

BARIATRIC SURGERY

Helping patients with more than just weight loss

Nearly one-third of Americans are morbidly obese. However, only about 1 percent of the eligible population seeks bariatric surgery to address their obesity. Researchers are discovering more about the metabolic system and how obesity affects chronic diseases such as diabetes and joints.

Knees, hips and backs

In 2003, most patients were in their 40s and 50s, says Dr. Michael Nowak, medical director of the Center for Bariatric Surgery at St. Vincent Charity Medical Center. "The only surgical option we had at the time was gastric bypass. When we operated on older individuals with arthritis, they were not able to take most arthritis medications following surgery. So they were able to lose the weight, but were limited to Tylenol to manage arthritic pain."

The conversion to laparoscopic surgery and the sleeve gastrectomy has changed that for patients. Following a gastric sleeve, they are still able to take anti-inflammatory medica-

tions, known as NSAIDs. "An inability to manage their arthritic pain with medication was the single biggest reason why older patients would not have the surgery," says Nowak.

That is changing. Now more than half of Nowak's patients are over the age of 50. One of their major complaints aside from weight is back or joint pain. "Getting the excess weight off can delay the need for joint replacement and improve outcomes when it is finally needed," says Nowak.

Patients who undergo a total hip or total knee replacement and are morbidly obese increase their complication rates seven-fold, according to Dr. Bernard Stulberg, orthopedic surgeon at the Spine and Orthopedic Institute at St. Vincent Charity Medical Center. "This is particularly true if obesity is associated with diabetes," he adds. "Many centers work to help patients get to a BMI below 40 before proceeding with elective total joint replacement."

Diabetes in remission

Gaining major support from organizations ranging from the American Diabetes Association to the World Health Organization is bariatric surgery as a treatment for Type 2 diabetes.



Michael Nowak, MD, Medical Director of Bariatric Surgery

"Diabetes often goes into remission within 48 hours of surgery," says Nowak. "Multiple intestinal hormones are changed and that affects the feeling of fullness, pancreatic function and glucose metabolism in ways we don't fully understand."

This does not mean that Type 2 diabetes won't reoccur even with the weight loss, according to

"Getting the excess weight off can delay the need for joint replacement and improve outcomes when it is finally needed." — Dr. Michael Nowak,

Medical Director, Center for Bariatric Surgery

Continued on page 3

ST. VINCENT CHARITY



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

Advancing science in service to patients is a theme through this latest issue of *St. Vincent Today*. Our knowledge of obesity, its impact on the body and affects on other health systems, is growing weekly as researchers look to understand the levers that impact weight and metabolism. This is good news for patients searching for a healthier life. **Dr. Michael Nowak**, medical director of the Center for Bariatric Surgery, discusses how the changes in surgery are allowing surgeons to operate on older individuals.

Spine and Orthopedics is another field undergoing rapid change. **Dr. Bernard Stulberg**, who has long made his reputation in the country as one of a handful of revision orthopedic surgeons, has performed the first robotic total hip replacement in the country. He will also lead a clinical trial to use the robot technology for total knee replacement. Orthopedics is about precision and as Dr. Stulberg says, this robot is a “game changer” for orthopedics. **Dr. George Friedhoff** a sports medicine physician, is helping patients find relief from chronic back pain using a non-invasive outpatient treatment known as COOLIEF Radiofrequency Ablation.

2016 was a record-high year for deaths from heroin/opiate/fentanyl overdoses in Cuyahoga County. Our Volunteer Profile of **Bob and Jeannie Brandt** demonstrates how families are affected by the addiction of their loved ones and how they are mobilized to help others.

St. Vincent Charity has engaged in an extensive community engagement initiative to look at expansion of treatment and to support stronger connection between agencies who serve those with addiction. This effort encompasses not only healthcare, but social service agencies, local government, law enforcement and media. This is a community problem and it requires a community response. St. Vincent Charity believes it is our mission to lead this effort.

Finally, I am pleased to feature **Bob Varley**, chair of our board of directors. Bob has been a vital member of our board since 2010 and we know that his leadership and stewardship of our mission will help St. Vincent Charity become a stronger voice in the community. I am also pleased to be working with **Tom Strauss**, new president and CEO of the Sisters of Charity Health System. Tom will be a great voice for Catholic health care.

Have a safe and healthy spring,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "D. F. Perse". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

David F. Perse, MD
President and CEO

BARIATRIC SURGERY

Continued from front cover

Nowak. However, it can eliminate the need for medication and slow the progression of other long-term effects of diabetes, such as eye failure, kidney failure and limb problems.

Nowak says the important piece for patients to remember before and after surgery is to keep moving. "Water aerobics is good because of its low impact on your joints. The YMCA has programs as do some recreation centers. Increase your daily movement incrementally to have an impact. If you walk a half-mile a day, try walking three-quarters of a mile a day," he said.

At St. Vincent Charity, our focus is on change management. "The number one way to lose weight is to reduce calories. Bariatric surgery works because it allows you to feel full with less food. To keep weight off you need to keep your calories down, get moving and build muscle mass," said Nowak.

Dietitians will meet with each patient at least three and as many as nine times prior to surgery to help them learn about dietary changes. The first year following bariatric surgery is what Nowak calls the "honeymoon" phase. You lose the most amount of weight that first year. "The rest of your life, it's behavior and lifestyle changes."

"Mentally, you need to be completely engaged and committed to this process. The number one correlation of long-term success is to follow-up with our program yearly or more often if you are struggling. We're here to help you be successful," he says. ■

To find a bariatric seminar near you please visit our website: www.stvincentcharity.com/bariatrics or call **888.362.9732**.

Watch our online seminar at www.stvincentcharity.com/onlineSeminar.

Hear from patients on our Radiant blog: www.svcradiant.com.

THOMAS J. STRAUSS

Named president and CEO of Sisters of Charity Health System



Thomas J. Strauss has been selected as the new president & CEO of the Sisters of Charity Health System. Headquartered in Cleveland, the health system includes two Catholic hospitals, two elder care facilities, three grantmaking foundations addressing the root causes of poverty, and five outreach organizations in Ohio and South Carolina.

"The Sisters of Charity Health System selected Tom because of his commitment to continuing the health system's Catholic mission, his record of transformational health care leadership and his ability to strategically position our hospitals for future growth," said SCHS Board Chair Robert Spangler M.D. "We are pleased to welcome him to lead this system into the future."

Strauss joins SCHS from CEO Advisory Network, where he is the managing member and co-founder. Consisting of five highly accomplished health care leaders who provide consulting services locally and nationally, CEO Advisory Network is affiliated with DHG Healthcare, which was ranked by Modern Healthcare as one of the top 10 private consulting firms nationally.

Prior, Strauss led Summa Health System for 15 years, during which time Summa experienced significant growth in market share and financial revenues, and earned the NorthCoast 99 award for best workplaces in Northeast Ohio for 11 straight years. His extensive experience also includes leadership roles for Meridia Health System, Baxter Health Care Corporation and Allegheny General Hospital.

"We look forward to Tom's leadership, strategic guidance and expertise to strengthen the Sisters of Charity Health System's mission in health care, while also supporting the growth of our many diverse ministries," said Sister Judith Ann Karam, CSA, congregational leader of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine and chair of CSA Health System Ministries, the member of the Sisters of Charity Health System.

A longtime committed civic and community leader, Strauss has served as a member of the boards of the Greater Akron Chamber, the Akron Regional Hospital Association, Akron Tomorrow, the Austen BioInnovation Institute, BioEnterprise and TeamNEO.

"Providing individuals, families and communities with quality, patient-centered health care is my life's work," said Strauss. "I am honored to join and help position the Sisters of Charity Health System for a strong future. Most importantly, I'm looking forward to leading an organization with the deep roots of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, who have carried forward a mission of service to Northeast Ohioans for more than 165 years." ■



Bob and Jeannie Brandt

OUT OF THEIR FAMILY'S PAIN, A MESSAGE OF HOPE

No matter what they have done, mistakes they have made, they are loved.

“You are beautiful people. You are good people. As a family member, we can’t trust you. We don’t like the choices you are making, but we will always love you.”

Bob and Jeannie Brandt lovingly share this message with Rosary Hall detox patients as they desperately attempt to escape the powerful grip of opioid and heroin addiction. It’s the message that Bob and Jeannie wished they had known to deliver—or wish someone else could have delivered—to their grandson, Robby, during his four-year struggle to overcome addiction. Tragically, Robby lost his battle five years ago at the age of 20, just days before he was to fulfill his long-held dream of serving in our nation’s military.

“When Robby—and our entire family—battled this disease, we didn’t know much about

opioid or heroin addiction,” says Bob. “It wasn’t something people talked about. We didn’t know anyone else who had been through this tragedy, so we did not know where to turn or what to say to help.”

The Brandt family, in fact, did not even tell friends and family how Robby died out of fear of their reaction. How do you tell someone that your grandson died from a heroin overdose? With so little known about opioid addiction, there was a feeling that this was not something that happened to good kids like Robby. It was not until six months after his death that the Brandts were sent a message from Robby to share his story as a way to help others suffering from the disease of opioid addiction.

In going through his room, Robby’s parents, Rob and Carla Brandt, came across their son’s plans to launch a foundation to help others. Robby wanted to protect other kids, and other families, from his suffering. It was

“(Bob and Jeannie Brandt) are the voices of the parents and grandparents who have tried over and over again to talk to these men and women about how their addiction is affecting others.”

— Orlando Howard, Manager of Outpatient Treatment, Rosary Hall

then that the Brandt family formed the nonprofit Robby’s Voice to keep his spirit and dreams alive. The Brandt family has spoken to more than 80,000 students, parents, teachers, counselors, physicians, and law enforcement officers to raise awareness of the growing opioid epidemic, which last year claimed the lives of more than 600 in Northeast Ohio.

Their work through Robby’s Voice led Bob and Jeannie to Rosary Hall as volunteers twice a month to share their story with those in the beginning stages of their recovery. Their honesty about the pain they felt as grandparents—their daily challenges and range of emotions from love to anger to distrust—is intended to protect these young men and women from their family tragedy.

“When Bob and Jeannie come, they are the voices of the parents and grandparents who have tried over and over again to talk to these men and women about how their addiction is affecting others,” says Orlando Howard, Manager of Outpatient Treatment Services for Rosary Hall. “When they are in the throes of their illness and not focusing, these patients don’t have a chance to settle down to really listen to their own parents. In telling their story, Bob and Jeannie give patients the



Bob and Jeannie Brandt meet with inpatient detox patients to share stories of addiction and how it impacts families.



opportunity to see the pain in their eyes and to realize this is a family disease.”

As difficult as it is, Bob and Jeannie describe the harrowing day Robby went missing and was then, later, found dead by police from an overdose. Their story serves as a wake-up call to patients that their choices rip through the fabric of the entire family. As a grandmother, Jeannie typically makes a point of sitting next to a young woman in the group, holding her hand as she tells her story, hoping to connect. Hoping to save one life. Jeannie not only speaks from her heart, but from Robby’s, as she talks about the challenges for family members living with an addict.

“As a family member, we get furious. You become thieves. You lie to us,” Jeannie said. “We understand that there is a demon inside of you that has changed you totally. We want to take on your disease, but this is your battle.”

Most of all, the Brandts just want these patients to know that no matter what they have done, no matter the mistakes they have made, they are loved.

Bob and Jeannie encourage them to use the resources available as they struggle through recovery—to call a friend, to go to a meeting,

to fight the opioid demon because their “life is worth it. Don’t give up, because we don’t give up on you.”

As lifelong Catholics, the Brandts also turn to their faith to handle their personal pain and to help those in recovery. For every patient they meet, the Brandts provide two patron saint medals—one of St. Jude, to provide the strength and courage to handle the bumps in the road of recovery and, second, St. Anthony, to help those feeling lost and alone to find the person they once were.

“Prayer is to help you get through the rough spots,” Jeannie says. “Don’t be afraid to pray. Right now, you might not think you are deserving of prayer, but I pray for every person that walks through the doors of Rosary Hall.”

This year, on the day of the five-year anniversary of Robby’s death, the Brandts’ gift had an immediate, emotional impact on “Dan”, a Rosary Hall patient.

The week before entering the hospital, Dan walked the streets, knowing he needed help, but also looking to score the drugs his brain was telling him he needed. As he looked down, Dan saw something shiny on the

sidewalk, bent down and picked it up. It was a St. Anthony medal. Hearing the Brandts talk about prayers to St. Anthony, Dan knew it was a sign from God that he found that medal on the sidewalk that day. He believes that God intervened, leading him to St. Vincent and to the Brandts, so that he could find the person in himself he had lost to his addiction.

Those are the moments that make the difference for Bob and Jeannie. It is difficult to re-live their pain as they tell their story of the grandson they lost. It is agonizing to remember the isolation they felt as they struggled through an epidemic that, at the time, no one really knew existed. However, each time they talk to a patient like Dan or receive a letter that says, “your story saved my life,” they know they are celebrating Robby’s life and giving him a voice to help save one person—and one family—from tragedy. ■

If you or a loved one are in need of help for addiction, call **216.363.2580**. Press 4 to speak to someone immediately. To learn more about addiction, watch The Addicted Brain educational video at www.stvincentcharity.com/rosaryhall.

LEADING THE WAY IN NEW ADVANCES IN ORTHOPEDICS

Treatments are designed
to improve outcomes
for patients



The Spine and Orthopedic Institute at St. Vincent Charity Medical Center prides itself on having a deep bench of entrepreneurial physicians who are constantly exploring ways to improve life for patients.

Some of the newer advances are designed to provide patients with improved long-term results and fewer complications. Ultimately, the name of the game is better care whether its surgical or non-surgical.

Dr. Bernard Stulberg recently became the first orthopedic surgeon in the world to use the newly released TSolution One only active robotic system to perform a successful total hip replacement surgery. This

technology enables a surgeon-controlled robot to cut the bone to precise shape and position and is expected to increase the accuracy of hip implant placement and improve long-term outcomes for patients.

“This is a game changer for orthopedic surgery,” Dr. Stulberg says. “Advancing and combining previous surgical technologies with improved imaging capability allows surgeons to develop a patient-specific and unique surgical plan prior to surgery. The plan is then executed with the level of precision that only robotics can offer. That means more accurate placement, less post-surgical pain and fewer problems, such as hip displacement, after surgery.”

While robotic technology has existed for some time to assist with orthopedic surgery, the TSolution is the only one in place in which the robot prepares the cavity for surgery. With it, Dr. Stulberg says, he is able to create a cavity the exact size, with symmetrical, smooth edges, to accommodate the implant. “This precise fit creates less opportunity for movement of the implant in the bone, assuring a more predictable attachment,” he says. “The positioning accuracy enhances the ultimate stability and loads on the implant to allow for increased longevity of the device.”

With repetitive dislocation of a hip implant as the leading cause for the need for hip revision surgery, this revolutionary technology is expected to reduce the chances for implant failure and reduce post-surgical pain. St. Vincent is the only hospital in the Midwest currently certified to use this

modern system, and has recently been approved as a site for a clinical trial for use of the robot in total knee replacement.

In addition to Dr. Stulberg, Dr. Audley Mackel and Dr. Lou Keppler are also trained on the system.

Those who suffer chronic back pain now have a non-invasive outpatient option known as COOLIEF Cooled Radiofrequency System. Recognizing that many patients, even though they may be in extreme, chronic back pain, often refuse surgery because of the risks and extended recovery periods, St. Vincent is employing this system to bring patients relief without the complications of major surgery.

With just a small incision, physicians target and burn the nerves causing a patient's neck and back pain. Studies have shown the treatment provides

“This is a game changer for orthopedic surgery.” – Dr. Bernard Stulberg

“One of the most significant benefits of the COOLIEF is our patients’ ability to stop taking narcotic pain medicines. With the opioid epidemic we are facing in our community today, we, as caregivers, are searching for less-invasive treatments that don’t rely on medication.” – Dr. George Friedhoff

patients with up to 24 months of pain relief and improved physical function without the months of rehab, risk of infection and hospitalization associated with surgery.

In less than six months, St. Vincent Sports Medicine Specialist Dr. George Friedhoff has performed nearly 100 ablations after receiving specialized training on the equipment.

“We have had tremendous success with this technology. With surgery, there are three options—a patient can get better, not get any better, or, sometimes, a patient can get worse. But, you don’t know which of those outcomes you will have until after surgery. With the COOLIEF, I know right away if the patient will respond to the procedure without any of the adverse outcomes of surgery.”

Prior to surgery, Dr. Friedhoff said he is able to perform a dry, test run with Lidocaine. If the patient feels relief from that, then he knows he or she is a candidate for a successful COOLIEF ablation.

While traditional radiofrequency ablation has been used for some time to heat and destroy nervous tissue causing back pain, the advanced COOLIEF system provides greater and longer relief for patients. The new technique uses cooled water to slow the heating process, thereby allowing the heat to penetrate a larger area of the offending nerve. This allows St. Vincent surgeons to create a larger lesion at the pain site, leading to more effective and longer last results.

“The majority of patients are completely pain free as soon as they get up from the table.

I had one patient who was actually able to chop a pile of wood shortly after his procedure—something he could have never done before,” Dr. Friedhoff said. “One of the most significant benefits of the COOLIEF is our patients’ ability to stop taking narcotic pain medicines. With the opioid epidemic we are facing in our community today, we, as caregivers, are searching for less-invasive treatments that don’t rely on medication.” ■

BOB VARLEY

There is a place for Catholic health care in Cleveland



Robert W. Varley still remembers coming out of an anesthesia fog in the recovery room at St. Vincent Charity Medical Center. “Two nurses were there and I learned they had each been working at St. Vincent for 40 years. They were there because of the mission and it showed in their compassion to patients like me,” says Varley.

Recently retired as senior policy advisor-Midwest at Dominion, where he worked for nearly 40 years, Varley was elected Chair of the St. Vincent Charity Medical Center Board of Directors, effective in January 2017. He replaces Mel Pye, who served in that role for more than 10 years.

He came to St. Vincent Charity in 2010 after the unwinding of the partnership with University Hospitals. Sister Judith Ann Karam, CSA, then president and CEO of St. Vincent Charity and the Sisters of Charity Health System, was rebuilding the board. Varley says he saw St. Vincent Charity as an important asset to the downtown community.

“I still believe there is a place for Catholic health care in our community,” says Varley. “St. Vincent Charity is an important institution in downtown Cleveland.”

As board chair, he believes in marshaling a team to support the strategic direction and to help make it a stronger hospital. “Addressing the opiate crisis and addiction is what this hospital does. I believe it’s imperative that we continue to be responsive to the needs of the community,” he says.

One of the ways St. Vincent Charity has engaged with the community is through its growing relationship with Cleveland State University. But at the end of the day, it’s the care and how it’s delivered that Varley sees as a key difference.

“Having been a patient here, I have literally seen the quality of care. The staff—the caregivers—take that title literally and patients feel it,” he says.

Varley has a long history of service to Cleveland that includes board involvement with Cuyahoga County Public Library and The Leadership Center in addition to St. Vincent Charity. He and his wife, Lorene, have two grown sons and a new granddaughter. ■

For more information, visit www.stvincentcharity.com/spine-ortho.



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MAN'S BEST FRIEND—AND CAREGIVER

How pet therapy is helping St. Vincent Charity's neediest patients



One of St. Vincent Charity's newest employees isn't who you might expect. He may not be a nurse or a doctor, but he's making a significant impact on our patients. Meet Cooper—St. Vincent Charity's new certified therapy dog!

Pet therapy makes use of dogs or other animals to help those who are ill recover from or manage health problems. The benefits of pet therapy can be both physical and mental and include:

- Reduction of blood pressure
- Improved cardiovascular health
- Releases endorphins (oxytocin) that have a calming effect
- Provides comfort
- Reduces anxiety
- Decreases feelings of isolation and alienation
- Diminishes overall physical pain

Cooper began visiting with St. Vincent Charity patients weekly back in January with his handler, Janine Smalley, RN-BC, BSN ECT Coordinator. Together the two visit all of the medical center's behavioral health units—where he has become a real asset and value to caregivers and patients alike.



"It seems Cooper just knows exactly who to go to exactly when they need him most," said Smalley.

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