



## Clinical Research

### Improving the Health of Local Communities

Research ignites innovation, and when research is pursued hot spots for new ideas, new opportunities, and new ways of thinking blossom. In no scientific field does this hold more true than with clinical research.

In 2006, Eastern Maine Medical Center established the Clinical Research Center, a program fully devoted to supporting hospital staff in all phases of research, from testing new drugs, to changing the way patients are cared for once they enter the hospital. Led by director Barbara Sorondo, MD, MBA, the Clinical Research Center is an opportunity for a community hospital, long known for its excellence in patient care, to continue to develop best practices and discover possibilities to improve access to quality care at the local level.

According to Edward Harrow, MD, a physician at Penobscot Respiratory and supporter of the research center, such a center has numerous benefits for the community. "A clinical research center helps to enhance the quality of care that patients receive by fostering a spirit of inquiry, reinforces the continual reexamination of practices and plans, and it also serves as a recruitment tool to bring new and stimulating health professionals to our institution," he says.



*The EMMC Clinical Research team: (front row) Barbara Sorondo, MD; Teresa White, CCRP; (back row) Joseph Kareem, MS; Wendy Currier; Denise Michaud; Michael Rocque; (not pictured) Janet Bayleran, PhD*



*Michael Rocque and Wendy Currier review current research protocols.*

The EMMC Clinical Research Center is currently working on a variety of studies, all with a unique benefit to patients in our area, as well as across the nation. One study explored the safety of angioplasty, which involves the use of stent devices to treat carotid atherosclerosis (a disease of the arteries that can lead to stroke) in community settings. This research had a tremendous community-wide benefit by expanding the number of patients eligible for Medicare reimbursement for the procedure who may not have been eligible under the general Medicare guidelines.

Currently, the center is exploring the safety and effectiveness of new treatments for Diabetic Macular Edema, one of the leading causes of vision loss for diabetic patients. Patients taking part in the study will gain access to drugs that have the potential to resolve the disease. Because of this trial, our community will be offered treatment that would not otherwise be available.

Other studies supported by the EMMC Clinical Research Center benefit the community by looking at whether new programs started at the hospital improve patient care. This results in evidence-based procedures, which ensure that we all receive the best care available. That, after all, is the ultimate goal of clinical research.