

Hermiston Herald

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2014

YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

HERMISTONHERALD.COM

Virtual medicine opportunities to help Hermiston spinal patients

Local medical office partners with OHSU to offer telemedicine service

BY MAEGAN MURRAY
HERMISTON HERALD

Thanks to a new service offered at Advanced Orthopedic and Sports Medicine in Hermiston, spinal patients might not have to make the 185-mile journey to the Oregon Health & Science University, more commonly known as OHSU, to see a spinal surgeon and physician.

Starting April 2, Dr. Jayme Hiratzka, a spine surgeon at OHSU Brain Institute, will begin making one-day monthly visits to the Hermiston facility, 620 Northwest 11th St. His visits will run in conjunction with a new telemedicine service that allows him to examine and live chat with patients in Hermiston from his office in Portland.



Hiratzka

TELEMEDICINE:

continued from page A1

Hiratzka said Advanced Orthopedic will house a mobile cart featuring a computer and web camera that will allow him to chat via technology with his patients for the three weeks out of the month he isn't able to physically see in Hermiston. During that time, the medical assistants will be able to perform exams under his direction and using the information gathered from the exams, as well as a verbal consult and other X-rays and materials, he will make diagnoses and recommendations.

"Currently, I see a lot of patients from Hermiston," Hiratzka said. "We can do some post-op visits through the system. It will help to minimize all the driving back and forth. That is one of the things that frustrated people. They may drive all the way here when the issue could have been best resolved with physical therapy."

Hiratzka said if a patient requires an operation, they will still have to schedule a time for a physical exam, and for more serious procedures patients will still have to venture out to OHSU. The new system in Hermiston, however, will allow him to see a greater number of patients without all of the hassle, he said.

"It is more convenient for patients," he said.

Hiratzka said he currently sees about 60 to 75 patients a year from Hermiston because there are currently no spinal services available in the area. Through the telemedicine network, he will be able to use the on-board camera and computer to zoom in on parts of the body during the exam, and the system will have full audio so the patient can speak with Hiratzka.

"It is a face-to-face encounter," he said. "I just personally am not there."

OHSU currently contracts with medical facilities across the state to offer the service. The telemedicine

network is offered at 17 sites for consultations on neonatal intensive care, pediatric intensive care, stroke, psychiatry, newborn medical genetics and cancer genetics.

Hiratzka said the idea to offer the service in Hermiston first came about because he had been wanting to expand his services into eastern Oregon. He started chatting with doctors in Hermiston about three or four months ago to begin formulating the plan for the system, found a host site and now is set to offer the service at Advanced Orthopedic.

Hiratzka said his first in-person visit to Hermiston will begin on April 2, and he thinks the first telemedicine clinic will probably run the next Wednesday.

"I am really looking forward to the opportunity," he said. "This is something that people have discussed for a long time ... It is exciting to offer the same quality of care that we offer at OHSU in eastern Oregon."