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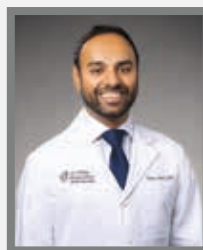
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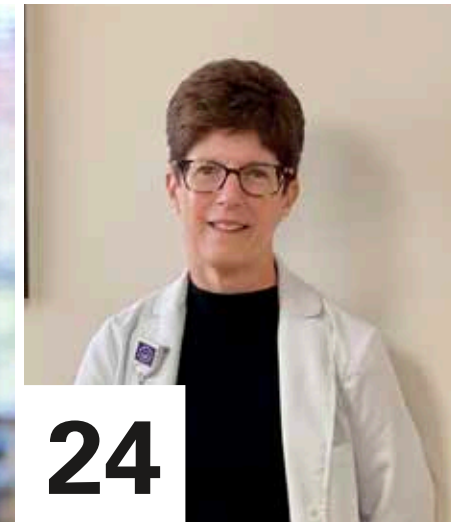
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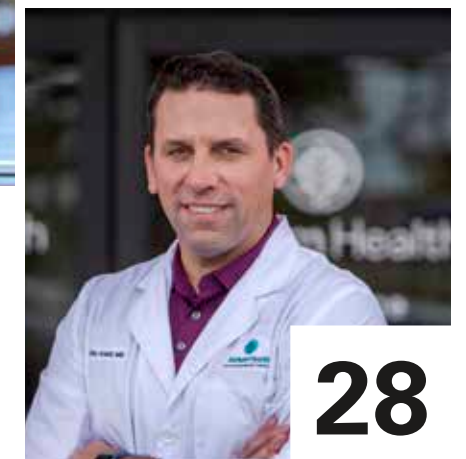
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from the PUBLISHER

Happy Holidays!

Aside from the cooler temps, this is one of my favorite times of the year. I love the decorations, the celebrations with friends and family, the justified over-eating, and hopefully a little downtime between Christmas and the new year. Our fall social last month was the best one yet and I hope they continue to get better every time. I also hope you enjoy some time off this holiday season with friends and family or doing whatever brings you happiness! See you in the new year!

Rounding out the year is featured Family Medicine physician James "Jim" Schaffer, MD, with One Health. He has been practicing medicine for 28 years and had an interest in medicine from a young age. Initially, he wanted to be a veterinarian but changed his mind around age 12 to focus on people because communication as part of care delivery became a primary focus of his. As his medical training progressed, he knew that he wanted to care for all ages, and Family Medicine provided the perfect fit.

One Health is a primary care based healthcare company with a focus on patients as consumers and team member wellness. By providing top-notch operations and access to care, they focus on the patient's

health to achieve high-value care. They provide OB/GYN, Internal Medicine, Pediatric, and Family Medicine services to the greater Charlotte and Winston-Salem regions.

Our final featured specialist for the year is Eric Kropf, MD, an Associate Professor and Orthopaedic surgeon with Atrium Health Musculoskeletal Institute. For as long as he can remember, he always wanted to be a doctor. His mother was a nurse, so he spent a lot of time around physicians and medicine and saw how she put others first but also how people turned to her when they needed help which drew him toward medicine as a career path.

Like many orthopaedic surgeons, he has a strong background in athletics and played multiple sports as a young child and was fortunate to continue with baseball through college. He learned the importance of hard work, commitment, and dedication to his craft through athletics. He entered medical school thinking he would explore all fields of medicine, but found himself constantly pulled back to orthopedics and sports medicine because he could easily relate and enjoyed spending time with athletes of all ages.

Paula Bird, RN, DNP, and VP of the Psychiatry and

Mental Health Institute for Novant Health, always wanted to be in healthcare and knew that she wanted to focus on the person and how they were managing their illness/medical condition rather than focusing on the illness itself, so nursing was a natural fit.

She began her nursing career in 1984 at the University of Missouri Hospital in Columbia, MS, where her interest in psychiatry was sparked. Now as VP, her role is focused on system and development of evidence-based strategies that will meet the current and future needs of their patients, team members, and system. She is motivated by being of service and making a difference and her job fulfills both.

I hope you enjoy this issue. To learn more about who is being featured each month, follow us on Instagram @medicalprofessionals.charlotte. To see what is happening with your peers in the Triad area and how we are growing, follow @medicalprofessionals.triad.

As always, please reach out if you would like to nominate a healthcare professional to be featured, if you would like to provide content, or if you would like information on sponsorship opportunities.

Happy reading!

Denise

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The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Brings Light to the Darkness of Cancer

THOUSANDS TAKE STEPS TOGETHER TO CREATE A WORLD WITHOUT BLOOD CANCER

When you or someone you love hears the words, “You have cancer,” it can be one of the darkest moments of your life. But the right community can offer you hope, connection, and crucial resources. The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) is bringing light to the blood cancer community through its Light The Night event.

Culminating in over 115 evening events each fall, communities across North America will join together at Light The Night to carry illuminated lanterns and take steps to end cancer – white lanterns for survivors, red for supporters, and gold in memory of loved ones lost



to cancer. In November, thousands from the Greater Charlotte community came together at American Legion Memorial Stadium to raise funds and walk to support the work of LLS.

The funds raised through Light The Night are used to support LLS’s mission priorities: Research, Education & Support, and Policy & Advocacy. Through campaigns like Light The Night, LLS has invested more than \$1.5 billion since its inception in research to advance breakthrough therapies.

“Light The Night events are celebrations of light, support, hope, and coming together as a Charlotte community to shine light on blood cancer patients and survivors,” said Ashley Davis, LLS Light The Night Campaign Development Manager.

From raising critical funds, driving forward policies that benefit patients, and providing support to families, LLS volunteers and Light The Night supporters are changing the future of blood cancer treatment and care.



“When you give your time and talent to LLS, you become part of a diverse, vibrant community of supporters from all walks of life who are helping us cure blood cancers,” said Davis.

Despite the progress, more than a third of blood cancer patients still do not survive five years after their diagnosis.

To form a Light The Night team or to learn how you can get support, please visit www.LightTheNight.org.

Blood cancer patients and their families can contact the LLS Information Resource Center at (800) 955-4572, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., ET.

About The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society® (LLS) is a global leader in the fight against cancer. The LLS mission: Cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin’s disease, and myeloma. LLS funds lifesaving blood cancer research around the world, provides free information and support services, and is the voice for all blood cancer patients seeking access to quality, affordable, coordinated care.

Founded in 1949 and headquartered in Rye Brook, NY, LLS has regional offices throughout the United States and Canada. To learn more, visit www.LLS.org. Patients should contact the LLS Information Resource Center at (800) 955-4572, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., ET. 📞



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILD LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: *WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR*



Emily Gammon, MS, CCC-SLP
Child & Family Development

Many researchers have concluded, “Children are the hidden victims of the pandemic”, and, for good reason. Their parents have been faced with unimaginable stress throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic – from job losses to daycare and school closures to being full-time caretakers, teachers, and everything in between.

While the long-lasting effects of COVID-19 on childhood development are still being researched and supported, we do know that many more children are being diagnosed with developmental delays as compared to children born prior to the pandemic. Typically, one in six children will be diagnosed with a developmental delay. A 2022 study finds that, now, children are more than twice as likely to experience the same delays. Additionally, another study found that children born between March 2020 and June 2021 have lower skills in language, cognition, and motor development as compared to children born the decade prior.

There is a plethora of factors that have contributed to the developmental language delays that we are seeing. We are now being faced with helping our children make up for lost time while recognizing all of the missed communication opportunities over these past few years.

Preliminary research suggests that the lack of social interaction among peers is a primary offender. The use of language through social interaction is, at its core, how we share experiences with one another. The reduction of, or in many cases, a complete lack of social experiences (i.e. educational, recreational, and familial) has negatively affected the way children develop socially and emotionally. We are seeing children born during the pandemic who have never had a play date. Others have not stepped foot inside a school or daycare. Meaningful social interactions, with a variety of conversational partners, are imperative for young children to develop appropriate pragmatic skills. Skills that we are seeing impacted include reduced turn-taking abilities, lack of confidence in social exchanges, difficulty with non-verbal supports

(i.e. shared visual attention, facial expressions, use of gestures, body posture/language, tone of voice, volume control, etc.), reduced understanding of vocabulary and non-literal language (figures of speech).

Excessive screen time is another issue contributing to delayed language development. Parents have been challenged with balancing virtual schooling, maintaining job duties, and providing their children with meaningful, educational activities to keep them busy while at home. Recent research suggests that there is a strong correlation between delayed language and media consumption. The more videos that a child watches, the less vocabulary they understand and express. Additionally, another study concludes that children are six times more likely to develop a language delay if they watch more than two hours of television per day. Passive screen time refers to a child who watches a show or video alone, not encouraged to interact with the characters or ideas in any way. Active screen time is the opposite, caregiver or parent-driven. This occurs when the child is prompted to engage in two-way communication, practicing language use with a parent or other caregiver. This might look like using a device to make a video call, play a game together or interact in a call-and-response manner. Passive screen time has, unfortunately, become a presence in many households. Children are missing raw social interactions, not observing models of real-time conversation (i.e. how to functionally ask and answer questions), and becoming reliant on technological devices to function across environments.

For children who have existing language delays, masking has presented its own set of challenges. Although there is no formal evidence that ties language delays to mask-wearing, we do know that masks make it more difficult for those on the autism spectrum, for example, to notice social cues or facial expressions. For others, such as children with apraxia of speech, masking creates a barrier between the child and the therapist. These children rely on watching the motor plans that occur in and around the mouth to be most successful in their speech production. Children with hearing impairment might find it difficult



to pick up on higher frequency speech sounds and speech might sound more muffled as compared to a child with normal hearing thresholds. Throughout the course of the past few years, clear masks and face shields have been used to mitigate some of these barriers with patients. The evolution of telehealth services as a means to reach patients in remote locations has also helped to bridge the gap.

A certified speech-language pathologist can help master speech and language milestones that might be delayed as a result of living through COVID-19. Generally speaking, a referral should be made for a screening or further evaluation if the following milestones are not met:

- 12 months: difficulty understanding speech or following one-step directions
- 16-18 months: no words or a very limited vocabulary (less than 10-20)
- 24-26 months: inability to combine words into short utterances
- 3 years: echolalia that is not resolved and/or many errors in spoken sentences
- 3-4 years: difficulty telling simple stories or past events
- 6 years: trouble with learning, reading, memorizing facts, or sustained attention to task

Resources:
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Pediatric Neurosurgery Helps Kids Get Back to Healthy Childhoods.



“I have the unique privilege of caring for children during some of the most challenging times for them and their families. The ultimate reward is watching them grow up.”

— Erin Kiehna, MD
Pediatric neurosurgeon at Novant Health

Novant Health offers specialized care for complex conditions, close to home.

As Novant Health’s only pediatric neurosurgeon, Erin Kiehna, MD, has a history of treating patients in all stages of childhood. “I have had the privilege of meeting some before they were born, and following them as they transition into adulthood,” Dr. Kiehna said.

Dr. Kiehna, the chair of neurosurgery at Novant Health Presbyterian Hospital, treats a wide range of pediatric neurosurgical conditions, including congenital problems of the brain and spinal cord, intraventricular hemorrhage of prematurity, hydrocephalus, infections, chiari malformations, spasticity,

vascular malformations, epilepsy and brain tumors. Dr. Kiehna and other Novant Health Brain & Spine Surgery physicians partner with patients’ primary care providers to ensure a seamless journey of care.

“I have the unique privilege of caring for children during some of the most challenging times for them and their families,” Dr. Kiehna said. “The ultimate reward is watching them grow up.”

Kiehna’s areas of focus are divided into three key areas: epilepsy, brain tumors and congenital conditions such as hydrocephalus.

For pediatric patients with epilepsy who are not responding well to medication, Dr. Kiehna works with the surgical epilepsy team to pursue a surgical epilepsy work-up.

While 70% of children with epilepsy will respond to one medication alone, 10% to 20% of children with epilepsy are refractory to medication.

“For those patients, we have a multidisciplinary team of neurologists, epileptologists, radiologists, neuropsychologists and neurosurgeons,” Dr. Kiehna said. “We take care of children as part of a comprehensive epilepsy program to determine whether epilepsy surgery may improve their chances of seizure control and/or freedom.”

Novant Health invests in innovative technology to support the surgical treatment of epilepsy. The team utilizes minimally invasive options such as stereo EEG, which involves the placing of electrode wires into small skull openings. Another approach is a laser interstitial thermal therapy called Visualase, an MRI-guided laser ablation system.

“This technology allows for the most comprehensive workup and, at the same time, minimally invasive treatment plans,” Dr. Kiehna said. “We know that the earlier in life that we can control epilepsy, the better the outcome for the child.”

To treat congenital conditions and hydrocephalus, Novant Health offers the highest level of neonatal and post-natal care.

“We have a level 4 NICU to care for our premature infants, where we provide multidisciplinary care for our youngest patients with congenital conditions and intraventricular hemorrhage of prematurity,” said Dr. Kiehna. “We use endoscopic techniques whenever possible to provide minimally invasive care.”

Dr. Kiehna founded the craniofacial program at the Novant Health Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics - Eastover, where her team cares for patients with skull anomalies, craniosynostosis and plagiocephaly. “This is the true art of medicine,” said Dr. Kiehna. “We use 3D modeling and virtual planning software to create innovative treatment plans for our surgical patients.”

Pediatric patients with complex brain and spinal cord tumors receive state-of-the-art surgical and oncological care in Charlotte.

“The worst words you could ever tell a parent are ‘your child has cancer,’” Dr. Kiehna said. “I’m incredibly fortunate to work with our pediatric hematologist oncologists who provide our families with world-class care.

“We combine the latest surgical technology and techniques with comprehensive cancer treatment to get children back to doing what they do best: being a kid.”

No matter what condition they’re treating, there’s a simple reason Dr. Kiehna and her care teams are passionate about providing the best neurosurgical care to pediatric patients. “It’s a real privilege to work with children because they have this strength of character, this courage, this resiliency,” Dr. Kiehna said. “They face every challenge with a smile. But the way they bounce back and the way they go back to school and accomplish all these amazing things, it’s what inspires me every day.”

Dr. Kiehna is accepting new pediatric neurosurgical patients up to age 21. To work with her team or to refer a patient, call Novant Health Brain & Spine Surgery - Cotswold at 704-316-3070.



James "Jim" Schaffer, MD

FAMILY MEDICINE
ONE HEALTH



FUN FACTS

- He is a Charlotte native.
- The first job he ever had was at an amusement park, and he was an awesome Scooby-Doo!
- He has been practicing medicine for 28 years.
- Their family pets are a dog named Duchess and a cat named Swirly Pearly.
- He served in the US Navy for 12 years.

How did you get your start in medicine?

I had an interest in medicine from a young age. Initially, I wanted to be a veterinarian

but changed my mind around age 12 that I wanted to focus on people. Pets couldn't talk! Communication as part of care delivery became a primary focus of mine. As my medical training progressed, I knew that I wanted to care for all ages. Family Medicine provided the perfect specialty for me.

How did One Health come to be?

One Health is a primary care based healthcare company with a focus on patients as consumers and team member wellness. By providing top-notch operations and access to care, we focus on patients' health to achieve high-value care. We provide OB/GYN, Internal Medicine, Pediatric, and Family Medicine services to the Greater Charlotte and Winston-Salem regions. We offer an alternative physician employment model that is provider-led and built on a platform of enhancing the patient experience, improving population health, and reducing medical costs with a laser focus on provider wellness and care FOR ALL.

What makes your practice unique in our community?

Our Team. One Health has created a fantastic team to provide our patients with the best quality care at a lower cost. This is accomplished with a smile too. You will feel the difference coming into a One Health Care Clinic. We want our patients to have personalized service in their medical home.

Does your practice have a mission statement?

One Health provides best-in-class medical services to our community. We have a team of medical professionals that guide our patients through the complex environment of healthcare. Our company is built on a platform of consumerism with access to care that is evidence-based, high quality, and excellent value. We provide access to the community through continued growth of practices and markets, systems integration, scalability, and long-term sustainability.



What are your goals for your patients and your practice?

I want my patients to feel that they have a medical home that cares deeply for them and will go the extra mile to achieve their best health outcomes.

Tell me about the culture of your practice.

It is people-centric. One Health has seven core values or pillars. Two of the pillars are centered on PEOPLE. First, we focus on our patients as the consumer. Then, we focus on each other to ensure we are happy and healthy so that we can provide exceptional care to our patients.

How would you define quality care?

Quality care provides care that is patient-centered at the appropriate level of care, in a timely manner, and at a lower cost. All of this must be accomplished with exceptional customer service.

Are there some practical actions you have initiated in your doctor-patient time to help your patients have a more productive experience?

At One Health, we spend considerable time trying to find the right team. We have built unique relationships with other healthcare companies to provide a team around our patients and providers. We focus on continuous improvement of our care delivery model. Personally, I have found a scribe a fantastic way to improve my doctor-patient experience. I can spend more time in direct communication with my patients and less time documenting in the EMR.

In your opinion, what are some of the biggest issues facing primary care providers today?

The beauty of medicine is that it continues to evolve. But, it is becoming increasingly complex and specialized. We need more primary care providers and healthcare workers as they are often the first line in the medical experience. The care that we can provide today can be vastly different than even a decade ago. We need to take care of our providers



and save them from the burdens of documentation and paperwork. From a patient perspective, we need to guide them through a very complex health system. Creating an effective care delivery team is critical to the long-term success of primary care and decreasing burnout, and improving care for our patients while containing healthcare costs.

What motivates you?

A desire to serve others and to do that at the best possible level.

What concerns, if any, keep you up at night?

Protecting the team around me at One Health. Our people are amazing, and I want them to continue to enjoy healthcare delivery without experiencing burnout. We need more primary care providers and healthcare workers. One Health is proud to offer a different place for healthcare providers to work.

What keeps you engaged when things get hard in your practice?

Life and good health are amazing gifts. My mission is to create the best possible health for my patients

and team. Whatever I can do to make a difference makes the effort worth it.

How do you try to maintain a balanced life outside of work?

This is always a struggle! But, I have an amazing team at One Health that helps support my work-life balance. And, most importantly, I have a family who supports me and keeps me grounded and engaged in life outside of work.

Have you ever been close to quitting or changing careers? If so, how did you stay engaged and push through?

Fortunately, no! I have thought in my next life I may be an architect or weatherman, but I can't draw, and the Weather Channel computers would probably put me out of business.

What are some of the most rewarding aspects of your profession?

The ability to get to know the people in my community and help them through their life journeys. Everyone has a story to share. Each

person's condition is affected by their story and history. I love getting to know them, problem solving with them, and supporting them as each of them needs.

What methods do you employ to keep improving your knowledge and experience?

I love to engage with my colleagues both in primary care and specialty care. In addition, I try to keep up on journal reading and CME. The American Academy of Family Physicians has fantastic resources available. And a quick UpToDate search is always a great source of information.

Do you have a career highlight?

Joining the team at One Health and becoming their Chief Medical Officer in the Charlotte market. It has been an amazing experience to serve and support this incredible group!

If you could offer any advice to younger physicians, what would it be?

Stay engaged! It is important to make connections with others both at work and outside of work.

At One Health, we have developed an Onboarding Program for our new providers. Part of our onboarding is a mentor program. We connect all of our new providers with an experienced provider outside of their primary clinic. We want our providers to feel connected and supported throughout the One Health team.



Do you have any physicians who have influenced you over the years?

I have been fortunate to have wonderful role models and mentors throughout my career. My family medicine teachers and colleagues in the Navy were amazing people. True leaders in their field and fantastic role models.

The senior leadership at One Health also continues to be a source of inspiration. And on a day-to-day basis, my physician partners continue to push me, educate me, support me and keep me focused and grounded.

If you were not practicing medicine, what profession do you think you may have chosen?

Well, as I said earlier, I probably would not have succeeded as an architect or weatherman, so something else service oriented.

GETTING TO KNOW THE DOC...

When you were younger, what did you think you would be when you "grew up?"

A veterinarian.

Your first job.

Animal character at Carowinds.

Tell us about your family.

I have an amazing wife, Suzanne, and two wonderful daughters, Kate (14) and Lyla (12).

Indoors or outdoors person?

Outdoors, definitely.

The last thing you researched on the internet.

Probably something when solving a Wordle puzzle. I also enjoy geography and learning about other countries and cultures.



Your guilty pleasure.

Any sweet.

Favorite snack.

Peanuts.

The last book you really enjoyed.

Arms of Nemesis by Steven Taylor.

A movie you could watch on an endless loop.

National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation.

A fun adventure you have been on.

Exploring Iceland and Ireland with family.

The best advice you have ever received.

"Don't be your own worst enemy." Meaning, don't let your mind or self-doubt get in your way of achieving your goals and dreams.

Something in life you are happy you did.

Joined the Navy. I got to meet ter-

rific people, see amazing places, and practice medicine as my job.

Something you are excited about coming up in the next 12 months.

One Health is such an exciting place to work. We continue to grow, add providers, and move to new markets.

Interests/hobbies outside of work.

Travel and sports with kids.

Any hobbies you would like to try if you had more time.

Triathlon training, gardening, and winemaking.

A habit you would like to change.

I need to stop walking around the house with my AirPods in my ears. (My wife would agree with this!).

Someplace on your bucket list.

Sailing trip around the Greek Islands and skiing in New Zealand.

Favorite sports teams?

Duke Blue Devils, particularly their basketball team.

If you could spend a day in someone else's shoes, who would it be and why?

Ohh, that is a tough one. I think the old adage is "before you judge a man, walk a mile in his shoes." I believe that we can learn from anyone, and I try to keep this adage in mind in my daily life. But, choosing just one person is too hard!

Anything your parents taught you that sticks with you today?

Work hard to accomplish what you want.

Personal accomplishment you are most proud of.

Becoming a physician was a life goal so I am very proud of that. Being a good husband, father, physician, and person is how I hope to be remembered.

Charities you are involved with or support.

Alzheimer's Association and Duke University. 🇺🇸

No More Neuropathy



Ankur M. Manvar, MD
Integrative
Pain & Spine
Institute
Double Board
Certified in
Anesthesiology
and Pain
Management

Neuropathy affects an estimated 30 million Americans, which is about 9% of the population. One of the earliest signs is tingling in the limbs, but it isn't long before pain ensues. No two patients have the same experience from neuropathy. Each patient has their own story: how it started, how long it has been present, the severity, the type, the symptoms, and even the treatment modalities vary for each patient. There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to neuropathy.

Many patients seek treatment only after they start to feel symptoms. But did you know that your patient's pain symptoms can be addressed prior to permanent nerve damage? A customized treatment plan by an interventional pain management provider can diminish symptoms and help improve neuropathic symptoms – all without surgery or any downtime.

What are the Causes of Neuropathy?

The challenge with healing neuropathy is identifying and treating its underlying source, which has a multitude of causes, including:

- Diabetes (60% of causes)
- Alcoholism
- Medications
- Kidney Disease
- Hypothyroidism
- Peripheral Artery Disease
- Viral and Bacterial Infections
- Vitamin B12 Deficiency
- Autoimmune Diseases
- Toxins
- Cancer

In some cases, symptoms improve by treating the cause. However, in patients with chronic conditions such as diabetes, CKD, or autoimmune diseases, we work with primary providers to help manage the condition to maintain optimal health and help curb symptoms.

What are the Symptoms of Neuropathy?

Peripheral neuropathy can affect sensory, motor, and autonomic nerves. The symptoms experienced depends on which type of nerve is affected, how many nerves are damaged, and where the damage occurs. Common sensory and motor symptoms include numbness, tingling, prickling, loss of feeling, sharp/stabbing pain, sensitivity to touch temperature or pressure, poor balance and coordination, muscle weakness or atrophy, and electric-shock sensations.

What Non-Surgical Treatments Help Neuropathy?

The answer depends on the type of nerve damage; and therefore, it is important to involve interventional pain management early in its course. For most patients, treatment for neuropathy focuses on preventing further nerve damage and minimizing symptoms. Conservative treatment options are the first line therapy, and if these do not provide adequate relief, then minimally invasive, non-surgical options are recommended. Below are just a few treatment modalities:

1. Non-Opioid Medication Management

The first line of treatment often includes medications to treat an underlying condition or relieve neuropathic pain. We often start with neuropathic pain medications such as gabapentin, Lyrica or duloxe-

tine and titrate to effect if it is safe for the patient. Transdermal patches like lidocaine and creams like Capsaicin have also shown some efficacy for neuropathic pain.

2. Physical Therapy

PT can help improve strength and function by curbing the degree of muscle weakness and atrophy. Specific exercises and techniques such as stretching, electrical stimulation (TENS), heat/cold therapy, and dry needling helps to retain mobility.

3. Interventional Medicine

Interventional treatments ease the pain, burning, and tingling by targeting the damaged nerves. These procedures are performed in just a few minutes in the office under live XR guided imaging and without sedation. They do not typically require a driver, and all are pre-approved by insurance. A few examples of the interventional treatments that help people with neuropathy include:

a. Epidural Steroid Injections

Epidural steroid injections relieve back, neck, leg, and arm pain caused by inflamed nerves in the spine. Herniated discs, degenerative disc disease, and spinal stenosis are some of the most common causes of this type of neuropathy. As the steroid reduces inflammation, the patient gets relief from the pain and improvement of function.

b. Nerve Block

Nerve blocks, which contain an anesthetic and steroid, can target nearly any damaged nerve and prevent patients from perceiving pain. The duration of relief from the nerve block varies for each person based on the severity of nerve damage, but patients typically experience several months of relief.

c. Radiofrequency Ablation

A small needle targets the nerve under fluoroscopy. Then a controlled burst of



radiofrequency energy is sent through the needle. Heat from the energy wounds the nerve, therefore, blocking perceived pain signals. The results of radiofrequency ablation may last anywhere from nine months to two years, depending on how long it takes the nerve to regenerate.

d. Spinal Cord Stimulation

Neuromodulation, also called spinal cord stimulation, is an option for patients who have not found relief with conservative therapies or traditional interventional injections. Neuromodulation uses electricity to interrupt pain signals on their way to the brain. The electricity is painlessly delivered via an

implantable stimulator placed near the spinal cord. Patients control the device via a remote, increasing stimulation when pain worsens and decreasing it when pain subsides. For many patients, even 50% less pain means a significantly higher degree of daily function and often the use of less pain medication.

These treatment modalities help improve function, even being able to stand or walk for longer periods of time, enjoying activities that were once unbearable due to pain, and spending more time with family and friends.

When to Refer to a Pain Management Specialist for Neuropathy?

If your patient is experiencing any of the above-mentioned neuropathy symptoms, it

is important to refer them to a board-certified pain management specialist right away. Neuropathic symptoms can be uncomfortable, but early intervention can help manage pain and prevent further damage to nerves. New techniques and technology allow pain management providers to treat the exact source of pain without the reliance on highly addictive medications. Modern treatments provide immediate relief without surgery or downtime and get your patient back to an active life again! 📌

PAULA BIRD, RN, DNP

**VP, Psychiatry and
Mental Health Institute
Novant Health**



What or who inspired you to go into nursing?

I always wanted to be in health care, and I knew that I wanted to focus on the person and how they were managing their illness/medical condition rather than focusing on the illness itself. Nursing was a natural fit.

How long have you been a nurse?

I became an RN in 1984, so 38 years!

Tell me about your first nursing position.

My first position was at the University of Missouri Hospital in Columbia Missouri. I worked on a general medical/surgical unit that cared for a wide variety of patients. I worked a shift rotation of 3 weeks of days / 3 weeks of nights. I loved it! The hospital had a clinical ladder, and I was able to move up to the top of the ladder in three years.

How did you become interested in psychiatry?

It was my experience at the University Hospital that sparked my interest in psychiatry. The unit I worked on cared for patients from other public services including residential treatment facilities, psychiatric hospitals, and jails. I found myself volunteering to care for the patients from these facilities because I was interested in a more holistic approach to nursing.



How long have you been with Novant Health and how did you find your way there?

I will have been at Novant Health for three years and nine months; basically, since a bit before the pandemic began. I was not looking for a career change but was approached by a recruiter for the role, and when I learned more about Novant I was

interested! What captured my interest was that Novant Health lives its mission and does not simply have it as a tagline. The system I had been working at previously was wonderful, but they did not have a robust psychiatric service line. I wanted to work for a system that valued the need for patients to receive care for their mental health and substance use disorder needs, and Novant Health is that system.



As VP, what are some of your primary responsibilities now?

My role is focused on the system and development of evidence-based strategies that will meet the current and future needs of our patients, team members, and system. Currently, we are looking at how to best align digital technologies to supplement the behavioral health care for our patients. And of course, there is always financial stewardship intertwined with how we deliver our care, and one way we accomplish this is to assure we have highly

functional, interdisciplinary teams where each team member works to the top of their license.

What are some of the challenges of your job?

There are several major challenges for mental health nationally: a) workforce shortage of qualified professionals across the interdisciplinary team (RNs, Licensed Therapists, Psychologists, Psychiatrists), b) reimbursement /parity for psychiatric services, and c) documentation burden for receiving payment. People forego care because they can not afford it and often

show up in the ED in crisis. We need to begin seeing the provision of mental health care the way we do primary care; it is essential for health and not a "nice to have if you can afford it."

What do you feel your greatest skill is as a nurse?

Building a team of great clinicians and administrators that meet the needs of our patients and help the system.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Seeing plans for enhanced and evidenced-base patient care come to fruition. Also, I like working with our team. They are simply the best!



What do you find most rewarding about your job?

My motivation is being of service and making a difference – my job fulfills these motivations.

What has being a nurse taught you?

It has taught me the value of listening and seeking to understand others. It has also taught me the value of community and how we are all interconnected. We must improve our environment and other social determinants if we want to improve health. Health care needs to be a right and not based on income or job status.



If you had not chosen nursing, what profession do you think you may have chosen?

I briefly thought about being a physical therapist, but when I learned that they had to take calculus, I quickly change my mind.

What advice would you share with someone thinking of entering the nursing field?

Keep an open mind and know that there is SO VERY much you can do with a nursing degree. Nursing is needed everywhere, not just in hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and clinics.

How do you like to spend your free time?

Running, hanging out with my family, hiking, and reading.

What is your guilty pleasure?

Ok, I admit it, I can go down a rabbit hole watching TikTok from time to time. 📺

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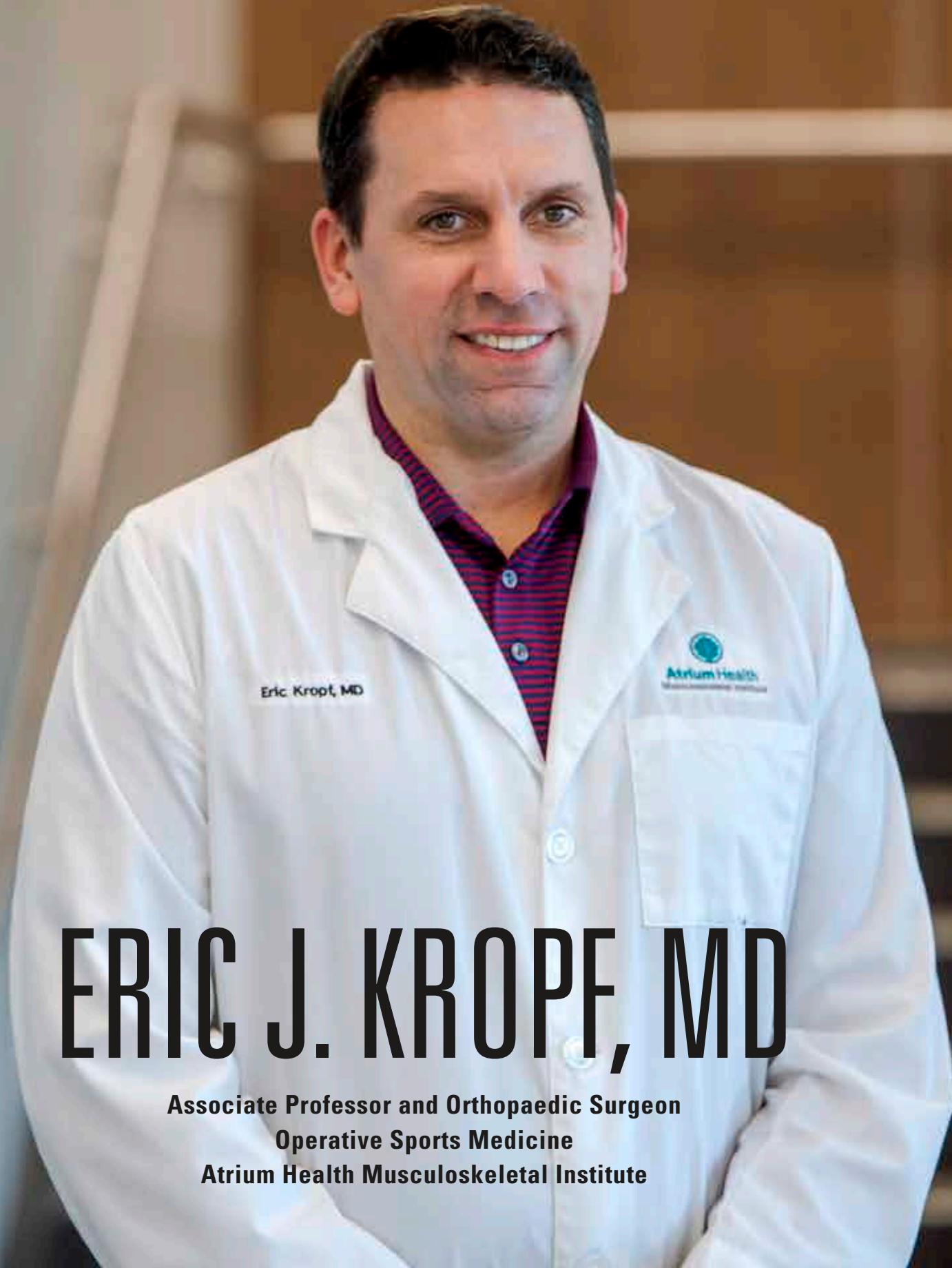
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ERIC J. KROPP, MD

Associate Professor and Orthopaedic Surgeon
Operative Sports Medicine
Atrium Health Musculoskeletal Institute



How did you choose sports medicine and orthopedics?

For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to be a doctor. I don't think there was one single event but rather it was a consequence of my upbringing. My mother was a nurse and therefore I spent a lot of time around physicians and medicine. I saw how she put others first but also how people turned to her when they needed help. I can't say exactly why but this clearly drew me toward medicine as a career path. The ability to help patients and be a part of their successful recovery from injury is uniquely rewarding. Like many orthopaedic surgeons, I have a strong background in athletics. I played multiple sports as a young child and was fortunate to continue with baseball through college. I learned the importance of hard work, commitment, and dedication to your craft through athletics. It was also a reality that injuries occurred and these could really derail you from your sport or chosen activity. I entered medical school thinking I would explore all fields of medicine but I found myself constantly drawn back to orthopedics and sports medicine because I could easily relate to and enjoyed spending time with athletes of all ages.

Tell me about Atrium Health Musculoskeletal Institute and how you landed there.

Atrium Health Musculoskeletal Institute (MSKI) is a multispecialty entity designed to provide the highest level of musculoskeletal care to patients throughout the region. Prior to relocating to Charlotte, I spent 13 years at Tem-

ple University in Philadelphia. I helped to grow and develop our program there and was excited to apply those skills at a larger healthcare institution. I enjoy the process of team building and recognize the great potential for continued growth and progress at Atrium Health MSKI.

Tell me about one of your favorite successes as a physician.

Like many physicians, I truly enjoy helping patients understand their injury or ailment and working to help them develop a plan for recovery and return

to function. When a patient says a sincere "thank you" when you've helped them understand their problem and given them a path forward, I consider that to be a great success. That is truly rewarding on a daily basis.

More specifically, I love working with young athletes. Maybe it's because I look at them and see my own two sons or maybe it's because they're still full of hope and excitement. Many of them still dream big about playing in college or professionally. They are still growing and becoming the person they will someday be and so much lies ahead of them. When they are injured, this is often the first time they will face real adversity. How they respond to that moment will define them in many ways.



Most times, the patient and even family are laser-focused on the time to return to play. This is the measurable success point that they can wrap their heads around. During the recovery from an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury, for example, I will see this family intermittently for often a year or longer. During that time, I ensure they hit their milestones from recovery but can also personally watch them grow. In many ways that personal relationship and helping to guide them can be the most rewarding. The truly most rewarding moment of my career is when that patient or family sends me an e-mail and asks if they could come to shadow me in my office to consider this career path or even just write them a letter of recommendation for something else they've chosen to pursue. Like a teacher, knowing that I've been able to positively impact their life during a time of perceived adversity is the most rewarding experience.

How do you try to maintain a balanced life outside of work?

I think work-life balance is obviously a very personal issue that all of us struggle with as we progress through our careers. Medicine is exceptionally demanding and the early stages of medical school residency and the start of your career are very time-consuming. It is truly challenging to do anything else during those times. I am fortunate to have a wonderful family. I met my wife in medical school and she is a very successful oncologist. She understands the demands of this profession but also the fact that the two of us need to always keep things in perspective and spend time with each other and our children. There's no one thing but rather it's knowing that every week you find time to step back from your hectic work schedule and focus on your family.

Do you have any medical role models who have influenced you along the way?

There have been many physicians who influenced me along the way. Like a great teacher or coach, sometimes you don't appreciate the impact they have had until much later on in life. I went to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center for residency and fellowship. I spent six years with Dr. Freddie H. Fu. He is an orthopaedic icon. Everyone in our

profession across the globe knows who he is. He is considered by many to be a visionary in the field of sports medicine and specifically ACL surgery. On the simplest level, he taught me how to interact with patients and how to do surgery. Most importantly, he taught me that we should never settle for anything less than perfection. He dedicated his entire life to ACL research. If there was a question about what could be done to improve the surgery or how to improve the outcome, he dedicated the time and his team to the research to find that answer. This was constant and unrelenting. Watching his quest for perfection was similar to watching a great athlete strive to be the best at what they do. But Dr. Fu was much more than just a great surgeon, he connected

people in many ways. When he passed a year ago it became apparent that orthopaedic surgery was just the vehicle by which he touched so many lives. His legacy continues on through his former students, residents, and fellows.

If you were not practicing medicine, what other profession would you have chosen?

This is a common question that people ask and it's really difficult to go back in time and think where you would have gone if you didn't go down this path. The only possibility in my mind would have been teaching or coaching. I think that would have afforded me the opportunity to interact with the young people and help guide them through growth and adversity similar to how I do today.



What would you like to communicate to primary care and referring physicians?

Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information is challenging for most patients to wrap their heads around. Injury, whether acute or chronic, can be debilitating and emotionally upsetting to patients. Patient education is the most important aspect of a strong patient/physician relationship. There are many great orthopaedic surgeons in the Charlotte region. I think the most important thing is for patients to find a physician they trust who helps them understand their problems. As orthopaedic surgeons, we have the exact same conversation with patients on a regular basis. We need to remember, that this is all new to the patient and invest the time upfront with them. I believe that is a cornerstone of the foundation at Atrium Health Musculoskeletal Institute.

If you could offer any advice to younger physicians, what would it be?

One of my mentors once told me, "if you want to be an orthopaedic surgeon, you're not allowed to have a bad day." Your patients expect the most of you at all times. They expect perfection just like we do when we watch athletes on TV. Therefore, we have to be constantly preparing and constantly working at improving patient experience and process. In that sense, we are just like the athletes we care for.

What are some of your hobbies or interests outside of work?

I enjoy most sports and the opportunity to share them with my sons. My oldest son, Wesley and I are Villanova basketball fanatics and Charlie is a baseball player like I was. During this stage of my life, I try to spend as much time with them as possible. Watching them grow and succeed at what they love has become my full-time hobby for the next few years. 🏀

4 Specialty Services That Meet Women's Comprehensive Care Needs.



Novant Health is the healthcare partner you can depend on to provide the specialty services your patients need.

Women should be able to have all of their specialized healthcare needs met when and where they need it. That's why Novant Health has built a system of comprehensive care services, with specialties from pelvic and sexual health to maternal-fetal medicine. No matter what age or stage of life they're in, women can easily access the right care in the Charlotte area.

Here are four specialty services you can find at Novant Health as part of our comprehensive care for women.

Sexual health and wellness

"In order to have good sexual health, women have to have good overall health," said Alyse Kelly-Jones, MD, the founding provider of Novant Health Women's Sexual Health & Wellness in SouthPark. "If they have chronic medical conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, chronic pain conditions, that's going to affect their sexual health. So, it's almost like a vital sign."

Three types of patients generally require sexual health and wellness services:

- Women with perimenopause, menopause and hormone concerns who need support to address issues like weight gain, hot flashes and other symptoms.
- Women with low libido complaints. "This is often multifactorial, so we dive into potentially what else is going on," Dr. Kelly-Jones said.
- Women experiencing painful sex, which can span a lifetime. "One of the unique things about our clinic is our comprehensive approach to painful sex — hormone problems, tightness in the pelvic floor, menopause, and thin and atrophied skin can all be causes that we can treat," Dr. Kelly-Jones said.

Women who come for sexual health and wellness services have access to innovative treatments. That includes the MonaLisa Touch. "This is a laser we use to

No matter what age or stage of life they're in, women can easily access the right care in the Charlotte area.



Alyse Kelly-Jones, MD



Amelia Sutton, MD



Melissa Caldwell, NP

rebuild collagen in a woman's vulva and vagina to help relieve some of her painful sex, dryness and those types of issues," Dr. Kelly-Jones said. "It can be a game-changer."

High-risk pregnancy

"We see a wide range of complications in pregnancy," said Amelia Sutton, MD, a maternal-fetal medicine specialist at Novant Health Maternal-Fetal Medicine in Matthews. "Some of the most common conditions include high blood pressure, diabetes, advanced maternal age, prior pregnancy complications, preterm labor, fetal growth abnormalities, multiple gestations and birth defects."

Maternal-fetal medicine specialists collaborate with a patient's providers to build a care plan through pregnancy, labor and delivery, and postpartum stages. "We work closely with a patient's primary obstetrician and other specialists throughout their pregnancy to optimize their outcomes," Dr. Sutton said. "For patients with underlying chronic health conditions, prior pregnancy complications, or family history of birth defects or genetic conditions, the best time to develop a treatment plan is actually prior to pregnancy."

Genetic counseling

Perinatal genetic counselors are specially trained to test and care for patients with a personal or family history of complex genetic conditions. "We offer advanced genetic testing and interpretation of

the results, which can help clarify a genetic diagnosis and elucidate the impact on the couple's children," said Dr. Sutton, the area's only perinatal geneticist. "Also, all of our physicians have extensive experience with fetal testing procedures, including chorionic villus sampling and amniocentesis."

Counselors encourage carrier screening prior to pregnancy.

"This allows adequate time for genetic counseling and more advanced testing of the partner if indicated," Dr. Sutton said. "Furthermore, this affords the couple more reproductive options, including utilizing in vitro fertilization with preimplantation genetic testing. Lastly, some patients may want more information prior to conception about how advancing maternal age can increase the risk of certain genetic conditions, such as Down syndrome and other chromosomal abnormalities, and what options they have for testing for these conditions."

Neonatal intensive care

As a level IV neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center has all of the doctors, consultants and therapies a baby as young as 22 weeks gestation may need. "We have neonatal nurse practitioners and neonatologists in-house 24/7 along with all of the other subspecialties we can call in as needed," said Melissa Caldwell, director of newborn services for Novant Health who is also a neonatal

nurse practitioner. "We have specialty doctors in cardiology, pulmonology, endocrinology, infectious disease, neurology, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, urology, hematology/oncology, nephrology, gastroenterology, orthopedics, ENT and surgery, to take care of the most complex newborn."

Collaborate with a women's specialist mentioned above or refer a patient:

Novant Health Women's Sexual Health & Wellness

6324 Fairview Road, Suite 440
Charlotte, NC 28210
980-302-8945

Novant Health Maternal-Fetal Medicine

1718 E. Fourth St., Suite 404
Charlotte, NC 28204
704-384-5701

19475 Old Jetton Road, Suite 101
Cornelius, NC 28031
704-384-5701

1450 Matthews Township Pkwy,
Suite 410
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704-384-5701

Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center, Maternity and Neonatal Experts

704-316-2200



AvanceCare

MIDTOWN

RHETT BROWN, MD ✱ CARSON ROUNDS, MD

Dr. Brown, tell us about your experience in medicine up to now.

I am privileged to celebrate my 30th year practicing family medicine in Charlotte and recently opened our new practice with Dr. Rounds, Avance Care Midtown. The physician/patient connection is at the heart of a healing office and starts with a conversation and leads to a relationship focused on support, guidance, and acceptance. The provision of care has changed significantly over these 30 years with better tools and a greater understanding of health and disease prevention. Technology brings great advancements and has the potential to enhance care and yet, it can interfere with the physician/patient relationship with too many boxes to check and too much clicking through an electronic health record and focusing on the computer screen.

Dr. Rounds, tell us about your experience in medicine up to now.

In 1849, French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr wrote “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose,” – the more things change, the more they stay the same. A lasting, personal relationship is at the bedrock of what we do. Medical knowledge has exploded in the 38 years since I started medical school. There were no mobile phones, personal computers, electronic health records, or MRIs then. Medical practice, at all levels, was in many ways still a cottage industry without the horizontal and vertical integra-



tion that has become the norm today. The constant in my professional life has been change while at the same time the constant in my professional life has stayed the same – lasting personal relationships where we work together with individuals to help them maximize their health and reach their personal health goals.

How did you decide to partner together?

We completed residency together here in Charlotte. There is no one I trust more and have as much respect for their medical knowledge, skills, and compassion.

Why did you choose to partner with Avance?

Unlike large health systems, Avance Care is focused on providing extraordinary primary care. Their leadership understands the stress the US health-care system is under. The focus is on creating an environment that allows primary care physicians to have the tools and resources readily available for high-quality primary care. This includes providing in-office services that create synergies such as behavioral health and nutritionists.

What are the goals for your new practice?

To be your medical home. If you are a patient, we hope you never have the need to go to urgent care or minute clinics. We are open M-F 7-7 and anticipate adding Saturday and Sunday hours soon.

What makes your practice unique?

The sign on our front door: we welcome all, all ages, and all families. Our goal is to provide support, guidance, and acceptance and not judgment. We want you to bring all of yourself into our office and start a conversation with us.

What is the culture like in your practice?

A relaxed, fun, and professional office. Our team works hard, and we invest in them and their personal growth. We provide professional coaching for each team member, encourage work-life balance, and actively ask for their input on how we improve and become even better.

Tell us about your staff.

Our team is truly amazing and gifted.

What services do you provide?

Primary care for all ages from birth to earth. We provide care for transgender patients. We also perform minor procedures including joint injections, skin biopsies, cryotherapy, laceration repair, wart treatment, and ingrown nail removal. In addition, we provide IV services, in-office labs, X-rays on-site, and ultrasound services. We have mental health providers and nutritionists full-time in our office.

What would you like your peers in health-care to know about your practice?

Despite the many challenges facing health care currently, there is still joy in being a family physician in our office.

How can we get in touch with you and where are you located?

New patients can register at www.AvanceCare.com or call 980-375-0550. We are located at 205 S. Kings Drive, Charlotte, NC 28204 (at the corner of Kings Drive and Charlottetown Avenue) ✱



MP* FALL SOCIAL CHARLOTTE



We hosted our Fall Social on Thursday, November 10th celebrating featured physicians and our local medical community. A HUGE thank you to our event sponsors **Audiology & Hearing Services of Charlotte, Avance Care, Carolina Digestive Health Associates, Davis Moore Healthcare Practice Group, Gardner Skelton, Neuros Medical, Oncology Specialists of Charlotte, Sentinel, Social Med Consultants, and Spectrum Enterprise.**

Thank you **Juan Zambrano** for all of the great pictures! 📸








Warmest Holiday Wishes

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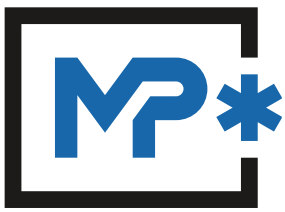
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