

FEATURING "IN GOOD HEALTH" FROM MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER

# Monmouth

HEALTH & LIFE

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BAO BUNS,  
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# THE BEST OF 2021

DELIS & DINERS, GOLF & GIFTS, MALLS & MORE!





**Holmdel resident David Katz is now living pain-free following an anterior cervical discectomy performed by Jason Cohen, M.D., chairman of the Department of Orthopaedics. The surgery relieved pain and pressure in Katz's arm and neck.**



# NO PAIN IN THE NECK

Cervical spine surgery at Monmouth Medical Center helps a local businessman regain quality of life.

**David Katz first noticed** a problem about three years ago. It started with pain in his right shoulder, and the pain soon migrated to his upper right arm. At times, Katz, of Holmdel, felt a tingling sensation from his elbow down to his fingers.

Katz, now 68, contacted a friend of his, Brian Torpey, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Monmouth Medical Center (MMC). Dr. Torpey took images of Katz's spine and diagnosed degenerative damage in the disks of Katz's neck. The disk damage was putting pressure on the nerves in the neck, causing the pain in Katz's arm.

The first line of treatment was pain management, so Katz received steroid injections and anti-inflammatory medications from Anil Sharma, M.D., a pain medicine specialist at MMC. It helped at first, but over time grew ineffective. "It didn't mask the constant shoulder pain," says Katz, CEO of BMI Merchandise, a toy and amusement company. "It made it hard to get comfortable to sleep or work at my computer."

His doctors suggested he talk to a colleague at MMC: Jason Cohen, M.D., Chairman of Orthopaedic Surgery.

"Jason said surgery is always the last resort when less-invasive treatment methods have failed, so he did a bit more with nonsurgical treatments, and when that didn't help, he said it was time to consider surgery," Katz said, adding that he had reached the point where he was fed up with the pain. "I told him that's it, just do it."

On May 17, 2021, Dr. Cohen performed what's called an anterior cervical discectomy and fusion at the C4-5, C5-6 and C6-7 disks. "It's a very common issue, and when surgery is necessary it can provide good relief of pain and improve function," he said.

Dr. Cohen made an incision in the front of Katz's neck, removed the diseased discs to relieve the pressure on the spinal cord and nerve roots and then put implants where the discs were. He also added bone grafts to the vertebrae and then stabilized them with a titanium plate that fused the vertebrae together. "It all heals as one segment that doesn't move," Dr. Cohen says. "There is a loss of motion across those segments, but patients tend not to notice it too much because other levels of the spine can compensate."

Katz praises Dr. Cohen's team for educating him prior to the surgery. "They were very smart. Jason's team did a good job getting me physically and mentally prepared," he says. He did breathing exercises and avoided outdoor pollen before surgery to help recover from anesthesia, for example. He also watched a video about the surgery. "I paid attention, and the more I delved into this process, I started feeling more comfortable with the recovery," Katz says. "It made me go back and read the information they gave me more carefully, and that helped me be more informed, have more realistic expectations."

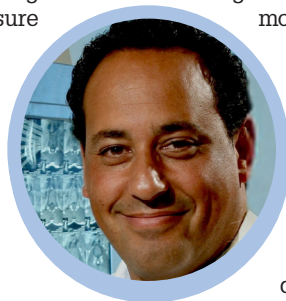
The surgery went according to plan, and Katz spent one night in the

hospital. "When I woke up, I was not that sore. I was surprised," he says. "I had a neck brace on. I ate some soft foods, and they had me walking that night, with no walker. I was very comfortable, didn't feel poorly at all."

He took a week off from work, and had "a little pain," that he controlled with Tylenol. He also started doing some neck exercises, and began wearing an electronic bone stimulator for four hours every day to help promote bone growth and fusion with the titanium plate in his neck.

At a follow-up examination two weeks after surgery, Dr. Cohen saw that Katz was doing well. "He was back to normal activities at this point—no restrictions, no medications," Dr. Cohen says. Katz was still being cautious as of the end of June, though. "Dr. Cohen said your body will tell you what you can do," Katz says. "I started moving some pallets in my warehouse, and I felt worn out, so I knew that was not the path to take right now." He still has some trouble turning his neck while driving, he reports. "But there is no more pain. I can sleep on both sides. I can use computers," he says.

Katz has the highest praise for everyone at MMC, from the surgeons and nurses to the staff. "Everyone was so lovely. I should have booked it for three nights," he jokes. He knew he did not have to go to New York City for the kind of care he received locally. "I could have gone anywhere. I chose what I thought to be the best option after knowing the quality of Jason Cohen and the outcomes at Monmouth Medical Center. It was excellent, and highly recommended."



Jason Cohen, M.D.

## THE SPINE CENTER AT MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER

The Spine Center at Monmouth Medical Center offers patients the most advanced non-surgical and surgical options for the relief of neck and back pain and related conditions. Patients receive world-class care from a coordinated team of orthopedic spine specialists, neurosurgeons and other providers who work together to offer leading-edge treatments, including minimally invasive procedures and innovative therapies for all forms of spinal disease:

- Disc disease
- Spinal stenosis
- Osteoarthritis of the spine
- Scoliosis
- Rheumatoid arthritis of the spine
- Herniated or ruptured discs
- Osteoporosis
- Spinal trauma or spinal injuries
- Spinal cord tumors or malformations



To learn more about spine surgery options at Monmouth Medical Center, visit [rwjhb.org/mmcjointandspine](http://rwjhb.org/mmcjointandspine).

# COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE

Monmouth Medical Center ED and MedSurg Unit nurse leaders honored with prestigious nursing award.

**Monmouth Medical Center** (MMC) nurse leaders, who were praised for going above and beyond for their staff, have been honored with a special Nurse Recognition Award established to honor extraordinary nurses and the super-human work they do every day. Dave DeMatteo, assistant clinical director for MMC's Emergency Department, and Stefonia Thompson, BSN, RN-BC, director of patient care for the hospital's Borden 5 adult inpatient unit, were re-

cently honored with the DAISY Award. The award was established by the DAISY Foundation, formed by the family of J. Patrick Barnes who died at age 33 of complications of Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP), an autoimmune disease. His widow, Tena, (a DAISY co-founder) created the acronym, Diseases Attacking the Immune System, and the Foundation established the DAISY recognition program to honor the super-human work nurses do.

## **Dave DeMatteo: Everyone's Cheerleader**

Many MMC staff remember DeMatteo for parking his RV outside of the ED during the first wave of COVID and staying there for weeks to help his staff. Colleagues say he goes out of his way to support nurses, despite how tired and overworked he may be, and he continually puts his own needs aside to help in any way that he can. Nominating staff offered the following testimonials for DeMatteo:

"Dave is everyone's cheerleader. He has a way of making everyone feel smart, cared-about and important. He pushes us to all be better."

"Dave does an unbelievable job of advocating for his nurses while maintaining his managerial responsibilities."

"I had a particularly difficult shift one night with an aggressive patient. I kept working, but Dave would not leave my stubborn self alone until I left the unit to take a walk with him. Despite being short-staffed, he made me go home early, telling me: 'When your mind isn't there, that's when you make mistakes.' I will never forget how he put my needs and emotions first, and I will always be grateful for that."



**Dave DeMatteo (second from right), the Assistant Clinical Director for the Emergency Department, is shown with, from left, Lauren Fleming, Magnet Program Director; Diann Johnston, Southern Region Chief Nursing Officer (CNO), RWJBarnabas Health, and CNO for Monmouth Medical Center; Sharmine Brassington, Director of Patient Care for the ED; Melissa Johnson, ED Unit Secretary; Darla Harmer, Assistant Vice President for Nursing; Danielle Perez-Dominguez, Pediatric ED nurse; and Victor Almeida, D.O., Chair of Emergency Medicine.**





### **Stefonia Thompson: Promoting A Positive Vision for Her Unit**

Thompson is described as a leader who cares for her staff like family. Staff who nominated her for the award say she is always well-informed with what is happening on the unit, and trusts them to make decisions, which promotes autonomy. She sets a tone for the unit, and her staff feels that the environment she facilitates is one of positive energy, compassion and teamwork. Colleagues note that Thompson goes above and beyond for her staff; she always makes herself available and is willing to help them, no matter the issue. Those who nominated her included the following words of praise:

“Good staff buy-in starts with leadership, and Stefonia is always promoting a positive vision for the unit and how it fits into MMC. Borden 5’s quality indicators increased under Stefonia, as did HCAHP (Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems) scores. She has changed the unit culture for the better.”

“Stefonia’s huddles are the best! Very thorough with high staff involvement and attention to detail. The education posted around the unit speaks to her eagerness to promote and increase nurse-sensitive indicators.”

“Stefonia works with her staff so well, with an open-door policy and team approach. She is an excellent nurse, approachable, kind, compassionate, innovative and an advocate for her team. She is a leader in every way!”

**Stefonia Thompson (middle), Director of Patient Care for Borden 5, is shown here with, from left, Diann Johnston and Darla Harmer.**

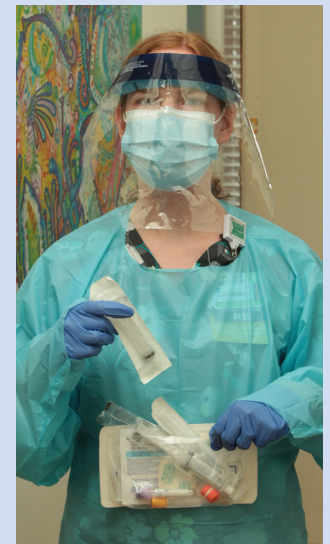


**Diann Johnston, Southern Region Chief Nursing Officer (CNO), RWJBarnabas Health, and CNO for Monmouth Medical Center, stands at MMC’s newly dedicated “Nursing Excellence” display case. Shown with special illumination is the crown jewel of MMC’s Nursing Excellence awards, the Magnet obelisk. In January 2020, MMC learned that The American Nurses Credentialing Center had conferred the prestigious Magnet® recognition as a reflection of its nursing professionalism, teamwork and superiority in patient care.**

## **MORE HONORS FOR KATHLEEN MALOUF**

Kathleen Malouf, who works in Pediatric Medical Day Stay for Monmouth Medical Center’s Unterberg Children’s Hospital, was recently recognized with a State of New Jersey Senate and General Assembly commendation for her innovation in COVID-19 care.

Malouf received the Johnson & Johnson Nurses Innovate Quick-Fire Challenge in COVID-19 Patient Care for her invention of the IsoPouch, a disposable, transparent pouch that adheres to an isolation gown. The pouch helps healthcare workers quickly and easily gather supplies and preserve personal protective equipment (PPE). She was recognized among hundreds of applicants worldwide for ideas to improve COVID-19 care. In May, Malouf was recognized by her hometown of Middletown with a proclamation from the township’s mayor. She currently is working on securing an international patent for the IsoPouch.



To learn more about nursing excellence at Monmouth Medical Center, visit [rwjbh.org/Monmouth](http://rwjbh.org/Monmouth).



{ IN GOOD HEALTH }

# MAGNETIC APPEAL

Monmouth Medical Center's advanced MRI technology offers a unique look inside the human body — making disease detection easier and precise.



Upgraded MRI equipment allows MMC cardiologist Ajay Shah, M.D. (seated), to better assess the heart. He is shown with MRI supervisor Nick DeMonte.

**Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)**, which uses magnets and radio waves to make a detailed image of the body, has been around for decades—but it keeps improving. Monmouth Medical Center (MMC) offers advanced techniques and state-of-the-art technology, such as adjustable receiver coils, allowing for increased patient comfort as well as more precise imaging and reporting by the radiologist. Its MRI units hold accreditation from the American College of Radiology, an achievement recognized as the gold standard for quality in medical imaging.

## MRI for Heart Disease

Monmouth Medical Center's MRI equipment was recently upgraded to offer special evaluations of the heart. "A cardiac MRI is the gold

standard for assessing the structure and function of the heart," says Ajay Shah, M.D., Director of Cardiac Rehabilitation at MMC.

A cardiac MRI assesses blood flow, heart valve structure and inflammation, helping doctors diagnose heart disease, aneurysm and cardiomyopathy. "An MRI helps us determine a patient's prognosis and treatment," says Dr. Shah.

## MRI for Liver Disease

MRI is used to detect or monitor liver disease and to evaluate the effectiveness of treatment for patients with liver disease related to excess fat and iron storage, says Tejas Shinde, M.D., Chair of Radiology at MMC. The liver is one of the main iron storage organs and usually the first to show iron overload. Therefore, detection and

quantification of liver iron overload are critical to optimize treatment and prevent complications, says Dr. Shinde.

"Our advanced MRI technology offers precise diagnosis and accurate noninvasive quantification of iron overload," he says.

Iron overload can be either primary (genetic) or secondary. Primary iron overload is most commonly associated with an inherited condition called hemochromatosis. Secondary iron overload is associated with ineffective erythropoiesis, the process which produces red blood cells, and predominantly caused by long-term transfusion therapy. Excess iron can poison organs, which can lead to conditions such as cancer, irregular heartbeat and cirrhosis of the liver.

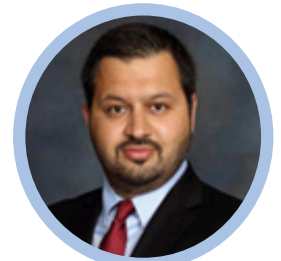
Fat deposition is a common condition of the liver. Fat is the hallmark of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease but may also occur with other entities such as alcohol abuse, HIV and genetic lipodystrophies and chemotherapy.

"Left untreated, it can lead to liver fibrosis, which causes diminished blood flow throughout the liver and a buildup of scar tissue. Without treatment, liver fibrosis may lead to cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer," Dr. Shinde says.

MRI elastography is an advanced imaging technique used to measure liver stiffness. "This is useful in staging the degree of liver fibrosis in patients with hepatitis/cirrhosis, which previously could only be performed through liver biopsy. However, elastography can painlessly provide a fibrosis score to identify those patients that would benefit from treatment or may require additional screening for hepatocellular carcinoma," says Shabbir Naqvi, M.D., a radiologist with MMC.



Tejas Shinde, M.D.,  
Chair of Radiology



Shabbir Naqvi, M.D.,  
Radiologist

## MRI for Prostate and Testicles

Multiparametric MRI of the prostate is an advanced MRI protocol that is used to screen for prostate cancer. It allows radiologists to identify and localize the most aggressive lesions, so that prostate biopsy can be directed to the area of concern. It also has the ability to evaluate for local tumor extension as well as any metastatic disease in the pelvis.

"MRI of the testicles is a valuable problem-solving technique when other imaging modalities have yielded indeterminate results. The Monmouth Medical Center MRI department is one of the few sites in Central Jersey offering this advanced technique," Dr. Shinde says.



To learn more about robotic surgery at Monmouth Medical Center, call 888.724.7123.

# MMC: The Choice for the Best Care

**The theme for** this issue of *Monmouth Health & Life* is “Readers’ Choice,” and in our In Good Health pages, we spotlight a primary factor in our standing as the community’s first choice for safe, compassionate health care. At Monmouth Medical Center (MMC), our nurses provide exceptionally compassionate care, advocating for our patients in every situation, on every level and treating every patient and family member as if they were caring for their own.

In this issue, you’ll meet two nurse leaders widely recognized for caring for their staff like family—facilitating a patient care environment that is one of positive energy, compassion and teamwork. Honored with Nurse Leader Awards, they were praised for always going above and beyond for their staff, which our assistant clinical director for the emergency department extended to parking his RV outside of the ED during the first wave of COVID and staying there for weeks to support his team.

Inside our hospital, our nursing excellence literally shines, as we recently unveiled a Nursing Excellence display case, with special illumination cast on the crown jewel of our quality awards, the Magnet obelisk. In January 2020, MMC learned that The American Nurses Credentialing Center had conferred the prestigious Magnet® recognition to MMC as a reflection of our nursing professionalism, teamwork and superiority in patient care. The beautiful new lighted display case is appropriately located in a highly visible, central location for patients, visitors and staff to behold.

In earning Magnet recognition, we also received an extraordinary seven exemplars for exemplary professional practice—from the Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders Center to the Emergency Department and ICU and other inpatient areas. This was truly across-the-board recognition of the outstanding work done by our nurses.

As a high-reliability organization, MMC has safety embedded in everything we do. Our skilled and dedicated nurses play a key role in our commitment to “Safety Together”—our continuing quest to unite our organization in a culture of safety to achieve top-tier clinical outcomes and deliver the highest quality care and safest experience for our patients, communities and workforce.

Please continue to stay well and take excellent care of yourselves, and know that we are here to safely and compassionately meet all of your health care needs.



**ERIC CARNEY**  
**President and Chief Executive Officer**  
MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER  
AND MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER  
SOUTHERN CAMPUS

