

Orthopaedics Doctors with brand-new pods

For reasons that radiate from his department's educational mission, Lawrence Bone, M.D., wants his residents to see your primary care orthopaedic cases. "We're happy to see your patients. We want to see your patients. If access is ever a problem, you can e-mail me or call me. **We're available.**"

To that end, the Department of Orthopaedics has opened a new clinical facility at 4949 Harlem Road (at Sheridan Drive). The University Orthopaedic Center is the largest orthopaedic practice site not located in a hospital. Bone and his colleagues see it as an education center for training orthopaedists, radiologists and others who are not orthopaedists, and for teaching medical students.

University Orthopaedic Services (UOS)—which staffs ECMC, Buffalo General Hospital, and Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo and includes University Sports Medicine and the Western New York Cartilage Restoration Center—is the largest orthopaedic practice in the region. It covers all orthopaedic subspecialties. UOS comprises 22 physicians and 12 physician assistants and, from reception desks to back office operations, employs more than 100 persons.

Bone anticipates continued growth for the practice as UBMD gets more exposure. "UBMD emphasizes our clinical strengths that come from



PHOTO: NANCY J. PARISI
Brian McGrath, M.D., a prime mover in the development of the new University Orthopaedic Center, shows off the center's new MRI system; the center also has two digital X-ray imaging systems.

being educators—the advantage to the practice of staying on the cutting edge of medicine. As educators, we're pushing the envelope every day."

Ultimately, he says, reputation is at the bottom of the department's success. "If you are good physicians, and you take good care of your patients, you'll get patients."

Brian McGrath, M.D., a principal actor in the creation of the new center at Sheridan and Harlem, wanted to add patient comfort and convenience to that time-tested formula.

"It's difficult enough to come to a physician's office in a hospital week after week," he says, "and it can be especially difficult for orthopaedic patients to negotiate the hospital environment, all the way from parking to the physician's office, often with long distances between the clinical exam room and X-ray."

"We designed our site to be as easy to use as possible because when patients come to see us, they are either partially disabled by pain or completely disabled by injury."

Ten members of UOS are now seeing patients there.

Our own group

The new center occupies 20,000 square feet of space that was completely remodeled for orthopaedic use. The ground floor is devoted to clinical work—a waiting area, nurses' stations, examination rooms, a casting room, physician dictation rooms, an imaging suite—and has a multimedia classroom; there are administrative offices and four physicians' offices on the second

floor; and a physical therapy suite on the fourth floor.

The clinical area is arranged in three pods, or practice areas: pediatric orthopaedics, sports medicine, and adult reconstructive orthopaedics. The imaging suite contains two digital X-ray units and a 1.5 Tesla MRI. The MRI is welcome, according to Robert Smolinski, M.D., director of University Sports Medicine. "There are so many MRIs in the area that it's hard to establish relationships with all the physicians reading studies, so we'll benefit from having our own group here."

McGrath adds that because orthopaedic care is almost always semi-urgent, it was important for the group to put services like imaging and physical therapy together in a comfortable, manageable environment. Other than short distances on one level, the only traveling that patients have to do at the center is an elevator ride to the physical therapy suite.

The new center is also fully wired so that all aspects of patient visits are computer assisted—from examination room assignment to X-ray display to prescription printing. All exam rooms and physician dictation rooms are equipped with large display screens. The physicians can access their patients' records from anywhere: hospital, home, or another office. The heart of the system is a big server running the Dell Picture Archiving and Communications System (PACS).

Sports medicine

University Sports Medicine (USM) is the division of University Orthopaedic Services that specializes in treatment of orthopaedic and sports-related injuries. Although the name says "sports," the subspecialty treats patients who have never been closer to a playing field than the grandstands, as well as athletes. In fact, USM director Robert Smolinski says that "well



PHOTO: NANCY J. PARISI
Robert Smolinski, M.D., director of University Sports Medicine, sees patients at the new center and at sports medicine's home base in Farber Hall on the UB South Campus. He has PT facilities in both locations.

over half" the division's patients come with injuries that are not sports related. A ligament tear is a ligament tear.

As for athletes, Smolinski says USM covers the entire gamut of their needs. USM has three orthopaedic surgeons, four primary care physicians and a physiatrist, three physical therapists, and a dozen athletic trainers. Physicians see patients in USM's headquarters location in Farber Hall in the medical school (with dedicated patient parking in Michael Lot), in the University Orthopaedic Center at Sheridan and Harlem, and in satellite offices in the Southtowns and Niagara Falls.

"The primary care physicians cover all aspects of common problems, from ankle sprains to more complicated ligament problems; they also treat concussions and other specific medical problems such as playing sports with one kidney, eating disorders, and asthma-related conditions," Smolinski says.

USM operates an acute injury clinic every afternoon, Monday through

Friday, at its offices in 160 Farber Hall at the medical school where they can see patients as soon as they call. Smolinski says that even though it is ideal to have enough notice to match a patient with the appropriate provider, the acute injury clinic "is a real plus" because it is a way for patients to avoid going to the emergency room or waiting to see the family physician. "If we can see patients right away, we can get to the second step quickly."

On-site physical therapy gives the sports medicine orthopaedists an opportunity to stay close to certain cases. Smolinski says the group refers to physical therapists throughout the community, but there are situations when it is beneficial to have physician, therapist, and patient in the same room.

Smolinski has one word for the new orthopaedic center at Sheridan and Harlem: "Beautiful." He says it's the nicest facility he has worked in as a resident, fellow, and practitioner.

A third component of University Orthopaedic Services specializes in knee disorders involving the injury and aging of articular cartilage. The Western New York Cartilage Restoration Center, which is co-located with University Sports Medicine at 160 Farber Hall in the medical school, offers a full range of treatment options for knee cartilage injury, including arthroscopic and joint replacement surgery.

Take a look at the University Orthopaedic Center when you're using the I-290. It rises over the treescape at the Harlem Road exit, across the highway from the Dent Tower in what is becoming a Northtowns medical neighborhood. If Brian McGrath had his way, it would be even easier to see than it is (but the UBMD sign of his dreams would be larger than the Town of Amherst permits). Happily, there is no size limit on reputation. +

Ambulatory locations

University Orthopaedic Center
4949 Harlem Road, Amherst
204-3200

University Sports Medicine
160 Farber Hall, South Campus
University at Buffalo
829-2070

Northtowns
4949 Harlem Road, Amherst
204-3251

Southtowns
1026 Union Road, West Seneca
712-0853

WNY Cartilage Restoration Center
160 Farber Hall, South Campus
University at Buffalo
829-2070