Manage back pain
with the latest in diagnostic technology

This past holiday season, 67-year-old Inge Rader went shopping for presents and cooked a delicious Christmas dinner for her family; two seemingly simple activities that she wouldn’t have been able to do just a few months before.

After living with back problems for several years, Inge underwent back surgery in 1986. While that alleviated her discomfort for over a decade, the pain returned, rendering even some of the easiest daily tasks impossible for Inge.

It is because of an epidural spine injection that Inge received at Perham Memorial Hospital in early December, that she was able to actively take part in her family’s holiday festivities. Before getting the injection, Inge says even sitting was a painful task. After the injection, it was only a day until she found herself up on her feet again, browsing for presents for loved ones and busy cooking in her kitchen.

While doctors at PMHH have been administering hip injections for over 25 years, the type of epidural spine injection for pain management that Inge received was first made available in February 2009, following the hospital’s addition of a state-of-the-art C-arm x-ray unit.

Dr. Jason Asheim, a radiologist with Sanford-MeritCare who administers the injections, is in Perham each month. In addition to the epidural spine injections, PMHH offers CT-guided injections for sacroiliac joints and spinal nerve blocks. Hip and shoulder injections can be done under fluoroscopy. In other cases, Dr. Asheim may perform trigger point injections.

Prior to getting the injection in Perham through Dr. Asheim, Inge had previously gone to MeritCare in Fargo to get three separate injections. A year after her last injection in Fargo, Inge felt the pain starting to come back again and called her doctor to schedule an appointment for another injection. She was pleasantly surprised to learn that PMHH, which is much closer to her home, was now offering the same injections for pain management that she had been getting in Fargo.

Both Inge and her husband, DuWayne, were relieved to not have to make the extra hour-and-a-half drive each way to Fargo. They’ve lived in the Perham area for 32 years, raising their three boys on the family farm. Having the injections available locally for his wife is something DuWayne says he really appreciates.

“Each time we add a service locally, the public’s reception is very positive,” says Darla Medeck-Johnson, Director of Radiology at PMHH. “Typically, it means less driving and, in many cases, we can schedule them for the procedure more quickly than they could get an appointment to see a specialist elsewhere.”

Inge isn’t sure what exactly started causing her back pain this fall, but she figures she must have lifted something too heavy on the farm. “When I have the pain, it is very miserable,” Inge admits, thankful for the relief she’s discovered with the injections. “It is amazing to me how it works.”

After getting an epidural spine injection on the afternoon of December 7, she said she was

Inge Rader enjoys afternoon coffee with her husband, DuWayne, at their home north of Perham. The newly-offered pain management injections at PMHH have helped Inge get her back pain under control, return to her normal routine, and spend more quality time with her loved ones.

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already feeling better by that afternoon. “They’re a good thing,” confirms DuWayne, noting how he could see a difference in his wife almost immediately after she left the hospital. “The next day, she sure felt better.”

People who think that getting the injections might be helpful for their condition should first see their primary care physician. As was true in Inge’s case, doctors can then refer patients to get the injections to help with pain management.

At their appointment in the Radiology Department, patients are asked questions about their health history, a consent form is signed, and the radiologist will review any CT, MRI or x-ray exams the patient has had.

According to Medeck-Johnson, patients are always given a thorough explanation of the procedure, with ample time for patient questions to be answered. Inge remembers that this process helped her to feel more comfortable with the procedure. Reflecting on her interactions with the Radiology Department staff in Perham, Inge says, “They were very nice and the doctor explained everything to me.”

Two technologists assist the radiologist during the injection procedure. After the injection is complete, the patient is monitored for the next 30 minutes and pain level is assessed. In a very short amount of time, the patient should begin to notice an improvement in pain levels.

An epidural steroid injection is a procedure to inject a steroid into the epidural space, which surrounds the spinal column. The epidural injection has been used for over 40 years as a treatment for neck, back, arm and leg pain.

The main goal of the injection is to decrease any inflammation that surrounds a spinal nerve. Most patients improve following a series of injections. Generally, this procedure is repeated up to three times within a year; however, in some cases, additional injections are needed.

“In most cases, the level of pain the patient is experiencing is reduced making it more tolerable on a day-to-day basis,” explains Medeck-Johnson.

“I was able to go back to my regular work here on the farm, keeping up our home,” confirms Inge. “I actually feel like I can do a lot.” She knows she must still be careful with her back, but at least the injections give her the opportunity to get outside, go for walks with her husband, and spend some time working in her bountiful garden.

It also means she doesn’t have to be constantly taking medicine to help curb the back pain that was once so debilitating. Perhaps best of all, getting back to health and keeping her pain under control means Inge has more time and energy to devote to one of the activities closest to her heart: spending time with her eight grandkids.

Could you benefit from an epidural steroid injection?

If you have a bulging disc or spinal stenosis and experience sharp, shooting pain in your arm and/or leg, you could benefit from this injection. It is believed that the steroid reduces inflammation of the nerve roots as they exit the spine.

How is the injection performed?

- The procedure is done under x-ray guidance while patients lay on their stomachs.
- Their blood pressure, heart rate and blood oxygen levels are monitored.
- The skin surface is cleaned with antiseptic solution.
- A local anesthetic is then used to numb the skin and the injection is performed.
- The steroid starts working in one to seven days, with the effect typically lasting for several days to a few months or longer.
Dear Friends,

The Perham area and surrounding neighborhoods are a special place to live as well as visit. This is not by accident, but through great planning by those before us who had the foresight to provide us with special places to be a community. Our predecessors were not afraid to be innovative, to dream large, or to share their resources to make possible what we enjoy today. It is this sense of commitment to community, that our ancestors established Perham Memorial Hospital and Home.

Now it is our turn to continue what they began.

As history is made with the building of a new hospital, we have a great opportunity in front of us to help form the future of healthcare for our children, our grandchildren, and all who follow us. Your donation to the Together - Building for the Future capital campaign, will help provide the best state-of-the-art and family centered care possible to your families, friends, and neighbors when they need it most.

Your donation will be commemorated on an historical marker that will list all who stepped forward, arm in arm, to make this the best hospital and community ever.

Please join the community supporters listed on the back of this page as we, together, build for the future.

Best regards,

Trudy Swanson
Campaign Chair
Together - Building for the Future

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 Illene Reed, M.D.  
PMHH and MeritCare are very excited to welcome Dr. Illene (Porath) Reed, a Perham native and family medicine physician. Dr. Reed practiced in Perham from 2000-04 before moving to the metro area. She most recently worked at the Park Nicollet Eagen clinic. Dr. Reed will see patients at the MeritCare clinics in Perham and New York Mills.  
“My husband and I are excited to be back in the area,” said Dr. Reed. “We’re proud to be part of the progressive and growing healthcare system in Perham and are anxious to become involved in the community.”  
Dr. Reed enjoys practicing family medicine because it allows her to care for the entire family and assist patients with a wide variety of medical concerns. She has special interest in women’s health, obstetrics, and pediatrics.  
Dr. Reed and her husband have three daughters ages 11, 4, and 18 months. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family, outdoor activities including camping, fishing, and hunting, playing piano, and knitting.  
To make an appointment with Dr. Reed in Perham, call (218) 347-1200 and in New York Mills (218) 385-1800.  

Judy Bellanger-Dahl, P.A.-C  
PMHH and MeritCare are pleased to welcome back Judy Bellanger-Dahl. Judy previously worked in Perham for seven years followed by experience in the emergency center at St. Mary’s Innovis in Detroit Lakes. She returns to Perham as a physician assistant specializing in surgery.  
As a physician assistant, Judy’s primary role is to collaborate with Dr. Rand Stolee, surgeon, to perform pre and post surgical consultations and exams. In addition, she is available for well child exams, women’s health, and preventative physicals for adults. Judy practices at MeritCare Perham.  
Judy is happy to be rejoining the medical team in Perham. “It is nice to be back and to be working in such a progressive facility that truly places patients and families first,” she said.  
A native of Mahnomen, Minn., Judy attended the University of North Dakota where she obtained her physician assistant degree. She is married with three children, and when not at work, she enjoys spending time with her family at sporting events and the lake.  
To make an appointment with Judy, call (218) 347-1200.  

Robb Reed, D.C.  
Robb Reed, Doctor of Chiropractic, has joined the Perham Memorial Hospital chiropractic center. He will see patients at the MeritCare clinics in New York Mills and Pelican Rapids.  
A native of McGregor, Minn., Dr. Reed received his degree from Northwestern Health Sciences University in Minneapolis and since 2005, has been an adjunct faculty member there. Most recently, he practiced with HealthSource Chiropractic and Progressive Rehab in Minneapolis.  
Dr. Reed enjoys treating patients of all ages. He is a Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician, as well as a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist, having worked with athletes at all levels of performance.  
Dr. Reed lives in Perham with his wife, Illene, and three daughters; ages 11, 4, and 18 months. Outside of work, Dr. Reed enjoys outdoor activities and sports, primarily hunting, fishing and golf.  
To make an appointment with Dr. Reed in New York Mills call (218) 385-1800 and in Pelican Rapids call (866) 346-7644.  

Ronica Wahl, N.P.  
As a nurse practitioner, Ronica, in collaboration with a physician, specializes in the care of patients of all ages. This includes all aspects of family medicine. Ronica’s special area of interest is in women’s health.  
She sees patients at the MeritCare Perham and Ottertail clinics.  
Ronica earned her master’s degree as a nurse practitioner from Minnesota State University, Moorhead. Prior to joining MeritCare, she practiced at Tri-County Health Care in Wadena.  
To make an appointment with Ronica in Perham, call (218) 347-1200 and in Ottertail call (218) 367-6111.
Construction is going strong for the new Perham hospital. The curved block in the top photo is the foundation wall at the end of the inpatient wing. The steel columns and beams of the rehabilitation department are seen in the background. The bottom left photo is of a concrete column at the ER entrance while the photo to the right depicts part of the main entrance. The square openings will be windows. You can keep up with our progress by visiting our website and our Fan page on Facebook.