



## Outcomes in Joint Replacement Surgery

By Craig Burrows, MD

Getting older is a part of life that none of us can avoid, and unfortunately, as we get older, so do all of our parts, including our joints. With the rising number of our country's population aging past the age of 65, the expected rate of joint replacement surgery is expected to increase by 400% by the year 2025! So an obvious question for all of us is when it gets too painful to walk or function, where should we go to have our surgery?

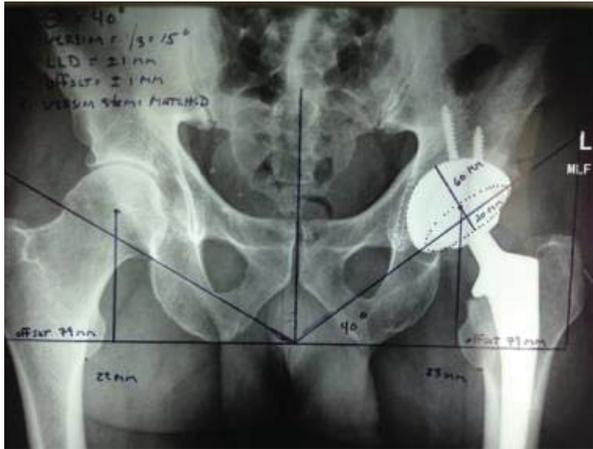
In the past, that answer would have been easy; for the best outcome, you have to go to a big hospital where this surgery is done every day. But in today's world, there is more and more evidence to suggest that bigger is not necessarily better. In May of 2016, an article was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association where researchers looked at the outcomes for common procedures done at large hospitals as opposed to critical access hospitals, like Mammoth Hospital, here in Mammoth Lakes, California. What they found was not only were there no differences in surgical outcomes, but there were less serious complications, and less Medicare expenditures. Additional bonuses of staying local included less travel time, reduced travel expenditures, a personalized approach, improved patient satisfaction, and better outcomes if readmission was required for a complication.

With all of this in mind, having your joint replacement surgery here at Mammoth Hospital seems like an



From left: Orthopedic Surgeons Brian Gilmer, Michael Karch, and Timothy Crall.

obvious choice. Board Certified and Fellowship trained Orthopedic Surgeon Michael M. Karch, M.D. and his Arthroplasty Specialty Surgical Team have been successfully performing Knee and Hip replacement surgeries at Mammoth Hospital since 2003, and continue to expand the Joint Replacement Program for the entire Eastern Sierra inter-mountain communities. This program has been remarkably successful, and the numbers back up our success! For example, the average length of stay nationally following hip or knee replacement is just under 4 days. At Mammoth Hospital, the length of stay is just over 1 day. In 2015, the infection rate following surgery was 1.4%, and in 2016, that rate dropped to 0.0%. Compare that with the national average of 2.1%.



The readmission rate following hip or knee surgery nationally is 4% at 30 days, and 7% at 90 days. At Mammoth Hospital, the readmission rate is 0.8% at 30 days, and 0.9% at 90 days. Lastly, thanks to the use of a medication called Exparel, Dr. Karch and his colleagues were able to demonstrate a 66% reduction in the amount of narcotics needed following surgery!

Mammoth Hospital may be small in size, but is a giant when it comes to implementing the best practices and giving our patients the best possible results. In order to care for the whole person effectively, the Joint Replacement Care Coordination Committee at Mammoth Hospital functions like a small army. This approach incorporates input from orthopedics, internal medicine, dietician services, care coordination, schedulers,

anesthesia, nursing, and physical therapy. Following the highest preoperative standards to ensure that every patient is absolutely the best possible surgical candidate he or she can be, every patient has to be cleared with respect to medical clearance, smoking status, ideal body weight, narcotic use, diabetes management, nutritional status, alcohol use, and depression screening.

What further sets the team at Mammoth Hospital apart is that if we find something that prevents you from having surgery, we work with you to fix that problem! From minute one of your first appointment with Dr. Karch until your last session in physical therapy, you have an entire team working to assure the best patient experience possible. So please keep in mind that the best option for your joint replacement surgery may very well be right here in your own back yard. And with that new joint and less pain, you can focus on adding years to your life and life to your years!!