



Three Healthcare Institutions Announce Dedication of ALS Clinic in Grand Rapids

Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital, Michigan State University, Saint Mary's Health Care open the 38th certified Muscular Dystrophy Association ALS Center in the country

Contacts: Micki Benz
Vice President, Saint Mary's Health Care
Ph (616) 913 1890
Pager (616) 397 6726
benzm@trinity-health.org

Meg Derrer
Director of Marketing and Public Relations
Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital
Ph (616) 242 0474
Cell (616) 260 6628
Meg.Derrer@maryfreebed.com

Geri Kelley
Communications Manager,
MSU College of Human Medicine
Ph (616) 233 1678
Cell (616) 350 7976
Geri.Kelley@hc.msu.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11, 2008

Grand Rapids, MI A unique collaboration of three major west Michigan institutions has created a comprehensive center for patients with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or, as it's commonly known, Lou Gehrig's disease).

Michigan State University, Saint Mary's Health Care, and Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital have combined resources to create the Grand Rapids clinic, which opened in October at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital. It is dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of ALS and is the 38th in the country to achieve certification by the Muscular Dystrophy Association as an MDA/ALS center. In a unique partnership, MDA has certified the center with two clinical locations. In addition to the Grand Rapids location, the center has an affiliated clinic on the campus of Michigan State University in East

Lansing. Together, the two locations comprise the only MDA-certified ALS center in the state.

Inspired by two west Michigan families struck by the disease who approached the organizations with the idea last spring, the center provides the only comprehensive care in the area for ALS patients and families. Prior to the opening of the Grand Rapids clinic, patients and families who are affected by ALS had to travel to Northwestern University in Chicago for an MDA designated ALS center, as there was none located in Michigan. A team of professionals, including physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, dieticians and respiratory therapists work together to provide coordinated care, thus eliminating the need for patients and caregivers to travel to multiple locations.

The Grand Rapids clinic was organized under the direction of a lead physician from each organization: David Baumgartner, MD, Vice President, Medical Affairs at Saint Mary's Health Care; John F. Butzer, MD, Medical Director, Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital; and David Kaufman, DO, Chair of the Michigan State University Department of Neurology and Ophthalmology. "This center is an excellent example of the cooperation among the three major organizations and two communities," remarked Dr. Kaufman. "Together we have created an opportunity to work toward a world-class center for patients and families who suffer from this disease."

Brian Averell, DO, oversees the clinic in Grand Rapids, which has seen steadily increasing patient volumes since it opened in October.

The clinic will be officially dedicated on February 11 at 10:00 AM in a ceremony hosted by all three organizations. With a fundraising goal of \$5,000,000, including endowment, to establish and perpetuate the clinic, a quiet campaign has netted nearly \$400,000 to date. Community fundraising will begin in March.

ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. Its causes and cure remain unknown.

It's estimated that currently approximately 30,000 Americans have been diagnosed with ALS.

ALS CLINIC FACT SHEET

Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital, Michigan State University, and Saint Mary's Health Care have combined to open the area's first MDA/ALS clinic, the 38th in the country to be officially MDA certified.

The clinic is unique in that it has two locations, one in Grand Rapids and one on the campus of Michigan State University in East Lansing.

The Grand Rapids clinic is located at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital.

Brian Averell, DO, heads a team of physicians, nurses, occupational and physical therapists, dieticians, speech and language pathologists, and respiratory therapists who staff the clinic in a combined multidisciplinary model.

Private donations have netted nearly \$400,000 toward the \$5,000,000 fundraising goal, which includes endowment for the clinic.

The Grand Rapids clinic is currently open on the first and third Tuesday mornings of each month. On average, six patients are seen during a morning session.

Since October, 23 patients have enrolled in the clinic.

Dedication of the Grand Rapids clinic will take place on February 11 at 10:00 AM at the Mary Free Bed location.