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MAY | 20 | 2008

An Advertising Supplement to  
THE ORANGE COUNTY  
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# Spine Surgery has deep roots

Confirming a Long-standing Reputation for Quality: O.C. Institute of Spine

By J. Anderson

**Two** spine surgeons at Fountain Valley Regional Hospital (FVRH) – one who has been at the hospital for four years, and another who’s been there for 24 years – regard the center’s establishment of the Orange County Institute of Spine a well-deserved confirmation of the hospital’s commitment to excellence in spine surgery.

Spine surgeon Dr. Ram Mudiyaam, has been with the hospital since 1984, and credits Dr. Charles Bonnett, now retired, and Dr. John C. Brown, who is still on the hospital staff, as primary forces in helping develop the hospital’s early reputation for spine surgery. All three had been previously affiliated with the renowned Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center in Downey, where they trained and worked with a special emphasis on scoliosis surgeries to remedy severe curvatures of the spine.

“We brought technology and experience in doing complex surgeries, especially in the areas of spinal deformities, to the hospital,” said Dr. Mudiyaam, Vice Chair of Surgery at FVRH and currently a member of the hospital’s Governing Board.

“Since the hospital was established in 1971, it has had a continued focus on excellence in spine surgery,” said spine surgeon Dr. Zafar Khan, who joined the hospital in 2004 and is Chairman of FVRH’s Department of Surgery.

Drs. Mudiyaam and Khan are gratified that a few years ago, the hospital created the O.C. Institute of Spine program. In their view it has

resulted in a larger pool of spine surgeons, a stronger support staff and a steadfast commitment to providing the doctors with ever-improving technologies.

Many factors make FVRH’s spine surgery program different from most other hospitals. Perhaps the most reassuring is the program’s unusual and progressive policy of involving neurosurgeons in the mix of spine surgery specialists who consult and review the many complex cases that end up at FVRH. Neurosurgery by definition and training involves considerable knowledge of the spine, hence the common ground.

“We utilize a multi-disciplinary approach,” said Dr. Khan. “At FVRH we have neurosurgeons and orthopedic spine surgeons working side-by-side. By getting the two disciplines together, it allows us to look at things from two sets of perspectives when dealing with complex cases.”

Definitions of a “complex” spinal case can

include those involving a patient who has been operated on multiple times, someone who has a tumor in the spinal cord, or one who suffers from an unusual spine deformity, Dr. Khan explained.

Other aspects that set FVRH’s spine surgery program above the norm include:

- Minimally invasive procedures for problems such as herniated discs. With an incision of only one or two inches, patients are often able to go home earlier, with little or no downtime for recovery. Previously such surgeries involved large incisions, a two- or three-day hospital stay, at-home recovery time of several days and reha-

“In order to qualify for clinical trials in spine procedures, the hospital must have two things: a proven commitment to providing excellent programs, and doctors who are true leaders in the spine world.”

— Dr. Zafar Khan, CHAIRMAN, DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY, FVRH

bilitation therapy

- Disc replacement surgery using artificial discs, which can help preserve motion in the spine. The technology for this brand-new approach is still evolving, said Dr. Mudiyaam, but he believes it has potential as a promising alternative to disc fusion.

- Techniques that allow spine surgery to be

# Spine

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performed without blood transfusions, a welcome option for those who have religious or health issues regarding the transfer of blood.

■ Comprehensive facilities for the treatment of spine problems in children. A sad fact about scoliosis, a medical condition of extreme spinal curvature from a variety of causes, is that children and adolescents are among its most common victims. This comes as a surprise to most people who assume that serious back problems are more an issue for the aged than for youth.

■ Use of Bone Morphogenetic Proteins, or BMPs, where DNA technologies replace the need for the painful procedure of taking bone grafts from the patient's hip. Although BMP technology is common now in many hospitals, FVRH was on the forefront and has offered it ever since the technology became available over four years ago.

■ Surgical technicians and support teams with many years' experience in spinal procedures and patient care.

The O.C. Institute of Spine has been so successful that it recently earned a "Specialty Center" designation for surgical spine from UnitedHealth.

"The designation is significant because it shows we have a higher success rate than average, with fewer complications. We have good outcomes," said Dr. Khan.

"Millions of people in America suffer with all kinds of back problems. For years, conventional wisdom was that you just had to live with the pain," said Debbie

Keel, Chief Executive Officer of FVRH. "We've always had an excellent spine program here, but our commitment to the O.C. Institute of Spine has increased our number of spine surgeons and made this hospital attractive to some of the best in the field. A great spine surgery program not only takes great surgeons, but a fabulous physical therapy department and adherence to strict protocols of care. I'm proud to say that we're continuing and improving this hospital's legacy as a premiere spine surgery resource."

Fountain Valley Regional Medical Center is at 17100 Euclid Street in Fountain Valley. For more information, call (714) 966-7200 or visit [www.fountainvalleyhospital.com](http://www.fountainvalleyhospital.com).





# BACK to better health

Fountain Valley Regional Hospital is proud to have been awarded a united Premium Specialty Care Center designation for Surgical Spine for 2007 to 2009. This designation means that we have met rigorous quality criteria based on nationally recognized medical standard and expert advice.

Thank you to all our Physicians and Staff for helping to make this possible.

- Robert Ahearn, MD
- Mitchell Cohen, MD
- Ram Mudiyam, MD
- John Brown, MD
- Zafar Khan, MD



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**SPINE**  
at Fountain Valley Regional Hospital

The highly trained staff of experienced and dedicated professionals at the Orange County Institute of Neurosurgery at Fountain Valley Regional Hospital provides surgical treatment options for patients suffering from pain due to acute or chronic disorders of the central and peripheral nervous system.

Our team includes neurosurgeons with adult and pediatric training.

- E. Thomas Chappell, MD
- Tien Nguyen, MD
- Minh Tran, MD
- Frank Coufal, MD
- Murali Raju, MD



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17100 Euclid St., Fountain Valley, CA 92708