

As Seen In... Forbes, February 9, 2015

■ NEW YORK
HEALTHCARE INNOVATORS

Redefining Orthopedic Care Is The Specialty of Syracuse Innovators

Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists



Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists Surgeons

Like turning a ship at sea, transforming the U.S. health care system is a slow and complicated process. Decades before sweeping federal legislation was enacted, a group of visionary practitioners in Syracuse, New York, had already taken on the challenge of redesigning care to improve the patient experience and outcomes. Today, Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists is recognized as an innovator, actively engaged in the process of setting the new gold standard for health care.

“We started by addressing the fundamental culture of the medical community,” explains I. Michael Vella, M.D., a senior fellow and fellowship-trained joint replacement surgeon and former president of Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists. “In the early 1990s, orthopedic care was fragmented. Patients visited the surgeon’s office and then were referred elsewhere to get X-rays, MRIs and other tests. If an operation

was required, patients and surgeons had to make arrangements with the hospital. Therapy, whether alone or a component of postoperative care, meant a referral to

“We changed the traditional philosophy within the specialty of orthopedic surgery. ... We challenged ourselves to overcome barriers that unnecessarily delay a patient’s optimal return of function.”
— Seth S. Greenky, M.D.

yet another provider. Patients often felt adrift and a competitive, rather than collegial, environment between the various professionals was common.”

Changes began when several orthopedic practices in Central New York formally aligned in 1996. Breaking down traditional silos, they opened lines of communication, collaboratively

purchased advanced imaging equipment, including MRI and a nuclear medicine system, hired their own radiologists, built an ambulatory surgery center in 2002 and established close partnerships with local hospitals. Eventually, six individual groups came together, totaling 30 doctors, 15 in-office physician assistants, 13 hospital PAs and 18 offices throughout the region.

Focus Brings Expertise

Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists’ innovative look at “the way it’s always been done” helped usher in a new era of the “super specialists.”

“We changed the traditional philosophy within the specialty of orthopedic surgery,” says Seth S. Greenky, M.D., a fellowship-trained surgeon and one of the nation’s most experienced in joint arthroplasty. “In the past, most orthopedic surgeons were generalists. That is, they treated all types of orthopedic problems.

As Seen In... Forbes, February 9, 2015

NEW YORK ■
HEALTHCARE INNOVATORS

Each surgeon was an entrepreneur of sorts who worked to build a loyal clientele. The problem with that type of thinking was that few surgeons got the opportunity to pursue areas of special interest or amass significant experience in a particular technique.”



Dr. Seth S. Greenky

Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists’ business model creates a collegial environment in which doctors don’t spend time protecting their turf and patients are treated by professionals with extensive training and experience in their specific condition. Each physician specializes in or has fellowship training in one or more subspecialty areas, including: general orthopedics, joint replacement, sports medicine, foot and ankle, spine, hand, shoulder and upper extremity, and trauma.

“Studies show volume makes a big difference in outcomes. A surgeon who does thousands of knee replacements, for example, experiences lower complication rates and better results than a generalist who may only do three in a year,” says Dr. Greenky, who has performed nearly 10,000 joint replacement surgeries in the past 23 years and, like others in the group, trains other surgeons in the latest techniques.

The Future of Orthopedic Care

The creative energy at Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists continues to drive the physicians to push the leading frontier of medicine. The group is continually asked by manufacturers of medical devices and technology to design, test and refine new products. Recently, the practice became an early adopter of the innovative Medicare redesign project that focuses on improving patient outcomes.

Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists President John F. Fatti, M.D. describes the project as a “significant departure from the current health care model” because it rewards providers for enhancing the quality of the care patients receive. “Once it’s implemented, our surgical patients will enjoy the peace of mind of knowing their own doctor is overseeing a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach – from the moment of intake to 90 days after surgery,” says the board-certified, fellowship-trained hand and wrist surgeon.

A key player in this initiative is the nurse navigator, who will assess progress and help patients and providers make smooth transitions through the entire continuum of care. “Each plan is ‘right-sized’ to meet the need of the patient and adhere to standardized clinical guidelines,” explains Dr. Vella. “It also allows us to most effectively utilize precious health care resources.”

Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists is also raising the bar by rethinking

the traditional care paradigm. “We challenged ourselves to overcome barriers that unnecessarily delay a patient’s optimal return of function,” explains Dr. Greenky. “We are developing a reputation now as a destination center for care in which patients can be seen by a surgeon and get all the work-up done in one day. In addition to offering one of the lowest costs and best clinical outcome programs in Upstate New York, this efficient approach is particularly appealing to patients living outside Central New York.”

“It’s an exciting time to be on the ground floor of new advances in the field,” says Dr. Vella. “What you can expect in many doctors’ offices five years from now is probably already being put into practice here today.”



Dr. I. Michael Vella

315-251-3100
sosbones.comBALDWINVILLE ♦ CAMILLUS ♦ CICERO ♦ CLAY
DEWITT ♦ FAYETTEVILLE ♦ LIVERPOOL ♦ EAST SYRACUSE
NORTH SYRACUSE ♦ ONONDAGA HILL ♦ SYRACUSE