

PRESS RELEASE

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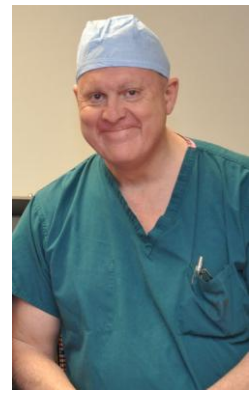
VALLEY HOSPITAL AWARDED 1ST JOINT REPLACEMENT “GOLD SEAL OF APPROVAL” SOUTH OF SAN ANTONIO

*Valley Baptist Medical Center-Harlingen becomes 1st in
South Texas certified for knee and hip replacements surgery
by national accrediting agency; hospital has helped thousands of
Valley patients, Winter Texans to walk again without pain*

HARLINGEN, Aug. 3, 2011 -- [Valley Baptist Medical Center-Harlingen](http://www.valleybaptist.net) has become the first hospital south of San Antonio to be certified with a “Gold Seal of Approval™” specifically for knee and hip replacement surgeries by a national accrediting organization for healthcare organizations.

[The Joint Commission](http://www.jointcommission.org), which is based in Illinois, granted the first-ever specialty certification in the Valley for knee and hip replacements following a survey on July 28, which included interviews with some of the thousands of Valley residents who have received knee and hip replacement surgery at Valley Baptist. VBMC-Harlingen is now one of only 11 hospitals in Texas which have the disease-specific” specialty certification in knee and hip replacements.

Joint replacement surgery is performed for patients who have pain, discomfort, or loss of function because of arthritis, accidents, or other causes. Arthritis can eventually cause a joint to deteriorate or wear out to the point that partial or total replacement is necessary. The replacement surgery is designed to restore the patient’s ability to walk and relieve pain.



Dr. Rick Bassett, Orthopedic Surgeon and Medical Director of Valley Baptist-Harlingen's Orthopedics / Joint Replacement Program, has performed more than 10,000 knee replacement and 2,000 hip replacement surgeries at Valley Baptist. Patients have come to Valley Baptist from across the country and Canada to have their knee or hip replacement surgery with Dr. Bassett. In fact, Dr. Bassett has operated on patients from 48 states, including Alaska and Hawaii.

"This certification for our excellence in joint replacement is a testament to the expertise, dedication and care of Dr. Bassett and our entire joint replacement team at Valley Baptist, including all of our orthopedic surgeons and nursing and rehab staff," said **James Eastham**, FACHE, President and CEO of Valley Baptist Health System. "Our physicians and employees provide outstanding care to our patients on a daily basis. This national honor is great news for our community and for the entire Valley."

Bill Adams, CEO for Valley Baptist-Harlingen, noted that the Joint Commission survey team gave the Valley Baptist joint replacement team a perfect score – without issuing a single "requirement for improvement."

"The surveyor spent much of her time summarizing the positive patient comments that she heard when she was interviewing patients ... they were extremely pleased," Mr. Adams said.

Ann McDonald-Upton, Chief Nursing Officer for Valley Baptist-Harlingen, said that the survey results were especially impressive given that this was Valley Baptist's first attempt at a specialty disease-specific certification in total joint replacement surgery. Previously, Valley Baptist-Harlingen was the first hospital in the Valley to be certified as a "Primary Stroke Center" for care of stroke patients by the Joint Commission.

"Our physicians and nursing team did an outstanding job ... we are so proud of them," Ms. McDonald-Upton added.

Valley Baptist's orthopedics department follows national standards to reduce the length of stay and risk of infections for patients hospitalized after orthopedic surgery. For example, under the "Surgical Care Improvement Project" guidelines, patients are given antibiotics at optimum times to reduce the chance of infection. In addition, Valley Baptist's orthopedic surgery rooms are equipped with Laminar Flow, a positive sterile air flow system which reduces infections.

"In achieving Joint Commission certification, Valley Baptist Medical Center has demonstrated its commitment to the highest level of care for its patients with knee and hip replacements," said Jean Range, M.S., R.N., C.P.H.Q. executive director for

Disease-Specific Care Certification for the Joint Commission. “Certification is a voluntary process and I commend Valley Baptist for successfully undertaking this challenge to elevate its standard of care and instill confidence in the community it serves.”

Following joint replacement surgery, Valley Baptist helps patients recover through care on a specially-equipped orthopedics floor, with 39 private rooms, staffed by nurses experienced at caring for joint replacement patients.



Overhead trapezes and bars above the patient beds help recovering patients by providing leverage when they are trying to move in their bed or get in or out of the bed. Once the patient is out of bed, they begin to walk again with assistance from physical therapists and side rails located along the hallways in the unit.

Valley Baptist also offers comprehensive rehabilitation programs which range from an intensive inpatient rehabilitation program to outpatient services after discharge from the hospital. Physical therapy plays a major role in the recovery of orthopedic patients, with Valley Baptist patients receiving physical therapy twice a day.

Rolando Ramos, RN, BSN, Nurse Manager for the Valley Baptist’s orthopedics floor on the sixth floor of the hospital, said the Joint Commission surveyors examined the entire process from when a doctor sees a potential joint replacement in their office until the time the patient is discharged after their surgery.

“The Joint Commission Gold Seal of Approval indicates that we are ensuring excellent quality of care -- and the most up-to-date care, using scientifically-proven ‘evidence-based’ procedures,” Mr. Ramos said. “As a center of excellence, we standardize the care for all of our hip and knee patients.”

Cristina Almanza, RN, BSN, Clinical Supervisor for the orthopedics unit -- which features large rooms that have been remodeled and upgraded in recent years -- said that a major focus of Valley Baptist’s joint replacement program is on managing pain for patients.

Valley Baptist chaplains help by providing spiritual and emotional support while patients recover from their surgery.

“We’ve developed a nursing plan of care specifically for knee and hip replacements,” Ms. Almanza added. “The plan is individualized towards the needs of joint replacement patients, including post-operative care, patient mobility, infection prevention, and patient education. If we educate the patients, they became their own advocate and decision maker – which helps in the recovery process.”

In fact, Valley Baptist holds weekly pre-operative classes to educate patients prior to their surgery and to prepare them for their hospital stay. Patients and family members are also taught how to care for themselves after they return home following discharge from the hospital. The education classes are taught by specially-trained orthopedic nurses. In addition, **Jan Kauffman**, RN, BSN, served as a “center of excellence” consultant, helping Valley Baptist prepare for the Joint Commission survey.

For more information on knee, hip and other joint replacement procedures, please consult your physician and visit www.ValleyBaptist.net.

About Valley Baptist Health System

Valley Baptist Health System is a faith-based regional health system focused on improving the lives of the people it serves by providing high quality health care and medical education throughout South Texas guided by the healing and teaching ministry of Jesus Christ.

Valley Baptist extends many of its services beyond its facilities and into local communities, offering free screenings for the community, support groups and numerous educational opportunities. For more information, visit www.ValleyBaptist.net.

About The Joint Commission

Founded in 1951, The Joint Commission seeks to continuously improve health care for the public, in collaboration with other stakeholders, by evaluating health care organizations and inspiring them to excel in providing safe and effective care of the highest quality and value. The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits more than 18,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. The Joint

Commission also provides certification of more than 1,700 disease-specific care programs, primary stroke centers, and health care staffing services. An independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Learn more about The Joint Commission at www.jointcommission.org.