

# Senior Services News

## Heart Surgery - "My Life as a Patient"

It's always enlightening for a doctor to experience medicine from a patient's point of view and since writing my last newsletter, I got my chance.

After a few weeks of denial, I reluctantly concluded that the chest discomfort I was having when playing racquetball or walking uphill was probably not imaginary. I had been told 10 years ago that I had an abnormal aortic heart valve that was becoming narrowed, and would need to be replaced when I started to have symptoms. My visit to the cardiologist confirmed that it was time. Fortunately, my coronary arteries (and me in general!) were in good shape, so the date for open heart surgery was set, and I am privileged to have been a guest for 6 days at the John Muir Cardiovascular Institute in Concord.

I mean privileged, because relatively few Americans are lucky enough to live within a few minutes' drive of such talent and quality care that is available at our Cardiovascular Institute

At the pre-op visit, what my wife found most valuable was the volunteer from the "Mended Hearts" program. These are people who have had heart surgery and are kind enough to share their experience and advice as they guided us through the pre-op testing. They really put a human face at the front door of the Institute!

A few days later, I underwent the aortic valve replacement surgery, which for me seemed to take about 5 minutes, although my wife assures me it was about 4 hours, and then I was in the intensive care unit for a day or so, before transferring to the cardiac care section next door.

The importance of early mobility after almost any surgery (they get you up and out of bed the first day!) cannot be over-stressed. I took every opportunity I could to go for a walk around the surgical ward with my wife's supervision, of course. This reduces the likelihood of leg and lung clots, and prevents muscle wasting.

As you are likely to need strong narcotics for a short time for pain control, the other thing that needs to move is your bowels, and the combination of narcotics and bed rest is very constipating. Laxatives are not an option, they are a necessity in the first week or so. Once the chest drains come out, the incisional pain is a lot less, and Acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be all that you need. Meanwhile, keep moving!

Deep breathing is also stressed by the surgical staff.

Because of the chest incision, the tendency is to take shallow breaths, which can lead to collapse of the spongy air spaces in your lungs, fluid collections and pneumonia. I was given a little plastic device called an "incentive spirometer" to breathe into hourly, to keep my air spaces open and prevent these complications.

I experienced a rapid heart rhythm called atrial fibrillation, which is a common occurrence after open heart surgery. I will need to take rhythm control medications for a few weeks, but this tendency settles down with time. I experienced a lot of nausea with one of the rhythm drugs, but a satisfactory alternative medication was prescribed when I complained.

I never take for granted the fact that I am married to a wonderful woman who looks out for me and cares for me - and is a retired registered nurse! If you live alone and need surgery, the importance of having an advocate and supportive home environment in the 6 weeks or so post-op cannot be overstated. If possible, make arrangements with your family or friends for someone to be there for you during recovery. You may wish to discuss these arrangements with your primary care physician, who can get Medical Home or Senior Services personnel involved to help you get set up in advance with the proper home supports.

After 4-6 weeks, most of the important surgical healing has occurred, but the body is still deconditioned, and a course of cardiac rehabilitation is usually recommended to get you back in "fighting trim". Cardiac rehab gives you an opportunity to exercise while your heart is being monitored, and under the supervision of expert rehab staff. Sessions are about an hour long, 3 times a week for 4-12 weeks.

The experience of being a patient and having surgery is a valuable one for any physician, and I'm almost sorry it happened so late in my career. Anyway, I'm back at work now and doing great!

**Lawren Hicks, MD**  
Medical Director, Senior Services



**JOHN MUIR**  
HEALTH

# Educational Opportunities

There is no charge to attend our health education events unless otherwise noted. Registration is required. Register early-class size is limited. Register on line at [johnmuirhealth.com](http://johnmuirhealth.com) or call 941-7900 option 1.

APRIL - JUNE 2016

## **Are You Considering Hip or Knee Replacement Surgery?** - Bradley Crow, MD

**April 15 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek**

Is hip or knee replacement right for you? Dr. Crow will discuss what is involved when considering surgery, pain protocols and recovery.

## **Healthy Gut, Healthy You** - Kathy Napoli, MA, RD

**April 21 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Medical Center, Concord**

New research is emerging that suggests a link between the bacteria in our gut (microbiome), and numerous health conditions, including allergies, asthma, arthritis, depression, and even obesity. Discover how you can take steps to improve your microbiome, and eventually your health.

## **Eating for Optimal Brain Function** - Kathy Napoli, MA, RD

**May 5 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Health Wellness Services**

Research is showing that you can increase your chances of maintaining a healthy brain as you age by adding specific "smart foods" to your daily diet. Find out how your nutrition and lifestyle choices can help you achieve a focused and happy brain.

## **The Wonders of Guided Imagery and Self-Hypnosis** - Alan Brast, Ph.D., C.C.H.T., CSA

**May 20 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek**

Gain the ability to become supremely relaxed. In this class, you'll learn simple techniques that will allow for less stressful daily living, better sleep, and an overall improvement in your quality of life.

## **Intimacy Over 60** - Alan Brast, Ph.D., C.C.H.T., CSA

**June 10 | 10 - 11:30 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Pleasanton**

Many people want and need to be close to others as they age. But, with aging, you may experience changes that can cause problems. Dr. Brast will talk about intimacy and understanding sexuality as you age.

## **Diabetes Prevention and Management** - Karen Andrade, RN, BSN, CDE

**June 16 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Medical Center, Concord**

What is pre-diabetes/diabetes and how does it occur? Understanding the importance of diet and exercise in the prevention and treatment of diabetes will help you avoid or successfully live with this chronic disease.

## **Making a Difference - Volunteering Can Change a Life** - Linda Groobin, Manager, Caring Hands

**April 19 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek**

Celebrate National Volunteer Week and learn how volunteering can benefit both you and your community. John Muir Health provides a diverse range of volunteer opportunities and programs for seniors in need.

# Ongoing Classes

## AARP Driver Safety Program

- Apr 5 & 7 | 2 - day, 8 hour class | 9 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Concord  
Apr 16 | refresher class | 8:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek  
May 13 | refresher class | 8:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Concord  
May 21 | 1-day, 8 hour class | 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek  
Jun 21 & 23 | 2 - day, 8 hour class | 9 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Concord  
Jun 25 | refresher class | 8:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek

This Smart Driver classroom course, designed for motorists over age 50, helps drivers refine existing skills and develop safe, defensive driving techniques. Offered in an eight hour or four-and-a-half hour refresher course for those who meet the criteria for renewal. There is a charge for this class. Register online at [johnmuirhealth.com](http://johnmuirhealth.com) or call 941-7900 option 1.

## Advance Health Care Directives - Suzanne Leib, LMFT

- April 21 | 2 - 4 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek  
May 10 | 6 - 8 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Medical Center, Concord  
Jun 29 | 6 - 8 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek

All adults, regardless of age, need to understand how they can have control over their own life and death decisions. Learn the choices you or your family may face due to an accident or serious illness. This is an opportunity to clarify your choices and make sure they will be carried out should you become unable to make your own health care decisions. Required documents will be provided.

## Catch Yourself - Fall Prevention to Maintain Your Independence

- April 4, 8, 11, 15 | 11:00 - 12:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Pleasanton

This four-session class series raises awareness about falls by practicing techniques in class. Learn how to improve your strength and balance, simplify your environment, and identify fall risks. Classes will cover home safety strategies, exercise techniques, medication management, and other ways to decrease your risk of falling. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing. Plan to attend all four classes. If you have taken this class in the past 12 months, and feel you still need fall prevention information, we ask you to follow up with your primary care doctor or call Wellness Services 941-7900 option 1.

## Welcome to Medicare - Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program

- April 13, May 18, June 8 | 7 - 9:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek

This course is for those new to Medicare, or soon to enroll, who want to understand the many benefits available. Learn about health benefits, drug coverage and how to supplement your coverage. HICAP does not sell or endorse insurance products. Register online at [johnmuirhealth.com](http://johnmuirhealth.com) or call 941-7900 option 1.

## Memory Screening - What's Your Memory Fitness?

- April 12, May 10, June 7 | morning appointments | 947-3300  
April 13, May 11, June 8 | afternoon appointments | 947-3300

Outpatient Centers: Brentwood | Pleasanton | Tice Valley/Rossmoor | Walnut Creek

Many people notice changes in their memory as they grow older. If you are 65 or older and have a John Muir Health primary care physician, Senior Services, in partnership with John Muir Health Neurosciences Institute, offers a free individual memory screening to help determine if your memory is functioning at a level that is typical for a person your age. This is a screening and not a diagnostic exam. Screenings are offered on the specific dates and times at the three locations listed. Call for a 30 minute appointment.



Senior Services  
 1450 Treat Blvd  
 Walnut Creek, CA 94597

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Change in information?** If you have a change in address or wish to be removed from our mailing list, please notify us at 947-3300 or [seniorservices@johnmuirhealth.com](mailto:seniorservices@johnmuirhealth.com)

**John Muir Health Senior Services**

Senior Services offers a wide range of services for John Muir Health seniors including resources, information, assessment services, and educational programs. We help older adults, their families, and those who care for them. Our goal is to help older adults keep their independence and enjoy the best possible quality of life. **(925) 947-3300**

**Outpatient Center, Brentwood**  
 2400 Balfour Road, Suite 201  
 Brentwood

**Outpatient Center, Pleasanton**  
 5860 Owens Drive, 2nd Floor  
 Pleasanton

**Outpatient Center, Tice Valley/Rossmoor**  
 1220 Rossmoor Parkway, Suite 100  
 Walnut Creek

**Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek**  
 1450 Treat Boulevard, 2nd Floor  
 Walnut Creek

**Volunteering: Caring Hands**

**Keeping seniors independent and in their own homes through Caring Hands at John Muir Health**

In 1998, several very dedicated and passionate people got together to create a volunteer caregivers program at John Muir Health. The mission was to help seniors stay in their own homes and independent as long as safely possible. With people living longer and wanting to age in place, John Muir Health saw the importance of such a program and knew then it was the right thing to do. Today 17 years later with the help of 300 dedicated volunteers, John Muir Health is doing just that. Caring Hands is a community program offering free non-medical in-home assistance to seniors over the age of 60 who meet some basic qualifications. Due to high demand, we often have a waiting list for services. To meet this need, more volunteers are needed each day! Please consider volunteering for a couple of hours a week. John Muir Health offers comprehensive training and ongoing support for all volunteers.

**Linda Groobin**  
 Manger, Caring Hands Volunteer Caregivers Program  
[johnmuirhealth.com/caringhands](http://johnmuirhealth.com/caringhands)  
**(925) 952-2999**

**PROGRAM LOCATIONS**

John Muir Health Wellness Services  
 1656 N. California Blvd., Ste 100  
 Walnut Creek  
 (925) 941-7900 option 1

John Muir Health Outpatient Center  
 Brentwood  
 2400 Balfour Rd., Brentwood  
 (925) 308-8100

John Muir Health Outpatient Center  
 Pleasanton  
 5860 Owens Dr., 2nd Floor, Pleasanton  
 (925) 224-0800

John Muir Health Outpatient Center  
 Tice Valley/Rossmoor  
 1220 Rossmoor Pkwy., Walnut Creek  
 (925) 939-1220

John Muir Health Outpatient Center  
 Walnut Creek  
 1450 Treat Blvd., Walnut Creek

John Muir Medical Center, Concord  
 2540 East St., Concord  
 (925) 682-8200

John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek  
 1601 Ygnacio Valley Rd., Walnut Creek  
 (925) 939-3000