

HEALTH NEWS *from*

WINTER 2018

# doctors hospital OF LAREDO

## Back to class after *knee surgery*

How outpatient therapy helped  
teacher Rosalinda Gonzalez



### **Inside:**

A patient's life-changing weight-loss surgery  
Join us for our expansion grand opening!



Compliments of  
**DOCTORS  
HOSPITAL**



The start of a new year is a good time to revisit your wellness goals and recommit to staying healthy. Doctors Hospital of Laredo is here to support you and your family with education, services and programs to help you feel your best.

On the next page you can learn more about our bariatric program, which can provide life-changing treatment for excess weight

and the related health problems that often come with it. We also tell you more in this issue about our outpatient therapy program, which relocated in 2017 to a more expansive facility on McPherson Road in Laredo. It is helping patients like Rosalinda Gonzalez, on our cover, overcome health challenges and keep doing the things they love.

Speaking of healthy recoveries, you can learn more on page 7 about our new cardiac rehab unit, designed especially for heart patients, as well as other renovations to enhance the care and services we provide. If you need help coping with seasonal flu and allergies, check out the "Ask the Doctor" article on page 6 for tips and information.

As the needs of our community continue to grow, we're expanding our services to make high-quality care more accessible. We're committed to helping you achieve your optimal health in the new year and well beyond.

Sincerely,

**James Resendez, FACHE**  
*Chief Executive Officer*

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## *Welcome to the community!*

Laredo Physicians Group and Doctors Hospital of Laredo recently welcomed family practice physician Mariela Bernal, MD, to the physician practice and the hospital's medical staff. Dr. Bernal is board certified by the American Board of Family Medicine. She is experienced in family medicine and urgent care, and joins the community from Mayaguez, Puerto Rico.

**Dr. Bernal is fluent in English and Spanish, and is now seeing patients at:**  
6801 McPherson Road, Suite 331, Laredo. To make an appointment, please call 956-704-1717.



# “Everything has improved AFTER SURGERY.” – Elizabeth Ortiz



Michael C. Morris  
MD, FACS,  
FASMBS

Before having weight-loss surgery last March at Doctors Hospital of Laredo, Elizabeth Ortiz wore a size 26. Now she is a size 16, and she’s continuing to lose weight. “My clothes are loose, and I can see how my body has changed in size,” she says. “Everything is smaller.” She used to suffer from lower back pain (sciatica) and took medicine for it, but not anymore. “As the weight came off, so did the lower back pain,” she says.

Ortiz had gastric sleeve surgery, which is a minimally invasive procedure that involves removing a portion of the stomach and creating a thin vertical sleeve. Altering the stomach anatomy decreases hunger and increases the feeling of fullness. Patients who follow a healthy lifestyle can expect to lose 65 to 80 percent of their excess body weight within the first year, says Bariatric Coordinator and registered dietician Blanca Villarreal, RD, LD, CHC.

For many patients, surgery can also help to treat and sometimes resolve obesity-related conditions like diabetes.

Bariatric surgery at Doctors Hospital is performed by surgeon and Bariatric Medical Director Michael C. Morris, MD, FACS, FASMBS. “He can help patients determine whether they are candidates for surgery and talk with them about the pros and cons,” says Villarreal. Being successful for the long term requires making a lifetime commitment to a healthy lifestyle. At Doctors Hospital, patients are supported through the program by Bariatric Surgical Clinical Reviewer Rochelle V. Gonzalez, RN, BSN. She also provides follow-up care to help patients stay healthy and on track after their procedure.

“Prior to my surgery, I was struggling to keep up with my lifestyle,” says Ortiz, who is a mom of three active kids. “I was not living; I was merely surviving.” Weight-loss surgery has changed that, she says. “I feel more energized and I am much more active.” ■

**Call Doctors Hospital Weight-Loss and Wellness Center at 956-693-5025 to learn more. Also, for an online seminar visit [doctorshosplaredo.com/slimdown](http://doctorshosplaredo.com/slimdown).**

*Individual results may vary. There are risks associated with any surgical procedure. Talk with your doctor about these risks to find out if bariatric surgery is right for you.*

## PROVEN CARE

Doctors Hospital of Laredo is accredited as a Comprehensive Center by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP®), which works to advance safe, high-quality care for bariatric surgical patients.



Elizabeth Ortiz before and after surgery.



## ROSALINDA GONZALEZ'S A+ RECOVERY WITH *outpatient therapy*

Teacher Rosalinda Gonzalez has function back in her knee and is pain free after completing outpatient therapy.

Walking, bending down and staying active with her young students are part of Rosalinda Gonzalez's everyday life as a teacher and director of Los Pepitos Schoolhouse in Laredo. When she needed to get back to her busy routine after knee replacement surgery last July, she turned to North Laredo Diagnostic and Therapy Center for help.

Gonzalez had been through joint replacement surgery on her right knee in 2011, so she was familiar with the recovery process. "I went back to Doctors Hospital for therapy because I was happy the first time around," she says. "This time I was more at ease. My biggest fear was bending my knee. Also, I didn't want to walk with a limp." >



Siripan Boughton, DPT, who performed Gonzalez's initial evaluation, explains that the first step was to create an individualized therapy plan based on Gonzalez's goals and her prior level of function. She needed help with range of motion and improving her strength so she could return to work, Boughton says.

Gonzalez attended rehab three times a week for the first month, and then twice a week after that. She usually met with the same therapist, Azahy Lee, PT. "Initially we worked on decreasing pain through things like massage and thermal therapy," Lee explains. Once the pain was controlled, the therapists worked on strengthening, activities like walking and stretching with manual techniques, focusing special attention on the muscles above the knee, which can become tight.

Therapists at North Laredo Diagnostic and Therapy Center measure patients' pain on a scale from 1 to 10. Gonzalez's pain initially was reported as a 6 to 8 on that scale. Upon completion of her plan of care with physical therapy, her pain was reported as a zero out of 10. In addition, she was able to walk without a limp, squat, and go up and down the stairs as per her prior level of function to return to work independently without restrictions.

"I tried to do as much at home as I could," says Gonzalez, who faithfully did all the home exercises that were recommended for her. "This makes the treatment go that much faster," says Lee.

Gonzalez says that the spacious new Doctors Hospital facility where she did her rehab provided a supportive environment and was convenient to her home. "They greet you by name when you arrive," she says of the staff. "It makes you feel good." Even though it was hard work, rehab helped her get back to her daily activities in the classroom and walks with her husband, Edmundo. They made it so you wanted to go there, she says of the therapy staff. "It was my little escape." ■

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**To learn more, visit [doctorshosplaredo.com/recover](http://doctorshosplaredo.com/recover).  
For a referral to a physician at Doctors Hospital of Laredo, call 1-877-992-1711.**

## *Services in our new outpatient therapy space*

Through outpatient therapy, patients receive help recovering from a major surgery, illness or injury, and then return to the comfort of their home when their therapy sessions are done. "We see patients for many different conditions, such as stroke, Parkinson's disease, back pain and knee pain," says Ashley Dowler, MS, CCC-SLP/L, director of therapy. "Anybody who has an impairment or limitation that affects his or her activities of daily living may be a possible candidate," she says. Therapy is individualized for each patient and may include:

- physical therapy to improve function and help with skills like getting in and out of bed or a wheelchair, standing and walking
- occupational therapy to enhance activities of daily living like bathing, cooking and working
- speech/language therapy to help with disorders of speech, voice, language, cognition, memory and swallowing

**A physician's referral is needed, and most types of insurance are accepted. North Laredo Diagnostic and Therapy Center is located at 6801 McPherson Road, Suite 101, Laredo.**



## Coping with *winter colds, flu and allergies*



It's important to recognize that winter is a time of increased viral as well as bacterial

respiratory infections, says allergist and immunologist **Jane Unzeitig, MD**. It can also be a tough time for allergy sufferers here in Laredo. To help you and your family feel your best, Dr. Unzeitig provides some guidance.

### **Q: How can I tell the difference between allergies and the flu?**

Allergy sufferers can feel tired and irritable. They can have itchy watery eyes, runny nose, sneezing, itchy nose and even cough. For many, the most bothersome symptom is nasal congestion. It can lead to sinus pressure headache, mouth breathing, dry cracked lips and dry throat. Flu victims are likely to have body aches, possibly fever, throat pain, chest pain and feel too ill to leave home.

### **Q: What should I know about winter allergies?**

In South Texas, allergies occur year round, but there is particularly miserable pollen in winter. Mountain Cedar, a tree that grows in the San Antonio/hill country area, sends massive quantities of pollen to Laredo. Cold fronts bring cedar pollen, and the second week of January sees the peak counts. **Visit [pollen.aaaai.org](http://pollen.aaaai.org) for information on pollen counts in your area.**

### **Q: When should I go to the doctor for cold- and flu-like symptoms?**

If your symptoms are keeping you from doing your daily activities, if you have an unusually severe symptom or if you do not get relief from a few doses of over-the-counter medication, it is time to seek a diagnosis and treatment.

### **Q: What is the best way to protect myself from getting sick?**

Be observant of people around you who may look ill, and bypass the "abrazo" and the kiss in that case. Discreet use of waterless hand sanitizer can be helpful. Also, get plenty of rest, eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly and get a yearly flu vaccine. If you're over age 50, get the new shingles vaccine, Shingrix; if over age 65, take the pneumonia vaccine series. Talk to your doctor for specific recommendations. ■

For help finding a doctor, call our free Direct Doctors Plus® physician referral service at 1-877-992-1711.



Patients will be able to access the new cardiac rehab and ICU expansion through the Women's Center entrance, where the grand opening will be held.



These lines show where the walking track will be situated, providing a safe and inviting place for patients to exercise and recover.

## ***GRAND OPENING set for January 25!***

A grand opening will be held Thursday, January 25, at 10 a.m. to celebrate the new Cardiac Rehabilitation Center and ICU expansion at Doctors Hospital of Laredo. This \$13 million-plus project involved adding eight ICU beds and constructing 4,000 square feet for a cardiac rehabilitation unit.

Cardiac rehabilitation plays a key role in helping patients improve their cardiovascular health after a heart attack, heart failure, heart surgery or interventional procedure. Ana Sanchez, RN, cardiac rehab clinical care coordinator, notes that the new space has been designed with a number of special features and amenities, including:

- a walking track and specialized equipment like rehab treadmills, recumbent bikes and wall pulleys to help patients exercise safely
- a private conference room for support group meetings and education
- a spacious waiting area
- men's and women's showers and lockers, allowing for convenient visits around work
- Increased cardiac rehab monitoring capacity to 12 patients at any given time
- lots of windows for natural light

**The grand opening will be held at the Women's Center entrance, and members of the community are welcome to attend.**

**To stay up to date on the latest happenings, follow us on Facebook or on our website at [ichoosedoctorshospital.com](http://ichoosedoctorshospital.com).**

### ***Other upgrades and renovations at Doctors Hospital ...***

**A facelift for the emergency department:** "We have brought in some warm colors to make the ED more comfortable for patients," says ED Manager Marcus Dally, RN, CEN, EMT. Also, a non-waxing wood laminate floor has been installed. Additionally, more privacy has been provided in the lobby, and a room has been reserved for the suicide risk population to support a safe patient environment, Dally says.

**A renovation of the Sterile Processing Department (SPD):** "We've got the latest technology," says Tanni M. Diaz, RN, BS, Director of Surgical Services. "Patient safety is our number one priority." The new equipment supports the effective and efficient sterilization of instrumentation used throughout the hospital. It is also environmentally conscious, utilizing less water, says Dolores Boswell, RN, CNOR.



CALENDAR OF *events*



**FREE**

**CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION**

The prepared childbirth class covers information for your entire pregnancy, including labor, pain management, breastfeeding and newborn care. A tour will be included.

**WHERE:** Community Center

**WHEN:** Sessions are held the first Tuesday of the month, from 6 – 8 p.m.

- February 6
- March 6
- April 3

**WHO:** Instructors are Sharon Priest, RN, and Maria Noela Avila, RN, IBCLC, Lactation Consultant.

**HOW:** Call 1-877-992-1711 to sign up and confirm class dates.\*

\*We recommend that a mom and her support person register and attend during the third trimester of pregnancy. Class size is limited; please register early. Children are not permitted.

**BREASTFEEDING CLASSES**

Open to all moms, even if it is not your first baby. All mothers are encouraged to attend before and/or after they deliver. Our Lactation Consultant is ready to offer support and guidance.

**WHERE:** Postpartum Conference Room

**WHEN:** Last Thursday of every month, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

**HOW:** Register at 956-523-2530; if there is no answer, please leave a message.

**WEIGHT-LOSS SURGERY  
ONLINE SEMINARS**

If you want to learn more about weight-loss surgery, you can now get the information you need in the comfort of your home. Find out more by watching a series of videos about weight-loss surgery at Doctors Hospital of Laredo. Go to [ichoosedoctorshospital.com/videoseminar](http://ichoosedoctorshospital.com/videoseminar).

**BARIATRIC SUPPORT GROUP**

**Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m.**

Providence Health Center (main lobby)  
Open to anyone who has had bariatric surgery or is considering it.

- January 31: What is a plant-based diet?
- February 28: What is mindful eating?
- March 28: How to do sheet pan meals



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956-523-2000

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