



## McLaren Oakland Partners with Surgical Affiliates in Forging a Path for Continued Excellence

Like other mid-sized hospitals across the U.S., McLaren Oakland, a 328-bed medical center in Pontiac, Michigan, was at a crossroads of how best to continue providing the highest level of emergency surgical coverage to patients. Serving the growing communities in greater Pontiac and Oakland County, McLaren Oakland, a Level II-verified trauma center and one of the country's largest osteopathic teaching hospitals, wanted to ensure continued excellence in providing emergency surgical services to patients that would also help to differentiate their facility from other area providers. "Although we had a loosely affiliated group of excellent, committed surgeons providing trauma coverage for several years, it became important that we establish a cohesive, in-house trauma program that was accessible to patients 24/7," says McLaren Oakland CMO and Vice President of Medical Affairs Steven Calkin, D.O.

Aware that Surgical Affiliates Management Group was providing acute care and trauma surgical services to McLaren Northern Michigan, one of 14 hospitals within the McLaren Health Care network, Dr. Calkin and McLaren Oakland President and CEO Margaret Dimond,

Ph.D., began discussions with Surgical Affiliates to learn how the company could provide an in-house team of fellowship-trained acute care and trauma surgeons supported by Surgical Affiliates' depth of expertise in emergency surgical care. "We began to envision what our trauma service could look like when handled by a professional team of surgeons dedicated to taking care of trauma and acute care surgical patients around the clock," Dr. Calkin recalls. Based on these pivotal discussions with Surgical Affiliates President and CEO Lynette Scherer, M.D., FACS, and her colleagues, McLaren Oakland began a partnership with Surgical Affiliates to provide an enhanced array of surgical services to patients entering the Emergency Department, including 24/7 acute care and trauma services as well as a fully staffed follow-up clinic to provide post-discharge care to patients.

**SURGICAL AFFILIATES**  
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Less than a year after implementation of Surgical Affiliates' innovative surgicalist model, McLaren Oakland has become one of a growing number of hospitals nationwide experiencing early and significant positive impacts from its partnership with Surgical Affiliates to provide in-house acute care and trauma surgical services – with benefits ranging from enhanced patient care and residency training to support for surgical specialties and a meaningful level of engagement in the leadership and life of the hospital.

### Early Signs of Commitment

As Dr. Calkin recalls, Surgical Affiliates' dedication and commitment to McLaren Oakland's success was evident even before the surgicalist program had been implemented. "Our tri-annual ACS verification survey occurred during the 90-day build-up period before Surgical Affiliates' program implementation," he says. "Dr. Scherer sent one of the trauma managers from another site to advocate on our behalf for the 'go forward' plan that would include Surgical Affiliates. Having that level of support during our survey was an early sign of Surgical Affiliates' commitment to us and was very meaningful."

Surgical Affiliates offers hospital partners such as McLaren Oakland unequalled knowledge and expertise in acquiring and maintaining ACS trauma center verification – with a corporate leadership team that has extensive experience as both American College of Surgeons and state-specific site reviewers. "Our medical director of trauma is integral in working with the trauma team that prepares the ACS data needed in peer review," observes Dr. Dimond, and Dr. Calkin adds that while McLaren Oakland hasn't undergone an ACS site review since beginning the partnership with Surgical Affiliates, he's confident they will be instrumental in helping to ensure that all required standards are met successfully.

### Eliminating Surgical Delays and Enhancing Patient Care

The most immediate and significant impact of McLaren Oakland's partnership with Surgical Affiliates – the only surgical hospitalist company with published, peer-reviewed results – is the presence of 24/7, on-site surgical expertise, allowing patients to receive surgeries more quickly. "We've eliminated delays we experienced prior to having an in-house surgical team because there is no longer a need to schedule necessary surgeries in alignment with our surgeons' private practice schedules," explains Dr. Calkin.

A growing body of evidence has shown that delays in emergency surgery are linked to a host of adverse outcomes for patients and providers, including increased rates of post-operative hospitalizations and increased costs for hospitals. Emergency patients at surgical-staffed hospitals receive focused, dedicated surgical care without delays, supporting better outcomes for patients and improved performance for hospitals. The highly experienced surgical team in place at McLaren Oakland is focused on delivering a systematic, personalized approach to care that is a hallmark of the Surgical Affiliates acute care surgical model. "Our surgical teams implement evidenced-based guidelines that ensure standardization of care, which result in the highest level of quality and excellence for the hospitals and patients we serve," remarks Dr. Scherer.

Dr. Calkin stresses that Surgical Affiliates' in-house surgical team has also elevated the expectations and satisfaction of the Emergency Department staff at McLaren Oakland. Before implementation of an in-house surgical team, private surgeons would often contact residents first to evaluate patients who may be in need of surgery, and the surgeons would be contacted by

the residents if surgery was indicated. “Having Surgical Affiliates in house allows the Emergency Department to work directly with the emergency surgical team, and there is a higher rate of satisfaction among the Emergency Department physicians toward the surgeons in the trauma service,” he adds, also emphasizing that satisfaction has increased among all care providers. “This is due primarily to the fact that daily access to our surgeons by the caregivers at the bedside has improved markedly because of our partnership with Surgical Affiliates.”

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– Dr. Steven Calkin  
CMO and Vice President of Medical Affairs  
McLaren Oakland

## **Establishing a Trauma Center Niche and Supporting Surgical Specialties**

Eliminating the need for surgical delays – and enhancing emergency surgical capabilities with a dedicated in-house team – has also allowed McLaren Oakland to become better positioned as a provider of leading-edge emergency surgical services within the communities it serves. Dr. Calkin explains, “Our trauma medical director interacts with our local EMS units and providers, continuously keeping our hospital connected while also educating and informing EMS units about our services and what we can provide at McLaren Oakland.”

Dr. Dimond adds that the hospital is hoping to increase its market share of trauma cases because of the presence of Surgical Affiliates surgeons.

The on-site presence of a dedicated team of board-certified acute care and trauma surgeons has also enabled McLaren Oakland to recruit and support high-end surgical specialties that serve patients with more complex needs, such as the hospital’s hepato-pancreato-biliary (HPB) surgical program that provides treatment for malignancies and diseases in the liver, pancreas, gallbladder, and bile duct. Surgical Affiliates surgeons partner with the hospital’s HPB surgeons in the operating room and assist with 24/7 management of this vulnerable patient population in the ICU and afterward, providing a foundation of surgical support that allows for the future growth of the HPB program and other surgical specialties at McLaren Oakland.

“Our private surgeons feel more comfortable knowing that we have 24/7 trauma surgery specialists in house. We will also be adding nocturnal mid-levels through the trauma service. This new extension of Surgical Affiliates adds a bridge for the private surgeons in off hours and promotes better patient safety for any post-surgical patient care, or potential complications,” Dr. Dimond explains.

## **A Dedicated Commitment to the Hospital’s Residency Program**

McLaren Oakland serves as an affiliated site for two residency programs, which are integral to the hospital’s well-established role as a teaching hospital. “Surgical Affiliates has been instrumental in facilitating the success of these programs by providing leadership of and support for residency education and training,” observes Dr. Calkin, explaining that a requirement for maintaining the residency programs is that a member of the surgical faculty serves as site director to coordinate the scholarly activity of the residents as well as manage their assignments in support of the surgeons. He recalls that almost immediately after establishing an in-house surgical team, one of the new Surgical Affiliates surgeons offered to serve as site director because of a high level of interest in residency training and a desire to remain involved in this arena. “She meets with the residents regularly, provides didactic training and has been quite accessible for the residents to ensure we’re meeting the needs of the program,” he adds.

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Dr. Scherer, an experienced fellowship-trained trauma surgeon, underscores the high value that Surgical Affiliates places on supporting residency education and training, “General surgery rotations are formative for residents, who will take these skills with them regardless of their specialty.” She adds that because Surgical Affiliates manages the work of the in-house surgical team, this ensures an appropriate balance between work and education for the residents. “The residents’ experience is enhanced in this type of environment because we’re relying on them to be a team member.”

## Providing Leadership and a Supportive Partnership

A unique cornerstone of Surgical Affiliates’ commitment to its hospital partners is the level of dedicated leadership surgical team members provide in all facets of the life of the hospital. The clearest evidence of this leadership at McLaren Oakland, according to Dr. Calkin, is that each of the acute care and trauma surgeons with a full-time commitment to the hospital also serves on a professional staff committee assignment or has assumed some type of leadership role. “They’ve demonstrated a very high level of engagement, which is part of the reason we entered into the partnership,” remarks Dr. Calkin, adding that the surgeons are participating in various areas of leadership including peer review and credentialing, reviewing mortality cases, and serving on the site inspection committee. “Our trauma medical director also serves with our medical executive committee and influences many of the decisions regarding service line performance and other important areas.”

McLaren Oakland has also found Surgical Affiliates – and the company’s CEO Dr. Scherer in particular – to be a supportive and accessible partner, willing to help the hospital solve problems in several areas. “Dr. Scherer and her team have visibly demonstrated their commitment to the success of McLaren Oakland, and she has taken a great deal of interest in trying to help us in ways that may not always be purely surgical in nature,” Dr. Calkin emphasizes. Dr. Scherer says forming a true partnership with the hospitals Surgical Affiliates serves is inherent in the company’s philosophy. “We’re willing to walk alongside the hospital to help solve any problem – even if it may be outside of our typical purview.” Dr. Calkin views the partnership as integral in facilitating the highest level of 24/7 emergency surgical coverage at McLaren Oakland. “In Surgical Affiliates, we have a partner

**McLaren Oakland**, part of the McLaren Health Care network headquartered in Flint, Michigan, is a 328-bed medical center that provides primary and specialty healthcare services to the greater Pontiac and Oakland County communities. Founded in 1953, McLaren Oakland has grown to a full-fledged medical community that includes more than 300 physicians and an inpatient hospital with a range of services including cardiovascular care, cancer services, women’s health, minimally invasive robotic surgery, orthopedic services, and a state-of-the-art Surgery Center. A Level II-verified trauma center and an accredited stroke center, McLaren Oakland also offers AOA-approved residency and fellowship programs in 12 specialties.

who will work with us in solving problems and driving improvements and efficiencies to ensure a continued standard of excellence in the care we provide to our patients.”

## About Surgical Affiliates

Surgical Affiliates is a national leader in surgical hospitalist care with published, peer-reviewed results in the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons* that demonstrate how they benefit hospitals, clinicians, and patients by providing quality 24/7 emergency surgical care. The team is comprised of a dynamic group of experienced, board-certified surgeons, healthcare providers, and medical directors. Programs offered provide strategic, structured surgical programs that encompass Acute Care, Trauma, Neurosurgery, and Orthopedics, and fuse with a hospital’s ICU, Emergency Department, and Medical Hospitalist Program to ensure quality of care and proper workflow throughout these departments.

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