surgical technology is going.”

The use of robotic surgery has expanded with the Xi, says Dr. Ghosh who has performed more than 1,000 robotic surgeries.

“In addition to performing hysterectomies and prostate cancer surgeries, the Xi is allowing surgeons to do advanced kidney surgeries, ovarian cancer surgeries and cardiothoracic surgeries robotically that were difficult to do before the Xi,” he says. “It’s also opened up robotics for general surgery including colorectal surgery and all gastric bypass surgeries.”

The Xi didn’t replace the Si robot; they are complementary robots.

“What this means for patients is that minimally-invasive surgery with smaller incisions, quicker recovery and better quality outcomes are now possible for an increasing number of surgeries,” says Dr. Ghosh, who encourages patients to check with their physician to see if a procedure they had planned can be done with minimally-invasive robotic surgery.

Sotera Wireless

This lightweight mobile device is worn on a patient’s wrist to measure their vital signs. It allows medical staff to continuously and remotely monitor patients’ well being.

Palomar Medical Center was the first hospital in the country to use the Sotera Wireless ViSi Mobile system, allowing nurses and doctors to measure a patient’s blood pressure, skin temperature, heart, respiration rate and blood oxygenation levels.

“The ViSi Mobile System is designed to help keep patients safe and provide a connection between patient and clinician, allowing for more individualized and timely care,” says Ryan Olson, program manager for Information Systems at Palomar Health.

Palomar Medical Center began using the Sotera Wireless devices in February 2013. The system is designed to remove the need for bulkier patient monitoring devices, which are either wall-mounted or wheeled from room to room.
Sherlock 3CG® Tip Confirmation System

This new technique tracks a peripherally-inserted central catheter (PICC) line.

Used at Palomar Health since July, the navigation system allows the clinician to watch a computer screen to make sure that the catheter is properly placed. It negates the need for a chest X-ray to confirm the placement of the catheter.

“This minimizes risk because the clinician has real time verification (of the catheter placement) instead of waiting for verification by a chest X-ray,” says Ross, noting that the new navigation system also reduces the time it takes to do a procedure.

RIVA

A compounding robot that prepares intravenous medications, the device is used by Palomar Health pharmacies to automatically and accurately prepare IV syringes and bags. By automating the preparation of IV medications, RIVA offers safety for the patient and efficiency and effectiveness for the pharmacy.

Xenex

A germ-zapping robot that disinfects hospital rooms using high intensity xenon light, Xenex attacks the DNA of pathogens to prevent them from replicating. In less than 10 minutes, all surfaces in a patient’s room or an operating room are sterilized. Palomar Medical Center was one of the first hospitals in the country to pioneer this convenient and efficient method of disinfection that has been proven more effective than traditional procedures, alone.

VGo Robot

Sometimes referred to as a personal medical avatar, the VGo enables Palomar Medical Center staff to establish their physical presence in a distant location, such as a meeting or a patient’s room. Using a special software application, an Internet-connected clinician located anywhere can instantly connect to a VGo in a distant facility.

This gives the doctor or nurse operating the VGo the ability to interact with the patient and anyone in the room, plus move around the room, just as they would if they were there in person.

This virtual visit-enabling robot is integrated with a camera, microphone and video display, all on a light-weight, motorized remote-controlled platform. At a little over 4 feet tall, VGo works well with patients who are sitting or standing.

AirStrip ONE

This mobile health-care app enables a clinician to access a patient’s electronic medical records on a phone or tablet when outside the hospital or when a desktop computer is not available. The features include secure HIPAA compliant messaging, patient information with demographics, code status, allergies, problems/diagnoses and care team information. Active medications are listed, along with radiology images and vitals signs, lab results and ECGs.

Palomar Health is an AirStrip Innovation Partner and the first hospital in the world to use AirStrip ONE. “AirStrip ONE provides a way for physicians practicing at Palomar Health to access a wide variety of medical data anytime, anywhere, to help them make the right decisions at the right time,” Olson says. 

To choose a physician, or to register for a class, call Palomar Health at 800.628.2880.
To get a balanced perspective on any issue, including health care, it’s helpful to view issues through fresh eyes.

Palomar Health is confident that its Patient and Family Advisor Council will create a more insightful perspective by integrating the patient voice into health-care practices.

Composed of former patients or family members of patients, the council helps bring the viewpoints of patients and families directly into the planning, delivery and evaluation of care, explains Tina Pope, manager of Service Excellence at Palomar Health.

“A patient advisor has to be someone who appreciates who we are and sees there are opportunities to improve,” Pope says. “They must want to serve, give back and be our partners here at Palomar Health. We want their voice to help improve the patient experience.”

One such advisor is Valley Center resident Judy Casillas, who had triple bypass surgery at Palomar Medical Center last March. It was during that time that the hospital staff got to appreciate her outgoing personality and Pope realized she’d be a great addition to the patient advisor team. (See related story on pages 6-7.)

“At our first meeting, I felt overwhelmed because there were all these doctors and nurses there and I felt like ‘why would they care what I think?’” Casillas says with a laugh. “But they really seemed to want to hear what I said. They really did care.”

The Patient and Family Advisor Council provides input on how to improve Palomar Health policies and care practices. By offering feedback about their hospital stay, they let hospital staff know what went well and where there are opportunities to improve.

“They help us develop priorities and make improvements based on patient- and family-identified needs rather than on our own professional assumptions,” Pope says. “They help us come up with solutions that clinicians and staff may not have considered.”

One safety suggestion that Casillas advocated for was to post a bedside sign or picture reminding surgery patients not to get up and walk unassisted. This came from her experience as a patient.

“I made the mistake of trying to get up and walk on my own. They had told me not to do that when I was brought in from surgery, but I was groggy and didn’t remember,” she says. “I think it would be helpful to have some kind of a visual reminder after we wake up.”

There are currently 10 patient/family advisors on the council, which serve all three campuses, with two more advisors to be added for 2015.

The current council is composed of two men and eight women ranging in age from their early 30s to early 70s. The group represents the Latino, Native American and Caucasian communities. Pope hopes to add even more diversity to the council in the near future.

The advisors serve on hospital committees and help develop Palomar Health informational brochures, written with the patient and family, not the clinician, in mind.

Advisors do not need any special qualifications to serve on the council other than having experienced care at Palomar Health. However, there are some necessary personal skills, including being open-minded, able to listen and share opinions respectfully. Palomar Health provides any training needed.

“You need to be able to voice your opinion, but also hear all sides of an issue. You have to (realize) it’s not just about you,” Casillas says. “Patients don’t want to have a bad experience, they just want to get well. If we can suggest things to help avoid some little problems, it will make things better for everybody.”
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Rehab RENOVATION
Remodel Creates All-Private Rooms for Rehabilitation Patients

The only all-private inpatient rehabilitation facility in North County has expanded once again. The Rehabilitation Institute at Palomar Health Downtown Campus in Escondido completely remodeled the ninth floor and reopened for patient care in October, giving acute rehabilitation patients two floors of private patient rooms. This second expansion phase comes after the fifth floor was remodeled for patients last April.

“The ninth floor was completely rejuvenated with new paint, flooring and window coverings to mirror the fifth floor,” says Virginia Barragan, director of Rehabilitation Services and Developmental Services for Palomar Health.

With two floors, the Rehabilitation Institute now can take up to 36 patients, which is double its capacity prior to the remodel. Both floors offer therapy gyms, dining facilities and conference rooms.

The expansion and renovation project was largely funded through a generous donation to the Palomar Health Foundation.

“We are so blessed that a donor was able to help us create a peaceful, healing environment to aid our patients in their optimal recovery,” Barragan says.

The Rehabilitation Institute provides assessments for admission to its Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) accredited programs, seven days a week.

To learn more about Rehabilitation Services at Palomar Health, visit www.PalomarHealth.org/Rehab or call 800.628.2880.
What is more precious than our sight? For patients and retina specialists, the ability to see clearly is vital.

Today, the Zeiss OPMI Lumera 700 microscope with a resight viewing system makes tissue more visible, allowing surgeons to operate better and faster with fewer chances for complications.

Thanks to the generous support of grateful patients and a significant gift by Carol Lazier, a longtime Palomar Health Foundation supporter, the Zeiss Lumera microscope is now part of the arsenal of surgical instruments available to retina specialists at Pomerado Hospital.

“The Zeiss Lumera is the best microscope money can buy,” said Paul E. Tornambe, M.D., a renowned retina specialist with Retina Consultants of Poway. “In this era of limited reimbursement and very expensive equipment, we are deeply grateful to the Palomar Health Foundation, to patients who have contributed specifically to obtain this microscope and to Carol Lazier, who contributed most generously to make acquisition of the microscope possible.”

The microscope will be used to treat a variety of eye diseases, including cataracts, detached retinas and other eye conditions. It will support the growth of Pomerado Hospital’s eye surgeries as we continue to work toward becoming a Center of Excellence for ophthalmic surgeries, said David Tam, M.D., vice president, Pomerado Hospital and Palomar Health Downtown Campus.

A Center of Excellence, in any specialty, requires the best surgeons and staff, the finest equipment, and the volume of patients to support the clinical excellence of the facility. The new Zeiss microscope will attract more highly-qualified surgeons and increase the volume of patients to move Pomerado Hospital forward in our efforts to become a Center of Excellence in eye care. This will provide residents in North San Diego County with highly advanced ophthalmic care near their home.

“We are very fortunate to have Dr. Tornambe and his team of specialists caring for patients at Pomerado Hospital,” said Lazier. “I feel so lucky that we could help obtain this sophisticated piece of equipment to continue to provide excellent patient care.”

To make a gift in support of Pomerado Hospital, please call 760.739.2787 or visit www.PalomarHealthFoundation/Donate.