

# Health *for* Life

PRESENTED BY KERN MEDICAL

Winter 2017

## Managing Your **MEDS**

A Simple Guide to  
Keep You Safe

## LEAPING FORWARD

A Teen Returns to Health with  
the Help of New Technology

## +

## saving a life

It Only Takes a Minute  
to Become a Hero

## battling diabetes

Staring Down Kern  
County's Epidemic





# CARROTS BY GORDON. HEALTH BY KERN MEDICAL.

 KernMedical | *Health for Life.*

[KernMedical.com](http://KernMedical.com)





8

WINTER 2017

# contents



12

We hope you enjoy this edition of Health for Life. Comments about the publication can be directed to the Marketing & Communications Department:

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16



24

- 2 GREETINGS  
CEO Russell Judd heralds Kern Medical's 150th Anniversary
- 3 IN PICTURES  
Kern Medical initiates a clinical trial to improve treatment of Valley Fever
- 4 COMMUNITY HEALTH  
Valuing the lifesaving gifts of blood and organ donation
- 8 PRACTICE PROFILE  
Kern Medical endocrinologists lead fight against the diabetes epidemic
- 12 COVER STORY  
Robotic surgery conquers a young man's mysterious pain
- 16 MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH  
County supervisor, her preemie find safe haven at Kern Medical
- 20 HEALTH TECHNOLOGY  
Self-check-in guards privacy, tracks wait times
- 22 HEALTH SPOTLIGHT  
Medication guidance: Straight from the pharmacist
- 24 GIVING BACK  
JJ's Legacy provides comfort, calming respite

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# a proud tradition

Hello, and welcome to the winter edition of Health for Life. This edition comes at a special time for us, as we begin a year-long celebration of our hospital's 150th anniversary. We've come a long way over the years, but one thing has remained constant – our tradition of meeting the health care needs of all who enter our doors. It is a legacy of community trust and commitment that we hold dear and work hard to uphold every day.

We began in 1867 as a one-room adobe shack established to provide care during an epidemic. Today, we are a 222-bed hospital and an expanding network of physician offices, caring for 12,000 inpatients and 125,000 physician office visits a year.

We are a UCLA-affiliated teaching hospital, the only one in our region. We train incredibly talented medical residents. Many of them choose to remain here, serving our community as physicians.

We have the area's only trauma center, a much valued life-saving resource. And we take deep pride in our role as a safety net hospital, providing care for everyone, regardless of ability to pay. We're also proud of the strides we've taken in establishing ourselves as a hospital of choice, where state-of-the-art technology and skilled medical professionals come together to deliver care.

Kern Medical's future grows brighter each year. Our transition to an independent Hospital Authority has opened new opportunities and we are poised for continued growth and expansion of services to better serve our community.

Please join me and the entire organization in celebrating our 150th anniversary. Stay tuned for announcements of the events and celebrations we have planned throughout the year. This is a milestone we can all take pride in, as we continue moving forward in our honored traditions of care, service and healing.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, you can reach me directly at [Russell.Judd@KernMedical.com](mailto:Russell.Judd@KernMedical.com). Thank you for your support.

**Russell Judd**  
CEO, KERN MEDICAL

# Fighting the Fever



On Oct. 13 Kern Medical celebrated its partnership with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to initiate a clinical trial to improve the recognition and management of Valley Fever, one of only six trial sites in California and Arizona.



**Pictured clockwise from top left:** A) Attendees take a photo at the Kern Medical event to mark the beginning of a clinical trial to improve Valley Fever treatment. B) Dr. Glenn Goldis, CMO at Kern Medical; and Dr. Everardo Cobos, Chair of the Department of Medicine at Kern Medical. C) Russell Judd, Kern Medical CEO. D) Renee Villanueva, VP of ambulatory care at Kern Medical, and Congressman Kevin McCarthy, chairman of the Congressional Valley Fever Task Force. E) Dr. Royce H. Johnson, chief of Infectious Disease at Kern Medical; Dr. Arash Heidari, Infectious Disease, Principal Investigator Fleet at Kern Medical; and Jeff Jolliff, PharmD.



# Blood Donation

A Universal Opportunity  
to Save Lives

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*Contributed Content by*  
**Greg Gallion**

# C

ar crashes and emergency surgeries are everyday events for the Kern Medical trauma team and its partner, Houchin Community Blood Bank.

To respond to a patient's loss of blood, trauma personnel depend on having a reliable supply of blood and blood products. They depend on Houchin's many generous blood donors.

But even with good support, more "Universal" donors are urgently needed. And what are "Universal" donors?

## Universal Donors

When there is no time to determine a trauma patient's blood type, "universal" blood products -- O red cells, coupled with AB plasma and platelets -- are used. That's important because less than 7 percent of the population has type O- blood, 37 percent has O+ blood, and only about 4 percent has type AB blood.

Blood is actually made up of several "components" -- red blood cells, plasma and platelets. People experiencing severe blood loss need red blood cells. Plasma is the liquid portion of blood that suspends red blood cells, platelets and other cells. These platelets are needed to prevent or stop bleeding.

Dr. Ruby Skinner, Kern Medical's chief of trauma services and director of surgical critical care, notes the best protocol to replace traumatic injury blood loss is to combine a transfusion of red blood cells with equal volumes of plasma and platelets. Combining the transfusion of plasma and platelets with whole blood has greatly reduced death rates due to major injury and blood loss.

"In fact, death rates due to major injury and blood loss have dropped significantly with the aggressive transfusion of plasma and platelets," she said.



The automated blood collection process, which separates platelets and plasma from whole blood, is a bit more time consuming than the whole blood collection process. But whether you are donating whole blood, platelets or plasma, the donation processes are similar.

## The Need to Give

So it's important to give, even if you are on medication. Many people on medication erroneously believe they aren't able to donate. The list of medications precluding blood donation is short. And cancer survivors can donate five years after successful treatment of most types of cancer.

*Greg Gallion is Chief Executive Officer of Houchin Community Blood Bank*



## At a Glance

### Who Can Donate

Donors must be at least 17 years old, or 16 with a parent's permission. Healthy people generally can donate blood every 56 days, and platelets and plasma every two weeks, but not more than 24 times in one year.

### How to Donate

Call 661-323-4222 or toll free 877-364-5844 to make an appointment to donate blood, verify need, and arrange plasma and platelets donation.

### Where to Donate

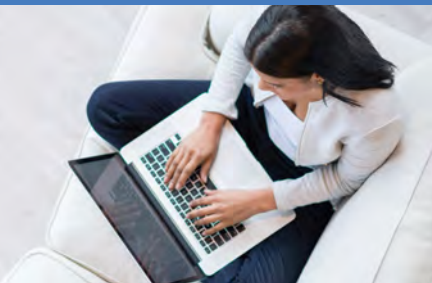
11515 Bolthouse Dr. and 5901 Truxtun Ave. in Bakersfield.

# TAKE A MINUTE Save a Life

Contributed Content by  
Lori Malkin

## Organ Donor Registration

The process is quick and easy, with three different ways to register:



You can register online in English at [donatelifecalifornia.org](http://donatelifecalifornia.org) or in Spanish at [donevidacalifornia.org](http://donevidacalifornia.org)

Check mark in the appropriate box when renewing your driver's license with the California DMV.

For those seeking to make their wishes known beyond California, visit [register.organize.org](http://register.organize.org)

When I first started down this path, I had no idea how it would change my life. Through meeting other organ donor family members, recipients, living donors and people on the waiting list, I have been inspired beyond words and touched to see our organization, JJ's Legacy, grow beyond anything I could have ever imagined.

JJ's Legacy spreads an educational message about organ donation through appearances at schools, service clubs and community events. The message is simple and powerful -- selfless donation to benefit someone else. At any moment, there are more than 120,000 Americans awaiting a transplant. Each organ donor could save up to eight lives. Each tissue donor could touch 50 lives.

Beyond educating the community, JJ's Legacy also raises funds to assist recipients and donor families and holds celebrations to honor donation successes.

The foundation's signature events are a golf tournament and a gala dinner, now in its seventh year, honoring deceased donors and their families, living donors, and those waiting for the lifesaving transplant and organ, eye and tissue recipients. We are also involved in the Rose Bowl Parade, a barbeque, and in other fundraising activities.

Every April, Kern Medical celebrates Donor Awareness month. Both JJ's Legacy and Kern Medical are partners in OneLegacy, a regional group that stages a series of events to increase awareness of the need for organ, eye, and tissue donations. Its Ambassador program makes community presentations on the subject.

There are many ways to become involved and help with this great cause. You can learn more at [jjslegacy.org](http://jjslegacy.org) and [onelegacy.org](http://onelegacy.org).



Lori Malkin is founder and chairperson of JJ's Legacy, named for her son Jeff Johns, a 27-year-old loan officer who died of injuries suffered in an accident. His organs saved five lives; his eye and tissue donations helped up to 50 other patients.







# FIGHTING BACK

DIABETES  
+ OBESITY

**Norm Bell** STAFF WRITER

Endocrinologists Sangeeta Chandramahanti, MD and Harshit Shah, MD are on the front lines of Kern County's diabetes epidemic





Dr. Harshit Shah consults with a patient at the Kern Medical Truxtun office.

# K

ern County residents are eating their way into endocrinologists' offices. Too much fast food. Too many snacks. Too much red meat. Too much diabetes. The result is keeping Kern Medical's two endocrinologists busy. Very busy.

Drs. Sangeeta Chandramahanti and Harshit Shah represent two-thirds of the entire corps of endocrinologists in practice in the county. Kern Medical's skilled team represents an opportunity to turn the tide.

In broad terms, endocrinologists deal with the body's glands, the regulators of metabolism and hormones. They treat thyroid diseases as well as pituitary and adrenal gland issues. Conditions like osteoporosis and weight loss also come under their purview. And then there's diabetes.

Public health statistics indicate more than 60 percent of Kern County residents are overweight or obese. Among California counties, Kern has been ranked worst in heart disease and second worst in diabetes. Diabetes is known to contribute to heart disease, strokes and kidney problems.

Endocrinologists treat Type 1 diabetes – cases in which the body doesn't produce enough insulin. On referral from primary care physicians, they see cases of Type 2 diabetes in which control of blood sugar has proven difficult.

For most Type 2 patients, Dr. Shah said, the first order of business is a trip to the diabetes educator for some training in what choices help their conditions and which make things worse.

Those discussions can be an eye-opener, said Dr. Chandra, as she is known to her patients. Portion size is an issue in Kern County. Even when making better choices in the food they eat, diabetics can undo the good by choosing too much of a good thing. Moderation is the key.

Diabetes educators are rare in Kern County. Kern Medical's pharmacy team does double duty as diabetes educators for clinic patients at the Sagebrush office, while patients being treated at the Truxtun Avenue endocrinology office can be referred to certified diabetes educators.

For Type 1 diabetes patients, Dr. Shah said, an implanted insulin pump works with a device that takes a blood reading every five minutes to ensure that the insulin dosage remains correct. It's impressive technology, he said, but the key is controlling carbohydrate intake.

**60%**  
of Kern County  
Residents are  
Overweight or  
Obese

For both Dr. Chandra and Dr. Shah, the chance to work with Kern County's diverse population is both a challenge and a reason that brought them to Kern Medical.

# OSTEOPOROSIS

## Separating Fact from Fiction

Dr. Chandra received her initial medical training in India before completing an internal medicine internship at St. Vincent's Medical Center in Bridgeport, Conn. There she was recognized as outstanding ambulatory senior resident and received the American Cancer Society's Best Resident Screening Award.

She also had her first encounter with snow, which she described as "fun at first" then a chore. She went on to hold a postgraduate fellowship in endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism at Marshall University in Huntington, W.Va., before coming to Bakersfield in 2015.

She is board-certified in internal medicine and in the subspecialties of endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism. As a Kern Medical physician, she is an assistant professor on the UCLA teaching faculty.

Dr. Chandra has expertise in insulin resistance, diabetes in pregnancy and insulin pumps. She also is skilled in treating thyroid, parathyroid, pituitary, adrenal and lipid disorders. She treats women for polycystic ovary syndrome, menopause, bone disorders such as osteoporosis, and hormonal disorders. She also offers treatment for obesity and weight loss including follow-up care for weight loss surgery.

Dr. Chandra and her husband have a 5-year-old daughter. They live in Bakersfield and they enjoy cycling and shopping.

Dr. Shah, who came to Kern Medical in 2015 as well, also received his initial medical education in India. He went on to receive a degree in endocrinology from the University of Florida College of Medicine, where he held a fellowship in endocrinology. He has a medical degree in internal medicine from Loma Linda University. He was chief resident in internal medicine at Loma Linda's VA hospital, where he led the diabetic multidisciplinary team as chief resident in quality improvement.

He is board-certified in internal medicine and serves as a clinical instructor on the UCLA faculty. He is a member of the Multidisciplinary Thyroid Tumor Board and is active in research on such topics as diabetes and insulin therapy, thyroid disorders, and veterans care.

However, no look at Kern Medical's endocrinology practice is complete

without a nod to Dr. Tung Trang, a head and neck oncology surgeon who handles the difficult thyroid cancer cases with the endocrinologists. Drs. Chandra and Shah do the initial diagnosis work and the follow-up surrounding Dr. Trang's surgical intervention.

Together, they form a powerful endocrinology team that makes Kern Medical a regional leader in diagnosing and treating disorders of the endocrine system, working with the newest therapies and the most effective treatment innovations.

Osteoporosis is one of the conditions treated by endocrinologists and it is an area of focus for Dr. Sangeeta Chandramahanti or "Dr. Chandra." The bone density disorder is widely misunderstood. Here are five common misconceptions about osteoporosis:

1

### **It's a disease of postmenopausal women.**

Not really. While 80 percent of the cases involve women, there are more than 2 million men with osteoporosis. Up to another 3 million may have the precursor – osteopenia – and don't know it. The most striking statistic is that men are at greater risk for an osteoporosis-related fracture than they are for prostate cancer.

2

### **If you have osteoporosis, it's too late to do anything about it.**

Not really. While it is true that most cannot grow new bone, they all can slow bone loss. Drugs can cut your risk of fractures by more than 50 percent. Exercise also can play a role in slowing bone loss. The key is to fight back.

3

### **If you're taking an osteoporosis drug, you don't need to worry about calcium and vitamin D.**

Not really. Some do; some don't. Calcium and vitamin D are important ingredients in building bone. Whether you get them by taking supplements or by adding dairy products to your diet, do it.

4

### **If you're taking an osteoporosis drug and your bone scan doesn't show new bone growth, the drug isn't working.**

Not really. Most osteoporosis drugs are designed to strengthen bones. A stable T-score is a better indication whether your drug is working.

5

### **It's an old person's disease. No reason to worry before you retire.**

Not really. While about 90 percent of osteoporosis cases occur in older Americans, building healthy bones is a lifelong job. Eating well and exercising today can push osteoporosis concerns farther downstream. So start now.

Dr. Chandra



*Drs. Chandra and Shah see patients at Kern Medical's Truxtun Ave. campus and in the Sagebrush office on Columbus Ave. To make an appointment, call 661-326-2800.*





# GOING THE DISTANCE

**Norm Bell** STAFF WRITER

When it came to solving the mystery of his chronic pain, Cole Young had to look beyond his backyard.

At age 18, Cole Young has a clear fix on his career path. He wants to be a nurse and is taking classes toward that goal at Visalia Community College.

His combination of interest in healthcare and knowledge of his own body may have saved him from permanent kidney damage.

Ever since he was in eighth grade, he had dealt with what he described as "a pain in my flank."

He's long been active in freestyle BMX and it would have been easy to dismiss the pain as a recurring bicycle riding injury. Young was sure it was more serious.

Initially, doctors thought the problem was digestive. But as the pain grew worse, Young and his mother, Kelly Germanetti, grew more concerned.

His doctor in Visalia ran an ultrasound test and thought he'd detect-

ed a cyst on the kidney. He suggested Young go to Fresno for imagining on more sophisticated equipment.

That was easier said than done. Young encountered delays and didn't bond with the medical team there.

When his pain became so bad he couldn't go to class, his mother turned to a friend for help.

Germanetti is a detention sergeant with the Kern County Sheriff's Department. Her friend Margaret Johnson, is the nurse at the county jail, which contracts with Kern Medical for prisoner care. Johnson has seen the changes taking place at Kern Medical first hand.

She pointed Germanetti to the new urology team at Kern Medical and told her about the investment in a state-of-the-art daVinci Robot.

Germanetti said she was apprehensive but what happened next "just blew my mind.

After just a few nights on mom's couch, Young got in to see Dr. Vinh Trang. Tests were done quickly, confirming a congenital condition that had

area that was blocked, flip the blood vessel to behind this area and sew the two ends back together over the top so the blood vessel would not compress this area anymore."

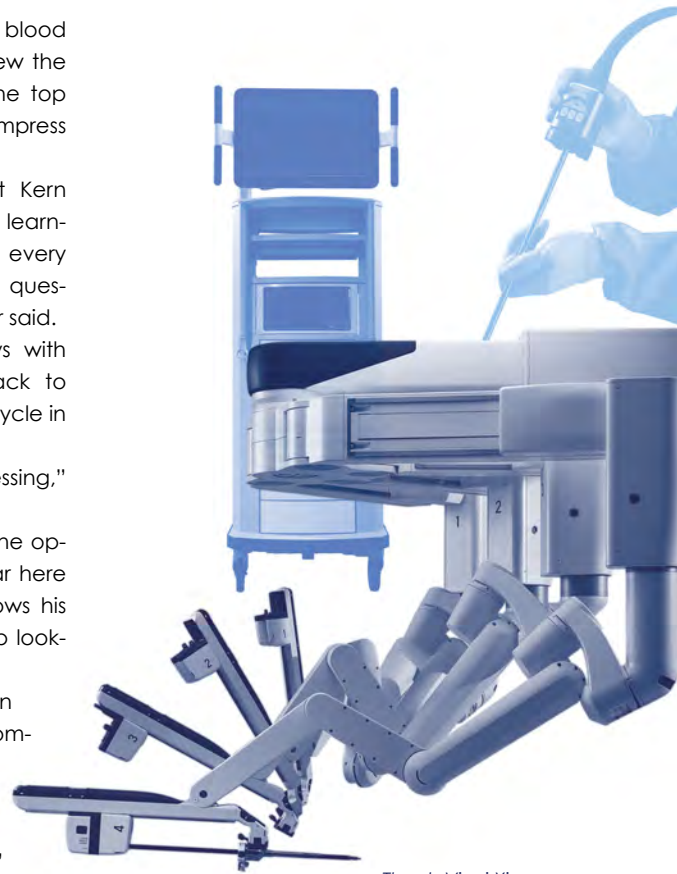
Young spent two nights at Kern Medical and used the time as a learning experience. "He talked to every doctor, nurse and intern, asking questions and seeking tips," his mother said.

He spent a few more days with Germanetti before heading back to Visalia. He was back riding his bicycle in six weeks.

Finding Dr. Trang "was a blessing," Young said.

The doctor demurs, calling the operation "routine." He said the star here is the soon-to-be nurse who knows his body and had the sense to keep looking for answers.

The whole experience was an eye-opener for Germanetti. "It completely changed my mind about Kern Medical," she said. "They understood our urgency and moved quickly. They were great."



The daVinci Xi surgical unit.

## Finding Dr. Trang "was a blessing."

allowed Young's kidney to swell to more than three times its normal size.

He recommended surgery with the daVinci Robot. "The robot has allowed us to perform the surgery through small pinhole incisions vs. a very large flank incision under the ribs, which in the past meant longer hospitalization, more pain with breathing and more narcotic pain medication," Dr. Trang explained.

The decision on surgery – a pyeloplasty – was "a no-brainer," Germanetti said. And Dr. Trang was able to quickly resolve the potentially serious problem.

"It is a congenital condition and he had a blood vessel that supplied the lower part of his kidney that was aberrant and compressed this area from the outside, preventing the kidney from draining," Dr. Trang said. "With the surgery, we were able to disconnect the



From Left: A) Dr. Vinh Trang at Kern Medical Main Campus. B) Cole at the bike park. C) Cole with his mother, Kelly.





## BECOMING YOUR OWN

*Dr. Everardo Cobos is Chair of the Department of Medicine at Kern Medical.*



An engaged patient is the best advocate for his or her own health. Doctors have years of advanced training but they don't know your body as well as you do. Together, a patient and doctor can form a powerful team. And it starts with communication. Here are some helpful tips:

**Come to an appointment prepared** to tell your doctor about your concerns and symptoms.

**Don't be afraid to ask questions.** If the doctor uses terms you don't understand, ask. When a doctor suggests a course of treatment, don't automatically accept it. Ask about options.

**Don't be afraid to discuss financial considerations.** For example, with prescription drugs, there may be an alternative or generic drug that is covered by the patient's insurance. For other needs, doctors often know of programs that can help.

**Specialists are great. But sometimes you can have too many doctors on the case.**

Look to your primary care physician to help direct traffic. Make sure that the doctor is kept informed of your specialist's tests and discussions. Your relationship with a primary care doctor is on-going, but the relationship with a specialist may be limited.

**Beware of taking medical advice from the internet.** Typing symptoms into a search box will produce lots of information. But without the context of the individual's history combined with a

physician's knowledge and the ability to examine the patient, inappropriate advice may result.

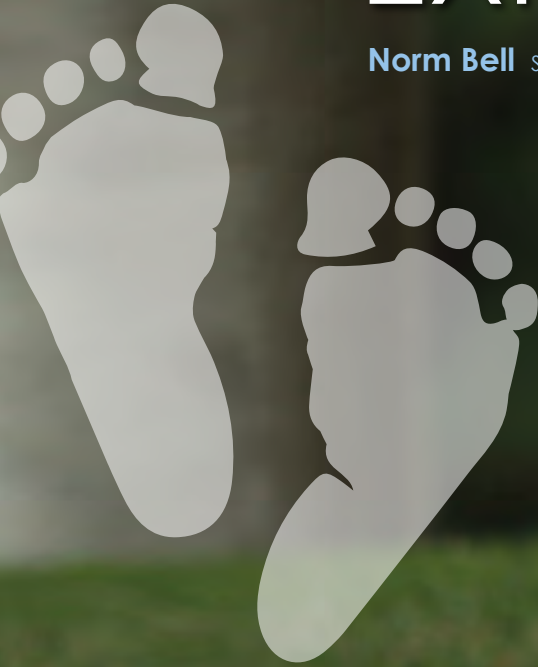
**Lots of diseases list fatigue among the symptoms.** But often a good night's sleep, may be the best course of treatment.

**Taking care of your medical conditions is complex.** Sometimes a family member or a professional healthcare advocate can be a big help—don't be afraid to take them with you to a doctor's appointment.

# HEALTH ADVOCATE

# FOR THE LEAST EXPECTED MOMENTS WHEN EXPECTING

Norm Bell STAFF WRITER



As a Kern County supervisor, Leticia Perez knows well that you can't please all of your constituents all of the time.

But her efforts to please one of her youngest constituents has been unusually demanding.

Her son Jude had "carried on for years" about how much he was looking forward to having a younger sister. With her 40th birthday now in the rear-view mirror, she recognizes she won't be able to fulfill his wish. But Jude has

since warmed up to the idea of a new, younger brother.

It's been more than six months since Perez gave birth to a baby boy named Noah, who arrived 7½ weeks prematurely. Perez is thankful that the neonatal team at Kern Medical orchestrated a happy ending to what was clearly a difficult situation.

On June 29, the Democrat who represents District 5 took part in a video on pregnancy for the Kern Coun-



*Leticia Perez, her husband Fernando Jara, and children Jude and Noah.*

ty Health Department. Hours later, she'd be flat on her back at Kern Medical, fearing for her unborn baby's life.

For her physician – Dr. Juan Lopez, chair of the department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Kern Medical – the scene was all too familiar.

A dozen years ago, Dr. Lopez's daughter was born nine weeks prematurely. He understood the emotion, the worry, the life-changing decisions. He'd been there, done that. And he was

comfortable assuring Perez that she was in the right place, just as he'd reassured his own wife.

For Perez, the choice of Kern Medical was never in question. "It's our hospital," she said. "It's in my district; it's just down the street from my house."

It's also the place her mother was born, where her siblings had been born and where she had been born. Kern Medical's main campus has been a part of the Perez family's history for

more than 60 years.

Perez had recognized that complications with her pregnancy were possible; she'd already endured three miscarriages. Still, on this night in late June, "it was just unimaginable that I'd be here," she recalled.

She'd been home when she started leaking fluid.

"I was instantly, completely terrified," she told The Bakersfield Californian, which broke the story of the

premature birth in its July 16 edition.

Perez, with help from her level-headed husband Fernando Jara, quickly made her way to Kern Medical. There she encountered "a level of compassionate care beyond description."

Dr. Lopez stabilized her condition and ordered bed rest in an effort to prolong the pregnancy. It wasn't long before the hard-charging Perez rebelled. She wanted to go home; she had things to do.

"I had to be firm with her," Dr. Lopez recalled. "She couldn't go home until she'd delivered."

For the next 10 days, Perez rested, although Lopez acknowledged he'd been unable to get her cellphone away from her.

Then the contractions became stronger and it was time for Noah to arrive. It was July 7, well ahead of the Aug. 29 due date.

Like most premature babies, the 4.5-pound Noah needed some help breathing and adjusting to life outside the womb. That's where the Neonatal

Intensive Care Unit's (NICU) staff and technology shone.

Babies born prematurely have a rough first few weeks, Dr. Lopez said. Breathing problems top the list as lungs develop late in the pregnancy. Issues of feeding, temperature regulation and blood sugar levels are also common.

The NICU staff handles difficult cases as a matter of daily routine. It's been designated as the high-risk pregnancy center for Kern County and other hospitals refer their toughest cases here, Dr. Lopez said.

For Perez, Kern Medical's NICU was the right place for Noah.

She said she saw doctors and nurses giving so selflessly. Their commitment to doing the right thing was "inspirational."

Back home, Noah has grown and is thriving, Perez said. "He's eating us out of house and home."

Noah's arrival has made Perez think more about work-life balance but she acknowledged her husband has carried a lot of the load. "He has a knack; he's more intuitive," she said.

By early August, she was back at work, helping the Board of Supervisors navigate another set of issues, knowing that her solutions won't please all of her constituents.

“A level of compassionate care beyond description.”



Dr. Juan Lopez  
Obstetrics and Gynecology

## Preemies

### All Too Prevalent in Kern County

Kern County has among the highest rates of premature births in California. Statewide figures for 2013 show 8.8 percent of all births in California are premature. In Kern County, that rate is 10.3 percent, a total of 1,395 cases.

The county's high rates of diabetes and obesity are factors, said Dr. Juan Lopez, chair of the department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Kern Medical. So are the county's high rate of teen pregnancies and a growing national trend toward later-in-life pregnancies.

Each case is individual, Dr. Lopez said. Heredity and family history are not factors. But having one premature birth is a predictor of having additional premature deliveries.

The best preventive step is getting prenatal care as early as possible, Dr. Lopez said. Counseling on health, diet, exercise and vitamins makes a difference, he said. But sometimes Mother Nature and babies have their own ideas.

Dr. Lopez has been at Kern Medical since 1998 and sees patients through the outpatient services at Sagebrush on Columbus Street.





“ It’s been designated as the high-risk pregnancy center for Kern County and other hospitals refer their toughest cases here.”

# TECHNOLOGY ENHANCING

PATIENTS' EXPERIENCES



## SELF SERVICE CHECK-IN KIOSK

Kern Medical is turning to technology in an effort to enhance the patient experience. Self-service pre-check-in kiosks have been installed at key locations to speed patient registration. The technology, enhances patient privacy while giving Kern Medical managers a new tool to track wait times and adjust staffing. The kiosks are available in English and Spanish.

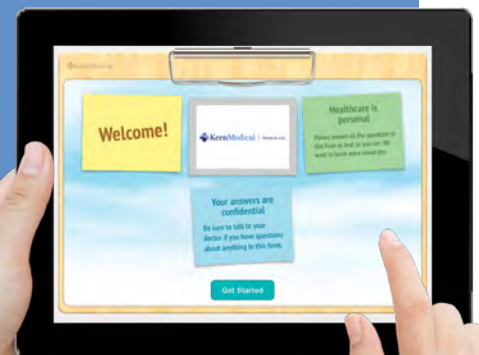


## MOBILE APP

Patients also have the option to download an app to their smartphones that allows a quick scan at the kiosk for future visits.

## ONLINE PATIENT SURVEY

Kern Medical is utilizing a cloud based application called Tonic that replaces paper forms with electronic data gathering. The technology provides health care practitioners with real time information and reports based on risk assessments, health history questionnaires, and patient experience surveys. The platform can also provide the patients with customized education videos. Tonic made its debut last fall at the Truxtun office, with other locations coming soon.





# WOMEN'S HEALTH IN FOCUS

HEALTH SERVICES FOR WOMEN AT EVERY STAGE OF LIFE

Kern Medical offers comprehensive, state-of-the-art Women's Health Services delivered by top professionals who care. Whether your needs involve obstetrics and gynecology, surgical options or staying strong and healthy, our specialists can help. Our UCLA-affiliated program is unique to the region. And we're focused on women of every age and stage of life. Some of our services include:

- Prenatal Screening and Diagnostic Services including Ultrasound and Amniocentesis
- Obstetrics and Gynecology
- Newly Remodeled Private Post-Partum Rooms
- High-Risk Pregnancy Management
- Urogynecology including Incontinence, Pelvic Floor Disorders and Complex Reconstructive Surgery
- Gynecologic Oncology
- Minimally Invasive and Robotic Surgery
- Infertility Services and Reproductive Endocrinology
- Genetic Counseling
- Post-Menopausal Care

 **KernMedical** | *Health for Life.*

661.664.2200

# Managing Your MEDS



**p**harmacists don't just hand out pills. They dispense information. Important information.

For Jay Josen, PharmD, assistant director of pharmacy at Kern Medical, the job is about giving the patient all the tools to get better, not just feel better. The distinction matters, says Josen.

Many medications relieve symptoms quickly but if patients stop taking the medicine, they soon may find themselves back at the hospital.



## Joson's Advice:

**Take all of your medications**, even if you feel better or don't have symptoms. Follow the directions on the bottle. If you encounter side effects – or have an adverse drug reaction – contact your pharmacist or provider immediately.

**Make sure the pharmacist consults you on any new medication** so that you understand what it is for, what to expect, and how best to take it. Let the pharmacist know, too, if you're taking over-the-counter medications that may cause drug-to-drug interactions.

**Don't wait until you're all out of medication to get a refill.** Call it in when you've got a week left; that way, if your doctor needs to authorize the refill or if your medication is not in stock at the pharmacy, those issues can be resolved before you run out.

**Stick to one pharmacy and be actively involved in your health care.** Using multiple pharmacies won't give the pharmacist the complete picture; a drug-to-drug interaction may exist but it won't get caught because the medication is being filled elsewhere.

**Make sure to double check every bottle and pill you're receiving.** Pharmacy staff are human beings and can make mistakes. Don't be afraid to ask questions. It's best to develop a rapport with your pharmacy so the staff know you personally and can better look out for your well-being.

**Don't just walk away, if you can't afford a medication** or it's not covered by your insurance. Have your pharmacist get the medication changed to an affordable alternative — pharmacists' expertise includes working with effective alternatives, whether the issue may be expense, adverse reactions, an allergy or something else. Let us help you.

**Don't rush the staff.** It isn't burgers and fries we're filling here. It pays to be patient for your medications as time pressures increase the chance of errors. Pharmacists are looking out for you by ensuring the provider prescribed the right drug for the right condition at the right dose as well as ensuring the prescription gets covered by your insurance. We also look for allergies, drug-to-drug or drug-to-food interactions to keep you as safe as possible.



“The goal is to make sure the patient leaves with the tools to get well.”

## MEDS-TO-BEDS PROGRAM EXPANDS

Kern Medical has expanded its Meds-to-Beds program to cover all in-patient beds. The concept is straight forward, explained Jay Joson, PharmD, assistant director of pharmacy. When a patient is ready to be released, any newly prescribed medications are delivered by a pharmacist who does a bedside consultation to make sure the patient understands the instructions and any potential side effects.

The pharmacy staff works with the patient's insurance and the prescribing physician to make sure costs and complications are minimized. The goal is to make sure the patient leaves with the tools to get well.

Meds-to-Beds is an extension of Kern Medical's effort to provide consumer-facing services. Pharmacies are open on the main campus and on Columbus Street. The pharmacies can pass along significant savings to patients, Joson explained, because Kern Medical buys its drugs under a state program that delivers deep discounts, often much lower than the price of retail pharmacies.



Lori and Bob Malkin sit in the new JJ's Legacy Comfort Room at Kern Medical.

# JJ's LEGACY BRINGS COMFORT



**Erica Easton**  
*Executive Director of  
Kern Medical Foundation*

Recently, I was watching a new television show – *This Is Us* – and was struck by a line and a familiar situation. The character was celebrating the notion of taking the sourest lemon that life has to offer and turning it into something resembling lemonade.

As the only trauma center in the region, Kern Medical is where some families learn that their life has changed forever. In a few cases, we see a family attempt to transform their tragedy into a blessing for another family.

I can think of no better example of this turn of circumstance, than JJ's

Legacy. Over the past seven years, Lori Malkin has been able to turn the worst possible day for her and her family into a gift of life for so many.

Kern Medical has been fortunate to partner with JJ's Legacy to design a space tailor-made for families in our Intensive Care Unit (ICU). We know that family members play an important role in supporting the care of a patient. Having a space near the patients' room allows them to spend more time by the patient's bedside. It also provides a place to rest just steps outside the ICU doors.

JJ's Legacy is fulfilling its mission of providing compassionate support to donor and recipient families through this special collaboration.

Situations are often similar yet vastly different for families as they experience a roller coaster of emotions. The JJ's Legacy Comfort Room is a safe, private space for families to wait

while their loved one is undergoing life-saving surgery. It is also a place where the difficult discussions about organ donation can occur.

When Lori was faced with this decision, she had this difficult conversation at her sons' bedside in the ICU. Now, because of the generosity of our partner, JJ's Legacy, families will be able to leave the bedside and have time to consider the options and make the best choices.

JJ's Legacy was founded as the result of a tragic accident for one family, but has led to countless lives being saved in our community and beyond. We are grateful that JJ's Legacy has chosen to help our ICU families by providing them with a comfortable, compassionate space.

The ribbon cutting happened on Dec. 14 and we are pleased to say that the Comfort Room is now open.

*For more information about how you can help our families at Kern Medical, please contact Erica.Easton@KernMedical.com or (661) 868-8407. Additional information is also available on our website, KernMedicalFoundation.com. Other websites that provide related information on organ and tissue donation are <http://donatelifecalifornia.org> and <http://www.jjslegacy.org>*



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# 150 YEARS

Since 1867, Kern Medical has been committed to the health of our community through education, innovation and compassion. In this, our 150th year, we look forward to advancing the health of all of Bakersfield ... for generations to come.

