

# HEALTH & FITNESS 2000

Page 8, Section A

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## Extended care unit at KM Hospital: Making a difference

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"Our job is to help our patients return to their normal lives," said Sheila Blakemore, Discharge Planner for Kings Mountain Hospital's Extended Care Unit. "Because we are a small unit, we develop a special bond with our patients. We sort of become part of their family," she added. For Beverly Ponder, a recent patient, that's exactly what happened.

After suffering a fall and breaking 2 bones in her right leg, Beverly was admitted to Cleveland Regional Medical Center and scheduled for surgery. "I was worried that my injuries may cause limitations beyond those I already had," she explained. Because of a prior onset of muscular dystrophy, Beverly walked with the assistance of a modified cane. And, although independent, she feared the worse from her new injuries.

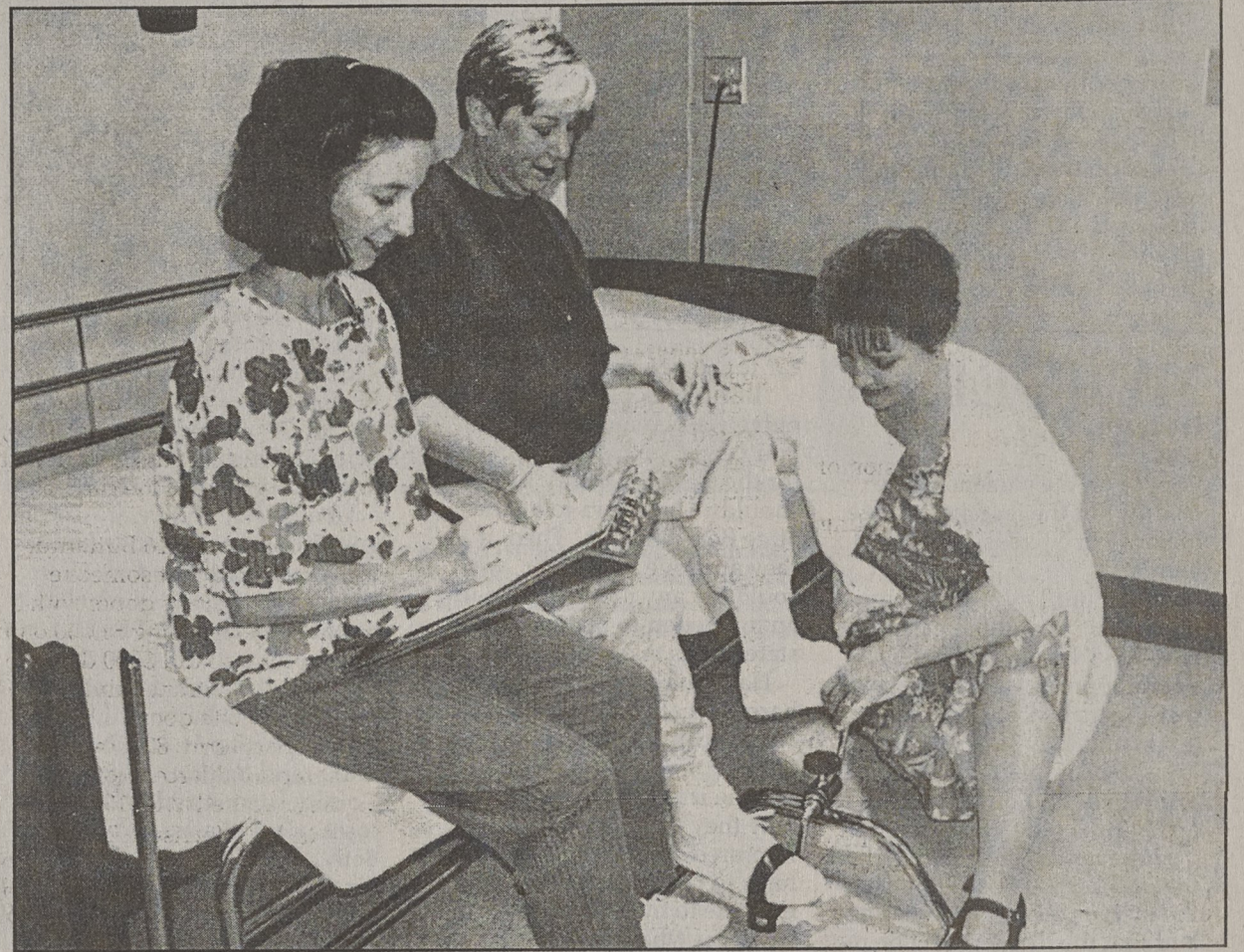
"I could have either been discharged to a rehab program in Charlotte or to Kings Mountain Hospital. After consulting my physician, we felt that Kings Mountain was the appropriate choice for me. They specialize in orthopaedic rehab and I trusted them," she said. Soon after arriving in the extended care unit at Kings Mountain Hospital, her condition was evaluated and a regimen of physical therapy was established. "There couldn't have been any better care," Beverly said. "Nurses were in and out of my room all of the time. We became friends and talked each day. I got to know them and they sure got to know me," she added. Beverly was pleased with all of the care at KMH. She does, however, have her favorites.

"Regina Lutz and Gale Parker were assigned to provide most of my therapy sessions. I had physical therapy sessions twice a day, seven days a week," she said. A special bond developed between the therapists and Beverly. "There were some days that I really wanted to quit. I wanted to give up and just go home; but they would not let me," she remembered. Several times during the therapy sessions, the treatment would stop and the women would talk. "I got so much more than therapy from them. They felt my pain and they truly wanted to help me," Ponder said.

Lutz and Parker, both Licensed Physical Therapy Aids, knew the unique difficulties Beverly had to endure and wanted to prepare her for returning home. Through their commitment, and Beverly's determination, her strength increased in both legs and she was discharged home after 60 days in the unit.

Discharging patients back to the community is not an unusual occurrence at the Extended Care Unit at Kings Mountain Hospital. "We discharge virtually every patient back to their homes; or some type of assisted living facility," Blakemore said. "Our average length of stay is about 12 days for most orthopaedic patients. Beverly stayed with us longer because of her prior condition. We are very happy for her," Blakemore added.

Now Ponder is back home and back at work at Cleveland Community College. She feels strong and continues to live independently. She is grateful for the treatment she received at the Extended Care Unit at Kings Mountain Hospital. More importantly, she is grateful for the compassion. "You don't have to go to Charlotte to get good care. I'm living proof of that."



Physical Therapy Assistants Regina Lutz (left) and Gale Parker (right) work with Beverly Ponder to strengthen her legs.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## New treatment against cause of blindness

There's encouraging progress in the battle to fight blindness. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved Visudyne™ (verteporfin for injection) therapy, a promising new treatment for patients with the "wet" form of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of blindness among people over the age of 50.

AMD can be classified into two types—the "dry" form which is the most common but does not usually cause significant vision loss, and the "wet" form which is the more serious or advanced type. Visudyne therapy has been developed to treat the wet form, which accounts for only 10-12 percent of all cases but is responsible for 80-90 percent of the severe vision loss associated with the disease.

In wet AMD, blood vessels grow and leak beneath the center of the retina (the macula) that lines the back of the eye, creating scar tissue that destroys central

vision, which is necessary for reading, driving and recognizing faces.

Some medical experts estimate that of the 500,000 people who develop wet AMD each year, 40 to 60 percent will develop predominantly classic lesions which may be treatable by Visudyne. Otherwise, the progression of the disease can lead to the loss of central vision in as little as two months to three years.

Yet, despite the high prevalence of the disease, a recent survey revealed only 30 percent of American adults may be familiar with it. Therefore, the American Academy of Ophthalmology urges everyone over the age of 50 to see their eye care professional once a year for a routine check-up.

Visudyne therapy is a two-step process that is performed in a doctor's office. In the first step, the light-sensitive drug is injected intravenously into the patient's arm. In the second step, the drug is activated by shining light from a cold laser into the patient's eye.

In clinical trials, Visudyne therapy preserved or improved vision in 38 percent of AMD patients and slowed vision loss in another 31 percent. It cannot, however, restore eyesight to patients with long-standing vision loss or those with the "dry" form of AMD. Visudyne is safe and well tolerated. The most frequently reported adverse events attributed to the treatment include injection site reactions and visual disturbances. Patients will become temporarily photosensitive following infusion; care should be taken to avoid exposure of skin or eyes to direct sunlight or bright indoor light for five days. The average treatment rate was 3.4 courses of therapy over 1 year.

Visudyne therapy was co-developed by CIBA Vision, the eye care unit of Novartis, and QLT PhotoTherapeutics Inc.

For more information about Visudyne therapy, visit the CIBA website at [www.visudyne.com](http://www.visudyne.com), or QLT at [www.qltinc.com](http://www.qltinc.com).

## Newborn hearing program

Did you know that a safe, non-invasive and inexpensive procedure that tests the hearing of newborns can save children years of developmental problems.

According to the National Campaign For Hearing Health, less than 35 percent of all newborns in the U.S. are currently being screened for hearing problems at birth. Yet, 12,000 infants are born with some degree of hearing loss each year and nearly 4,000 of these babies are profoundly deaf. That makes hearing impairment the most common birth defect in the U.S.

Most children with hearing impairment are not diagnosed until 30 months of age. This can result in serious delays in

speech and language development. Currently only 22 states mandate this hearing screening.

If you are an expectant parent, ask your doctor about having your newborn's hearing screened before leaving the hospital/birthing center. If your hospital/birthing center does not conduct infant hearing screening, you can check [www.hearinghealth.net](http://www.hearinghealth.net) for information about access to an infant hearing screening location near you.

**Twenty-two states now insist on hearing screening for newborns. Others may soon follow.**

## Progress against cancer

By learning more about the possible causes of cancer and the benefits of early screening, women may be able to lower their risk.

"Lung cancer is now the number one cancer killer for women, followed by breast and colorectal cancer," said Ruth Merkatz, RN, PhD, director of Pfizer Women's Health.

Breast cancer is still a leading cause of death—approximately 44,000 women died of breast cancer in 1998. Despite this many women do not get regular mammograms.

It's also estimated that one in 150 women, ages 40 to 59 will develop colorectal cancer, yet half of all American adults have never been screened for colon cancer.

At a recent roundtable sponsored by Pfizer Women's

Health, medical, research and policy experts talked about how to reduce women's cancer risk and improve their odds of surviving cancer as part of the "next wave" of women's health. According to the panelists, knowing the following risk factors may help:

- Tobacco (smoking is estimated to account for 90 percent of cancer cases)
- Diet (high meat and animal fat intake may be linked to increased rates of certain cancers)

Finally, early diagnosis may lead to more successful treatment, say the panelists and can improve survival rates dramatically.

For more information, visit [www.healthygenerations.com](http://www.healthygenerations.com) or visit [www.pfizer.com](http://www.pfizer.com).

## Vitamins: All the same?

When learning the ABCs of vitamins and nutritional supplements, many consumers may believe that all brands are about the same. Reading the label will show that this isn't true. Product strength may vary from brand to brand, and this can affect the vitamin's performance and healthful benefits.

Another concern is freshness. Researchers have found that the potency of vitamins and supplements decreases over time.

"When you purchase vitamins and nutritional supplements, you really can't be sure how long they've been sitting on the shelf or in a warehouse," says Ona Scandurra, M.S., R.D., Director

of Nutrition for Puritan.com, a leading website for high-quality vitamins, minerals and nutritional supplements.

One option is to go directly to a manufacturer like Puritan's Pride. All of its products carry expiration dates so consumers know that the supplements are fresh and potent. And by eliminating the "middle man," Puritan's Pride can offer its supplements direct to consumers, via the Puritan.com website, for 30 to 40 percent less.

To learn more, visit the website at [www.puritan.com](http://www.puritan.com) or call 1-800-645-1030 for a free catalog.

**Read the label! This can help you find the proper strength of vitamin you need.**

## These Doctors Feel Privileged To Serve You.



Christian Anderson, MD



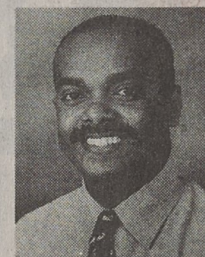
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Austin Osemeka, MD



Pam Shergill, MD



Syed Thiwan, MD



Everett Thombs, MD

## And, We Feel Privileged To Have Them On Our Staff.

When you're ill or injured, there is nothing more challenging than making important healthcare decisions. That's why our community is fortunate to have a skilled team of Internal Medicine physicians to manage your healthcare. On staff at Kings Mountain Hospital, these Internal Medicine

physicians can provide the care you need - from diagnostic tests and outpatient procedures to inpatient hospital care. To have the skill and training of these physicians on our staff at Kings Mountain Hospital is a privilege, one we are proud to offer our community.



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