



MUSCULOSKELETAL HEALTH NEWS

If you ever need
Joint Replacement Surgery,
it makes sense
to go to a place that does
nothing else.



**Orthopedic Surgeons Leonard Kibiloski, MD (left)
and Craig Erikson, MD**

The Regional Center for Joint Replacement at Elkhart General was created for one reason: to provide our patients who need a total joint replacement an unsurpassed level of excellence.

To achieve that goal, we've designed a program that is dedicated exclusively to joint replacement. In most hospitals, the joint replacement patient is just another patient on the general surgery floor. We've taken a much different approach – an approach that's modeled after programs in Florida and Maryland, where we saw first hand the important advantages that a dedicated joint replacement unit offers the patient.

One big advantage is that the unit is staffed by people who work only in this area. Each member of the team is a specialist in joint replacement. The surgery team, the nurses on the floor, the rehab therapists . . . this is all they do. And they've become very good at it. Patients report that this

dedicated staffing approach gives them great peace of mind. They see the same people throughout their entire stay, and they quickly discover that these people are real experts at what they do.

Another distinct advantage of our approach is that patients go through the experience as a group. All surgeries are performed on Monday or Tuesday, patients recover and do their rehab work together, then they're all usually discharged by the end of the week. During this time together, they develop their own mutual support system. Patient feedback tells us that this is a real benefit. It's amazing how a little encouragement from one patient can help another do one more leg lift.

Patient education is another important aspect of this program. Our team takes great care to ensure that each patient knows exactly what to expect.

This process actually starts several weeks prior to surgery when the patient attends a total joint class at the hospital. We tour the unit and demonstrate the rehab equipment. And we present a detailed

description of each step in the process, starting with the morning of surgery and continuing through each day until discharge. We find this removes much of the anxiety normally associated with the surgery. We also help the patient develop clear expectations regarding recovery, eliminating some of the frustration that might otherwise occur. We even cover preparations that should be made at home to enable the patient to return to normal routines as quickly as possible.

"Return to normal routines as quickly as possible." That statement pretty well sums up what this program is all about. In most cases, the patient is up and walking the day after surgery, gratefully wearing street clothes instead of a hospital gown. And each morning during the remainder of the hospital stay, the patient receives a special newsletter – either Hip Tips or Knee Knots – that explains exactly what to expect that day.

Unlike many patients in the hospital, total joint patients aren't really sick. They're just in for "repair." And they appreciate the wellness-based approach we take. As one 80-year-old patient recently remarked, "Your team did a great job getting me back in the game."