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Major moves to keep more patients on home turf

Hospital hires two ortho surgeons, changes name

Author(s): J.K. Wall jwall@ibj.com

Nearly three-quarters of orthopedics patients in Shelby County have gone to an Indianapolis **hospital** to receive care. Now, **Major Hospital** in Shelbyville wants to keep more of those patients at home. By next June, the **hospital** will build a \$7 million orthopedics center that will house two orthopedic surgeons. They will begin building their practices in Shelbyville next month.

The play for orthopedics patients throws **Major** into a pitched battle among Indianapolis-area **hospitals**. Surging numbers of patients need new hips and knees. And providing them is one of the most profitable things **hospitals** do these days.

Major's orthopedics gambit shows up how **Major** is working to convince Shelby County's 44,000 residents that they can get nearly all their health care close to home.

Major is renaming itself **Major Health Partners** so it can remind Shelby County residents of all the kinds of medical care the **Major** system provides. For example, **Major's** Shelbyville pharmacy now will refer to itself as MedWorks Pharmacy, a **Major Health Partner**.

A marketing campaign to promote the new name will begin the week of July 7.

"One of the biggest challenges for the doughnut **hospitals** around Indianapolis is to try to keep our specialty patients and not have them sucked up to Indy," said **Major** CEO Tony Lennen. He added, "There's still a lot of people in the Shelbyville area that don't really know what we do."

Lennen is trying to do even more, especially in the three key specialty areas: cancer, heart and orthopedics.

Two years ago, Lennen persuaded Dr. Kevin Lemme and Dr. Sean Garringer to set up shop in Shelbyville once they end their residencies at the Indiana University School of Medicine. They both will start Aug. 18.

Major already offers orthopedic care to its patients. But physicians there have to refer patients to other **hospitals** when they need surgery. Now, Lemme and Garringer can provide surgery in Shelbyville, which sits 25 minutes southeast of Indianapolis on Interstate 74.

Orthopedics is a smart area to go after. As of 2005, **hospitals** earned nearly 50 percent profit margins on orthopedic surgery procedures, according to Phase 2 Consulting in Austin, Texas. That meant **hospitals** pulled in nearly \$9,000 in profit for each surgery.

And the need for new joints keeps growing. The average age for joint replacement surgery is 67. The eldest of the 70 million baby boomers is 62.

"Orthopedics is a very hot topic," said Ed Abel, director of health care services at Blue & Co., an Indianapolis accounting firm. He added, "Virtually all Indianapolis **hospitals** have tried to develop orthopedic services."

Indianapolis even has one **hospital** dedicated entirely to orthopedics-the Indianapolis Orthopedic **Hospital**, which is owned by the OrthoIndy group of physicians. That 37-bed **hospital** sits in the northwest corner of Indianapolis.

But **Major** also will face strong competition from **hospitals** that serve the southern and eastern outskirts of the Indianapolis area. For example, St. Francis **Hospital & Health Centers** has 23 orthopedic surgeons working at its **hospitals** in Beech Grove, Indianapolis and Mooresville.

Also, Hancock Regional **Hospital** in Greenfield has offered orthopedic surgery for years via its affiliation with a physicians group called the Indiana Orthopaedic Center Physicians. And Community Health Network offers orthopedic surgery at three **hospitals** just off the east and south legs of Interstate 465. Keith Jewell, St. Francis' chief operating officer, praised **Major's** move as good for patients. But he said the Shelbyville **hospital's** strategy "absolutely" would draw patients away from St. Francis.

Even so, he said, "Our volume in orthopedics has continued to grow year after year for several years now," he said. "I still think we'll ... have a nice, strong, growing program."

Orthopedics is not the first specialty **Major** has gone after. In 2005, **Major** opened the Benesse Oncology Center in Shelbyville. Two physicians treat cancer patients at the center, along with a team of nurses, physical therapists, nutritionists, pathologists and other health care professionals.

Benesse is one of many outside practice groups and service centers that **Major** owns. Others include physician groups in obstetrics, sports medicine, surgery and family practice, as well as a physicianmanagement services firm.

Tying them all under one brand name should help promote **Major** not only to Shelby County families, but also to local employers, Lennen said.

That's the best way for **Major** to protect its turf and, maybe one day, even broaden it, Lennen said. "If we can rebrand ourselves, and deliver on the promise, then the reach will just take care of itself."