



## Spinal care specialists turn chronic pain challenges into quality of life victories

**A**s a busy mother, chef, and waitress, the pain that Marie Ng had been ignoring for so long was slowly starting to get the best of her.

"I know I should have started seeing a chiropractor six or seven years ago," she admits.

It was one of her co-workers at Thumper Pond in Ottertail who first recommended Dr. Pankonin to Marie. "They told me he was awesome and I had to go see him," she says.

With a full schedule to keep up with and no time to waste on the pain she was facing, Marie made the decision to finally seek chiropractic treatment. Last May, she stepped into Perham Memorial Hospital to visit Dr. Vince Pankonin, a chiropractor at the hospital.

A fellow Perham resident, 91-year-old Bessie Larsen also chose to visit Dr. Pankonin when her need for chiropractic care suddenly arose this past November.

Bessie is impressively active for her age. Yet, she'll quickly admit that walking along a busy street to make an appointment is not something she's comfortable doing.

With cars whizzing by and her body at a more fragile age, she says she's thankful for Dr. Pankonin—and especially glad that his office is within sight of her apartment window.

Living in St. James Manor, right next to Perham Memorial Hospital and Home, Bessie is able to take advantage of the services close at hand. In November, when she was suddenly stricken with debilitating back pain, she promptly went to visit her primary care doctor, Dr. Stephen Hietala, at MeritCare Perham which adjoins the hospital.

**Marie Ng, busy mother and chef, credits the chiropractic care at Perham Hospital for helping to get her chronic pain under control.**

"The pain was terrible; I couldn't sit, stand, or lay down," Bessie recalls. It was through Dr. Hietala that Bessie was first referred to Dr. Pankonin.

When local chef Marie first started getting treatments from Dr. Pankonin, she had appointments two or three times a week. With continued treatment, she saw a dra-

matic reduction in pain and she was gradually able to cut back on the frequency of her visits to the chiropractor. Currently, she visits Dr. Pankonin once a month.

"My pain is nonexistent now compared to what it was," she says. "My pain level used to be an 8 or 9 all the time; now when I come in it's a 2 or 3."





**Dr. Vince Pankonin listens attentively as patient Bessie Larsen explains where she is experiencing pain.**

Bessie says the pain went away almost immediately for her. She went from hardly moving, crippled by arthritis in her back that had spread into her hip and leg, to a mobile woman free to once again enjoy simple daily activities such as baking cakes for her friends. "After the second or third treatment, the pain was practically gone," she recalls. "It was a miracle."

Bessie now schedules appointments with Dr. Pankonin only when she feels pain com-

ing on. "I think it's a really good idea to have a chiropractor in the hospital," she says, adding how convenient it is to have all of her doctors so close in proximity.

She says she's impressed with the work Dr. Pankonin has done to help restore function to her back and legs. Most of all, Bessie talks about how much she enjoys the friendly and comforting environment she enters every time she visits Dr. Pankonin.

According to Bessie, members of the chiropractic staff always make her feel welcome, and never like a stranger. "I go in there, and they all say 'Hello, Bessie.'"

"Dr. Pankonin is awesome," agrees Marie, who says she appreciates both his warm personality and his use of the latest technology for adjustments. "Don't wait to see him—don't wait months," she offers as advice to people who might be experiencing chronic pain like she had. In fact, Marie says she's now encouraging other co-workers to visit Dr. Pankonin.

"He asks the right questions," she continues. "He makes sure he understands what you are saying."

Dr. Pankonin typically works on Marie's feet, neck, and back, adjusting the bones where necessary. In the past, Marie says she took large quantities of Tylenol and ibuprofen to help with her pain and frequent headaches.

"Now, I haven't had a headache for so long," she notes with satisfaction. "I used to have headaches every day."

In the future, Marie plans to take advantage of another offering in the chiropractic department—massage therapy. During one of her visits to Dr. Pankonin, PMHH massage therapist Ashley Dertinger spent a few minutes working on Marie's muscles before the adjustment.

Marie said even that small amount of massage made the work Dr. Pankonin did much easier, prompting her to make the decision to incorporate massage into her healing plan.

In addition to Dr. Pankonin at Perham Memorial Hospital, doctor of chiropractic Cheryl DeBoer sees patients at the Ottertail and New York Mills MeritCare clinics.

## Reasons to choose PMHH for your chiropractic needs

- We work closely with patients' medical doctors to coordinate care and to offer more treatment options. We are the only hospital in the region with chiropractors on staff.
- We work with physical therapy and occupational therapy to provide comprehensive rehabilitation care.
- We have direct access to radiology and lab services.

- Physician and specialist referrals can be easily made.
- Dr. Pankonin is the only chiropractor in the region trained in Cox® decompression manipulation for the hard to manage disc herniation, degenerative disc disease, spinal stenosis, and chronic spinal arthritis conditions.

***Dr. Cheri DeBoer (right) provides spinal care at the Ottertail and New York Mills MeritCare clinics.***



# New hospital design enhances patient, family experience

**The headline on a poster from a west coast hospital reads, "Imagine a hospital...."**

Community representatives, patients and families, and hospital leadership met in February 2007 to learn what was taking place around the country regarding a pioneering approach to patient- and family-centered care. From this gathering, many ideas were generated about how to care for patients and family members as partners in their health care. The group also crafted suggestions for how the spaces and environment of the building help support this partnership.

The meeting provided hospital leadership with pages of suggestions – and dreams – expressed by the participants that have played a key role in the design of the new hospital. Privacy, natural light, warm and inviting spaces, access to staff, and reduced noise are examples of values that were identified and provide the foundation for our new hospital design.

Space considerations include expanded surgical facilities, private rooms with private bathrooms, private emergency exam rooms, family space in patient rooms, a resource center, a breastfeeding room, kitchenette for patients and families, a garage at the emergency services area, and improved birthing rooms.

It is important to point out that the goal is not simply to build a beautiful hospital and clinic, although both contribute to a healing environment. More importantly, good design is meant to support healing and reduces stress for patients, families, and all who work in the facility.

Many of the areas in the new hospital are designed to connect with the elements of nature in order to benefit from the calming effects of nature. The building will be infused with as much natural light as possible to reduce anxiety. Light makes people feel better. We recognize that it can be very difficult to locate departments in our current hospital and so simple way finding is a key design element in the new building. From the time people enter the building, the goal is to minimize this frustration.

We understand the importance of the support of friends and families so have designed patient rooms with comfortable seating - including a convertible couch if family wishes to spend the night. Lounge areas dot the inpatient areas for families to gather and to have a quiet space. A family kitchen in the inpatient area will allow people to stay close to their loved ones and the convenience to prepare food that may appeal to a patient's sense of taste at the time.

We have learned from patients and families, from a rich supply of literature focused on patient- and family-centered care, from staff wanting to create a better environment, and education received through the Institute for Family Centered Care. We are excited to see all of the elements come together in the design of the new hospital and clinic.

## Board takes next step toward new hospital

The PMHH Board of Trustees has approved the final design of the new hospital and has authorized administration to move forward with construction drawings and the securing of financing. Groundbreaking is expected to take place early fall. PMHH will hold public forums in May throughout the hospital district to provide community members an opportunity to review the design of the new hospital and to present any questions they may have. The dates, locations, and times of these public meetings will be printed in area newspapers in coming weeks.

Tony Stoll, BHH Partners of Perham, is the lead architect on the project. Horty Elving and Associates of Minneapolis is the health care design consultant. The project will be done under a construction management model which allows the involvement of more local contractors.



# Welcome new doctors



Family  
Medicine

**Dr. Tom  
Seaworth**

Dr. Tom Seaworth is trained in all the major areas of medicine and is qualified to care for most of the health care needs of the entire family, from infants to the elderly. He practices at MeritCare New York Mills.

He and his wife, Mary, have four children. In his spare time, Dr. Seaworth enjoys sports.

To make an appointment with Dr. Seaworth, call MeritCare New York Mills at (218) 385-1800.



Oncology

**Dr. Denise  
Snow**

Dr. Denise Snow specializes in medical oncology and hematology. She sees patients at MeritCare Perham once a month. Dr. Snow is a medical specialist at MeritCare Roger Maris Cancer Center, Fargo, N.D.

To make an appointment with Dr. Snow, call MeritCare Perham at (218) 347-1200.



Podiatry

**Dr. Andrew  
Johnson**

Dr. Andrew Johnson specializes in the diagnosis and treatment, both surgical and medical, for all foot and ankle disorders. He sees patients at MeritCare Perham.

He is married and has three children. Dr. Johnson enjoys hunting, fishing, golfing and boating.

To make an appointment with Dr. Johnson, call MeritCare Perham at (218) 347-1200.

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