

ACH Wound Care marks five years of healing

By SHANNON HARSH
The Review

After weeks of treatment at Alliance Community Hospital Wound Care and Hyperbaric Department, Milton Smith, of Alliance, finally heard the word he'd been waiting for — healed. Smith's issue started after cellulitis formed in his legs. "I woke up one morning, and there was a bubble on my leg, and when it broke, it left a great big (wound)," Smith recalled.

He learned of the ACH Wound Care through word of mouth and went for help. He was put under the care of internal medicine specialist Gamal El-Mobasher, who treated the wound with skin grafts, debridements and wound dressings. El-Mobasher said Smith's wound was infected and his bad venous system made it difficult to heal.

"It was so bad it was down so many layers. When (the doctor) first started this thing, it was awful; this leg was covered," Smith described. But during a recent return visit, Smith's leg was nearly back to normal. "They do an amazing job here," he said.

"By taking care of the ulcer, by treating the infection and by compressing, the ulcer is healed," El-Mobasher stated.

Smith is one of a long list of success stories that the Wound Care team can claim. The facility, located in the medical plaza west of the hospital, marked its five-year anniversary last month. According to Shawna Weber, office coordinator, more than 1,400 patients have been treated in that time, totalling upwards of 13,500 visits.

Five years ago, Weber said their goal was to build the program. One of the first physicians on board was El-Mobasher, who said wound care was a new branch of medicine and he was interested in being a part of the growing field.

El-Mobasher noted the success that they've achieved has been a team effort. "We're happy to have this very competent group of nurses and staff that are working well as one team," he said. "It's not my job only that heals patients. It's the job of other people with me. I'm glad to be here."

In the past five years, Weber said Wound Care has added services, such as ostomy care, and new team members. In addition to El-Mobasher, the team now includes general surgeon Daniel Mitchell, who serves as medical



Review Photos/Jessica Denton

Milton Smith, of Alliance, watches as Dr. Gamal El-Mobasher examines a wound on his leg at the Alliance Community Hospital Wound Care & Hyperbaric Department. Wound Care recently celebrated its fifth anniversary.



Alliance Community Hospital Wound Care & Hyperbaric center, located off of State Street to the west of the main campus, recently celebrated its fifth anniversary.

SEEKING CLINICAL TRIAL PARTICIPANTS

Alliance Community Hospital Wound Care & Hyperbaric Department is participating in a clinical trial using hyperbaric oxygen therapy to treat traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. Office coordinator Shawna Weber said they are in search of people with a history of concussions or mild to moderate traumatic brain injury and/or post-traumatic stress disorder. Those interested in being screened for qualification should call Weber at 330-596-7940.

director, podiatrist Thomas Groner, Drs. Karen Gade-Pulido and Dominick Catalano, who oversee hyperbaric oxygen treatments, and clinical nurse specialist Debra Clair, who Weber said has helped enhance the program and build up their inpatient program.

Weber said the team takes pride in its healing rates, which have remained above the national average the entire time they've been in existence. Compared to the national average of 63 days, Weber said their average number of days until a patient is discharged as healed is only 30. She added

that 96 percent of patients are healed upon discharge at their facility, compared to the national average of 85 percent.

While not all patients need hyperbaric therapy, Weber said Wound Care has performed nearly 4,000 treatments during its first five years. "We've had people go through as little as 10 and as many as 100 treatments in the hyperbaric chamber, depending on what they need for their particular condition, and we've seen lots of success with the hyperbaric treatments," she said.

Like Smith, Weber said the majority of their patients

have chronic wounds that won't heal, and many have other conditions affecting their healing, such as diabetes, venous insufficiency or arterial deficiencies.

For this reason, she said they address more than just the wound, often using their unofficial slogan, "We treat the whole patient, not the hole in the patient."

"It sounds kind of corny, but it's true," she said. "We look at their dietary status. We look at any other conditions that can be going on that maybe haven't been caught before. We really look at the whole picture and try to figure out what it is this

patient needs to take care of their wound."

Weber added that they focus on the Planetree philosophy and their patients often become like family. "We see them every week — sometimes more than once a week — and you get really close to them," she described. "Our happiest day here is when somebody heals and gets discharged. We present them with a certificate like an award and a little goodie bag and we cheer. It's a big deal to us when we see patients that accomplish it."

To learn more about Wound Care, call 330-596-7940.