

HealthLINK

WINTER 2024

YOUR CONNECTION TO HEALTH & WELLNESS

NEXT-LEVEL NEUROSURGERY

OUR EXPERT TEAM OF NEUROSURGEONS USES
A ROBOTIC GUIDANCE SYSTEM TO PERFORM
MINIMALLY INVASIVE SPINE SURGERY—WITH
IMPROVED PATIENT OUTCOMES

INSIDE:

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New rheumatology practice opens at
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Meet our community health workers

 **ValleyHealth**
Healthier, together.

WELCOME

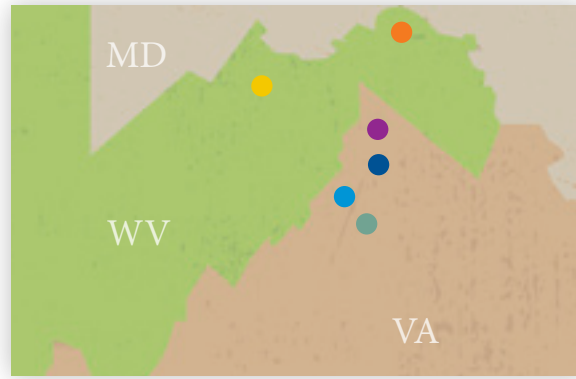
MOVING FORWARD

Moving forward—that’s our goal at Valley Health when it comes to patient care. To remain a trusted leader in health care and a place where everyone receives compassionate, patient-centered care, we must consistently strive to improve. We do this by investing in state-of-the-art technology, analyzing and updating our systemwide processes, and expanding our services and expertise.

In this issue, you’ll read about our new Mazor robot that improves spine surgery, making it easier for physicians to perform minimally invasive surgery with smaller incisions and shorter hospital stays. We’re moving forward in the treatment of inflammatory diseases with our two new rheumatologists, who came on board this fall. Patients can now stay closer to home to receive care for their musculoskeletal, autoimmune and inflammatory conditions. We’ve also rolled out an updated version of MyChart and a new Valley Health mobile app, which will make your healthcare experience easier and more convenient.

As Valley Health continues to move forward, seeking better ways to deliver care, we hope that you will move forward with us—as a partner, a patient and as a community.

On the cover: Neurosurgeon Charbel Fawaz, MD, of Valley Health Virginia Brain & Spine.



Valley Health is a not-for-profit system of hospitals, services and providers. For more information about the many ways we serve the health and wellness needs of the community, visit valleyhealthlink.com/community.

Valley Health System includes:

- Winchester Medical Center (Winchester, VA)
- Hampshire Memorial Hospital (Romney, WV)
- Page Memorial Hospital (Luray, VA)
- Shenandoah Memorial Hospital (Woodstock, VA)
- War Memorial Hospital (Berkeley Springs, WV)
- Warren Memorial Hospital (Front Royal, VA)

Additional locations and services:

- Employer Health
- Outreach Lab Services
- Rehabilitation Services (Inpatient and Outpatient)
- Urgent Care and Urgent Care Express
- Valley Health Home Health | West Virginia
- Valley Health Medical Group
- Valley Health | Spring Mills
- Valley Health Surgery Center
- Valley Medical Transport
- Valley Pharmacy
- Wellness & Fitness Centers

For more information, visit valleyhealthlink.com/locations.



Valley Health System

Serving Our Community by Improving Health

HealthLINK

The magazine of Valley Health System

Serving the Northern Shenandoah Valley, the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and the surrounding areas

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HealthLINK magazine is published three times a year. Its purpose is to provide health and wellness information to the community and to connect area residents with healthcare experts within Valley Health System.

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BOB AMOS BECOMES NEW CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER AT VALLEY HEALTH

Following a nationwide search, Valley Health promoted Bob Amos to serve as the health system's new Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Amos started his first day in the position on June 1.

The selection process for this key role included input from Valley Health board members, executive and senior leaders, and those with a direct reporting relationship to the CFO. Throughout the selection process, Amos distinguished himself with his extensive historical knowledge of Valley Health and his thoughtful and visionary ideas.

Prior to joining Valley Health in 2005 as a corporate director in finance, Amos served in financial leadership roles for other healthcare delivery systems in the South and Mid-Atlantic. During his time at Valley Health, Amos was promoted to vice president and CFO

of Winchester Medical Center, and his responsibilities eventually evolved to include the financial performance of all of Valley Health's six hospitals.

Amos is a member of the Healthcare Financial Management Association, a former certified public accountant and an active member in the community, volunteering with United Way and Young Life. He and his wife, Amy, raised their family in Winchester.

VALLEY HEALTH LAUNCHES SUCCESSFUL ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORD

In November, Valley Health successfully launched its own instance of Epic, the electronic medical record (EMR) it adopted in 2014 with Inova Health System.

Valley Health hospitals, outpatient clinics and providers have relied on Epic to document care; order tests and procedures; and communicate with patients, the healthcare team and referring providers. Valley Health partnered with Inova Health System on its first Epic adoption in order to streamline the initial implementation process and curb expenses. Now, Valley Health has implemented its own instance of Epic, which will be managed exclusively by Valley Health.



The Epic upgrade gives Valley Health more flexibility and independence to better serve the needs of the community. With our own Epic, communication and collaboration between caregivers will be enhanced, thus improving patient care.

The updated Valley Health MyChart also offers streamlined patient access and improved features. Through this change, we've been able to create a more robust platform than we had in the past, including the integration of new cognitive computing models, which use clinical data in Epic to predict patient events prior to the occurrence of those events.



The Community Wellness Festival offers free and low-cost health screenings.

CHECK UP ON YOUR HEALTH AT THE ANNUAL COMMUNITY WELLNESS FESTIVAL

This year's Valley Health Community Wellness Festival will run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, at Apple Blossom Mall. Since 1995, the annual Community Wellness Festival has offered health screenings, learning and fun for all ages—including activities for children throughout the day. This year's event will include:

- 80+ health, wellness and fitness exhibitors
- The Healthy Kids Experience: wellness fun for kids
- Free and low-cost health screenings, including blood pressure tests and hearing checks
- Fitness demonstrations

Learn more at valleyhealthlink.com/wellnessfestival. The event is funded by the Winchester Medical Center Foundation.

VALLEY HEALTH'S HOSPITALS RECEIVE RECOGNITION ON THE NATIONAL STAGE

This year, Valley Health received national recognition for the many ways it provides a positive work environment and exceptional patient care. These include:

- In September, **Warren Memorial Hospital** was redesignated as an American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Pathway to Excellence® organization for empowering and engaging its nurses. Warren Memorial Hospital is one of 203 organizations in the country to earn this recognition.
- This summer, **Shenandoah Memorial Hospital** received a 5-star rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) as part of its Overall Hospital Quality Star Rating, placing it among the top 15% of the more than 3,000 hospitals surveyed nationwide. In addition, **Warren Memorial Hospital** received a 4-star rating.
- In July, *U.S. News & World Report* released its 2023 Best Hospitals rankings. **Winchester Medical Center** was named a Best Regional Hospital, ranking No. 8 in Virginia. It was also recognized as High Performing in 10 adult procedures and conditions.
- *Becker's Hospital Review* recently compiled a list of the hospitals that patients are most likely to recommend in every state, using data from CMS. This year, **Page Memorial Hospital** and **War Memorial Hospital** were among the hospitals that received five stars for patient recommendations in Virginia and West Virginia, respectively.
- Valley Health's two acute care hospitals—**Winchester Medical Center** and **Warren Memorial Hospital**—have again earned "A" Hospital Safety Grades from The Leapfrog Group, making them the highest graded facilities in the Northern Shenandoah Valley/Eastern Panhandle region.

INNOVATIONS

HEALTH CARE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

A new mobile app and MyChart portal improve patient access to vital healthcare information

This fall, Valley Health rolled out two highly effective ways for patients to get the information they need—both with the click of a button.

VALLEY HEALTH'S MYCHART PORTAL

Valley Health has launched an updated MyChart portal, which is a free, easy and secure way for patients to view portions of their health information and communicate with members of their healthcare team. This update makes it easier than ever for patients to access medication lists, test results, upcoming appointments, medical bills, price estimates and more from a computer or mobile device. Additionally, MyChart has improved communication tools to remind patients of important screenings such as mammograms and colonoscopies. And, through proxy access, family members and/or caregivers can keep track of their loved one's health records.

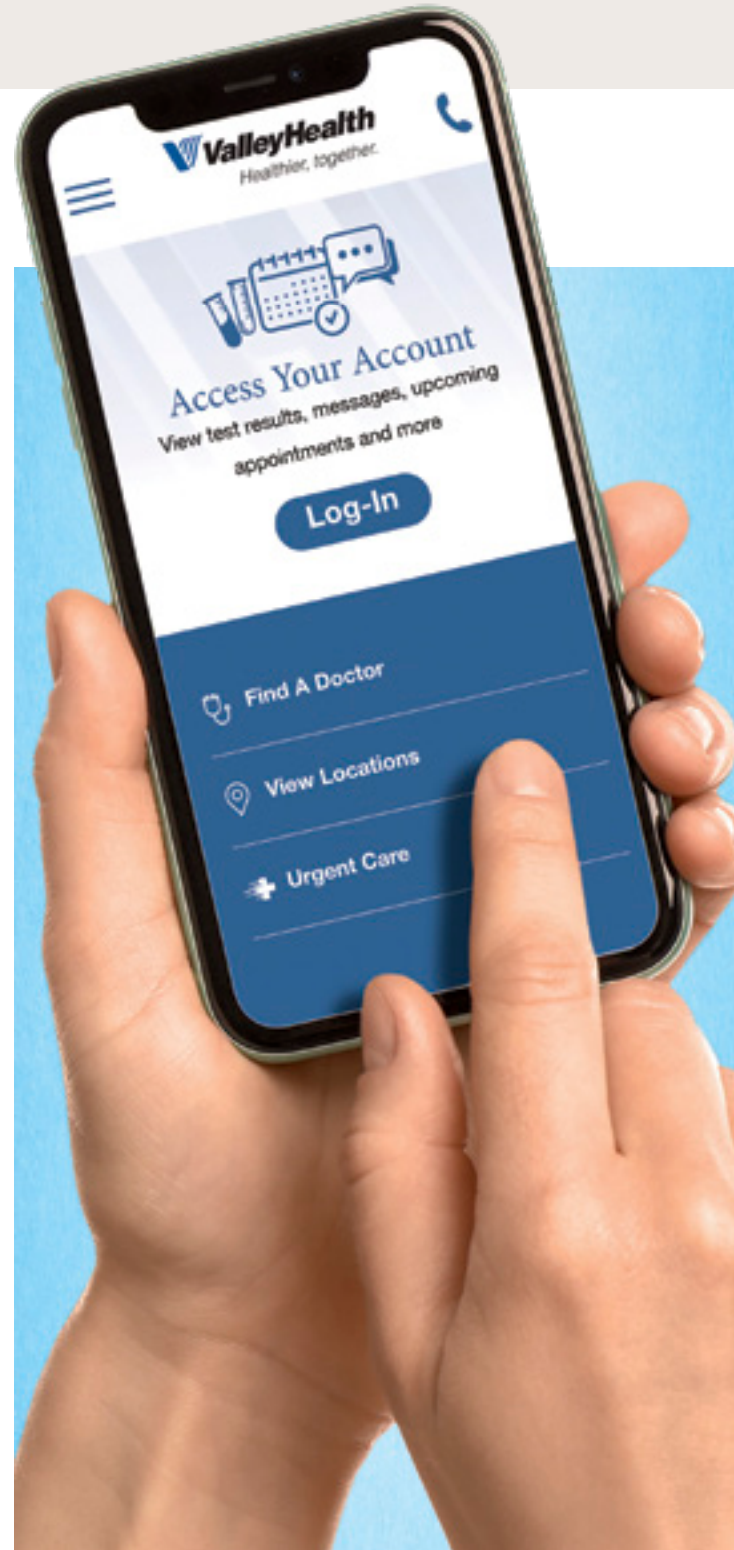
Patients already using MyChart can use their current login to access the new version and link their MyChart accounts from other healthcare facilities. *To learn more, visit valleyhealthlink.com/mychart.*

MY VALLEY HEALTH MOBILE APP

Along with Valley Health's new MyChart portal, November welcomed the launch of a health system mobile app called "My Valley Health," available for download in app stores. Now, using a smart device, patients can conveniently and securely access their MyChart account, enabling them to keep track of appointments, get test results, send messages to care providers, pay bills and more.

Using the app's "Find a Doctor" feature, patients can view providers throughout the region and find one best suited to their needs. The app also allows users to get addresses and directions, receive up-to-date information on visiting Valley Health hospitals and get information on any of Valley Health's locations.

Another helpful tool is the app's "Find Care Now" feature, which guides patients through various healthcare options when they aren't sure if they need a primary care, Urgent Care or emergency room visit. If patients want to make an appointment with Urgent Care, the app allows them to view the wait times at various Urgent Care locations and make a reservation at their convenience.



To download the app, visit the app store on your iPhone or Android and search for "My Valley Health."

A MILESTONE ACHIEVEMENT IN ROBOTICS

→ VALLEY HEALTH CONTINUES TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF MINIMALLY INVASIVE SURGICAL CARE DUE TO THE SIGNIFICANT GROWTH OF ITS ROBOTICS PROGRAM OVER THE YEARS. ONE OF THESE SURGICAL ROBOTS IS THE DA VINCI XI, WHICH HAS ASSISTED IN MORE THAN 5,000 SURGERIES SINCE 2016. DA VINCI XI ROBOTS ALLOW SURGEONS ACROSS SEVERAL SPECIALTIES TO OPERATE WITH GREATER RANGE OF MOTION AND PRECISION AND TO SEE A MORE MAGNIFIED SURGICAL SITE. PATIENTS EXPERIENCE SMALLER INCISIONS, LESS PAIN AND A SHORTER RECOVERY TIME.

VALLEY HEALTH OFFERS **24/7 PATIENT ACCESS TO ROBOTIC SURGERY**, WHICH MEANS SURGEONS ARE TRAINED TO DO **EMERGENCY ROBOTIC SURGERIES AT ANY HOUR**

5

NUMBER OF DA VINCI XI ROBOTS AT VALLEY HEALTH DELIVERING STATE-OF-THE-ART SURGICAL CARE

5,000+

THE NUMBER OF ROBOT-ASSISTED SURGERIES PERFORMED AT WINCHESTER MEDICAL CENTER (WMC) SINCE 2016

APPROXIMATELY **20 WMC SURGEONS** USE THESE ROBOTS IN **SPECIALTIES INCLUDING GENERAL SURGERY, SURGICAL ONCOLOGY, THORACIC, BARIATRIC, UROGYNECOLOGY, UROLOGY AND ACUTE CARE SURGERY**

1,600+

THE NUMBER OF ROBOT-ASSISTED SURGERIES AT WMC IN 2023 ALONE

THE DA VINCI XI DELIVERS **HIGH-DEFINITION 3D VIEWS THAT MAGNIFY THE SURGICAL AREA 10 TIMES GREATER THAN WHAT THE HUMAN EYE CAN SEE**

To learn more, visit valleyhealthlink.com/robotics.

PLANNING AHEAD FOR PEACE OF MIND

An Advance Care Conversation Educator can help ensure that your wishes will be honored if you lose the ability to communicate

If you become seriously ill or injured and can't speak for yourself, who should speak for you? What types of treatment would you want—or not want?

A medical advance directive makes your wishes known to your family and care providers. In the Winchester area, about 20 percent of people have an advance directive. Hoping to increase that number and improve care in our community, Valley Health is enlisting retired caregivers to help people create one at no cost. One of these Advance Care Conversation Educators, geriatrician Cyril Barch, MD, explains how the program works.

Q: WHO SHOULD HAVE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE, AND WHY?

A: We recommend that everyone 18 years and over have an advance directive. None of us knows when an accident or medical condition may leave us unable to communicate. An advance directive identifies the person who will make medical decisions on our behalf and who knows our specific wishes about our care.

Q: HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

A: We mail out a conversation starter guide to help you talk to the person

you've identified as your medical agent [the person who will make decisions on your behalf if you cannot].

Advance Care Conversation Educators will meet with you at the Palliative Care office at Winchester Medical Center. You are encouraged to bring your medical agent to that meeting and any other people you deem important to your care. We are also available to talk at events, organizations and civic club meetings.

We use the Five Wishes form [fivewishes.org], which is nationally based and transferable among 45 states. Along with the conversation starter guide, we mail out the Five Wishes document ahead of time so that you can discuss it with the people important to you. The form will be completed at your appointment, where we will address any questions you might have.

An important topic to discuss is life support. You may have strong feelings about being placed on artificial life support. We can provide some medical background as to situations where this might become an issue and discuss whether it's consistent with your values and goals.

Q: WHAT IF MY WISHES CHANGE?

A: These documents should be reviewed regularly and can always be changed. We encourage you to schedule follow-up visits if you would like help updating your documents.

Q: HOW DO YOU MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH AN ADVANCE CARE CONVERSATION EDUCATOR?

A: You can call 540-536-5437 to set up a free appointment. You do not need a referral from your physician.

To learn more about advance directives, visit valleyhealthlink.com/advancedirectives.





Charbel Fawaz, MD (far right) and team use the Mazor robotic guidance system to improve precision during surgery.

WE'VE GOT YOU

AT 72, Beverley Ridings refused to let chronic back pain slow down her life—whether it was teaching nursing students, tending her gardens or doing household chores. But after the pain, as she says, “really got my attention” last spring, Ridings became the first Winchester Medical Center patient to undergo minimally invasive spine surgery with the hospital’s new Mazor X Stealth™ Edition robotic guidance system.

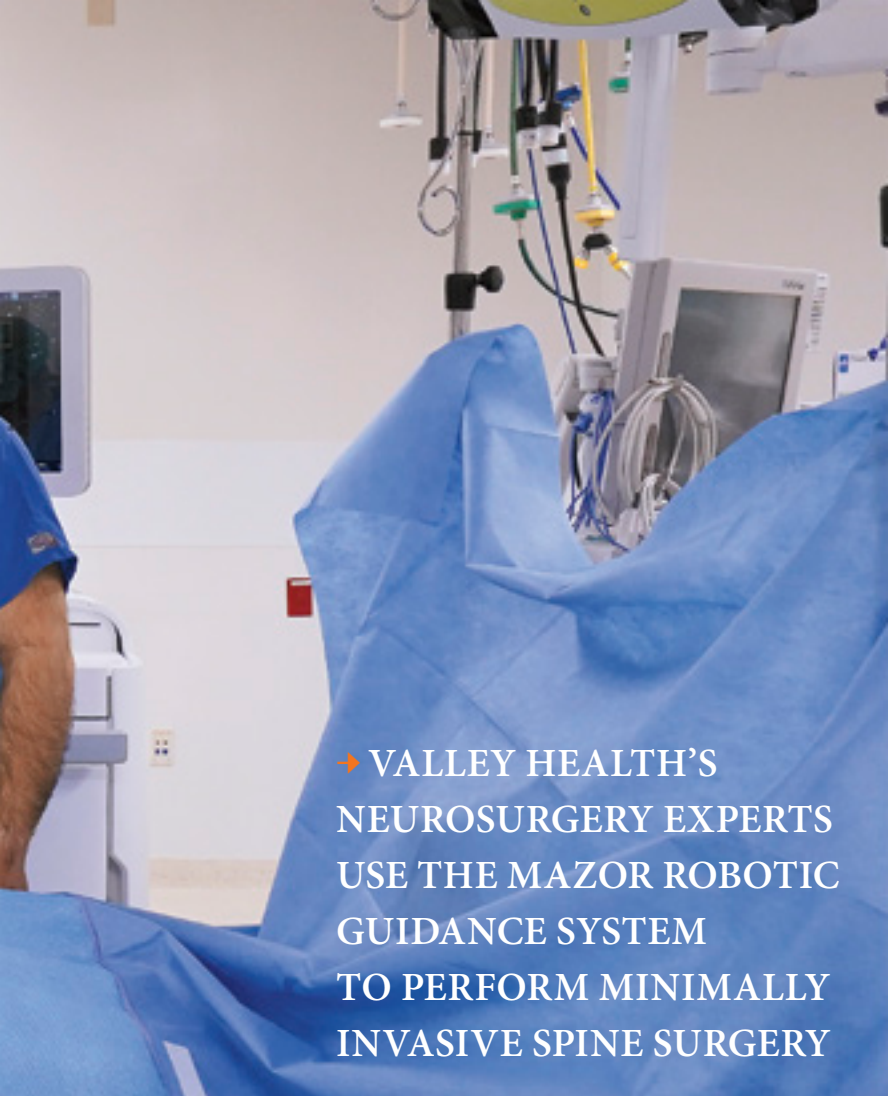
Neurosurgeon Charbel Fawaz, MD, of Valley Health Virginia Brain & Spine, performed the procedure in October. He, along with his colleagues Patrick Ireland, MD; Joshua Prickett, DO; Lee Selznick, MD; and David Salvetti, MD, are all trained to use the Mazor. The system, Dr. Fawaz says, brings an unparalleled level of precision, customization and pre-surgery planning to the already proven benefits of minimally invasive

spine surgery (MISS). “The Mazor navigation system minimizes post-operative pain and complications,” he says. “It also means less blood loss and shorter surgery times, which makes recovery easier and spine surgery possible for people who may not have been candidates in the past.”

Two weeks after her surgery, Ridings was doing great. “I’m walking over a half-mile to my mailbox and back. I do laundry. I cook. There’s just a little ache that creeps into my back at night. I use a gel ice bag for that. Once I’m up and moving for the day, there’s no need for any pain relief.”

EXPERT NEUROSURGEON JOINS VALLEY HEALTH

Dr. Fawaz joined Valley Health Virginia Brain & Spine in



➤ VALLEY HEALTH'S
NEUROSURGERY EXPERTS
USE THE MAZOR ROBOTIC
GUIDANCE SYSTEM
TO PERFORM MINIMALLY
INVASIVE SPINE SURGERY

UR BACK

March, bringing expertise in minimally invasive and complex multilevel spine surgery acquired during his neurosurgery residency at Canada's University of Sherbrooke. Dr. Fawaz also received a prestigious fellowship in the spine program at the University of Calgary. He then served as chief of neurosurgery at The Moncton Hospital in New Brunswick, Canada, for ten years, from 2013 to 2023.

At Valley Health, Dr. Fawaz and other highly trained neurosurgeons treat emergency spine and brain trauma cases, tumors of the brain and spine, and more common conditions such as herniated discs, spinal stenosis and scoliosis. "Those are the spine conditions that affect people most often," Dr. Fawaz says. "About 80 percent of the time, they can be treated with MISS."

And if treatment involves spinal fusion—installing metal screws, rods, plates, cages or other material to stabilize the spine—Valley Health

neurosurgeons can use the new Mazor system. In summer 2023, the Valley Health neurosurgery staff received extensive training on the system. Now, it is used increasingly often to guide MISS procedures for patients like Ridings.

"We have been utilizing spine navigation for several years very successfully here in Winchester," says Dr. Salvetti. "This is the next step in advancing our technology to better meet the needs of our patients."

BENEFITS OF THE MAZOR SYSTEM

A robotic guidance system, the Mazor helps neurosurgeons plan spine surgery more precisely using detailed CT images of a patient's spine. "With Mazor, I can plan the safest angles for inserting screws, the best correction for a rod, and how to work around structures like blood vessels and the spinal cord," Dr. Fawaz says. "We can simulate different solutions. Without Mazor, we would have to do this planning in the operating room during a procedure."

Pre-planning with the Mazor can reduce operating time for a complex procedure from six or seven hours to five hours or fewer. That means less time under anesthesia, and it also makes spine surgery an option for people who otherwise might not be candidates due to advanced age, diabetes, heart disease or other conditions that could rule out a long procedure.

Mazor also provides navigation assistance during surgery. The system provides live images of the surgical site, and a special arm guides the surgeon in working at the precise entry points and angles set in their plan.

"One of the most common questions we get is whether the robot performs the surgery," Dr. Fawaz notes. "It's a legitimate question. The answer is that I am the one making openings in the spine. It is my hands inserting the hardware, not the robot. The surgeon plans everything and then uses the guidance of the robot to execute the plan."

The Mazor system can be used during open surgeries as well as during minimally invasive procedures. Adding robotic guidance to MISS provides unique advantages for patients, Dr. Fawaz says.

During a MISS procedure, the neurosurgeon makes small incisions and uses tools called tubular retractors to move apart fibers in the muscles surrounding the spine.



Dr. Fawaz uses the Mazor robotic system to guide open surgeries as well as minimally invasive ones.

Surgical tools are inserted through the tubes in order to reach the spine. In contrast, during an open procedure, muscle is often cut and moved aside. Avoiding cutting muscle makes recovery significantly faster and less painful, Dr. Fawaz explains.

The Mazor system also extends MISS benefits to fusion surgery, allowing the neurosurgeon to use small incisions to place screws and other hardware within the spine, all while using the system's imaging and guidance to work precisely without making large incisions.

"Using the Mazor robot and the Medtronic software is like using GPS rather than a paper map when driving from point A to point B," says Dr. Selznick. "It eliminates the guesswork and many of the hazards we have to contend with when doing it 'the old-fashioned way.' Having the capability of getting an intraoperative CT also takes away all of the guesswork and allows us to confirm good placement of the screws before the patient even wakes up. It's a game changer for patient care."

In addition to experiencing shorter surgeries, less blood loss, and faster recovery with less pain—meaning reduced use of pain medication—patients are also exposed to less radiation than with X-ray-guided procedures. Surgical results are more accurate, which can reduce the need for corrections in the future. "Patients leave the hospital in half the time they would with an open procedure, sometimes the same day," Dr. Fawaz says.

"They are back to work, sports and other activities generally in four to six weeks."

But it's not just patients who benefit from the Mazor. The stereotactic navigation allows surgeons to operate without wearing a heavy lead apron, which is required when they use X-ray guidance.

"This means I no longer have to sacrifice my own back while fixing someone else's," Dr. Selznick says. "This could add years to my career simply by preventing the occupational hazard of radiation exposure and strain on my back."

A PATIENT'S EXPERIENCE

Ridings, who has her Master of Science in nursing, worked as a nurse in neurology at Winchester Memorial Hospital (the forerunner to Winchester Medical Center) before becoming a nurse educator at Laurel Ridge Community College in 2012. She says aging, plus heavy lifting on the job and at home, likely contributed to back and leg pain caused by a disc in her lower spine pressing on a nerve root. "I tried physical therapy, injections, non-narcotic medications and other modalities, but the relief was temporary," she says.

“We treat our patients the way we would want our own families treated, with the best options and safest technologies possible—right here, locally.”

—CHARBEL FAWAZ, MD

Doing the things she loves—teaching yoga, working out to Jazzercise routines, tending her gardens—left her with an aching back. “I could relieve it with stretching, but I wanted to do something more definitive. So last spring I saw Dr. Fawaz.”

With her background in neurology, Ridings was interested in the idea of robotic guidance for her procedure, which involved inserting screws and a cage in her spine to take pressure off the nerve. “Anything that minimizes the pain, time involved in recovery, and surgical trauma to the body is a positive thing,” she says. “Dr. Fawaz explained that instead of cutting muscle fiber vertically, they would tunnel through the fibers, which would make the discomfort and recovery time much less.”

After her procedure, Ridings spent one night in the hospital and then went home. “I took one prescription pain reliever pill,” she says. “After that, it was Tylenol for three days and a gel ice pack.”

Her husband took over the cooking and making the bed. “Turning over in bed and getting up from a chair were painful at first,” Ridings says. “But after the first 48 hours, things smoothed out a lot. Keeping up with physical exercise beforehand and having fairly strong muscles has helped me a lot. I think that would be helpful for others to know about, too.”

Looking back on her experience, she notes that “any time surgery can be minimally invasive, we are less apt to traumatize our bodies. And when it involves the nerves in the back and spinal cord, technology guidance and visualization increase the possibility of good outcomes.”

Dr. Fawaz agrees. “Now with robotic guidance, no one can do minimally invasive spine surgery better than we do at Valley Health,” he says. “We treat our patients the way we would want our own families treated, with the best options and safest technologies possible—right here, locally.”

To learn more, visit valleyhealthlink.com/VBSC or valleyhealthlink.com/neuro.



Beverley Ridings, a nurse educator and dedicated gardener, recently underwent Mazor-guided minimally invasive spine surgery at Winchester Medical Center.

SPOTLIGHT



Rheumatologists
Myo-Pale' Aye, MD,
and Kevin A. Hicks, MD.

ADVANCED CARE FOR RHEUMATIC CONDITIONS

Valley Health's new rheumatology practice provides top-level care for patients with autoimmune and inflammatory diseases

At Valley Health's new rheumatology practice, located at Winchester Medical Center, board-certified and fellowship-trained physicians Myo-Pale' Aye, MD, and Kevin A. Hicks, MD, diagnose and treat a wide variety of bone, joint and autoimmune conditions.

The rheumatologists work closely with patients to uncover the cause of their symptoms, find the right therapies and monitor long-term health. Expert care eases symptoms such as pain, joint stiffness, fatigue and skin rashes—but it doesn't stop there, Dr. Hicks says. "Early treatment of conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus increases the likelihood of remission, preventing damage to joints and harm to heart, lungs and kidneys."

Listening is a priority. "I am in favor of shared decision making," says Dr. Aye. "When I approach new patients, I do a thorough workup to get the right diagnosis, letting them know about the nature of their disease, its progression

and treatment options. I recommend what is most appropriate. But at the end of the day, my patients are the ones taking a medication and making the final decision based on benefits, side effects and doses.” Adds Dr. Hicks, “I always make sure my patients have a voice. They are treated with respect. There is always time during a visit to discuss their concerns.”

Valley Health Rheumatology opened this fall, giving residents an option close to home for conditions including:

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS: Inflammation, caused by an overactive immune system, can make joints stiff, swollen and painful. Morning joint stiffness and fatigue are typical signs, Dr. Hicks notes. Rheumatoid arthritis affects women more often than men and often starts in midlife. Disease-modifying medications can reduce joint damage, Dr. Aye says. She also treats seronegative rheumatoid arthritis, a syndrome in which a patient has rheumatoid arthritis symptoms but an antibody test used to diagnose the condition is negative.

LUPUS: Also called systemic lupus erythematosus, lupus occurs when the immune system attacks the body’s tissues and organs such as the skin, heart and kidneys. It often affects women between the ages of 15 and 45 and is more common in African Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans. Symptoms include joint pain, fatigue and a skin rash that worsens after sun exposure, Dr. Hicks says. “Some people with lupus have a butterfly-shaped rash across their cheeks and nose, but more often the rash appears on the neck, arms or torso,” he explains.

“It’s important to treat lupus appropriately to slow or prevent inflammation of the lungs, kidneys and other organs,”

Dr. Aye says. “Some people with lupus have a mild condition with skin involvement only. But about 10 percent of skin lupus can become systemic over time,” making regular follow-ups all the more important.

GOUT: This inflammatory condition triggers extreme pain in a joint—often but not always the big toe—and it happens when people at risk for gout consume foods high in purines such as red meat, Dr. Aye says. “These cause deposits in joints,” she explains. While your primary care doctor can treat mild and occasional gout, a rheumatologist helps those whose gout is more advanced or difficult to treat or who cannot take common gout medications due to other health issues such as heart or kidney problems.

Valley Health Rheumatology also treats psoriatic arthritis, systemic sclerosis, Sjogren’s syndrome, myositis, vasculitis and other rheumatologic problems as well as fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis and osteoporosis. “We are not only skilled at prescribing the appropriate medications, but also at performing procedures, such as joint injections,” Dr. Hicks says.

Rheumatologists are specially trained to prescribe and monitor a class of potent disease-modifying agents called biologics. These can be very effective yet require ongoing follow-up. “Our biologic agents suppress a hyperactive immune system that’s attacking your own body,” Dr. Aye says. “When a patient is using one, we work with their primary care doctor to make sure they are up to date on vaccinations and receive health screenings and routine checkups to stay healthy.”

The physicians work with other specialists for optimal patient care, such as coordinating with dermatologists for a patient’s psoriatic arthritis, collaborating with nephrologists for patients whose lupus affects their kidneys, and working with pulmonologists for those whose myopathy involves their lungs.

“The diseases a rheumatologist treats are often systemic,” Dr. Aye explains. “Our focus is on doing everything to keep patients healthy.”

For more information, visit valleyhealthlink.com/rheumatology or call Valley Health Rheumatology at 540-536-6200.

“Early treatment of conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus increases the likelihood of remission, preventing damage to joints and harm to heart, lungs and kidneys.” —KEVIN A. HICKS, MD

HEALTHIER

2023 COMMUNITY BENEFIT

TOMORROWS

COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROVIDED BY VALLEY HEALTH

Valley Health makes significant financial contributions in the region in the form of community support. In 2022, the most recent IRS reporting year, Valley Health's community contribution was more than \$209 million in the form of Community Benefit programs, unreimbursed costs for care provided to Medicare and Medicaid recipients, uncollected fees for provided healthcare services and more.

VALLEY HEALTH'S COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION IN 2022 INCLUDED COMMUNITY BENEFIT PROGRAMS TOTALING \$111 MILLION:

- **\$83 MILLION** for health programs for individuals and families with low income and resources, along with government-sponsored health programs where eligibility for benefits or coverage is determined by income or assets. We assume the costs of care and treatment for those who are unable to pay for care.
- **\$15.7 MILLION** for training healthcare professionals. Every year, hundreds of students in college-level nursing, pharmacy, physical/occupational therapy and other programs enhance their educational experience through preceptorship programs with Valley Health's expert healthcare professionals.
- **\$12.5 MILLION** for community health improvement services, subsidized health services, and cash and in-kind contributions.

PAYING IT FORWARD

DONORS LIKE JENNA FRENCH ENSURE THAT SHENANDOAH MEMORIAL HOSPITAL WILL THRIVE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

Shenandoah County resident Jenna French first learned of the Shenandoah Memorial Hospital (SMH) Foundation when it launched its 2015 campaign to update and expand the hospital's Emergency Department.

"I thought, we have two small boys. We're going to need this at some point," she says. "The local hospital touches everyone at some time in their lives."

In her role as the director of Tourism and Economic Development for Shenandoah County, French sees the importance of high-quality, compassionate care in the community. "Having this hospital here is a wonderful tool for attracting quality companies and a quality workforce to our area," she says.

"Other localities don't have what we have—a healthcare facility we may sometimes take for granted."

French has been a monthly donor to the SMH Foundation for nearly a decade and now chairs its board of trustees. Local leaders help raise and distribute the funds that go back to SMH in ways that enhance and expand the work the hospital is able to do. "Sometimes organizations have unplanned needs, and we're able to help," she says. "Without our support, they might not receive the help they need, or

they might have to wait for it. I enjoy participating in our scholarship committee, where we interview high school students planning to go into health care. We like to fund the underdog, and without this scholarship, college might not be an option for them. And we hope they come back to our community to pay it forward.

"Why do we give? I'm passionate about the work the Foundation does. To hear directly from the caregivers about their ideas and needs, and to be able to do something about that—it's very rewarding."



Jenna
French

To learn more, visit valleyhealthlink.com/foundations. To contact the Foundation office directly, email donations@valleyhealthlink.com or call **540-536-6939**.



From left: Angie Martocci, Maria Diaz and Heather Roberts.

OUR COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

THESE DEDICATED TEAM MEMBERS HELP PATIENTS MEET THEIR NEEDS AND GOALS, CLOSE TO HOME

Valley Health has three dedicated community health workers whose main goal is to help at-risk patients on their health journey. Community health workers live within the communities they serve, providing individuals with assistance and support, connecting them with resources in the community, and assisting with health-related tasks, such as medicine management and transportation to and from doctor appointments.

Community health workers develop patient-centered goals and work with patients intensively for three to six months to help them meet these goals. They conduct home visits, meet with patients in community locations, and also provide support over the telephone. These three positions are funded by two grants from the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association Foundation and one grant from the United States Department of Agriculture.

Let's meet Maria, Angie and Heather.

MARIA DIAZ

Started: November 2022

Location: Winchester/Frederick County

Who I help: Patients with complex medical and social needs

What I do: I meet patients and offer assistance at their doctor appointments; help them obtain their medications; transportation, and housing needs; and provide resources. I work with patients from the Winchester Rescue Mission and WATTS, connecting them with primary care and community resources. I find strategies that help people with their health needs. I meet them at their level and try to make them more independent in their care.

Why I do this: I like the personal connection. This is not just data and charts; it's real people. It's really exciting when someone meets their goals, becomes more independent or improves their health.

ANGIE MARTOCCI

Started: March 2023

Location: Warren County

Who I help: Patients with a history of stroke, or who are at risk of a stroke, including diabetic patients and those with hypertension. Many have mobility issues and health barriers.

What I do: I help with transportation to and from appointments and assist patients with appointment reminders. I also help patients manage their medications, and I'll take items like blood pressure cuffs to their homes. I connect patients with community resources as well. I work with homeless individuals, getting them tents and toiletries and connecting them with local churches where they can shower.

Why I do this: I like it when I can help a person, meet their needs and get them to a better place. If I can make something better or put a smile on a person's face, that makes me feel like I've done something to make a difference.

HEATHER ROBERTS

Started: May 2023

Location: Page County

Who I help: Low-income individuals, older adults, people with disabilities

What I do: I connect patients to resources in Page County and try to keep them connected to these resources. This can include individuals who might not have electricity or food. I also connect people with their neighbors, like churches and nonprofit organizations, that might be able to help them.

Why I do this: I like working in the community. I like how we get to connect with people and that this is a very person-centered program. These people are so isolated, and when they make a connection, that's a win. Sometimes, however, all you can do is listen to them and be a place where they can vent.



Healthier, together.

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Health Care at Your Fingertips



Valley Health's new mobile app, **My Valley Health**, provides the healthcare information you need right at your fingertips.

With My Valley Health, you can:

- Log into your MyChart account
- Find a doctor, location or service at Valley Health
- Check in online with Urgent Care
- Learn about visitation information and updates

To download, visit the app store on your iPhone or Android and search for "My Valley Health."

While you don't have to have a MyChart account to download the app, starting an account is free, secure and lets you get the most out of the My Valley Health app. To start a MyChart account, visit valleyhealthlink.com/mychart.



Healthier, together.