Recent technological advances and revolutionary procedures can make a huge difference for surgical patients with benefits that include smaller incisions, shorter hospital stays and quicker recoveries.

Surgeons at Meriter Hospital have been quick to embrace innovative techniques that improve outcomes for their patients. Here are a few examples of unique procedures now available at Meriter:

**Disc replacement surgery**

Lumbar fusion – surgically fusing two or more vertebrae together – has been the traditional treatment for people with chronic low back pain from degenerative disc disease. While that procedure stops the pain, fusion restricts movement in the problem area, and it creates greater strain on the healthy spinal segments above and below.

Patients are now having excellent results from an alternative to spinal fusion, which has been available in Europe for over 17 years, and recently received FDA approval. Disc replacement surgery is performed at Meriter Hospital through a joint program of UW Health Neurosurgery and Orthopedics. The artificial disc is arranged like a sandwich with a polyethylene (very hard plastic) core between two metal endplates. The device is shaped so the endplates pivot in a way that imitates the normal motion of the two vertebrae.

Neurosurgeon John Sandin, M.D., explains, "Discs wear out as a natural part of aging and from stress and strain. This procedure effectively addresses the chronic and debilitating pain found when discs in the lower back fail. Disc replacement saves adjacent levels of the spine by not immobilizing one level and forcing adjacent levels to support the resulting stresses."

Orthopedic surgeon Craig Dopf, M.D., says that the surgery is performed from the front of the body through a small incision near the naval, and adds, "Pain relief post-operatively appears to be much quicker with artificial disc replacements than with spinal fusions."

While it is too soon to know long-term results for patients in the U.S., a recent European study of 226 disc replacement patients concluded that nearly 80 percent maintained good or excellent clinical outcomes at over 10 years’ follow-up.

**FDA-Approved Hip Resurfacing**

Orthopedic surgeon John S. Rogerson, MD, is among the first surgeons in this country and the first in Wisconsin to provide patients who suffer hip pain the remarkable new Birmingham Hip Resurfacing (BHR) technique.

This alternative, which has been offered in Europe and other countries for almost a decade, won approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in May. It is the only FDA-approved hip resurfacing system currently available in the United States. Rather than replacing the entire hip joint, as in a total hip replacement, hip resurfacing simply shaves and caps a few millimeters of bone within the joint.

The bone-conserving approach of hip resurfacing preserves more of the patient’s natural bone structures and stability, covering the joint’s surfaces with an
all-metal implant that more closely resembles a tooth cap than a hip implant.

“This is one of the most exciting procedures I’ve seen in years,” says Dr. Rogerson. “I am pleased that the Birmingham hip resurfacing replacement was the first resurfacing prosthesis to win FDA approval because it is the best design, metal and instrumentation with the longest track record on the global market.”

Dr. Rogerson adds, “I see hip resurfacing as the ideal solution for many young, active patients who suffer from hip pain. We are seeing patients who develop arthritic hip pain through either extremely physical work or leisure activities. They don’t intend to slow down. BHR is an alternative to total hip replacement that accommodates both age and lifestyle.”

Rogerson’s patients can participate in an innovative approach to rehabilitation with a seven-day program – modeled after a proven protocol in Europe – that moves them from hip resurfacing surgery to rehabilitation to home. The rehabilitation phase, HipHab, offers private apartments, 24-hour access to nursing care, and intensive physical therapy – including warm water therapy – at the Meriter Heights Wellness Center in downtown Madison.

“Patients have found that strolling around the Capitol Square is an enjoyable way to practice walking,” says Rogerson, “and they are delighted to discover that walking trips to the Farmers’ Market, concerts or restaurants can be part of their therapy.”

**Laparoscopic Supracervical Hysterectomy**

Hysterectomies – the second most common major surgery for women – are performed to treat a range of conditions including fibroids, endometriosis, pelvic support problems and cancer.

Until recently, most hysterectomies were performed through a large abdominal incision, which means a long recovery and visible scar. Laparoscopic Supracervical Hysterectomy (LSH) – a minimally-invasive technique that dramatically reduces pain and trauma to the body – is a better option for many women.

Klaus D. Diem, MD, the first to offer LSH at Meriter, says that he uses a thin 5-millimeter telescope-like instrument, called a laparoscope, along with small surgical instruments. All are inserted through three tiny incisions (less than 1/4 inch each) in the navel and abdomen.

The uterus is separated from the cervix and removed through one of the openings. The cervix is left intact, Diem explains, to reduce the chance of future pelvic floor support problems and to hasten the return to normal sexual functions.

Diem adds, “With this procedure, women experience less scarring, less pain and a shorter recovery than with the traditional open abdominal surgery. It can be done on an outpatient basis, so women can be home resting comfortably the same day and resuming day-to-day activities within a week.”

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**For More Information**

**Laparoscopic Hysterectomy**

[www.meriter.com/mih](http://www.meriter.com/mih)

**Klaus Diem, MD**

UW Health – 20 S. Park

(608) 287-2830

**Barbara Hostetler, MD**

UW Health – 20 S. Park

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**Barbara O’Connell, MD**

Meriter WomanCare Clinic

(608) 267-5433

**Erick Wait, MD**

UW Health – Fitchburg

(608) 274-5300

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**Disc Replacement**

[www.meriter.com/spine](http://www.meriter.com/spine)

**Craig A. Dof, MD**

UW Health - 20 S. Park

(608) 287-2700

**John A. Sandin, III, MD**

UW Health - 20 S. Park

(608) 255-4223

**FDA-Approved Hip Resurfacing**

[www.meriter.com/hip](http://www.meriter.com/hip)

**John S. Rogerson, MD, SC**

(608) 231-3410

*UW Health Physician and UW School of Medicine and Public Health Faculty Member*
Building for the Community

In keeping with its mission to embrace excellence always, Meriter currently has several construction/renovation projects in progress. When completed, the projects below will serve community members across the lifespan.

**Neonatal Intensive Care Nursery Unit**
Construction of a new, state-of-the-art newborn intensive care unit (NICU) is progressing on schedule. When completed in early 2007, the new unit will provide an environment unmatched in the area for infants who need specialized care after birth by combining a quiet, healing environment with leading-edge medical and technical care. Features include thirty private rooms with sleeping areas for parents in each room, a sibling play area, a family resource area and a family lounge.

**Heart Hospital**
The Meriter Heart Hospital will raise the standard for cardiovascular care in our region when it opens next year. The “hospital within a hospital” will consolidate cardiovascular services on two floors, and will provide a comprehensive range of diagnostic, treatment and therapy services for all stages of cardiac and vascular disease. The hospital will include a 45-bed inpatient unit and a 16-bed short-stay unit – both units will offer private patient rooms.

**Meriter Retirement Community**
Meriter Retirement Services is renovating two facilities in its downtown Madison continuing-care retirement community. These changes will be phased in over five years and are needed to provide today’s seniors with the design features and amenities they’re seeking.
Meriter Heights, which opened in 1975, offers independent-living apartments. A $12 million renovation will create spacious apartment homes, many with spectacular views.
Meriter Health Center is a skilled nursing care facility that opened in 1980. A $2.5 million renovation will enhance dining and family spaces, and will convert some semi-private rooms to private.
Retirement Community residents have easy access to a variety of learning and recreational opportunities, including the onsite PLATO lecture series cultural performances.

When it opens in mid-2007, the Meriter Heart Hospital will have five diagnostic and interventional labs (two more than currently available).
The most important call that was made from the Lake Windsor golf course on the evening of May 1 was not “fore” following a wild drive. It was a “9-1-1” cell phone call from the ninth hole reporting that avid golfer Lee Syvrud was having chest pain. After driving from the tee, Syvrud knew he couldn’t continue.

That phone call was just the first critical step in the race against the clock. DeForest Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responded, equipped with new, unique equipment that has the potential to drastically reduce the time needed to treat a heart attack.

“In cardiac medicine, we know ‘time is muscle,’” says Joseph Bellissimo, MD, Wisconsin Heart cardiologist and medical director of Meriter’s Cardiology and Chest Pain Center. “This new technology can dramatically reduce the time from the initial contact with the patient to the time that blood flow is restored and the heart attack is stopped.”

Meriter helped fund the addition of equipment and hosted the training for the new 12-Lead program of the Dane County EMS. The EMS providers are now able to send high-resolution, diagnostic quality 12-Lead electrocardiograms (ECGs) to the hospital emergency department via cell phone while patients are in the ambulance. ECGs provide important information in the diagnosis of a heart attack.

“Our goal at Meriter is to turn the advance notice we get from the EMS into a real patient advantage,” says Marko Pease, RN, PhD, clinical nurse specialist for cardiac medicine.

“Now the treatment of heart attack begins in the ambulance before the patient arrives at the hospital,” Pease explains. “The EMS have given us the opportunity to further reduce the heart muscle damage and improve the patient’s quality of life.”

Based on the ECG sent by the DeForest EMS, the Meriter emergency physician called in the catheterization team prior to Syvrud’s arrival at the hospital. After the abnormal ECG findings were confirmed by the emergency room physician, Syvrud was promptly taken to the catheterization lab for the blood-flow restoring angioplasty with a stent.

The time from when Syvrud arrived at the hospital to the time at which blood flow was restored was only 46 minutes. The national standard of care for “door to balloon” is 90 minutes.

“I immediately felt better than I had in weeks,” Syvrud reports. So good that just two days after he was discharged from the hospital, he was back on the golf course finishing that ninth hole.
Meriter News in Brief

Parish Nurse Earns Award
Meriter Parish Nurse Cheryl Munns was honored recently by the South Central Wisconsin American Heart Association/American Stroke Association during its recent “Celebration of Heroes” event. Munns was recognized for her leadership and commitment to increasing awareness about heart health and stroke prevention.

Online Gift Shop Now Open
Sending fresh flowers, baby items and other gifts to patients is now easier with the secure online Friends of Meriter Gift Shop at www.meriter.com/giftshop. All gifts except balloons and flowers arrive in a complimentary gift bag with colorful tissue, and include a card with your personal message.

Meriter Named Best for Commuters
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Transportation recently recognized Meriter Health Services as one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters for providing "outstanding commuter benefits which help meet the National Standard of Excellence."

New Patient Meal Service
Meriter Hospital recently launched a new concept in hospital meal service that lets patients decide what and when they eat – much like hotel room service. The service is available 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., seven days a week. Menus are available in English and Spanish.
Region’s First Baby-Friendly Hospital

Bab-Friendly USA has awarded Meriter Hospital the prestigious international recognition as a Baby-Friendly birth facility. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative is sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to encourage and recognize facilities that provide optimal levels of care for breastfeeding mothers and their babies.

Meriter is one of only 54 Baby-Friendly hospitals and birth centers in the United States.

“We are very proud of this achievement,” says Pat Grunwald, RN, Meriter assistant vice president of Women’s Health. “This award reflects the staff’s commitment to the health and wellness of moms and babies.”

The designation is given after a rigorous on-site survey is completed. Based on the UNICEF/WHO Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, the award recognizes birth facilities that offer breastfeeding mothers the information, confidence and skills needed to successfully initiate and continue breastfeeding their babies.

At Meriter, 88 percent of all new mothers breastfeed while in the hospital, compared to 70 percent nationwide. Meriter is the second largest birthing hospital in the state, with about 3,600 births a year.

“We encourage breastfeeding because of its many benefits to mom and baby,” says Kathie Russell, RN, and certified lactation consultant. “But it is important to note that if a mother chooses to use formula, we will support her. Our goal is to give every baby the best start possible.”

To learn more about the Birthing Center at Meriter Hospital, visit www.meriter.com/birthingcenter.

Lydia is one of nearly 3,200 babies born at Meriter each year who are breastfed.