

Mayo Clinic Consult:  
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Traumatic Injury

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The Strength  
of Precision Treatment

# Connections

A health and lifestyle publication from NorthShore University HealthSystem | Spring 2015 | [northshore.org/connections](http://northshore.org/connections)



**NorthShore**  
University HealthSystem



## REMARKABLE RECOVERY

New Technique at  
NorthShore Redefines  
Brain Tumor Surgery

Healthcare for what's next.

# Pacesetters

Meet NorthShore Physicians Leading the Way



Jerome Alexander is more in tune with his diabetes, thanks to NorthShore's latest technology tools.



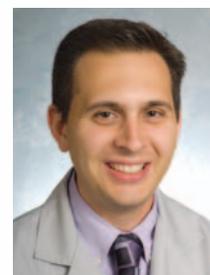
This small glucose sensor is implanted under a patient's skin and communicates wirelessly to an insulin pump or monitor.



## WHAT'S THE RIGHT NUMBER?

The A1C test is a simple lab test that measures average blood glucose levels over the past three months. You and your doctor should discuss an A1C goal that is right for you. Lowering your A1C by any amount can improve your chances of staying healthy.

To make an appointment with a NorthShore physician or meet with a certified diabetes educator, please call **(847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1221)**, or visit [northshore.org/f1](http://northshore.org/f1).



Dr. Herman Blomeier

**WE CAN HELP Be Well-** Lake County is a community health initiative led by NorthShore and the Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center. Committed to providing greater access to comprehensive diabetes care, Be Well is a vital asset to more than 850 medically underserved patients with Type 2 diabetes living in Lake County. [Watch videos and learn more at northshore.org/f2](http://northshore.org/f2).

## Frontiers in Diabetes Management

By Martha Floberg

**J**erome Alexander, 43, of Glenview, is a family man with a busy career. He also is benefiting from new glucose sensor technology available at NorthShore University HealthSystem (NorthShore). It provides him with instant feedback to manage his Type 2 diabetes.

"It can be difficult to control your blood sugar levels," said Alexander, who developed diabetes at age 17. "This sensor is a continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) system. It tells me what's going on all day long with my blood sugar levels, so I can more proactively control it."

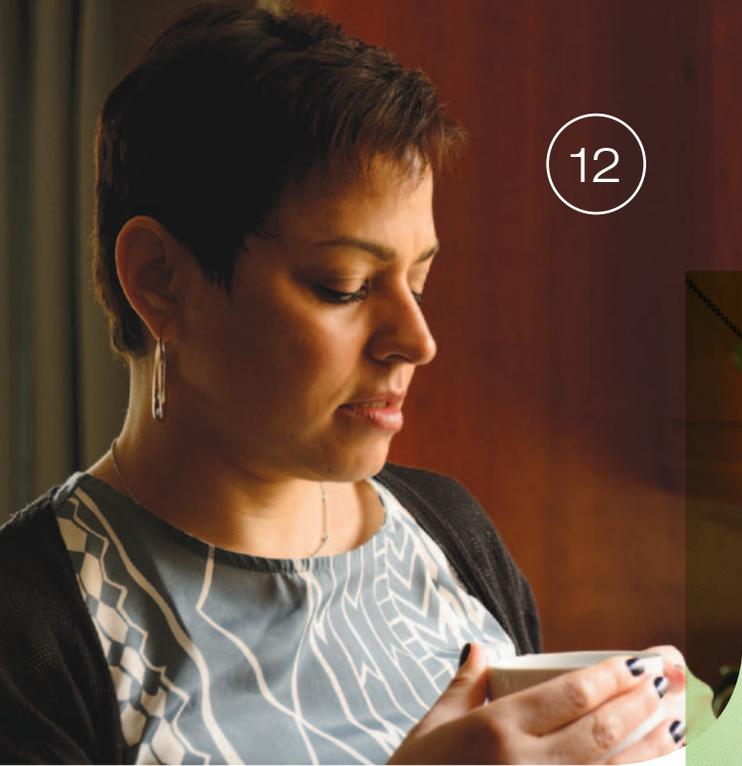
"The CGM sensor monitors glucose levels in the interstitial fluid directly under the skin every five minutes," explained NorthShore Endocrinologist Herman Blomeier, MD, who holds an academic title at the Pritzker School of Medicine. "It communicates wirelessly via a transmitter on the sensor to a receiver or monitor, which may include an insulin pump, to help control blood sugar throughout the day."

In Alexander's case, the technology has improved his blood sugar variations significantly. In addition to providing information on glucose levels in real time and sending this information to an insulin pump, the innovative technology also gives patients and physicians the opportunity to monitor trends over time and better manage diabetes.

"We used to base treatment decisions on only four or five readings a day," noted Dr. Blomeier. "But now we have 288 data points per day to see how insulin, exercise and diet impact a patient's glycemic control."

According to NorthShore Certified Diabetes Educator Harriet Salzberg, patients using CGM still need to check their blood sugar with a glucose meter a minimum of two to four times a day. "But CGM helps them see a pattern to their blood sugar readings," she explained, adding that with new technology some patients will be able to use the system with a smartphone or smartwatch.

"This new technology has freed me up," added Alexander. "With it, I can go about my normal, everyday activities and I don't have to stop and take a blood sugar reading. Most of all, I don't have to worry about my diabetes getting out of control."



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Healthcare for what's next.

When it comes to your health, you never know what's around the corner. That's why NorthShore is always thinking ahead of the curve. In this and future issues of *Connections*, we'll be featuring stories and news about how we're bringing our leading-edge innovation to healthcare management, prevention and disease treatment. Look for the "healthcare for what's next" logo on the stories inside and learn how NorthShore is here for you *now* and for *what's next*.

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*Connections*, Volume 8, Issue 2  
Editor: **Phil Rozen**  
Director, Corporate Communications  
Photography: **Jon Hillenbrand**

**ON THE COVER:** Jill Vannatta treasures time with her three children—Avery, Connor and Peyton—following an innovative procedure last year at NorthShore that removes hard-to-reach brain tumors.

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# NEW PATH TO SURVIVAL

Neurological Expertise Defines **What's Next** in Treating Brain Tumors

By Susan J. White

In the words of her youngest daughter, Jill Vannatta can “do almost everything she used to do before getting sick.” Given the fact that Vannatta was diagnosed with a malignant glioblastoma brain tumor more than a year ago, her health status today is a miracle.

An accomplished equestrian, Vannatta, 44, was at a horse show in Florida last December when she suddenly “felt completely out of it” and knew something was wrong. A friend took her back to the barn, where she called Vannatta’s husband Jeremy at home in Evanston.

“I knew immediately something was amiss. Jill sounded drunk and not at all like herself. I had to get somebody to take her to a hospital,” said Jeremy Vannatta. “Two hours later, I got a call and learned they had found a mass in her brain.”

Jeremy Vannatta was in Florida the next morning. Following a procedure to insert a shunt

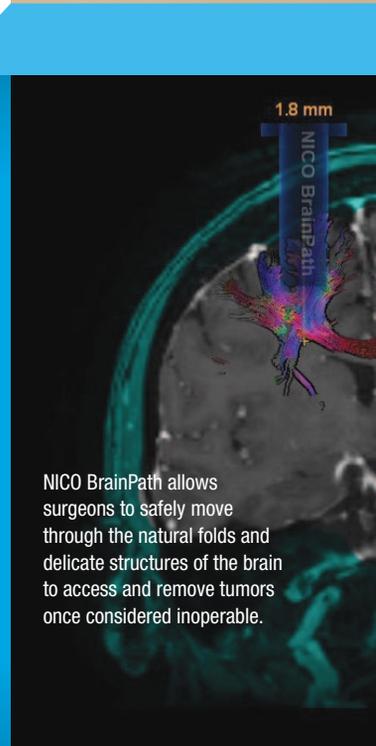
to relieve some of the pressure on her brain, Jill Vannatta was on a plane home to Chicago, which was met by an ambulance that took her to NorthShore Evanston Hospital’s Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

## ADVANCED TECHNIQUE FOR HARD-TO-REACH TUMORS

The couple met with Julian Bailes, MD, the Bennett-Tarkington Chairman of Neurosurgery and renowned Surgical Director of NorthShore Neurological Institute. “In the ICU, many people told us what good hands we were in with Dr. Bailes,” said Jeremy Vannatta.

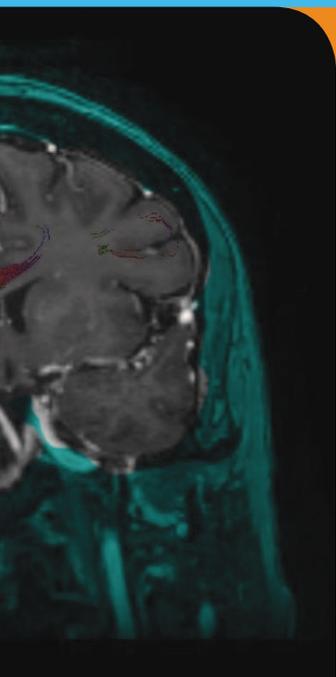
Dr. Bailes opted to let the swelling go down a bit more and give the Vannattas’ three children a chance to see their mother before surgery the next day. He performed an advanced, minimally invasive procedure to remove the tumor, which was deep in the thalamus region of the brain.

*continued on page 6*



NICO BrainPath allows surgeons to safely move through the natural folds and delicate structures of the brain to access and remove tumors once considered inoperable.

"I feel really, really good," said **Jill Vannatta**, following an innovative procedure to remove a dangerous brain tumor.



## The Next Level of Brain Tumor Treatment

The NICO BrainPath 6 Pillar Approach is a highly advanced, minimally invasive technique that enables safe and effective removal of brain tumors that were once considered inoperable. 6 Pillar technology integrates leading-edge brain mapping, navigation technology and high-definition optics. Through an opening smaller than a dime, it provides access into the brain to remove tumors through small openings between folds.

Before surgery, Neurosurgeon Julian Bailes, MD, studied the wiring of Jill Vannatta's brain to navigate the safest route to access her tumor. Sophisticated optics and a GPS-like navigation system helped him move through the brain to preserve the normal fibers.

"NorthShore continues to be a leader in the surgical treatment of brain disorders," noted Dr. Bailes. "We're committed to further exploration and discovery, and application of enhanced surgical treatment to continue to improve patient outcomes."



 WATCH A VIDEO

Jill Vannatta and her husband Jeremy share their story of survival and hope at NorthShore. Watch the video at [northshore.org/jillsstory](http://northshore.org/jillsstory).

Dr. Bailes used the NICO BrainPath 6 Pillar Approach. It integrates brain mapping and high-definition optics in the removal of hard-to-reach tumors and preservation of the normal fiber tracks, explained Dr. Bailes, who holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. A very small tube, or neuroport, provides safe and effective access deep into the center of the brain.

The innovative surgery was a success, something Jill and Jeremy Vannatta said they never doubted going into the procedure. Their shared optimism and confidence in her care has helped make her recovery easier.

After two weeks in the ICU, Vannatta was moved to an inpatient rehabilitation unit, where the couple celebrated with occasional “date nights”—ordering in dinner and watching movies. A family member slept at the hospital every night of her stay so she was never alone. “There was nothing I wanted more than to get her home with us,” recalled Jeremy Vannatta.

#### POSTSURGICAL TREATMENT

Four weeks after surgery, with pathology results in hand, Vannatta met with Neuro-Oncologist Ryan Merrell, MD, to discuss further treatment and clinical trial options to keep the tumor in check. Husband Jeremy, who works in the pharmaceutical industry, talked to neuro-oncologists at a few other institutions, “but I was comfortable with

Neurosurgeon **Dr. Julian Bailes** (left) and Neuro-Oncologist **Dr. Ryan Merrell** collaborated on Jill Vannatta’s pre- and postsurgical care.



## ★ MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

Want to learn more about symptoms and the latest treatment options for brain tumors? Watch educational videos at [northshore.org/f3](http://northshore.org/f3). To make an appointment at NorthShore Neurological Institute, call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1222).

# Team Approach

Brain tumor patients like Jill Vannatta benefit from a true team approach involving experts in neuro-oncology, neurosurgery and a host of other specialties. “At NorthShore Neurological Institute, we pride ourselves on close collaboration,” said Neuro-Oncologist Ryan Merrell, MD. “We have regular tumor conferences where our team reviews and collaborates on specific cases. This ‘meeting of the minds’ helps develop the most effective, individualized treatment plans.”

A broad array of clinical trials also offers NorthShore patients access to the latest treatment options, providing new hope in the fight against brain cancer. “It’s important to have lofty goals in this battle. Hope and optimism are things we always emphasize,” said Dr. Merrell.

**Dr. Merrell talks about the Neurological Institute’s approach to treating brain tumors in an online chat at [northshore.org/f4](http://northshore.org/f4).**



Dr. Merrell as soon as I met him. Nothing made me think we should go somewhere other than NorthShore.”

Postsurgical treatment began with 30 days of radiation. Jill Vannatta described feeling “really uplifted and empowered.” Accompanied to every single treatment by her husband or a friend, she did everything she could, including exercising every day, to get better.

“I thought the stronger I was, the better I would be able to handle the treatment,” she said. “It was such an incredibly positive experience for me. Every day is a great day, in my mind. This whole experience has helped show me that.”

She also started receiving oral chemotherapy five days a month as part of a clinical trial, one of several trials offered to NorthShore neuro-oncology patients. While she has experienced some vision issues as a side effect from the clinical trial medication, the family continued to be thrilled with her progress.

“I feel really, really good,” said Jill Vannatta, who has an MRI every eight weeks and sees Ophthalmology Division Head Marian Macsai, MD, who helps manage her ocular side effects. Coordination between Dr. Merrell and Dr. Macsai, and everyone on the clinical team, has been a hallmark of her care.

“My father has been a physician for 40

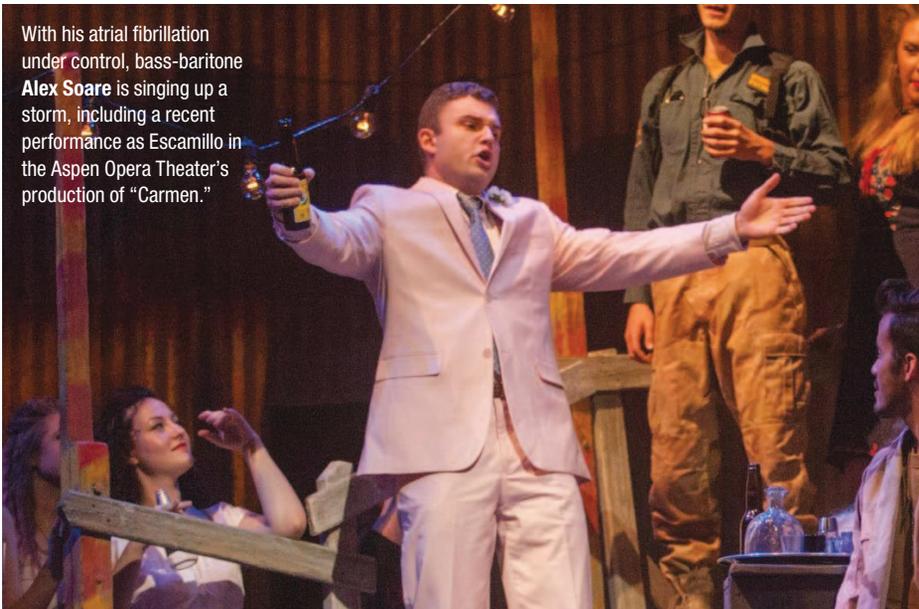
years. He said the continuity of care Jill has received is unparalleled,” added Jeremy Vannatta.

“It really is a big team effort,” said Dr. Merrell, who, along with Dr. Macsai, holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. “We have a team of research nurses and coordinators that is the lifeblood of our clinical trials. The nurses and staff at NorthShore Kellogg Cancer Center and pharmacy are all so important to patients, and having a surgeon like Dr. Bailes, who is able to perform such a technically challenging procedure, is just tremendous.”

Ophthalmology Division Head **Dr. Marian Macsai** is helping Jill Vannatta manage some of the side effects related to her chemotherapy medication.



With his atrial fibrillation under control, bass-baritone **Alex Soare** is singing up a storm, including a recent performance as Escamillo in the Aspen Opera Theater's production of "Carmen."



## Bravo!

### Next-Generation Heart Care Hits a High Note

By Martha Floberg

**A**lex Soare, 30, of Evanston, calls singing his life path. A bass-baritone with the Nashville Opera, the professional freelance singer rehearses constantly and travels extensively for performances.

Two years ago, it looked like nothing could get in Soare's way of pursuing his passion. But then he was diagnosed with atrial fibrillation, a type of arrhythmia, or irregular heartbeat.

"One day, I woke up and my heart was racing," recalled Soare. "I went to the Emergency Department, where they diagnosed atrial fibrillation. The nurse on duty said to me, 'If you were my son, I'd send you to Dr. Fisher at NorthShore Cardiovascular Institute.'"

"Atrial fibrillation is a serious heart condition and the second leading cause of stroke," said Westby Fisher, MD, a cardiologist who specializes in electrophysiology and holds an academic appointment at the University

of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. He prescribed a blood thinner medication for Soare and closely monitored his condition with a portable device. But Soare's heart continued to beat irregularly. The blood thinner also began to affect his vocal chords, which could have derailed his singing career. So, Dr. Fisher recommended nonsurgical catheter ablation.

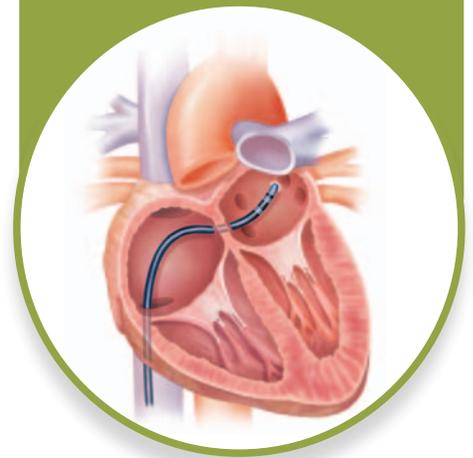
"During ablation therapy," explained Dr. Fisher, "physicians use sophisticated monitoring and heart electrical mapping technology, as well as ultrasound and real-time X-ray, to guide a series of wires through a catheter to the specific area of the arrhythmia within the patient's heart."

Then, working carefully to avoid damaging surrounding heart tissue, small electrical currents are sent to cauterize—or deaden—the area and permanently isolate the arrhythmia's source.

"Most patients undergo this procedure with general anesthesia, using a tube that passes through their vocal cords," added

## Did You Know?

During an ablation, a catheter—or thin, flexible tube—with an electrode tip is threaded through a vein and into a specific area of the heart. The electrode emits heat that scars or destroys the heart tissue triggering the abnormal rhythm, disconnecting the problem area from the rest of the heart.



**Dr. Westby Fisher** is Section Chief of Electrophysiology at NorthShore Cardiovascular Institute.

Dr. Fisher. "But to prevent injuring Alex's voice, he was heavily sedated instead, using great care so he could continue to breathe spontaneously. It was truly a team effort, with careful collaboration to preserve his professional singing career."

Now, Soare is back on the opera circuit, rehearsing for a performance of "The Pirates of Penzance." "I'm living a normal life again," he said, "and most of all, I'm glad I don't have to take medication for the rest of my life."

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Learn more about NorthShore Cardiovascular Institute's innovative capabilities to treat a variety of heart conditions—including atrial fibrillation. Visit us online at [northshore.org/f5](http://northshore.org/f5). To make an appointment, call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1223).



Alex Soare talks about the one-of-a-kind heart care he received at NorthShore Cardiovascular Institute. Watch the video at [northshore.org/alexsstory](http://northshore.org/alexsstory).

# Delivering Happiness

*Compassion and Expertise Aid Couple with Daughter's Early Arrival*

By Susan J. White

“A perfectly healthy, beautiful, curly-haired ball of love.” That is how Carl Marcelin describes his 2-year-old daughter Jillian, who was born two months early.

Prior to Jillian's birth, Marcelin and his wife Sara Gerstmayr lost twins to a rare complication of twin gestation. In light of their loss, Jillian is not only a gift in their lives, but an inspiration.

In the very early stages of labor with her twins, Gerstmayr was transferred to Evanston Hospital from another hospital. She had already lost one of her twins. “Everyone at NorthShore was very supportive and very understanding. They truly helped us get through it. They took care of us, and we could tell they cared,” said Gerstmayr, who praised the entire team of physicians, nurses and social workers.

“We really wanted children but feared going through something like that again,” said Marcelin. “They told us how they could help ensure a full-term pregnancy,” recalled Gerstmayr, who became pregnant just three months later. She was treated as a high-risk pregnancy patient.

“It's important for women to have hope for subsequent pregnancies even after suffering a tragic loss,” said NorthShore Maternal-Fetal Medicine Specialist Beth Plunkett, MD, a member of the caring team who helped Gerstmayr through both the trauma of losing her babies and the joy of a successful pregnancy. Dr. Plunkett also holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine.

Even with two other hospitals much closer to home, Gerstmayr was happy to drive to Evanston almost weekly for continued monitoring throughout her pregnancy. At 30 weeks, Jillian was born at Evanston Hospital. She spent her initial weeks at the Infant Special Care Unit (ISCU). Her parents were delighted with her care, especially from her primary nurse Megan Ealey. “I felt so prepared when Jillian was born, and it was so much easier knowing the great care we were going to receive,” said Gerstmayr.

“Our nurses, Perinatal Family Support Center and ISCU team provide consistently exceptional care, which is particularly valuable in these more complicated cases,” said Dr. Plunkett.

Carl Marcelin and wife Sara Gerstmayr enjoy a lighthearted moment with their fun and feisty 2-year-old Jillian.



Dr. Beth Plunkett was part of an extensive team of doctors and nurses who cared for Sara Gerstmayr.

## Exceptional Care for Moms and Babies

NorthShore's Centers for Maternal and Fetal Health offer a full range of consultative, diagnostic and therapeutic services for women and their fetuses during pregnancy.

Conveniently located at NorthShore Evanston, Glenbrook and Highland Park Hospitals and six additional locations,

our Centers provide compassionate and comprehensive care focused on individual patients. Learn more online at [northshore.org/f6](http://northshore.org/f6) or call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1224).



### WE ARE HERE TO HELP

NorthShore.org is home to an online community forum for parents—the Parent 'Hood.

The Parent 'Hood is a place where moms and dads can access health-related information through videos and blogs, ask questions and share parenting advice. NorthShore physicians also are part of the forum to provide expertise and share their experiences. Join today at [northshore.org/f7](http://northshore.org/f7).



Oral cancer patient **Michael Heyman** is back to pursuing his love of the outdoors with wife **Claire** and their dog **Champ**.

# Savoring Survivorship

## Mayo Clinic Collaborates on Throat Cancer Care Plan

By Susan J. White

**A**t 61, Michael Heyman was semiretired, leading an active and healthy life. He was unaware that a cancer was growing in his throat until his dentist noticed a small lump on his neck. The real shock hit when a needle biopsy confirmed stage 4 oropharynx cancer—originating in the back of the tongue or tonsils. Left untreated, it would surely kill him.



**Dr. Bruce Brockstein**, Medical Director, Kellogg Cancer Center

Heyman's first objective was to find the right oncologist to direct his treatment. He turned to head and neck cancer expert Bruce Brockstein, MD, at Kellogg Cancer Center and had no question he was in the right place.

Dr. Brockstein laid out all of Heyman's options, thoroughly explaining the disease and a recommended treatment plan. As part of NorthShore's ongoing collaboration with the Mayo Clinic Care Network, Dr. Brockstein also offered Heyman, of Glencoe, a second-opinion consultation from Mayo Clinic Oncologist Katharine Price, MD.

"They sent the pathology out that day, and I had the advantage of another expert weighing in and confirming it was the right course," said Heyman, who also uses the convenient online portal NorthShoreConnect to manage appointments and check lab results.

An initial surgery removed Heyman's tonsils and an enlarged lymph node. Lab tests confirmed Heyman's cancer was related to the human papillomavirus (HPV), which is actually linked to a better prognosis and higher cure rate than non-HPV-related head and neck cancers, explained Dr. Brockstein, who holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine.

The primary source of the cancer was at the back of the tongue, where Heyman received seven weeks of daily, focused radiation treatments.

"I couldn't eat, drink or speak for weeks," Heyman recalled. Even swallowing the nutritional drinks that helped sustain his weight could be excruciating. "I knew it would be a mountain to climb," he said. "I had to win the battle."

Almost a year later, it appears that he has. "I feel great, except for my mouth and throat. I'm living each day and enjoying it," added Heyman, who is on a self-described crusade to help others avoid this cancer by promoting the importance of the HPV vaccine. It is an advocacy he shares with his NorthShore oncologist.

"There's clear evidence that links HPV to both cervical and throat cancers," Dr. Brockstein said, "yet the vaccination rates for both girls and boys still remains too low."

**MORE INSIGHTS ONLINE** Patient Michael Heyman talks about his challenging battle with throat cancer. Read his blog at [northshore.org/f9](http://northshore.org/f9).



## Second Opinion Expertise

As the only health system in the Chicago region that is a member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network, NorthShore is able to offer patients like Michael Heyman the benefit of experts from two leading health systems working together and consulting on his care.

"It's reassuring for patients to have another specialist involved in their treatment decisions," said Mayo Clinic

Oncologist Katharine Price, MD. "In appropriate cases, this relationship also spares patients the travel time and expense, and allows for a rapid consult."



**Dr. Katharine Price**, Mayo Clinic Oncologist

Discover how NorthShore and Mayo Clinic are working together for you. Visit [northshore.org/f8](http://northshore.org/f8), or call **(847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1250)**.

NorthShore expertise restored **Colin Moody's** passion for golf.



Healthcare for what's next.

Our board-certified ophthalmologists provide the latest medical and surgical treatments to suit all your eye care needs. To make an appointment, call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1251), or visit [northshore.org/f10](http://northshore.org/f10).

## Back in the Swing

*Talented Surgeon Rebuilds Eye After Traumatic Golf Injury*

By Barb Hailey

**C**olin Moody, 16, has played golf since age 5. But his love of the game was temporarily shattered last summer while teaching 8-year-olds at a local golf camp when he was struck in the eye with a golf club. The injury was devastating.

"The injury was as severe as any I've ever seen, similar to a gunshot wound," explained NorthShore Ophthalmologist Milap Mehta, MD, who specializes in ocular plastic surgery. "The eye had lost all vision and the muscles were shattered."

Fortunately, the Lake Bluff teen was minutes away from Evanston Hospital, a Level I trauma center staffed and equipped to treat the most serious injuries. It includes highly trained specialists such as Dr. Mehta, who assessed Moody's injuries.

"I was in shock," Moody recalled. "But when Dr. Mehta came into the room, his confidence eased my nerves."

Dr. Mehta is one of a handful of specialists in Illinois who perform the complex surgery

required to repair Moody's eye. "It was a significant injury, but I'm a superoptimist. I will try to fix it—no matter what," he said.

Dr. Mehta, who holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine, is part of the team at the NorthShore Eye and Vision Center, a state-of-the-art multispecialty eye care center that provides comprehensive patient services in all ophthalmic subspecialties.

In a delicate and involved procedure called a complete global reconstruction, Dr. Mehta replaced the contents of Moody's right eye and completely rebuilt it. This included repair of the severed eye muscle responsible for making the eyes move in tandem. He also fixed a laceration on the young man's cheek. Although his vision was significantly diminished, Moody can discern shapes, color and movement.



**Dr. Milap Mehta** performed a complete global reconstruction on Colin Moody's injured eye.

"Without Dr. Mehta, my son wouldn't have an eye right now," said Alice Moody. Both she and her son praised Dr. Mehta's skill and his compassion for



## Guard Your Vision

**More than 40 percent of eye injuries occur during sports or recreational activities. Using protective eyewear or face masks helps keep eyes safe. Remember to wear:**

- **A helmet with a face mask or wire shield when playing baseball, ice hockey or lacrosse**
- **Protective glasses when playing racquet sports, basketball, soccer, golf and field hockey**
- **Protective glasses when fishing or performing other activities involving sharp objects**

his patients.

Several months after the accident, Moody was back to playing golf, although the loss of vision has made certain shots more challenging. For example, sand traps are more difficult, as they require greater depth perception. "I still love the mental aspect of golf," he said. "I've adjusted pretty well."

Shane and Joanne Bertsch with daughter Peyton and son Shane Jr.



WATCH A VIDEO

Joanne Bertsch talks about the important role Personalized Medicine techniques played in her fight against breast cancer. Watch the video at [northshore.org/joannesstory](http://northshore.org/joannesstory).



Healthcare  
for  
what's  
next.

The Strength of  
Precision Treatment

# MEDICINE GETS PERSONAL

Center for Personalized Medicine Drives  
**Targeted** Disease Prevention and Treatment

By *Andy Buchanan*

**J**oanne Bertsch is no stranger to taking on a challenge. After a breast cancer diagnosis and subsequent bilateral mastectomy in 2014, the 46-year-old wife and mother of two made the decision to work with NorthShore experts on a treatment regimen to lower the risk of her cancer returning. The journey was something she never would have predicted.

"I work out, I don't smoke, I eat well, so I was really surprised to learn I had breast cancer," she recalled.

Fortunately, the cancer was limited to one breast and had not spread. Still, she chose to have both breasts removed in a procedure performed by NorthShore Surgical Oncologist David Winchester, MD, who holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago

Pritzker School of Medicine.

Following surgery, Bertsch turned to Kellogg Cancer Center experts and the Center for Personalized Medicine to create a treatment plan, which included special tests to confirm the specific biological characteristics of her particular cancer and the most effective course of treatment.

The tests found that she was "triple positive"; her tumor tested positive for two hormone receptors—estrogen (ER) and progesterone (PR)—plus a third protein called human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2). Since cancer cells feed off these hormones, they need to be blocked to prevent recurrence.

Armed with this critical new information, Bertsch's Medical Oncologist Douglas Merkel, MD, created a treatment plan to best fight her form of the disease.

*continued on the next page*

## TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE AS WE KNOW IT

Bertsch's case is an example of how NorthShore's Center for Personalized Medicine combines scientific and clinical expertise in molecular and genomic medicine to more accurately assess the unique characteristics of an individual patient. The result is a better way to predict, prevent, diagnose and treat certain diseases through tailored care plans.

"Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, our highly specialized testing and other assessments allow us to tailor therapy specifically for a patient and his or her disease type," explained Dr. Merkel, who also holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. "It's an acknowledgment that not all cancers—and all patients—are the same."

Bertsch, of Chicago, appreciated the precise nature of her care plan. She wanted nothing more than to move on with her busy life, which includes her husband, two children, ages 9 and 7, and her job at a Lake Forest nonprofit organization.

"My treatment was right on. It was just what I needed," she said. "Having the testing done and understanding what a triple positive was gave me confidence my physicians were on target and doing the right thing."

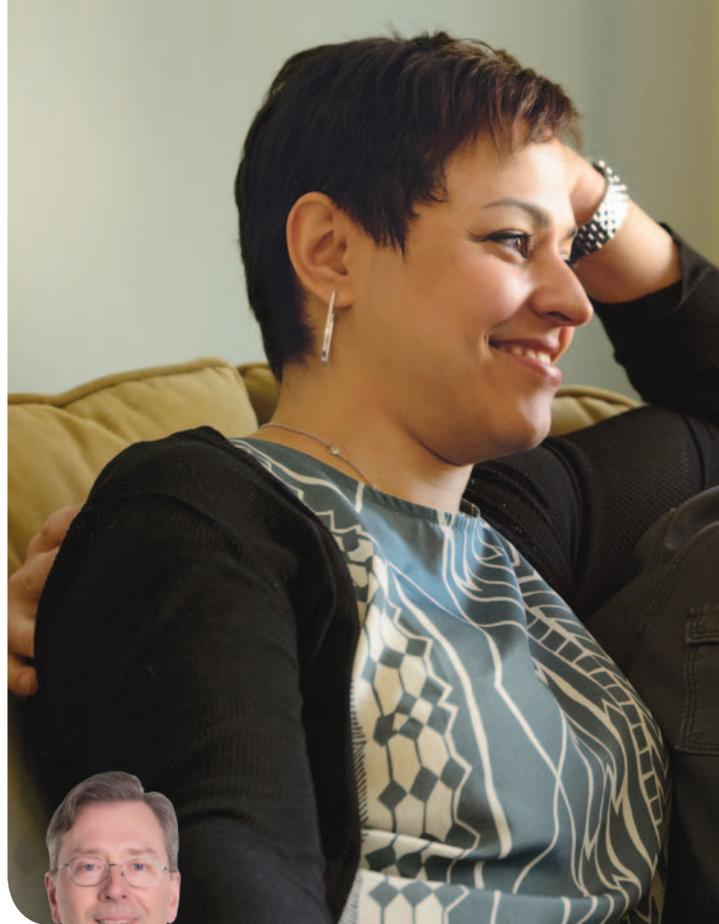
## HIGHLY TARGETED MEDICATIONS

"I met with Dr. Merkel soon after my surgery because I wanted to get things moving as quickly as possible," Bertsch said. "When I found out I was triple positive, I did some reading and had a sense of what kind of treatment was coming."

What followed was a fairly intensive chemotherapy regimen: 12 concurrent weeks of two drugs—Taxol and Herceptin—followed by additional doses of Herceptin.



Surgical Oncologist **Dr. David Winchester** (left) and Medical Oncologist **Dr. Douglas Merkel** collaborated on a personalized care plan for Joanne Bertsch.



## What Is Pharmacogenomics?

A drug that works well for one person may not work for another, even if they are both fighting the same disease. Our unique genetic makeup influences how we respond to medications. That is the impetus behind pharmacogenomics and NorthShore's decision—as part of the Center for Personalized Medicine—to create a special clinic around the practice.

Led by Mark Dunnenberger, PharmD, BCPS, pharmacogenomics allows NorthShore physicians to tailor medications based on patients' genetic makeup, not just their age, lifestyle and overall health. For example, physicians can now use a genetic test to help determine which drugs work best for a cardiac patient following a stent placement.

NorthShore's Pharmacogenomics Clinic is the only one of its kind in Chicagoland and one of only a few in the country. Patients can talk with genetic counselors, pharmacogenomic experts and medical geneticists—and even schedule genetic testing. Learn more about this emerging discipline in Dr. Dunnenberger's recent blog at [northshore.org/f11](http://northshore.org/f11)—or to schedule an appointment, call **(847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1252)**.



**Dr. Mark Dunnenberger**





"I worked with an A-Team of doctors to get me through," said Joanne Bertsch, relaxing at home with her husband Shane.

She also began a program of active ovarian suppression with drug therapy designed to prevent the ovaries from making estrogen. It was a lot to navigate, but Bertsch said she tolerated it well with the support of her collaborative care team. She continued to work, take care of her family and even exercise.

"It was demanding. But with my kids and everything else I have in front of me, I was determined to do what it takes to try to prevent this from coming back," she said. "I've taken every opportunity to ensure the cancer doesn't come back. I feel good now and am moving forward."

Bertsch uses NorthShoreConnect to track test results, manage her many appointments and email her caregivers with questions. "My team's response time was incredible, and it helped put me at ease knowing my questions and concerns would be addressed right away," she said.

Bertsch is also grateful for the warm and understanding care she received at NorthShore, including access to the assessment that helped physicians create a plan just for her.

"Dr. Merkel and everyone else were just wonderful," she said. "I felt like I was getting the most up-to-date care, and they were so compassionate, too. I worked with an A-Team of doctors to get me through."

NorthShore has made a significant investment in the Center for Personalized Medicine, including recruiting world-renowned experts in genomic research and informatics. It also is one of only a few health systems developing a standardized process to analyze a patient's genome and link it with more than 10 years of collective research and clinical data from its Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system. This combined data will be used to create innovative approaches for predicting, preventing and treating various diseases and conditions.

"It's great to be at a place like NorthShore that's on the leading edge of this movement and delivering customized care to our patients," added Dr. Merkel.

## Implications Beyond Cancer Care

Personalized Medicine is not limited to cancer care at NorthShore. Other clinical specialties are using similar techniques to tailor treatment for patients. NorthShore Cardiovascular Institute is now assessing patients' genetic information to better predict and prevent heart attacks and strokes.

"We have the ability to do a cholesterol-based assessment that goes much deeper than your average lipid panel," said NorthShore Cardiologist David Davidson, MD. "By understanding a patient's unique genetic profile, I can pick the most powerful course of therapy and medication and fine-tune more impactful changes to diet and lifestyle. It helps us better understand what's going on with a particular patient and how best we can address it."



Dr. David Davidson

For example, patients with a family history of heart attacks could come in for a genetic assessment that shows if they, too, are at greater risk for an attack and what type of therapy they are most likely to respond to. "It's great to have access to this information and be able to act on it to the benefit of our patients," said Dr. Davidson.

## You Can Help

Help shape the next generation of medicine by participating in NorthShore's Genomic Health Initiative. Adult NorthShore patients can donate a blood sample and allow our researchers to study your DNA in combination with research data obtained from your Electronic Medical Record (EMR). All DNA samples and data obtained from patients' EMRs are de-identified and kept strictly confidential. Genomic Health Initiative participants now receive a Starbucks eGift as a thank-you for their contributions. Sign up today on [northshore.org/f12](http://northshore.org/f12) or call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1253).

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## Community Wellness Rethink Your Drink

As part of its sponsorship of the Rethink Your Drink campaign, NorthShore donated new water fountains to Willard Elementary School in Evanston to encourage its students to choose water over sugar-sweetened drinks. The pilot program will measure water fountain usage and survey students to determine their consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks.

"These high-quality fountains are similar to those at private gyms offering cold, filtered water," said Pediatrician Lynn Gettleman-Chehab, MD, who also is a Willard parent spearheading the pilot program. "They make it fun to drink water."



As part of the Rethink Your Drink campaign, NorthShore donated new water fountains to Willard Elementary School in Evanston.

### HEALTH NEWS YOU CAN USE

Looking for preventive medicine and wellness information? Sign up today for NorthShore emails tailored to the needs of you and your family. Please visit [northshore.org/f13](http://northshore.org/f13).



Dr. Lynn Gettleman-Chehab (right) and registered dietitian and parent Arleen Temer-Witcoff collaborated on a presentation to educate youngsters on the harmful effects of sugary drinks.

## Sugar Smackdown

*Physician Offers Reality Check for Youngsters*

By Barb Hailey

Most kids love sweets, but it is important for them to learn that too much of a good thing is dangerous and unhealthy. NorthShore-affiliated pediatrician Lynn Gettleman-Chehab, MD, MPH, is on a mission to educate children and teens about the harmful effects of sugar. Her goal is to teach them to make healthier choices.

"We wanted to come up with healthy behaviors that are good for anyone—regardless of their weight," said Dr. Gettleman-Chehab, who helped create a wellness program around healthy weight at Evanston Township High School.

Kids get most of their sugar from sweetened beverages, like soda, sports drinks, fruit juice and chocolate milk. The American Heart Association recommends that children consume no more than 4 teaspoons of added sugar daily. Yet one 20-ounce soda can have 19 teaspoons!

It can be difficult to figure out how many teaspoons of sugar are in products. Nutritional labels list sugars in grams, so the grams need to be converted to teaspoons by dividing by four. For example, 16 grams of sugar equals 4 teaspoons.

Research has shown that consuming too much sugar contributes more to obesity,

diabetes, heart disease and cavities than fat. "When you eat too much sugar, your body is programmed to store excess sugar as fat," explained Dr. Gettleman-Chehab, who holds an academic title at the Pritzker School of Medicine.

That is why she and registered dietitian Arleen Temer-Witcoff, at Willard Elementary School in Evanston, created "The Sugar Show" presentation. It teaches third- through fifth-graders about healthy drink choices, like water. Their presentation complements the national Rethink Your Drink campaign through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In the presentation, students are shown a plastic bag containing the 19 teaspoons of sugar found in a 20-ounce soda and then asked if they would take a spoon and eat the sugar. "It's amazing the light bulbs that go on," Dr. Gettleman-Chehab said. "The biggest response I hear to that suggestion is 'that's nasty!'"

Willard students are now being surveyed about their drink habits before and after watching "The Sugar Show" to see if the presentation has led them to change their drink choices. "The Sugar Show" is part of ongoing outreach with area schools to encourage more students to make smarter and healthier choices.



Dr. Claudia Petersen

## Communicate Your Medical and Personal Wishes

Medical emergencies, accidents and sudden changes in your health can happen unexpectedly. It is important to reflect on, discuss and share your medical preferences with loved ones and your healthcare team—even when you are healthy. NorthShore-affiliated Internist Claudia Petersen, MD, answers commonly asked questions about developing an advance care plan.

### WHAT IS AN ADVANCE CARE PLAN?

An advance care plan is a discussion with your loved ones that helps clarify important goals and values regarding your health and your future. It should result in an advance healthcare directive that clearly communicates your medical and personal wishes. It also designates a healthcare power of attorney, who can make decisions if you are unable. Advance care planning reduces stress and anxiety for your loved ones, as they will know how to act in accordance with your wishes.

### WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

It is important to select the right person. Choose someone who will honor your wishes. This could be a legal guardian, spouse, parent, adult child or close friend. The person you select should understand and accept the responsibility and your values. Be sure to let your physician know whom you have selected as your medical decision maker. Also, be sure to update that person and your documents if your life situation changes due to a death in the family, divorce or change in health.

**WE CAN HELP** Download NorthShore's [Advance Care Planning Guidebook](#)—available in English, Spanish and Russian. Also, you can find other resources and watch a video to learn more about the importance of developing an advance care plan at [northshore.org/f14](http://northshore.org/f14).

## Save These Dates

### June 13, 2015

The Auxiliary's Summer Soirée  
(previously the Hospitals' Gala)

*Morgan Manufacturing, Chicago*  
Proceeds support the Grainger Center for Simulation and Innovation

### June 20, 2015

Parkinson's Disease Patient Education Event  
*DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Libertyville-Mundelein*

### July 31, 2015

Be Part of the CURE Summer Party  
*Grainger Corporate Campus, Lake Forest*  
Proceeds support NorthShore Kellogg Cancer Center at Highland Park Hospital

.....  
**STAY UP TO DATE** on all NorthShore community seminars and events online at [northshore.org/f15](http://northshore.org/f15).

## Physicians Honored by University of Chicago Students

Each year, University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine students—who train at NorthShore Hospitals—honor members of the medical staff for their dedication to teaching and their passionate advocacy for patients. This year's recipient of the Alpha Omega Alpha Volunteer Clinical Faculty Award is General Surgeon Michael Ujiki, MD, who co-directs NorthShore's Grainger Center for Simulation and Innovation with Emergency Medicine Physician Ernest Wang, MD.

Dr. Wang—the Alvin H. Baum Family Fund Chair of Simulation and Innovation—was named a Fellow in the University of Chicago Academy of Distinguished Medical Educators. The honors recognize both physicians for their contributions to medical education, excellence in teaching and ongoing clinical leadership.

**Drs. Michael Ujiki** (left) and **Ernest Wang** received teaching honors from the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine.





"I have no pain whatsoever and no real restrictions," said basketball coach **Armando Villanueva** after successful surgery at NorthShore Spine Center.



WATCH A VIDEO

Armando Villanueva shares his thoughts about resuming an active life after expert surgery and follow-up care at NorthShore Spine Center. Watch the video at [northshore.org/armandosstory](http://northshore.org/armandosstory).

# OFF THE BENCH

## Spine Center's **Advanced Care** Puts Coach Back on His Feet

By *Susan J. White*

**A** former professional basketball player turned teacher and coach, Armando Villanueva is perpetually on the go. But less than a year ago, he was sidelined with crippling pain in his back and numbness in his left leg.

"I was really suffering. I'd have to take a break after a shower and sit down until the pain went away," recalled Villanueva, 58. "Then I'd brush my teeth, get dressed and take another break." He also noticed that his left leg was dragging when he walked.

One day while teaching high school, Villanueva collapsed in excruciating pain. "It was like an electric jolt from my lumbar spine all the way down my left side to the big toe," he said. "It paralyzed me and I couldn't get up."

His wife took Villanueva to the closest hospital where they took X-rays and advised him to see a spine specialist. The next day, Villanueva saw NorthShore Spine

Center Specialist and Surgeon Eldin Karaikovic, MD, PhD, who holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine.

Villanueva was diagnosed with congenital spinal stenosis—a narrowing of the spinal canal—which was aggravated by arthritis, bulging disks and disk degradation. As nerves in the spinal cord are increasingly pinched, pain escalates and—as in Villanueva's case—can ultimately lead to numbness and weakness in the legs.

It was immediately clear that surgery was Villanueva's best option. "We begin with a conservative approach and then create the best treatment plan that's tailored to a particular patient's needs," Dr. Karaikovic explained. In Villanueva's case, he performed a laminectomy, removing parts of the lower vertebrae to take pressure off the damaged nerves.

"I was totally confident going into surgery," said Villanueva, who also appreciated the convenience of the



Orthopaedic Spine Surgeon **Dr. Eldin Karaikovic**

## More than Meds

NorthShore Spine Center offers many treatment options for low back pain, including physical therapy, pain management and—when appropriate—surgical intervention:

- **EXERCISE**

Bed rest can actually make back pain worse. Exercises such as physical therapy, yoga, abdominal strengthening, stretching, walking and swimming strengthen muscles that support your back and improve recovery.

- **ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS**

Acupuncture may release natural painkillers in your body. Using massage, along with cold and hot compresses, also may reduce pain and inflammation.

- **MEDICATION**

Prescription and over-the-counter drugs can decrease inflammation, stiffness and swelling. A Spine Center expert can outline the risks and benefits of using medications to treat your pain.



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secure online portal NorthShoreConnect to communicate with his care team, make appointments and refill prescriptions. “Everybody at NorthShore treated me like I was special. It was just a wonderful experience.”

The Spine Center team seamlessly coordinated a regimen of physical therapy—an important part of Villanueva’s recovery. “The therapists were very helpful, and just like the nurses and everyone I encountered, they were professional and caring,” he noted.

Villanueva, assistant coach of the professional Premier Basketball League’s Lake Michigan Admirals, is now back on the court with his team and has not missed a single home game following surgery last November. “I have no pain whatsoever and no real restrictions,” he said.

“What we do as surgeons is just the first step,” said Dr. Karaikovic. “The Spine Center’s comprehensive care with specially trained nurses and therapists is equally critical to a patient’s success.”

“I felt like everyone I came in contact with at NorthShore truly cared,” added Villanueva.

## We’ve Got Your Back

The experienced specialists at NorthShore Spine Center take a collaborative, conservative approach in diagnosing and treating back and neck pain. An elite team of physicians cares for professional and student athletes of all ages.

The Spine Center provides a seamless patient experience at convenient locations in Chicago, Skokie, Glenview, Lake County and beyond. Our fellowship-trained physicians are connected through NorthShore’s advanced Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system and work to develop individually focused treatment plans for each patient.

Find out more about the Spine Center’s capabilities at [northshore.org/f16](http://northshore.org/f16), or call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1255) to make an appointment.

### JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Learn about what’s next in spine care from NorthShore’s experts. Participate in a live Web chat with NorthShore Orthopaedic Surgeon Srdjan Mirkovic, MD, on **Thursday, June 4, 2015, from 11 a.m. to noon** at [northshore.org/f18](http://northshore.org/f18).

## Manage Your Care Online—Now Even Easier!

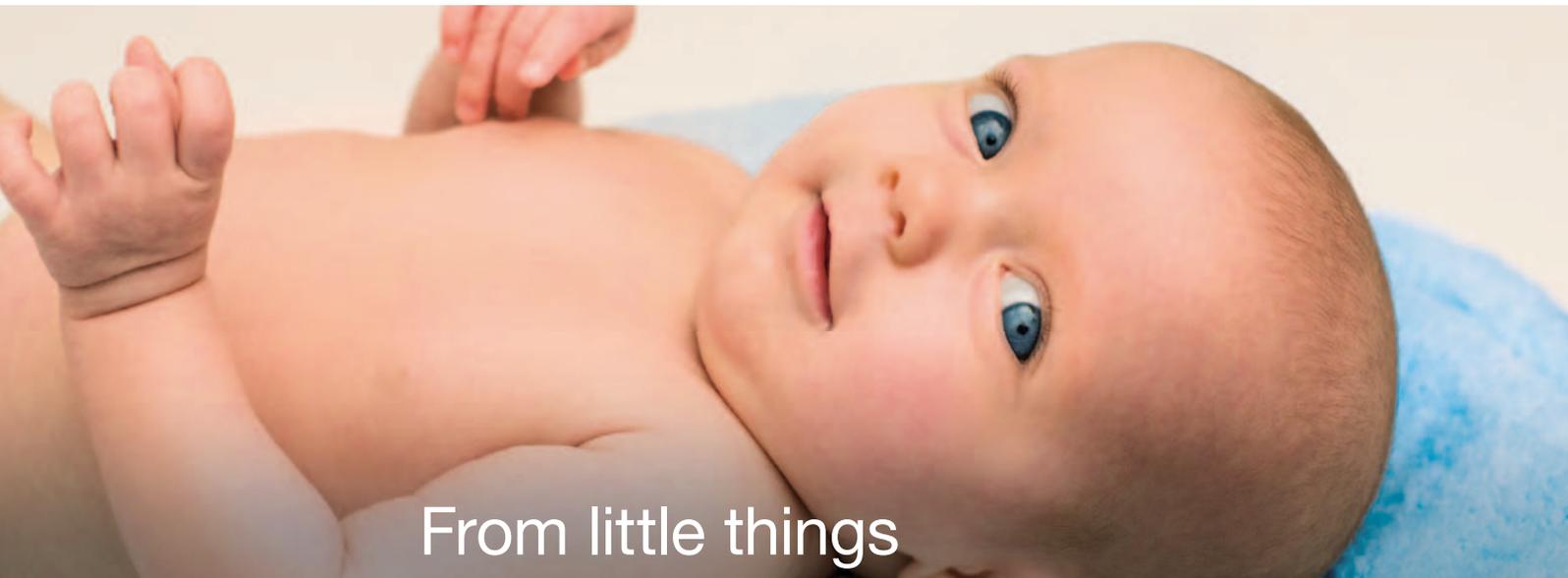
Access NorthShore when you need it and where you need it—on your smartphone, tablet or computer. More than 280,000 NorthShore patients enjoy the convenience of NorthShoreConnect—the easy-to-use, secure online gateway to schedule appointments, see lab results, refill prescriptions and chat with physician experts.

NorthShoreConnect continues to expand, now offering appointment reminders via text message and new online scheduling for many specialists and outpatient procedures, including MRI, colonoscopy and rehabilitation services. There also are new Family Access tools for patients who manage care for others, such as children and older parents. Sign up today at [northshore.org/f17](http://northshore.org/f17). Tap or click on “Register Now” to get started.





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From little things  
to big things.



# Healthcare for what's next.

At NorthShore, we're always looking forward. From welcoming the newest family member to developing advanced surgical options to mapping your unique genomic characteristics to predict and prevent illnesses. At NorthShore, we're not just here for you now. We're helping you be ready for what's next.