



# CRAWFORD COUNTY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

## CCMH CRNAs PERFORM ADVANCED ANESTHESIA TECHNIQUES

(Denison, IA) -- The anesthesia team, surgeons and nurses at Crawford County Memorial Hospital (CCMH) are implementing new anesthesia techniques. Rik Hill and Reggie Elam, certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNAs) at CCMH, said one of the new procedures, called a thoracic epidural, was performed on a patient needing abdominal surgery. Hill noted at larger hospitals in bigger cities thoracic epidurals are not a totally uncommon procedure, but it's a new technique for surgery patients at CCMH.



Rik Hill, CRNA

"Thoracic epidurals are placed along the middle of the back, just a little below your shoulder blades," Hill explained. "A small catheter is inserted and resides just outside the covering of the spinal cord called the dura. The thoracic epidural technique bathes the nerves that come out of the dura with a local anesthetic. The local anesthetic then gives you a certain amount of paresthesia or numbness in an area," Hill said.

Elam also noted the thoracic epidural technique provides many positive aspects for the patient and medical staff.

"You can keep a thoracic epidural in for multiple days. For this particular patient, we maintained an area of numbness, which included the incision site, so she could get up and walk, sit in a chair, and the incision site didn't hurt. This does a couple of beneficial things for the patient and for the medical team. Once the epidural is placed we just have to maintain the site. The patient only took a minimum amount of pain medications, like ibuprofen. Decreasing the amount of narcotics has the side effect of allowing the patient to heal faster and be discharged from the hospital quicker."

He went on to say, "Special kudos to our nurses on the floor for adapting to something they'd never seen before at CCMH."

Elam possesses a doctorate in nurse anesthesia and Hill is pursuing his doctorate in nurse anesthesia as well.

"A thoracic epidural is just one of the cool things we can do in surgery at CCMH," Hill commented. "As we start doing more of these surgical cases - more complex cases - the anesthesia department will be able to keep up with the requirements."

Elam further commented, "Our standard of care fits the correct anesthesia technique to the surgery being performed. We can use epidurals, infraclavicular blocks which we administer using ultrasound, tap blocks for cesarean sections, and very specific local anesthesia for very specific needs. We also work very diligently to provide pain control after surgery to speed the healing process."

Hill said the use of Exparel, a medication used for pain control following joint replacement surgery, is just one example.

"With concerns about opioid abuse, we think Exparel is a better alternative. In layman's terms, Exparel is genetically engineered sheep fat combined with a local anesthetic. It is put directly into the joint area and dissolves naturally over a 72-hour period. Our experience shows that's 72 hours with no pain for the patient and greatly improves the recovery time for joint replacement surgery."



Reggie Elam, CRNA