

Dear Editor,

Gem County residents may have recently received a letter from West Idaho Orthopedics or seen a letter in the November 9th edition of the paper regarding the transition taking place in orthopedic care at Valor Health. A couple of years ago, Valor Health conducted a survey to determine the medical needs in the community. Through that study and through surveying the community, it was clear that Gem County needed a full-time orthopedic surgeon. Many community members expressed frustration about going to the emergency department at Valor Health, only to be transferred to a hospital over the hill because an orthopedic doctor wasn't available. Others were frustrated that they were unable to have their orthopedic surgeries performed locally.

Through the years, West Idaho Orthopedics has come up to see their patients in the hospital clinic, but they have never had a full-time presence in Emmett. They would generally come to Emmett on a very limited basis for a few hours a day, four to six days a month. Because the doctors came up infrequently, it was much easier for them to schedule surgeries and treatments at hospitals in Ada and Canyon Counties where they spent most of their time. In addition, it was more convenient for them to have our emergency patients transferred over the hill for surgery, rather than come up to Emmett to see a patient in our emergency room or to perform a necessary surgery.

After identifying the community need for full-time orthopedics in Gem County, we approached West Idaho Orthopedics with the opportunity to provide an orthopedic doctor to our community. We shared our commitment to get full-time orthopedics coverage for Gem County and that our first choice was to work with them. Recruiting our own orthopedic surgeon was our second option and one we would pursue only if they were unable to provide the necessary coverage for our patients. Unfortunately, despite giving the group two years to provide a full-time orthopedic surgeon to Emmett, which they had committed to do, late this spring they informed us that they would be unable to provide a surgeon for our community. As a result, we had to move forward in recruiting our own orthopedic surgeon, who will live and work in the community.

Starting in December, patients in our community will now have access to the full range of orthopedic surgery and care. Dr Jerod Hines will be performing shoulder, hip and knee replacements, as well as a full range of inpatient and outpatient orthopedic surgeries. He is fellowship trained in Sports Medicine as well, so he will perform a wide range of procedures such as ACL and meniscal repairs. As an Idaho native and experienced surgeon, he is thrilled to be coming back home to Idaho to serve our community. Emergency room patients will no longer have to be transferred over the hill for orthopedic consults or surgery. Our community members will now get the orthopedic care they need, close to home!

In order to make room for Dr Hines and his clinic, we had to end the lease we had in place with West Idaho Orthopedics. We recognize this may create some inconvenience for their patients who may have to travel over the hill to see them now. At the same time, all patients will be welcomed in our clinic if they would like to see a local orthopedic surgeon and we are confident that the community will benefit greatly from having an orthopedic surgeon who lives and works in the community. More information about Dr Hines and our Orthopedics and Sports Medicine Program will be sent out to the community in the coming days and you can learn more if you visit us at www.valorhealth.org

Wade Johnson

Valor Health

