Inside North Valley Hospital

BY CLINT WALKER

The word is out that North Valley Hospital is the place to go for minimally invasive surgery, imaging procedures, to have babies, in an emergency, and to simply feel good. That’s right, feel good. The services North Valley Hospital provides are complementary to active lifestyles and to people who value patient-centered care so they can feel good again quickly.

In February this year, laparoscopic surgery was upgraded in the Flathead Valley when North Valley Hospital completed its first robot-assisted prostatectomy. Surgeons at the Whitefish hospital are now able to offer their patients the most advanced technology for minimally invasive urological and gynecological procedures.

The laparoscopic procedures are ones the physicians have been doing for years. However, the robotic unit gives surgeons dexterity and range of motion far greater than their human hands at a highly magnified view. These advantages allow smaller incisions, less blood loss, faster recovery, minimal scarring, reduced pain, and ultimately greater comfort and safety for the patient. The decision to acquire this elite surgical unit is in keeping with the hospital’s philosophy of supporting the physicians’ practices with a vision of world-class healing.

“We are excited to see the da Vinci® robot come to North Valley Hospital,” said Hospital Chief of Staff Dr. Mirna Bowden, OB-GYN at Alpine Women’s Center. “Gynecologists across the country have been using this technology for complicated hysterectomies for several years with great results. Until now, a surgery would require a big abdominal incision and two or three day hospital stay to recover. With the robot, a surgery now can be done through tiny dime-sized incisions as an outpatient procedure. It’s great to see North Valley Hospital become a center for advanced laparoscopic and robotic techniques.”

The da Vinci just grazes the surface of the world class technology that’s available in this hospital set in the picturesque town of Whitefish. Add to that the strong values in patient-centered care and recruiting the finest primary care physicians and surgeons is simplified.
North Valley Hospital is a desirable place to practice medicine. The facility, completed in 2007, was designed to harmonize a healing environment by incorporating natural light, healing gardens, open space, warm colors, and more. But the architecture was just one of the components of a Planetree hospital. Every surgical patient, new mother, and in-patient is invited to have a free massage to relieve anxiety and tension. Other complementary therapies bring music, art, health information, touch, and great food to the bedside.

With this kind of care, it’s no wonder the Birth Center has been the site of almost 500 deliveries a year since moving to the new facility. North Valley Hospital is the only one within the surrounding states that offers a water birth option, and one of only a handful offering acupuncture to manage pain and nausea after a normal or C-section delivery. A comprehensive team of world class obstetricians, midwives, registered nurses, and anesthesiologists delivers the care new parents deserve along with their babies.

It’s the patients’ stories that illustrate the reason North Valley Hospital is acknowledged time and again for having unwavering high standards of patient care. For instance, in the eight years the hospital has participated in Avatar International’s national measurement of customer expectations in healthcare, it has received the Exceeding Patient Expectations Award annually. And, for the second year in a row, North Valley Hospital has received the Overall Best Performer Award, which recognizes high performing facilities that demonstrate consistency of highly-rated experiences by patients throughout the organization.

“The ongoing commitment to patient-centered care through the teamwork of our staff is what drives the many accolades that North Valley Hospital continues to earn,” North Valley Hospital CEO Jason Spring said. “Our consistency of providing impeccable patient care is exemplified by receiving Avatar’s awards and demonstrates how the community appreciates what we do here.”

Along with exceptional patient care, North Valley Hospital is an active community partner. The Healthy Communities initiative was launched to provide residents with preventative health information, nutritional facts and goals, and life-saving skills. Physician-lead free community educations allow for an informal visit while teaching valuable health information. Staff is always happy to speak to groups catered to your needs. And to further community health, North Valley Hospital provides resources to various non-profit groups.

And, when a sudden illness or accident requires emergency care, all the services at North Valley Hospital and outlying clinics are unified at the drop of a hat to care for your needs. This teamwork is why the hospital was designated as a Community Trauma facility by the State of Montana Public Health and Human Services last year.

“Injury mortality, and short- and long-term disabilities related to trauma can be decreased by designating trauma facilities,” said Dr. Rod Vaught, Emergency Department physician at North Valley Hospital. “The state program presents us with the template that assists us with organizing and training ourselves to provide better care. This approach enables more positive patient outcomes.”

And with North Valley Hospital’s five-star approach to patient care within all its services, great outcomes are not only expected, they are delivered.