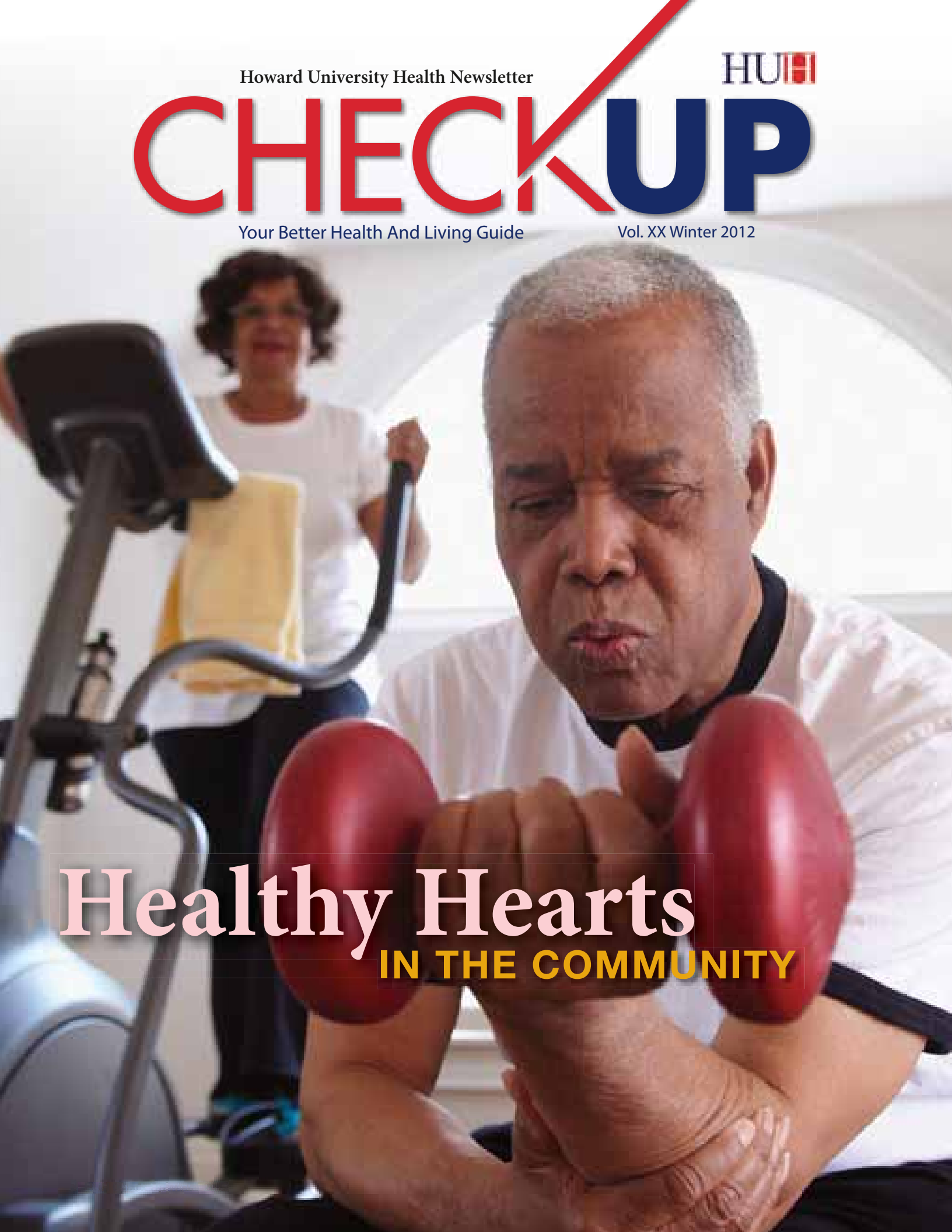
Howard University Health Newsletter

CHECKUP

Your Better Health And Living Guide

Vol. XX Winter 2012



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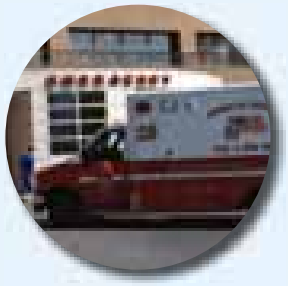

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YOUR HEALTH CARE IS OUR CONCERN

Welcome to another issue of the *HUH Check Up*, where we encourage a healthy lifestyle for you, your family and the community.

Happy New Year! The start of the year is an opportune time to highlight some of the new initiatives and programs being offered here at Howard University Hospital. This past fall, we unveiled a new heart center. While heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the U.S., our cardiologists and nurses are committed to helping decrease this high percentage, evidenced in part by the center's cardiac rehabilitation program, which one patient describes in this issue as having given her "a new lease on life."

We are also in the midst of opening a new musculoskeletal center in a renovated section on the first floor of the Hospital, and we have strengthened our Fast Track program, which is designed to decrease the emergency room wait time at HUH.

Cultural Tourism DC recently named the Hospital to the Georgia Avenue Heritage Trail. It's a recognition that we appreciate, and coincides with the celebration of the Hospital's 150th anniversary this year. Visit our website—http://huhealthcare.com/healthcare/hospital—in the upcoming months for news and events commemorating the anniversary.

Finally, we hope you'll visit our HUH Health Pavilion during the 19th annual NBC4 Health and Fitness Expo, Jan. 14-15, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center.

On behalf of the Howard University Hospital community, we hope you enjoy this issue of *HUH Check Up*. We remain committed to providing you with relevant and timely information to assist you with your health care needs, and as always we look forward to serving you.

Sincerely,

Larry Warren
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www.huhealthcare.com

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Cover Photo: © by Getty Images

Hospital Site Recognized on Heritage Trail

Howard University Hospital (HUH) and the Howard University School of Communications were both named to the new Georgia Avenue Heritage Trail by Cultural Tourism DC. The Hospital was added to the trail because it sits on what was once the site of Griffith Stadium, the Washington area's sports center from 1911 to 1965. The School of Communications building was once Freedmen's Hospital, the precursor to HUH. The heritage trail includes 19 historical sites and begins on Georgia Avenue at S Street, NW and ends at New Hampshire Avenue, NW.

Stay Connected to HUH

Howard University Hospital's website has a new look. Visit **http://huhealthcare.com/healthcare/hospital** for the latest updates about the Hospital's services and doctors. You can also become a fan of the Hospital's new Facebook page and read about the research being done at the Hospital while accessing regular tips for staying healthy.

EMERGENCY ROOM PATIENTS

On a 'Fast Track' to Care

By Tamara E. Holmes

Howard University Hospital (HUH) is improving the emergency care experience with its Fast Track program, designed to relieve emergency room waits for *all* patients.

Fast Track allows Hospital staff to separate the most acutely ill patients—such as those suffering heart attacks—from those who come to the emergency room for sprained ankles, lingering colds and other minor illnesses.

"If your illness is not as acute, we're taking you out of the regular emergency medicine population and putting you on this rapid track," says Dr. Geoffrey Mountvarner, chief and chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine.

As a result, most patients will see a medical provider within 30 minutes, though it may take longer for treatments to be completed, depending upon the injury or illness.

"We recognized that there were a number of patients who were waiting, and we knew if we could get them in and out faster, it would increase patient satisfaction and increase the quality of care," says Mountvarner.

In Fast Track, patients' ailments are categorized into one of five levels. Level one patients are the most seriously ill, suffering from such ailments as heart attacks, acute bleeding or strokes. Level two patients also have serious medical conditions, such as a fast heart rate or other abnormal vital signs. Level three patients are those with semi-serious ailments, such as a fever and a cough with no other symptoms. All patients whose illnesses fall between levels one and three are seen in the traditional emergency department.

The fourth and fifth levels of ailments are less severe. Level four patients are those with minor injuries, such as a twisted ankle or a cut needing stitches. Level five patients are those with even less serious issues, such as those who need to have stitches removed. These patients will be steered to Fast Track.

> ***"We recognized that there were a number of patients who were waiting, and we knew if we could get them in and out faster, it would increase patient satisfaction and increase the quality of care."***

"The triage nurse uses pre-established criteria to make the determination regarding what part of the emergency department the arriving patients will be accommodated," says Mayble Craig, R.N., chief nurse officer for HUH.

Fast Track is currently operational 16 hours per day, "but if the need arises, we will expand to 24 hours," Craig says.

While Fast Track staff see patients whose condition warrants immediate care and who can't wait to get a regular doctor's appointment, it's not meant to replace a primary care physician.

"Overall, our goal is to have people still go to their private doctors for continuity of care," says Craig. "They know you, they know your issues, they know how you are responding to various medications and they can help you coordinate the services that you may be receiving from multiple specialists."

Craig adds, "The Fast Track staff will treat you and refer you back to your private doctor or help you obtain a private doctor."

For patients, the changes will make the time they spend at HUH more pleasant. "Emergency room patients will experience less wait time and rapid turnaround," Mountvarner says. ◪

The Fast Track staff includes Mayble Craig, R.N., chief nurse officer; Dr. Lyle Campbell, assistant clinical director; Dr. Adrienne Wilson, director of Fast Track; Michael K. Jones, executive officer; Dr. Geoffrey Mountvarner, chairman, Department of Emergency Medicine; and Viktoria Holley-Trimmer, R.N., nurse manager.

New Heart Center Offers Comprehensive Care

The Howard University Hospital Heart Center is a new state-of-the-art, comprehensive diagnostic and treatment facility where highly trained clinicians deliver the best in medical care in one convenient location. The center offers cardiac testing (or cardiac catheterization), heart imaging and cardiac rehabilitation. There are several rooms/areas including:

- ✓ Private treatment rooms and a preparation and recovery room.
- ✓ An echocardiogram area, where ultrasound techniques are used to create two- and three-dimensional images of the heart to evaluate its valves and chambers.
- ✓ An electrocardiogram area, where doctors check the electrical heart activity to aid in diagnosing unexplained chest pain, which could be caused by a heart attack, abnormal heart rhythm or inflammation of the sac surrounding the heart.
- ✓ A cardiac stress area, where staff members test the heart's ability to respond to physical stress.
- ✓ A cardiac catheterization and electrophysiology room, where the latest medical technology is used to treat blockages of the heart and abnormal heart rhythms.

For more information about the Hospital's Heart Center, please call 202-865-7677 or visit **http://huhealthcare.com/healthcare/hospital/Specialty-Services/heart**.

February is American Heart Month

Cardiovascular disease, or heart disease, is the leading cause of death in the U.S. Learn about the symptoms and risk factors of heart disease and how diet, nutrition and exercise can help with prevention. Visit **www.cdc.gov/features/heartmonth** for more information.

Patient Receives *Heartfelt Care* from Cardiac Rehab Staff

By Stacy Gilliam

Jacqueline Deckard (right) says that her 12 weeks in the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program was supported by a caring staff, including Nurse Vanessa Rios (left).

Jacqueline Deckard wasn't sure she was experiencing a heart attack, but after receiving heart health information at a sorority meeting, she decided to take an aspirin and a dose of Pepto-Bismol. The next morning, she took another aspirin and went to see her doctor at Howard University Hospital (HUH).

"He told me to go immediately to the emergency room," she says. "I did an about-face and walked right there."

And that's where Deckard, 64, begins gushing about the care that she received at HUH—from a friendly security guard to the interns who helped perform her EKG test to some tough love by one nurse who, through rehabilitation, helped give her a new lease on life.

With three clogged arteries, her doctor ordered a triple-bypass operation, her first major surgery. She had every reason to be nervous, but Deckard says she felt at ease, thanks to a reassuring staff in the intensive care unit. She had a successful operation and even stayed longer to take care of other health matters.

"You talk about wonderful nurses? You felt like they really cared about you, and that you were not just a number," says Deckard, who retired after 39 years as an academic counselor for Howard's School of Business.

Deckard recovered from heart surgery with 12 weeks in the Hospital's Cardiac Rehabilitation Program, which includes an exercise regimen, education, counseling on heart healthy living and behavior modification to get patients accustomed to a healthy, productive lifestyle. The rehab center benefits cardiac patients who have had a heart or lung transplant, coronary artery surgery, stable angina pectoris and coronary angioplasty.

The program did wonders for Deckard. She progressed from barely walking at all to walking 3 mph on the treadmill and working out in the training room for an hour. Today at home, she eats a healthier diet and exercises five days a week.

"I haven't exercised like this since college in the 1970s!" she says. She gives much of the credit to Vanessa Rios, R.N., cardiac rehabilitation coordinator, who Deckard says pushed and challenged her every step of the way. But Rios gives some of that credit back.

"Jacqueline really embraced the therapy," says Rios. "She was committed to her recovery. She made time and made it a priority."

Deckard left with a newfound respect for the Hospital and its nurses. "Ms. Rios, in particular, was very encouraging," Deckard says. "She seems to understand that you may not feel like doing certain things, but she motivates you to do it. You're talking to a very happy patient."

For more information about the Hospital's Cardiac Rehabilitation program, please call 202-865-5380.

New Musculoskeletal Center to Open this Winter

Howard University Hospital will soon open a Musculoskeletal Center, a one-stop-shop offering patients the highest quality and care in orthopaedics. The new center, which is located in a refurbished suite on the first floor, will now house the Hospital's Department of Orthopaedic Surgery.

"We wanted to offer a service line for orthopaedics, while creating a seamless process for patients," says Dr. Terry L. Thompson, professor and chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery. "Medicine is always evolving and we want to bring these services together in one location to create synergy for our patients."

Thompson emphasizes that the relocation of these offices, which were originally in the Towers building, also places patients closer to other departments, such as the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, making it easier for patients to consult with other doctors, if necessary.

The Department of Orthopaedic Surgery currently offers a wide range of surgical and nonsurgical treatment of injuries and diseases of the musculoskeletal system: bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles and nerves. Board-certified surgeons practice general orthopaedics, with some specializing in fractures, sports medicine, arthroscopy, foot and ankle, hand and upper extremity surgery, joint replacement and surgery of the spine.

Thompson says that these services won't change; just the location where patients will go to receive them.

"This makes it easier for a patient who may need to have multiple needs met," says Thompson. "Having these offices close to one another makes it more accessible for our patients, which can help ease the stress of navigating to different locations."

Ask a Doctor

Dr. Terry L. Thompson,
Chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery

What types of services does your department provide to the community?

We provide comprehensive orthopaedic care for bone and joint problems, with subspecialty expertise in joint replacement, fracture surgery, hand and upper extremity surgery, sports medicine and arthroscopic surgery and surgery of the spine.

Eighty percent of U.S. adults experience back pain. What are some techniques to prevent the pain and to minimize serious back injuries?

While back pain is common, many back injuries are preventable. Attention to good posture is essential for those who sit most of the day. For those whose work involves lifting heavy objects, it is important to observe proper mechanics such as: 1) knowing or testing weight before lifting; 2) keeping the back straight; and 3) initiating the lift with the legs, not the back. During the winter months when shoveling snow is necessary, take frequent breaks.

Should athletes or those who exercise regularly take extra precautions so as not to pull or strain muscles and joints?

Most athletic activities place great demands on the muscles, bones and joints. Important steps for injury prevention include: 1) sports-specific training programs to prepare for participation and competition; 2) warm-up and stretching before activities; and 3) reduction or cessation of activities in response to early warning signs such as persistent muscle or bone pain and joint stiffness.

What is carpal tunnel syndrome and what can people do to prevent themselves from getting it?

Carpal tunnel syndrome is pain, numbness and weakness in the hand and fingers resulting from compression of the median nerve at the wrist. This condition is common in workers who handle heavy equipment and those who use their hands repetitively throughout the day in work activities. Wrist supports and various ergonomics aids have been found to be useful in decreasing the risk for developing carpal tunnel syndrome.

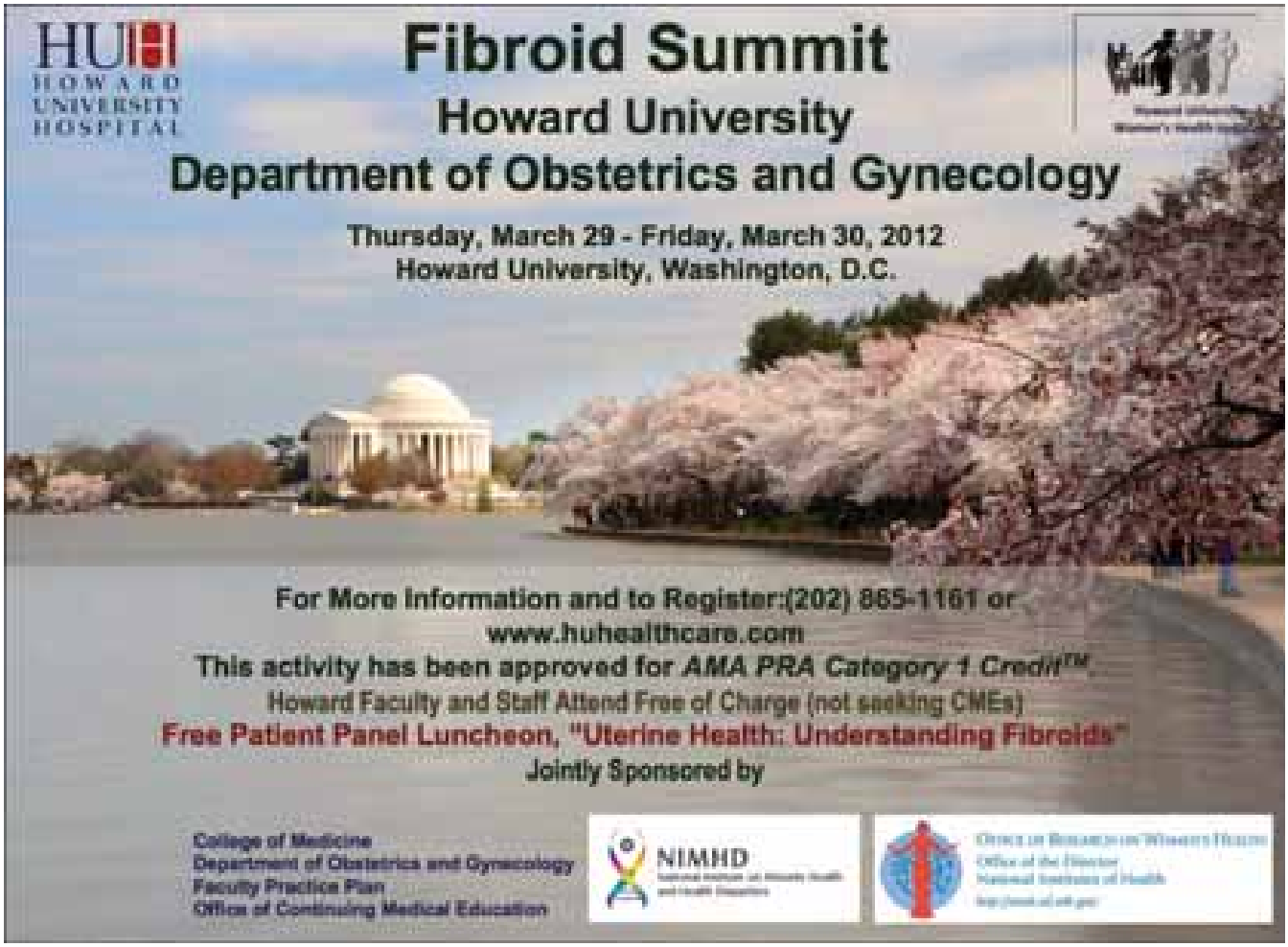
What is minimally invasive hip replacement surgery and what qualifies a patient for this type of surgery?

Minimally invasive hip replacement allows for the operation to be performed through smaller incisions than traditionally used. The requirements for this type of surgery include: 1) near normal body size; and 2) the absence of major deformity in the hip. Your surgeon can advise you if this option is available to you. ◪

HUH Doctors Are *Super*

Cardiologist Dr. Bryan Curry was one of 20 HUH doctors deemed super.

More than 20 doctors from Howard University Hospital and the Howard University Faculty Practice Plan were named by their peers as outstanding practicing physicians in the Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia area. The results were published in the *Washington Post*. Last spring, Super Doctors®, a listing of top doctors, sent surveys to thousands of physicians in the area seeking nominees in 30 categories. Each nominee was then evaluated by the Super Doctors® research staff using 10 established indicators, including peer recognition and professional achievement. Visit **http://huhealthcare.com/healthcare/hospital** to read more about Howard's "super doctors" and their specialties.



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Screenings, Services and Group Support

Bariatric Surgery & Medical Weight Loss Information Session
Monthly, Third Thursday
6:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.
HUH, Freedmen's Hall
Call 202-865-1286

Bariatric Support Group
Monthly, Third Thursday
6:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.
HUH, Towers Bldg., Suite 4100-B
Call 202-865-1286

Cancer Support Group
Monthly, Fourth Tuesday
10:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.
HU Cancer Center, Room 209
5th and V Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C.
Call 202-865-4655

Crohns and Colitis Foundation
Monthly, Third Saturday
1:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.
HUH, 2038-B
Call 301-260-7591

Diabetes Support Group
Monthly, Fourth Tuesday
6:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.
HUH, Towers Auditorium
Call 202-865-3350

Free Memory Screening
Daily, Monday – Friday
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
HUH, Division of Geriatrics
Tower Building, Suite 2309
Call 202-865-3776

Grief and Loss
Monthly, First Thursday
5:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.
HUH Chapel, First Floor
Call 202-865-1587

HIV Screening and Support Group
Monday–Friday
9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
Monday–Thursday
2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.
HUH, Room 1I24
Call 202-865-4942

HUH WIC Family Center and Beautiful Beginnings Club
Monthly, Second Wednesday
1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.
HUH, Room 3J14
Call 202-865-4564

Prostate Cancer Screening
Monthly, Third Wednesday
1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.
HU Cancer Center, Radiation Oncology Room
5th and V Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C.
Call 202-806-5539

Smoking Cessation
Monthly, Third Wednesday
5:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.
HUH Chapel, First Floor
Call 202-865-1587

Suicide Prevention and Intervention Training
Bi-weekly, Second and Fourth Wednesday
2:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.
HU Mental Health Clinic
530 College Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.
Call 202-806-7706

Survivors of Homicide, Inc. Peer Support Group
Weekly, Thursday
7:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.
HU Mental Health Clinic
530 College Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.
Call 202-258-2564

Survivors of Suicide Survivors Circle Support Group
Monthly, Last Tuesday
6:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.
HU Mental Health Clinic
530 College Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.
Call 202-806-7706

Sickle Cell Screenings
Weekly, Wednesday
9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
HUH, Main Lobby
Call 202-865-4443

Transplant Group
Weekly, Thursday
9:00 a.m.–10:30 a.m.
HUH, Room 5J17
Call 202-865-1443