

HEALTH NEWS *from*

SUMMER 2019

doctors hospital OF LAREDO

Seeing is *believing*

**Eduardo Valls Jr. enjoys
20/20 vision after having
cataract surgery**

Inside:

SMART WEIGHT- LOSS SUPPORT

Baritastic app keeps
surgery patients on track

ASK THE DOCTOR

When should you head
to the emergency room?



Compliments of
**DOCTORS
HOSPITAL**



At Doctors Hospital of Laredo, we are committed to providing compassionate, quality care to the residents of the communities we serve at convenient close-to-home locations.

This year's opening of a freestanding Emergency Department on Saunders Street will bring additional 24-hour emergency medical services to central Laredo. ER Saunders will provide the same quality

care that patients have come to expect from Doctors Hospital and, if needed, serve as a convenient access point to additional services. More importantly, ER Saunders will also be an in-network provider for many insurance plans. That's important because, depending on the kind of insurance you have, using providers within your network typically saves you out-of-pocket expenses when purchasing healthcare services. ER Saunders will also accept most insurance plans, including Medicaid and Medicare.

In the midst of this growth, one thing remains unchanged. Our focus will always be on delivering an exceptional patient experience. For that reason, it was especially gratifying to recently be recognized for achievements in this area. Doctors Hospital was the *Laredo Morning Times* 2019 Readers' Choice Award Winner for both Best Hospital and Best ER. In addition, we were honored to receive the Top Patient Experience Award for 2018 from Universal Health Services, Inc.

As rewarding as it is to be recognized for our efforts, we remain grounded in the reality that it is a privilege to serve the residents of our community through every stage of their life. We are proud to play a pivotal role in keeping Laredo healthy and thriving, one patient at a time.

James Resendez, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer

IN THIS ISSUE

4 WEIGHT-LOSS SURGERY SUPPORT

Introducing the Baritastic smartphone app

6 ASK THE DOCTOR

What to do in a medical emergency

7 INFORMATION, PLEASE

How to access your medical records



Powerful sculpture featured at “Click It or Ticket” launch

The Texas Department of Transportation kicked off its annual “Click It or Ticket” campaign with a May 10 press conference at Doctors Hospital. The event featured a sculpture that recreated the deadly car crash that killed 16-year-old Kailee Mills of Spring, Texas – which served as a powerful reminder to buckle up. “Click It or Ticket” is designed to encourage seat belt use in order to reduce the number of unrestrained drivers and passengers who are killed and seriously injured each year.



Easy on the eyes

Eduardo Valls Jr. can see clearly again after quick, convenient cataract surgery



Laura Mendiola, MD
Ophthalmologist

There's a clear lens inside your eye that helps to focus images and light on the retina. Over time, that lens can turn from clear to cloudy, resulting in a cataract. "Patients with cataracts can present with a variety of symptoms," says Ophthalmologist Laura Mendiola, MD. "They may experience blurred vision, difficulty with glare, trouble seeing street signs during the day or even have a hard time driving at night."

Eduardo Valls Jr. knows that all too well. He experienced all of these symptoms and more. Television images appeared blurry and, despite using magnifying glasses, he often ended up with a headache after reading.

Valls wasn't alone. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, cataracts affect more than 24 million Americans age 40 and older. In fact, about half of all Americans can expect to develop a cataract by age 75.

"These changes can occur gradually as we age," Dr. Mendiola explains. "Some patients may not realize just how much their vision is affected until they are checked by their eye doctor."

While lifestyle changes, like new glasses, may help with early symptoms, Dr. Mendiola determined that the best solution for Valls was cataract surgery at Providence Health Center. Recent renovations restored surgical services there, giving patients in the Laredo area a convenient option for low-acuity procedures like this one.

Valls, who lives close to Providence, was impressed. "I would recommend it 100%," he says. "It was very nice inside – clean and professional – and the procedure itself only took about 15 minutes."

Dr. Mendiola wants prospective patients to know that cataract surgery will not only affect their vision but could also improve their quality of life. "Oftentimes the surgery helps patients be more independent," she says. "Restored vision may also help prevent other injuries such as falls and hip fractures. While it is only a quick outpatient procedure, it can make a dramatic difference in a patient's life."

Valls agrees. "What can I say, my recovery was perfect," he says. "Life is much better now. The whole process went smoothly from start to finish and my vision is now 20/20." ■

Renovations COMPLETED

Renovations were completed at Providence Health Center, located at 230 Calle del Norte, in early 2019. In addition to beautifying the center inside and out, these multimillion-dollar upgrades restored surgical services to the site.

The surgical focus at this facility is on supporting lower acuity (less serious) procedures, such as ophthalmology and ear/nose/throat surgeries, as well as low-acuity general and orthopedic surgeries.

Along with surgical care, the newly renovated Providence Health Center will continue to house a laboratory draw station and radiology services. These areas were also refreshed as part of the renovation program.

For updates and information about Doctors Hospital of Laredo, follow us on Facebook or visit [doctorshospitallaredo.com](https://www.doctorshospitallaredo.com).

THE JOURNEY TO *wellness*

*New Baritastic app helps
weight-loss surgery patients
every step of the way*

Take a look at “before” and “after” photos of patients who have had successful bariatric (or weight-loss) surgeries and you’re sure to be inspired. Those not familiar with the process often mistakenly believe the path from “before” to “after” involves just a single step – getting the surgery itself. In reality, the journey is much longer than that. It starts well before surgery and continues long after. ►

Individual results may vary. There are risks associated with any surgical procedure. Talk with your doctor about these risks to find out if bariatric surgery is right for you.



Doctors Hospital of Laredo has introduced a new tool to help support bariatric surgery patients every step of the way. The Baritastic smartphone app, available for free on major app stores, has tools for each part of the process and even allows users to enter a code that connects them to Doctors Hospital.

Bariatric Program Coordinator Blanca Villarreal, RD, LD, is enthusiastic about the app's capabilities, starting with the patient's very first visit. "You have to take several steps to be considered for surgery," she says. This includes things like a psychological evaluation, a physical from your primary care doctor and consultations with a dietitian. "We can set up appointment reminders on the app," Villarreal says. "It helps so much with the pre-surgery process. Thanks to the notifications, app users are much less likely to miss these important dates."

Once a person has been cleared for surgery – and after months of preparation – it's on to the procedure itself. The two most popular options are gastric bypass and sleeve gastrectomy. Both are minimally invasive surgeries performed laparoscopically at Doctors Hospital.

Gastric bypass (also known as Roux-en-Y) creates a smaller stomach and reroutes it to the small intestine, bypassing portions of the digestive track. Sleeve gastrectomy removes a portion of the stomach so that less food can be consumed at a time. To be successful, both surgeries require a lifelong commitment to significant lifestyle changes. "It's important that patients understand what's expected," says Villarreal. "The app helps with that by letting patients preview what their days will be like going forward."

Baritastic also helps post-surgery patients stay on track with reminders for fluid intake, meals, protein shakes and vitamins. "Because you can only have so much food, there is a lot of planning and scheduling involved to maximize nutrient content," says Villarreal. Exercise can also be tracked and the app integrates with major fitness devices to capture steps.

Connecting to Doctors Hospital is another way to stay accountable. "I can monitor the patient's progress" Villarreal says. "Knowing how someone is doing when it comes to changing their habits helps me to provide personalized support."

Villarreal is especially excited about the app's journaling section. "Patients can capture their thoughts and feelings, add pictures, track inches and input their moods," she says. "Their routines change a lot and that can be emotional," she adds. "Journaling helps remind patients that they made a decision to be healthier – that they're on a new journey now." ■

To learn more about weight-loss surgery, visit doctorshospitalaredo.com/weightloss.

IS WEIGHT-LOSS SURGERY *right for you?*

Weight-loss surgery may be right for you if:

- You are 18 years of age or older.
- You are at least 80 pounds overweight, depending on other health conditions.
- Your Body Mass Index (BMI) is greater than 30.
- You have tried other weight-loss methods without success.
- You are medically stable and physically able to withstand surgery.
- You pass a psychological screening test that helps ensure you are able to comply with post-surgical behavior modifications.
- You complete all required pre-operative testing.

KNOW WHEN TO GO TO THE *emergency room*



When you or a loved one is sick or has had an accident, it

can be a challenging time to figure out what qualifies as a medical emergency. Should you head to the nearest emergency room (ER) or schedule an appointment with your primary care physician? Medical Director of ER Services **Paul C. Giasi, MD**, shares some useful tips to help determine your best option.

Q: How do I know when emergency care is needed?

Assess the situation and determine if the person's life would be in danger or if the person's health would be harmed by not going to the ER. If "yes," then you should call 9-1-1 and seek care immediately.

Should you determine that your best bet is to head to the ER, choose the location that's closest to you. In addition to the Emergency Department at Doctors Hospital of Laredo, 24-hour emergency medical care can be found at Doctors Hospital ER South and the soon-to-open Doctors Hospital ER Saunders.

Q: What constitutes a true emergency?

There are several conditions considered an emergency because they require quick treatment or surgical intervention. Examples include difficulty breathing, possible stroke or heart attack, unexplained seizures, sudden intense pain, broken bones, blurred or double vision, choking and profuse bleeding. The ER is equipped to handle these health conditions, and specialists can be consulted quickly if needed.

Q: What are signs of a possible heart attack or stroke?

The most common symptoms of a possible heart attack include chest pain and shortness of breath. For possible stroke, watch for facial drooping, inability to raise both arms and slurring of speech. All of these symptoms warrant immediate medical attention in the ER.

Q: What services will be available at the new ER Saunders?

Like ER South, ER Saunders (opening later this year) will be a freestanding emergency department that offers the same quality 24-hour emergency care as Doctors Hospital. When needed, it can also serve as an access point to additional services. If you need to be hospitalized, ER Saunders will be able to provide transfer and direct admission to Doctors Hospital of Laredo or a hospital of your choice. In addition, it will be an in-network provider for many insurance plans and will also accept most insurance plans, including Medicaid and Medicare. Diagnostic laboratory and radiology services will also be offered at this location. ■

ER Saunders (opening later this year) will be located at 1300 Saunders Street (1301 E. Olive Street), with easy access to main city arteries including McPherson Road, Highway 59 and IH 35.

If you or someone else needs emergency help, call 9-1-1 immediately.

For your information

Understanding how to access, share and protect your medical records



Most people don't give much thought to their medical records. For instance, they might not know they typically contain a combination of things like doctors' notes, signed consent forms, insurance information, lab results and immunizations.

But there is one aspect of these records that Health Information Management Director Hugo Garcia, RHIA, wants people to understand. "The information contained in these records belongs to the patient," he says. "To a large extent, the patient has control over this information and gets to decide, in writing, who is permitted to access their records and what they are allowed to see."

That's thanks, in part, to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996. HIPAA established laws designed to protect the privacy of personal health information. "Patients might be confused when they hear the term HIPAA, because there is a lot to this act," says Garcia. "I think what they need to walk away with is that HIPAA was established for their protection. It's in place to protect their privacy."

HIPAA was also enacted to help facilitate the flow of medical information. "That's something we call the continuum of care," says the HIM Director. "If, for instance, a patient is going to their doctor's office and wants us to share their hospital records with that office, they simply give us authorization for that to happen," he adds. "Once we receive the authorization, we can provide the requested records."

In addition to sharing health information with other providers, Doctors Hospital also makes it easy for patients to view their own records to see things like test results. "Health Records Online is a secure patient portal that gives patients easy access to things like lab results and radiology reports," says Garcia. "If patients want their full medical records, they can come to the facility and we'll provide them." ■

Health Records online

Health Records Online is a secure patient portal from Doctors Hospital of Laredo that lets you view your medical records online at any time using your computer, smartphone or tablet.

To learn more about Health Records Online, visit doctorshosplaredo.com/records.

CALENDAR OF *events*



FREE

CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION

The prepared childbirth class covers information for your entire pregnancy, including labor, pain management, breastfeeding and newborn care. A tour will be included.

WHERE: Doctors Hospital Community Center

WHEN: Sessions are held from 6 – 8 p.m.

- September 3
- October 1

WHO: Instructor is Maria Noela Avila, RN, IBCLC, Lactation Consultant.

Register at doctorshosplaredo.com/edu.

We recommend that a mom and her support person register and attend during the third trimester of pregnancy. Class size is limited; please register early. Children are not permitted.

BREASTFEEDING CLASSES

Open to all moms, even if it is not your first baby. All mothers are encouraged to attend before and/or after they deliver. Our Lactation Consultant is ready to offer support and guidance.

WHERE: Postpartum Conference Room

WHEN: Last Thursday of every month, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

To register call 956-523-2530; if there is no answer, please leave a message.

WEIGHT-LOSS SURGERY ONLINE SEMINARS

If you want to learn more about weight-loss surgery, you can now get the information you need in the comfort of your home. Find out more by watching a series of videos about weight-loss surgery at Doctors Hospital of Laredo. Go to ichoosedoctorshospital.com/videoseminar.

BARIATRIC SUPPORT GROUP

Wednesdays at 6 p.m.

Open to anyone who has had bariatric surgery or is considering it.

- August 28
- September 25
- October 30

Be sure to check the Event Calendar on our website for the 2019 support group schedule.

For support group location and information call 956-523-2573 or check our Facebook page at facebook.com/DHLWeightLossandWellness



*Connect
WITH US!*



English: ichoosedoctorshospital.com | Español: ichoosedoctorshospital.com/es
956-523-2000

**HEALTH NEWS FROM
DOCTORS HOSPITAL OF LAREDO**

James Resendez, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer

Mark A. Requena
Chief Financial Officer

Raymond Ramos, MPH, FACHE
Chief Operating Officer

Andrew Wilson
Associate Administrator

Rebecca Garcia Hernandez, BSN, RN
Assistant Chief Nursing Officer

Judith G. Martinez,
Director of Marketing

Information in *Health News* comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health, please contact your healthcare provider. Models may be used in photos or illustrations. Any opinion expressed by an author whose article appears in this publication is solely the opinion of the author and does not necessarily reflect the views of Doctors Hospital of Laredo or Universal Health Services, Inc. Physicians mentioned in this publication are independent practitioners who are not employees or agents of Doctors Hospital of Laredo. Doctors Hospital of Laredo is directly or indirectly owned by a partnership that includes physician owners, including certain members of the hospital medical staff. The hospital shall not be liable for actions or treatments provided by physicians. For language assistance, disability accommodations and the non-discrimination notice, visit our website. ©2019. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.