Improving Access to Orthopedic Care

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With three Orthopedic Urgent Care (OUC) locations throughout greater Charlotte, OrthoCarolina offers area patients convenient access to a wide range of specialized orthopedic services.

When Pressly Gilbert, M.D., general orthopedic surgeon, joined OrthoCarolina in 2000, only one of the practice’s OUC centers had been established. Set up in the mid-’90s on Randolph Road in uptown Charlotte, the first location was originally intended as an after-hours clinic for patients who were suffering from exacerbations of previously treated orthopedic problems, such as uncomfortable casts and surgical wound complications. People who could not wait two or three weeks to see their primary care physicians because of an immediate need could visit the OUC center after work without having to make an appointment. However, OrthoCarolina’s OUC facility quickly outgrew the confines of its original purpose.

“The service rapidly evolved to evaluate people who simply could not see their physicians that same day but did not require emergency room care,” Dr. Gilbert says. “By the time I began working here, about two-thirds of all patients we saw had problems that had not stemmed from a prior injury.”

Growing with the Community’s Needs

The OUC clinic soon found itself at a crossroads. The community was now utilizing the OUC center as the first point of care for urgent and nonurgent needs alike, but rather than turning these patients away or referring them to the local emergency room, OrthoCarolina rose to the challenge and quickly adapted to meet local residents’ needs.

Originally staffed by one physician, one nurse and one X-ray technician, OrthoCarolina began to expand staffing, training and capabilities at the OUC clinic. Surprised by the breadth of the gap in care services they were filling, Dr. Gilbert says OrthoCarolina realized the potential for growth into other areas around Charlotte.

“There was a definite geographic need, and the volume of patients we were seeing at the uptown location could be overwhelming at times,” says Dr. Gilbert. “We decided to expand our reach into nearby

**Conditions Treated**

Orthopedic Urgent Care (OUC) is equipped to diagnose, treat and provide follow-up care for the following conditions and symptoms:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Cast and wound dressing issues
- Closed fractures
- General sprains and strains
- Gout inflammation
- Herniated disks
- Injuries to the ankle, back, elbow, foot, hand, hip, knee, neck and shoulder
- Joint pain and swelling
- Minor dislocations
- Pediatric injuries
Offering A Better Option

The OUC clinics found early success because they responded to a growing deficit patients felt between their orthopedic needs and the forms of care available in the region. Before the advent of the OUC centers, patients with urgent orthopedic conditions such as broken bones would have to go to an emergency room for treatment, regardless of whether the injury was emergent or not.

“In the ER, patients would have an extended wait time before being evaluated, and in some cases the services they received would not be covered by insurance,” Dr. Gilbert says. “Patients love our urgent care clinics because they eliminate that costly, often unnecessary trip to the ER.”

A Mission for Excellence

OUC affords orthopedic patients the benefit of receiving more appropriate care. All three OUC locations are staffed by board-certified orthopedic surgeons and licensed orthopedic physician assistants. Every care provider, from the surgeon to members of the nursing and physician assistant staff, has undergone specialty training and carries multiple years of experience in treating orthopedic injuries and conditions. Some orthopedists on staff at the OUC clinics have also received subspecialty training in a specific field of orthopedic care, such as hand surgery or sports medicine.

“We do not treat anything but orthopedic problems, every day, all day,” Dr. Gilbert says. “That kind of focused care leads to more specialized treatment by the physician best equipped to deliver that treatment. Patients enjoy better outcomes as a result.”

OrthoCarolina’s extensive network of physicians, as well as its relationships with other health networks, helps expedite the process of connecting patients with the most appropriate care. If a patient presents with an injury or symptom that would best be served through a different form of care (primary, emergency, etc.), OUC physicians can find the appropriate avenues and refer patients quickly.

“We’ve had a lot of positive feedback from people in the community,” Dr. Gilbert says. “I’ve heard so many patients say things like, ‘I had no idea something like this existed,’ or ‘I wish I had known about this place sooner.’ It is a tremendous feeling knowing what a unique resource we are for the community.”

To learn more about Orthopedic Urgent Care, visit orthocarolina.com/urgentcare.
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