

UNINSURED PATIENT RECEIVES KNEE REPLACEMENT THANKS TO SUTTER HEALTH'S 'GIFT OF SURGERY'

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Leticia Sanchez is only 52 years old, but she suffered with painful, disabling arthritis in her right knee for six years and didn't receive permanent relief from injections and medications. She suffered through her job at a local thrift store and couldn't walk more than a block at a time. Complicating matters, Leticia also didn't have health insurance.

"This surgery is very important to me because it will allow me to continue working," the Rancho Cordova resident said. "I have to stand all day and it gets very painful."

A PATHWAY FOR A PAIN FREE LIFE

In May 2018, Leticia received an answer to her prayers through Sutter Health's "Gift of Surgery" program. She received a total knee replacement donated by Sutter Surgery Centers, orthopedic surgeon Michael W. Leathers, M.D., and anesthesiologist Jaime Dickerson, M.D., at the Sutter Alhambra Surgery Center in Sacramento.

Leticia receives primary care through WellSpace Health community clinics, but her advanced condition required more specialized care. She was referred to the Sacramento Sierra Valley Medical Society's SPIRIT program, and Dr. Leathers, a volunteer physician with SPIRIT, diagnosed that Leticia would need a total knee replacement.

"This surgery is going to change her life for the better," said SPIRIT Program Manager Janice Emerson, "and that's the best part of our job."



Sutter Health orthopedic surgeon Michael W. Leathers, M.D., meets with patient Leticia Sanchez prior to her total knee replacement. With her is her sister, Azucena Sanchez.

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**Janice Emerson,
SPIRIT Program Manager**

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Continued

The surgery was done on an outpatient basis – in the past, total knee replacements required a few days in the hospital – and Leticia was home by the evening. Sutter Care at Home is providing several weeks of home health care and physical therapy so Leticia can get back to full strength again, but without the knee pain.

In addition to the donations from the doctors and Sutter Health, Dennis Harris with Halyard Health donated the pain pump that allows patients to have total joint replacements on an outpatient basis.

“This pump enables us to do total knee replacements on an outpatient basis,” said Dr. Dickerson. “It provides the continuous nerve blocks for three days at home, reducing the need for narcotics.”



Leticia Sanchez, right, thanks SPIRIT program manager Janice Emerson for helping her receive Sutter's "Gift of Surgery."

GOING FORWARD

This is the first time Sutter Surgery Center provided a total knee replacement as part of the program, as well as home health care for the recuperation period. Since 2011, Sutter Surgery Centers have provided 114 donated surgeries to uninsured and under-insured Sacramento-area residents.

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