

COMING IN 2014



The New Wyoming Medical Center
Built Around You

For Your Health

WYOMINGMEDICALCENTER.ORG ■ SPRING 2014



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Expert Care, Close to Home



Wyoming Medical Center is pleased to welcome neurosurgeon **Don Penney, MD.**

Dr. Penney comes to Casper after running his solo practice in Atlanta, Ga., for 17 years. On pages 4 and 5 of this issue of *For Your Health*, he tells us why he still loves medicine and focuses on caring for the whole patient.

Dr. Penney joins our highly trained, specialized medical staff, allowing us to offer services you wouldn't expect in a city the size of Casper. We believe you heal faster when you are near friends and family, and with expert follow-up care available just down the street. In this issue, we highlight several of our doctors and their services.

Under the leadership of **David B. Wheeler, MD, PhD**, we have built Wyoming's only Primary Stroke Center certified by The Joint Commission. When you act FAST at the first signs of stroke, Dr. Wheeler and our award-winning team can help save brain function and lives (see page 3). **James Anderson, MD**, responded within minutes when Zachary Gentile's aorta ruptured, working with our medical team to correct a condition typically found only during autopsies (see page 7). And **Todd Hansen, MD**, explains how our da Vinci S HD™ Surgical System provides minimally invasive surgeries to help you heal faster with minimal scarring (see page 6).

These are just a fraction of the experienced physicians at Wyoming Medical Center, 95 percent of whom are board-certified. We are proud of our staff and the services they provide you every day, up the street from where you live.

Yours in good health,

Vickie Diamond, President and CEO



Check the 'Pulse' of Wyoming Medical Center

Do you like the content found in *For Your Health*? Connect with Wyoming Medical Center's new community health site to get more content like it every day.

"The Pulse: Life Inside Wyoming Medical Center" features stories, photos and important health information highlighting the heart of Natrona County's only community hospital: its people. We also feature stories from employees, physicians, patients and friends of WMC, offering a behind-the-scenes glimpse of hospital life.

Check out the Pulse community health blog at thepulse.wyomingmedicalcenter.org.

Connect



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In Case of a Stroke, **Act FAST** Learn what to look for

When it comes to stroke, time is of the essence. The longer a patient waits to seek treatment, the more severe the outcome likely will be.

“Treatment is available, but only if the treatment is started in time,” says neurologist **David B. Wheeler, MD, PhD, medical director of Wyoming Medical Center’s Primary Stroke Center.**

May is National Stroke Awareness Month. Stroke is the fourth-leading cause of death and the leading cause of long-term disability in the United States. One in every three strokes occurs in people younger than 65.

Wyoming Medical Center is better equipped to save brain function than any other facility in the state. Our Primary Stroke Center is Wyoming’s only center certified by The Joint Commission, and we are recipients of the Gold Plus–Target: Stroke award as part of the American Heart Association’s 2013 Get With the Guidelines: Stroke Campaign. But we can only save lives and improve outcomes when patients come to us in time.

What are the warning signs?

A stroke is caused by sudden interruption of the blood supply to part of the brain. The most common type is an ischemic stroke in which a clot blocks arteries in or leading to the brain, Dr. Wheeler says. In a hemorrhagic stroke, a blood vessel bursts and bleeds into the brain.

Warning signs include the sudden onset of one or more of the following symptoms:

- Numbness, weakness or tingling, especially in one side of the body
- Change or loss of vision in one or both eyes
- Dizziness, incoordination or inability to walk

- Difficulty speaking or understanding speech
- Unusually severe headache (for people who don’t typically suffer from them)

What does act FAST mean?

FAST is a memory guide for recognizing stroke.

Face:

Ask the person to smile. Look to see whether one side droops or the face is not symmetrical.

Arms:

Have the person raise both arms in front at shoulder height. Watch to see whether one arm drops lower than the other.

Speech:

Ask the person a question or to repeat a phrase back to you. Listen for slurred or garbled speech or signs that the individual doesn’t understand what you have asked.

Time:

If any of the three signs is present, time is of the essence. Call 911 immediately. Do not attempt to drive to the

hospital yourself. Emergency medical responders will begin tests on the way to the hospital.

“Get the patient to the emergency room right away, because there are treatments that can stop stroke in its tracks,” Dr. Wheeler says.

Why is time so important?

The longer that blood flow is restricted, the greater the chance for damage to the brain. “If we can open up or get rid of that clot and reestablish blood flow before permanent damage occurs, sometimes the stroke will go away,” Dr. Wheeler says.

The clot-buster tPA can dissolve the clot, but there is only a three-to four-and-a-half-hour window to administer the drug after the onset of symptoms. After that time window, tPA can cause more harm than good, Dr. Wheeler says.

Is stroke preventable?

“The key to all health is to live a healthy lifestyle by eating well and exercising regularly. Work with your doctor to manage your blood pressure and cholesterol. Most important, if you smoke cigarettes, quit today,” Dr. Wheeler says. •

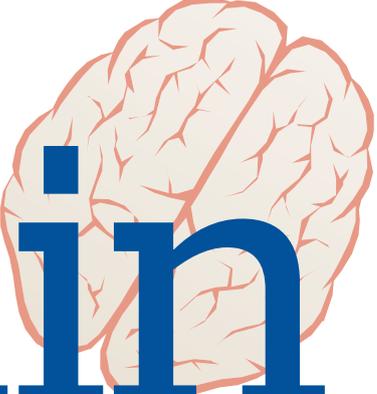


*David B. Wheeler,
MD, PhD*

ABOUT DR. WHEELER

Dr. Wheeler is board-certified in neurology and clinical neurophysiology. He is a Rhodes Scholar and was the 2010 Wyoming Medical Center Physician of the Year. He serves on the boards of Wyoming Medical Center, Wyoming Dementia Care and the American Heart Association (Southwest Affiliate.) Dr. Wheeler practices at Wyoming Neurologic Associates, 1020 E. Second St., Suite 100, in Casper. For a referral or an appointment, call **307-265-4343**.

The Brain Doctor



After 26 years, neurosurgeon Dr. Don Penney is still awed by the human nervous system

As a neurosurgeon, Don Penney, MD, once restored a mother's sight so she could watch her baby daughter grow. He pioneered a technique to treat brain tumors that gave a father several extra years with his wife and sons. And he protected a young stroke victim's brain from the damage of swelling by removing the top of her skull and helping her heal in time for high school graduation.

But Dr. Penney is not only a neurosurgeon. He is board-certified in emergency medicine, practicing in the famous Cook County Hospital on which the show *ER* was based. He consults with the FBI and is a member of its hostage rescue squad. He is a full professor and is passionate about teaching.

Dr. Penney recently moved to Casper to join the team at Wyoming Brain and Spine Associates and Wyoming Medical Center. We sat down with Dr. Penney to talk about his career, the patient cases that still give him goose bumps and the reason he closes every operation with AC/DC's "Thunderstruck."

Q Where did you grow up and what got you interested in medicine?

A: I came from a medical family. I was born and raised in Toronto, Canada. My mom was a nurse, and my dad was an engineer at a hospital. He worked in the power house and was responsible for all the mechanics of the hospital—from the furnaces down to the elevators.

At 16, I got my first job and went to work in a hospital. Right from the very beginning I was exposed to medicine.

Q Besides being a neurosurgeon, you're also board-certified in emergency medicine. Why the two disciplines?

A: All through medical school—and even through my neurosurgery training—I was interested in trauma. I always had this fixation on Cook County Hospital [a Level 1 Trauma Center in Chicago with one of the most respected emergency rooms in the country]. I thought, what better place to get your feet wet than in Cook County where there is so much trauma?

Q What is it that you love about emergency medicine?

A: I love medicine and being a full doctor. When I was in my residency training, I remember rounding with my attending physician. If there was a neuro problem, of course, the attending would address it. If they had any other kind of medical problem, they kind of delegated it to other specialists. I didn't want to give up the whole aspect of the patient.

Q Please tell us about Ebony Brown, the young mother who lost her sight seven days after giving birth to a daughter.

A: I happened to be in the office when I got a call from the ER. They said she had gone blind and had a pituitary tumor. As soon as I heard that, I knew it was a pituitary apoplexy [bleeding into the pituitary gland] and requested an MRI immediately. I ran over to the hospital and I met her on a gurney. I put two fingers 10 inches in front of her eyes, and she could not see them.

To remove pituitary tumors, I usually go transsphenoidal through the gum. Or, you can go alongside the nose. That is how we get to the base of the skull. I usually have an ear, nose and throat doctor perform the initial incision, because nobody wants a funny-looking nose afterward. The doctor came in and he did the approach to the skull, then I went in and took out the tumor.

After the surgery, I was wiped out. The surgery did not begin until 10:30 or 11 at night and I did not get out of there until about 4 in the morning. The next day, I came in and I was wondering if the procedure had helped. When I went to check on her, I remember sitting on the bed looking at the clock on the wall. I said to her, "Can you tell me what time it is?" She looked up and said, "It is 4:20." I got goose bumps. That was unbelievable to me.



Don Penney, MD, discusses his career from his desk at Wyoming Brain and Spine Associates, 1020 E. Second St., in Casper.

Q Have you ever heard of a case where a surgeon restored a patient's sight?

A: I haven't personally. I am sure they are out there, but that was a first for me.

Before I moved to Casper, my secretary in Atlanta said a woman was there to see me. I went out and there was the same mother who I had performed the transsphenoidal surgery on, who now had a daughter who was 7 or 8.

She said, "Do you remember me?" And I said, "Sure I do." She hugged me. It was cool. She got to see her daughter grow up.

Q After 26 years in neurosurgery, is there anything about the human brain that still amazes you?

A: I am still in awe. When I'm in the operating room and finishing surgery, my closing music is "Thunderstruck" by AC/DC. I feel that that song signifies the human nervous system for me.

Yes, neurosurgery is my job. I've become very familiar with the processes of the brain. But at times, I step back and am amazed at what goes on. We know so very little about the brain. We are growing and gaining, but we are not there yet. •

Meet the Doc

Family: Married with four grown children.

Education: Attended medical school at McMaster University in Montreal, Canada; completed a surgery internship at Montreal General Hospital, McGill University; completed his residency and fellowship at the Montreal Neurological Institute, McGill University.

Experience: Trained and practiced emergency medicine at the University of Illinois and Cook County Hospital in Chicago and joined the teaching staff as an assistant professor of neurosurgery. Ran a solo neurosurgery practice in Atlanta for 17 years, where he was also a full professor of emergency medicine at Medical College of Georgia, Augusta. In 2006, helped establish the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Georgia Chapter, where he directed the neuroscience program. Has authored numerous chapters in textbooks and scientific papers in addition to delivering multiple national lectures for the American College of Emergency Medicine.

Practice location:

Wyoming Brain and Spine Associates
1020 E. Second St., Suite 200,
Casper
307-266-2222



The da Vinci Surgical System provides the least-invasive option for many surgical procedures.

Small Wonders

The minimally invasive da Vinci robot is transforming surgery

Step into Wyoming Medical Center's da Vinci S HD™ Surgical System suite and you'll feel as if you're walking into a science fiction movie. **Urologist Todd Hansen, MD**, sits at what looks like a full-body video-game console at the back of the room, controlling two robotic arms at the operating table just behind him. The machine mimics the movements of Dr. Hansen's arms in every direction—including the rotation of his wrists. Dr. Hansen's thumbs and forefingers open and close the clasps on his surgical tools, allowing him to operate with enhanced precision, dexterity and control with what amounts to the world's coolest remote-control robot.

It's how Dr. Hansen now operates on most of his patients.

How It Works

"Robotic tools allow us to do complex surgeries without making big incisions," says Dr. Hansen, who has performed hundreds of procedures with the da Vinci system. "For example, if you have a tumor in your kidney, we have the ability to remove the tumor—what is called a partial nephrectomy—without a large incision. This is not being done anywhere else in Wyoming."

Five years ago, WMC was Wyoming's first hospital to get the da Vinci system, and our doctors are the most experienced in the state in using the technology. We provide the least-invasive options for urologic, gynecologic and general surgical procedures, including the No. 1 treatment option for prostate cancer.

Benefits for Patients

Traditional—or open—surgeries require incisions large enough to fit the surgeon's hands and surgical tools. The da Vinci system is minimally invasive, requiring very small incisions, offering better imaging and providing greater precision for removal of diseased tissue. Minimally invasive surgeries may also provide better results for patients.

Take, for an example, kidney cancer. The da Vinci technique allows Dr. Hansen, when possible, to remove cancerous tumors

and tissues without removing the entire kidney, resulting in longer life expectancy and decreasing the chance of renal failure, he says. It also avoids invasive open surgery.

"Open surgery would entail going through major muscles, even potentially taking a rib. There is a much higher chance of hernia and a higher risk of infection," Dr. Hansen says. "The pain and discomfort drops immensely with minimally invasive surgeries, and hospital stays are shorter, too." •

About the Doc

Dr. Hansen is a board-certified urologist with Central Wyoming Urological Associates, 1416 E. A St. in Casper. Call **307-577-8600** for an appointment or a referral.



Dr. Hansen discusses noninvasive procedures, a patient's role in seeking second opinions and the future of minimally invasive surgery, at **thepulse.wyomingmedicalcenter.org**. While there, watch a video of Dr. Hansen demonstrating the precision of the da Vinci S HD™ Surgical System. Just type "da Vinci" into the site's search bar.

IS DA VINCI RIGHT FOR YOU?

For more information about procedures performed with the da Vinci system at WMC, visit **wyomingmedicalcenter.org**.



Saving Chief Gentile

An investigation almost killed him, but thanks to WMC, he's still here to protect and serve

It had been a long night and Evansville Police Chief Zachary Gentile lay down almost as soon as he got home. A rare Evansville homicide had pulled Gentile and his Evansville officers out of bed just after midnight on July 25, and they worked the case for 12 straight hours. At noon, Gentile took his team to lunch and then went home to sleep. His stomach started to hurt almost immediately.

"The pain was just astronomical. It got to the point where I could not breathe," Gentile says. "I fell down, hit my head and cut my eye. My wife called the EMTs."

AAA Spells Trouble

Sometimes Gentile jokes that he must have landed in the witness protection program to find himself in Evansville. He grew up in New York, retired from Miami's Metro Dade Police Department after 24 years, and came to Wyoming 15 years ago to take the police chief job. But he will tell anyone who asks that his care at WMC rivals the care he would have gotten in cities 10 times the size of Casper. The medical team here saved his life, he says, no two ways about it.

"I have run into a couple of nurses who were there. They told me my condition is most often discovered during an autopsy," he says. "It obviously was not my turn to go."

For years and without

him knowing it, the lining of Gentile's aorta had been growing weaker—a condition that likely ran in his family. His aorta bulged outward like a balloon, stretching the walls and weakening them further. His blood pressure dropped, but he displayed no outward symptoms.

While investigating the murder, his blood pressure almost certainly rose, putting pressure on his weak aortic walls. By the time he lay down to sleep, his abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) had ruptured—a condition that is fatal if not immediately treated, says **surgeon James Anderson, MD**, who operated on Gentile within five minutes of the patient's arrival at WMC. The national survival rate for such a case is about 50 percent, and Dr. Anderson sees eight to 10 of the ruptures a year. When patients get to the ER in time, WMC surgeons save about 95 percent of them, he says.

Expert Care, Right Here

"There aren't many things we can't take care of right here," Dr. Anderson says. "The hospital recognizes that if we provide the highest quality care available, people will come to see us. We as surgeons have committed to that."

Gentile woke up the next day in the Intensive Care Unit, where the staff stayed by his



While investigating a rare Evansville homicide in July, Evansville Police Chief Zachary Gentile suffered a ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm. He credits the staff at WMC for saving his life—and for finding the cancer he didn't know he had on a kidney.

side, attending to his every need. He tells those who ask that Wyoming Medical Center is an asset Casper is lucky to have. "If anyone is wondering if we have a top-notch hospital, staffed by professionals, wonder no more," Gentile says. "They are the best. The nurses in the Intensive Care Unit and the surgery ward will always be in my prayers."

Getting to the hospital likely saved Gentile's life in another way. In the process of all the tests, doctors spotted a mark on his left kidney, which was most likely cancerous. Doctors at WMC removed his kidney this winter.

"The bad thing that happened to me was the ruptured aorta," Gentile says. "But if I did not have it, I would have never known about the kidney problem—and eventually, I would have died from it. Sometimes, bad things happen for good reasons." ●



Meet Dr. Anderson

Dr. Anderson is board-certified in general surgery and vascular surgery. He has worked in Casper for 33 years, 25 of which he was the only board-certified vascular surgeon in Wyoming. Reach him at Wyoming Surgical Associates, 419 S. Washington St., Suite 200 in Casper, or call **307-577-4220**.

Save the Date
WMC's Safe Kids Day is **May 3**. Learn the importance of helmets for a variety of sports and many more safety tips.


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Casper, WY 82601-9908

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The Perfect Fit

New wig room created for cancer patients lifts spirits

Every month, Wyoming Medical Center Foundation's Angels Cancer Care Program receives multiple requests from cancer patients needing wigs. With the help of local cosmetologists, the Angels have created a room to make the entire experience more comfortable and intimate for cancer patients.

The Angels have partnered with Kirby Morris, co-owner of Rocky Mountain Academy of Hair, Skin and Nails (RMA), to create a wig room in the cosmetology school. Morris completely refurbished a

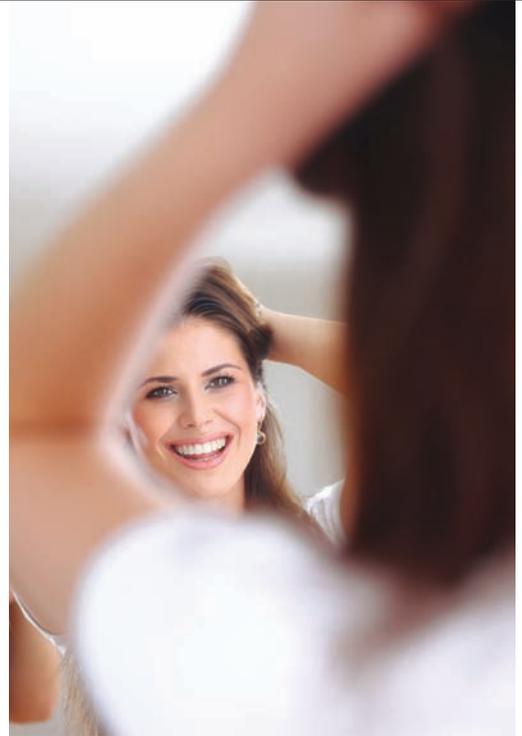
room in his school with a washing and styling station, welcoming décor and a variety of wigs lining the walls.

"Opening the wig room at the RMA is allowing us to pool our resources. It's giving patients a private place to have their heads shaved and to choose a wig that fits them," Morris says. "It's giving our school a place to teach our students about giving back to our community, and to cancer patients, while using the skills that they are learning here at RMA."

In the wig room, cancer patients can have their heads shaved, pick out a wig and have it styled either by RMA students or their own cosmetologist. It presents another facet of cosmetology that is not typically

covered in the academy curriculum and offers an opportunity for students to learn how to handle sensitive situations with cancer patients, Morris says.

Angels Cancer Care Coordinator Jillian Riddle says the Angels are looking forward to serving hundreds of cancer patients in the new room. "Our goal is to not only give patients privacy during this difficult time, but make them feel special when choosing their new wigs. We are thrilled the wig room has come to life." •



The new wig room at Rocky Mountain Academy of Hair, Skin and Nails will give cancer patients a private, comfortable place to pick out and style their new wigs.

DO YOU NEED HAIR LOSS SUPPORT?

If you are a cancer patient needing a new wig or would like more information about the wig room or the Angels Cancer Care Program, contact Jillian Riddle at **307-577-4355** or jriddle@wyomingmedicalcenter.org. Rocky Mountain Academy of Hair, Skin and Nails is located at 315 E. Fifth St. in Casper. Call them at **307-237-4247**.

