



News Release #10-013
November 9, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Krista A. Kittle
(315) 785-4504

**ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY COVERAGE CHANGES AT SMC
Three Physicians Discontinue Treating Fractures, Dislocations**

Watertown, New York – Three orthopaedic surgeons from the North Country Orthopaedic Group have elected to discontinue treating key orthopaedic conditions at Samaritan Medical Center, leaving only three physicians to cover those conditions at the hospital.

Doctors Edward Powell, Perry Shuman and Bruce Baird notified the hospital that, effective November 3rd, they would no longer be caring for patients who present to the hospital with fractures, dislocations and lacerations to tendons, vessels and nerves. The three remaining orthopaedic surgeons – Doctors Peter VanEenenaam, David VanEenenaam and Steven Fish – have maintained their privileges for these conditions and will continue to provide these services during the days that they are on call.

Though patients suffering from fractures and other orthopaedic injuries will still be cared for in the emergency department, the lack of 24/7 orthopaedic coverage means that those patients requiring surgery, treatment or follow up will need to be transferred to another facility during the days when no orthopaedic surgeon with privileges for these conditions is on call. The hospital expects that this will result in lack of orthopaedic coverage 50 percent of the time.

This development is unfortunate and disappointing. Most importantly, it is extremely burdensome and inconvenient for patients with these types of injuries, as well as for the EMS community and other healthcare providers who depend on the 24/7 availability of this basic service.

The Board of Trustees, hospital administration and Medical Staff leadership at SMC understand the significant implications that this reduction in orthopaedic services will have for patients suffering from these conditions. They are extremely concerned about this development knowing that, as a community hospital, treatment of these conditions is a basic service that our community expects to be provided. All steps necessary to ensure the restoration of full 24/7 orthopaedic coverage as soon as possible are underway. This includes pursuing interim assistance through locum tenens (temporary physicians) to provide this coverage until a long-term plan can be implemented.

For the long-term, SMC has moved orthopaedic surgery to its priority recruitment list and will work diligently to recruit a new orthopaedic surgery practice to the Watertown community.

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