

health matters

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Spring Tips: for Allergy Relief



With spring rains, there's more mold growth inside and outside your home! Flowers, trees, weeds, grasses, and local agriculture also begin to blossom. Here are some valuable tips to help you get through this Allergy Season...

See next page for Spring Tips.

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El Centro Regional Medical Center

An Agency of the City of El Centro



As administrative secretary in the Nursing Administration Department at El Centro Regional Medical Center, Monica Torres assists both the chief nursing officer and the assistant CNO and serves as a liaison with the department directors of Surgical Services, Critical Care, Medical/ Surgical, Women's Services, and Pediatrics.

Torres has held the position for four years, and prior to joining the hospital staff she worked as an administrative assistant for the Valley

Independent Bank.

She is a native of El Centro, a graduate of Central Union High School and is married to Ricardo Torres. The couple has two children, Joshua, 7, and Anthony, 3.

After a 20-year absence while living in Orange County, Frank Pimental is happy to be back home in Imperial Valley where he grew up and where he now is a licensed physical therapist in the Rehabilitation Department of El Centro Regional Medical Center.

A Valley native and a graduate of Brawley Union High School, Pimental earned his physical therapist license from Cal State, Long Beach. He has been back in the Valley for the last five years and joined the staff at the ECRMC Rehabilitation Department three years ago. He is trained in all forms of physical therapy but specializes in wound care.

"We are enjoying being back in the Valley," he said, "and I don't miss the traffic and the smog at all." Pimental is married and he and his wife, Luz, have a two year old son, Josue.



As the receptionist in the Medical Records Department of El Centro Regional Medical Center, Becky Hurtado says she "does a little bit of everything." She also is a file tech and a correspondence clerk.

She has been on the staff for a year, and her supervisor, Margaret Gomez, senior director of Medical Records and Compliance Officer, describes her as "pleasant, encouraging, accountable and friendly and one who goes out of her way to make sure nothing or no one is forgotten."

Becky is married to David Hurtado and the couple has three children.



Bambi Magno, a native of the Philippine Islands, has been a clinical laboratory scientist in the El Centro Regional Medical Center laboratory since immigrating to this country two years ago.

She graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Medical Technology from Velez College in Cebu, Philippines, and now is the holder of a California clinical laboratory science license. She learned to speak English while still in the Philippines.

"She is versatile in the lab and is one of the best blood bank clinicians we have," said Anna Brinkerhoff, lab director.



In Honor of NATIONAL HOSPITAL WEEK

Department heads and managers of El Centro Regional Medical Center have identified employees whose **Outstanding Performances** are worthy of **Special Recognition** as part of the celebration of **National Hospital Week!**

After two decades of being a nurse, Judy Hamilton, director of education for El Centro Regional Medical Center, has never lost her ardor for nursing because "I appreciate the people I work with and care about the people who come here for help."

Hamilton joined the hospital staff as a certified nursing assistant, and later earned her registered nursing credentials at Imperial Valley College. Prior to attending nursing school, she obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in education from Arizona State University at Tempe. She later obtained a Master of Arts in education from Redlands University.

She was named director of education in 1992, which places her in charge of both the community education programs the hospital offers and staff education. The latter includes planning and implementing hospital orientation, annual mandatory training for all hospital employees, and ongoing staff development. She also facilitates the vital continuing education required by licensed and credentialed staff members throughout the hospital. Mrs. Hamilton also chairs the Hospital Rewards and Recognition Committee whose members are responsible for annual awards celebrations, employee picnics, holiday celebrations and other hospital activities.

Hamilton is married to John Hamilton, a retired farmer, and the couple has four children, three of whom are married. They also have two grandchildren.



Andrea Hammond has been a registered nurse for 10 years and has worked all that time in the Emergency Department of El Centro Regional Medical Center. She currently is the day shift clinical manager of the department.

Hammond, who received her R.N. certification from Imperial Valley College, also is credentialed as a mobile intensive care nurse (MICN). This qualifies to staff the base station radio to help ambulance personnel stabilize patients on site before being transported to the emergency room.

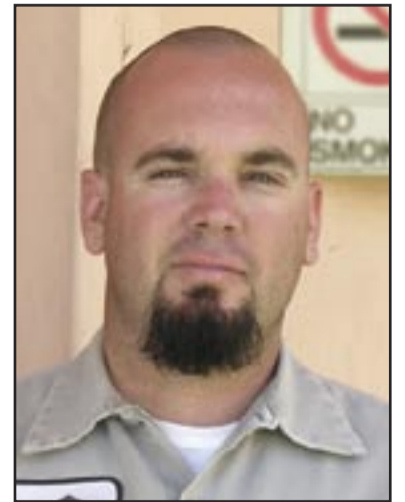
The ECRMC emergency room is the base station for the entire Imperial Valley.

Andrea is married to Jack Hammond and the couple has four children ranging from 9 to 19 years of age. She is a graduate of Central Union High School.

Darrell Clark was born in what was then the El Centro Community Hospital. His job today as a maintenance mechanic is to help keep the physical plant for what is now the El Centro Regional Medical Center in prime working order.

Clark has been on the maintenance staff for two years bringing to it the ability to repair and change air conditioning compressors and chillers without having to call in outside contractors, said his supervisor, Frank Biargiarelli, director of engineering.

Clark received part of his technical training while serving in the U.S. Army and later graduated from the North American Heating and Air Conditioning technical school in Redlands. He is married and the couple has two children.



Center of Healthcare Excellence

A Special Thanks From Our President



Debra L. Driskill is the President of the Board of Trustees at ECRMC.

Dear ECRMC Staff,

Congratulations on a successful JACHO survey, where we received the "gold seal" of accreditation. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank each and every one of you for your tireless commitment to our organization. It's through your dedication that El Centro Regional Medical Center continually provides quality healthcare for our community.

We have just completed our annual strategic planning process and have identified key opportunities for technological advancement and service excellence, which will advance our mission to provide healthcare excellence for the Imperial Valley. During this next year I look forward to working together as we complete our goals. The success of our hospital, and the compassionate care ECRMC provides the Imperial Valley 365 days a year is a true reflection of your hard work, dedication to healing, and spirit of community. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Debra L. Driskill
ECRMC Board of Trustees, President

May is National Allergy Awareness Month

The Return of the Allergy Attack

A young bride returned prematurely from a disastrous honeymoon, her face beet red and pock-marked with an itchy rash, her whimpering complaint, "I'm allergic to my husband."

There followed a battery of skin and respiratory tests before the offending antigens were isolated and treated to permit the couple to settle into a happy marital relationship. Allergic reactions, seldom that dramatic, normally at the least present a challenge to the comfort and ease of daily living for the sufferer.

Dr. Nemer Dabage-Forzoli, an El Centro internist and chief of staff at El Centro Regional Medical Center, said an estimated one fifth of the Western Hemisphere population suffers from some form of allergy. He defines allergy as an "abnormal reaction by the immune system to substances that normally are not harmful."

"The immune system," he explains, "protects the body from foreign substances—known as antigens—by producing antibodies and other chemicals to fight them off. A person develops an allergic reaction when the immune system fails to discriminate between the good and the bad."

Most allergic reactions are no more serious than a bothersome itch or a sneeze, but there is a condition known as anaphylactic shock, the most dangerous of allergic reactions, that can be life threatening. This condition usually begins within minutes after exposure to the allergic trigger, and the most common of these are bee stings, certain foods such as shell fish and nuts and injections of certain drugs.

Allergy is a medical catch-all term, like Lupus, because it comes in so many distinct forms, but they are typically grouped in general categories according to the allergens that cause them or the parts of the body affected.

These groupings are:

- **Skin Allergies** – These include both eczema and hives.
- **Respiratory Allergies** – About 20 million Americans experience the itchy eyes, nasal congestion, coughing and sneezing that are the hallmarks of hay fever. Hay fever, known colloquially by many here as desert fever, is caused by pollens from some plants and grasses, molds carried by dusty desert winds, animal dander and microscopic dust mites from upholstery and carpets.



Dr. Nemer Dabage-Forzoli is an El Centro internist and Chief of Staff at El Centro Regional Medical Center.



Dr. Prabhdeep Singh is Chief of the Medical-Surgical Department at El Centro Regional Medical Center.

- **Asthma** – Asthma has many causes, but the chief ones are environmental and Imperial County has the dubious distinction of having three times the normal asthma rate among school age children. El Centro Regional Medical Center has been in the forefront of efforts to bring relief to young asthma sufferers in the Valley through three grant-financed programs that attack both environmental triggers and case-by-case management of the disease.

- **Food Allergies** – an estimated 70 percent of the population with food allergies are under 30 and most of these are under the age of six. Perhaps 90 percent of food allergies are caused by proteins in milk, egg whites, peanuts, and wheat or soybeans.

- **Drug Allergies** – The most common among these is allergic reactions to drugs in the penicillin family.

- **Insect Sting Allergies** – Some studies show people with other allergies are more susceptible for insect sting

allergies which affect about 15 per cent of the population. Venom in the stings of bees, wasps, hornets, yellow jackets and fire ants is a common allergen.

Dr. Prabhdeep Singh, chief of the Medical-Surgical Department in the hospital, also has some advice for allergy sufferers as to when to consult a doctor.

"Violent stomach cramps, vomiting, bloating or diarrhea could point to a serious food allergy or food poisoning," he said. "Swallowing of breathing difficulties may be indicative of an asthma episode or a heart attack. Get emergency medical treatment." He also advised getting emergency treatment in event of skin welts accompanied by intense flushing and itching and a rapid heartbeat, all of which might indicate the onset of anaphylactic shock.

An important distinction, Dr. Singh added, is recognizing the difference between allergies and the common cold. "A cold normally will last three to seven days, but if your symptoms last longer than that you may have allergies."

Spring Tips: for Allergy Relief

With spring rains, there's more mold growth inside and outside your home!

Flowers, trees, weeds, grasses, and local agriculture also begin to blossom.

Here are some valuable tips to help you get through this Allergy Season...

1. Keep pollen under control!

- Wash bedding every week in hot water.
- Wash your hair and shower before going to bed, since pollen can accumulate in hair.

2. Clean every surface!

- Wear a mask and gloves when cleaning, vacuuming, or painting to limit dust and chemical exposure.
- Vacuum twice a week.

3. Wash rugs!

- Limit throw rugs to reduce dust and mold.
- If you do have rugs, make sure they are washable.

4. Keep indoor air clean!

- Change filters in air conditioning units and vents frequently this time of year.



AUXILIARY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Applications are available at the Front Lobby
Or, call 760.339.7163 for more information.

Ideal for Men & Women of all ages who enjoy giving back to the community!

DISCLAIMER This El Centro Regional Medical Center ("ECRMC") newsletter is for the sole purpose of providing readers with reference information as a means of introducing them to ECRMC and to the services provided by its physicians, health care providers, and affiliated clinics. The Information provided is not intended to replace obtaining medical evaluations and health care advice from qualified health care providers. Reference to specific products, processes, businesses, facilities, or services does not constitute or imply recommendation or endorsement by ECRMC. Physicians are not employees of ECRMC.

Staff Writer Robert V. Liggett

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