



## **Gunn: Joint replacement center offers new option**

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When the Joint Replacement Center at KershawHealth opened last month, it was a truly collaborative effort resulting in significant benefits for those having total joint replacement surgery. Today, the majority of patients will have surgery, begin therapy the same day and return home on the third day to continue their rehabilitation in the comfort of home. They will return to the things that mean the most to them -- home, family, work, and favorite activities -- sooner and further along in their recovery than before. Already, those who have been through the new program are excited about the change. They recognize the advantages the center offers, from a dedicated nurse navigator to guide them through the entire process, to an interactive therapy program which encourages them to accomplish goals more quickly.

"If it isn't broke, don't fix it," goes the old saying. Our system wasn't broken. Those who chose KershawHealth for their joint replacement surgery were receiving excellent care from talented physicians, staff and therapists. But today's joint replacement patients increasingly are younger, more active and expect to return to daily activities more quickly. They are raising the bar. Responding to the challenge was the only answer to ensure the future success of our orthopaedics program.

With the help of experts from Orthopaedic Advantage and support from physicians and staff, we reexamined the program from the ground up. To begin with, all the stakeholders brainstormed what the ideal patient experience would look like, both from the patient's perspective and ours. It quickly became evident what was important. Patients want a seamless transition from the surgeon's office, to the hospital, to therapy and home. They want to know what to expect every step of the way. They want a touchpoint -- someone who can provide answers to questions, offer encouragement and be with them and their family throughout the process. On KershawHealth's side, coordination between a host of departments, from registration, to surgery, to food and nutrition services, was essential to success. It also held the potential to increase efficiency, enhance patient safety and reduce costs.

Then the team took our entire process apart, piece by piece, and compared it to that ideal. Some things were possible, while others (a totally new building comes to mind) were not. It wasn't always easy, as the exercise challenged norms and called for innovation, but everyone involved was committed to success. Redesigning the patient experience involved items as diverse as revamping pre-admission testing to rethinking the set-up of operating rooms, and included building a therapy gym and creating a designated nursing "unit-within-a-unit" for joint replacement patients.

One of the advantages of being a smaller hospital is the opportunity to be nimble. We were able to identify an opportunity, gather stakeholders, develop a process and execute a new system in a relatively short period of time. The success of that opportunity is already showing, both for KershawHealth and for those in our community.

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