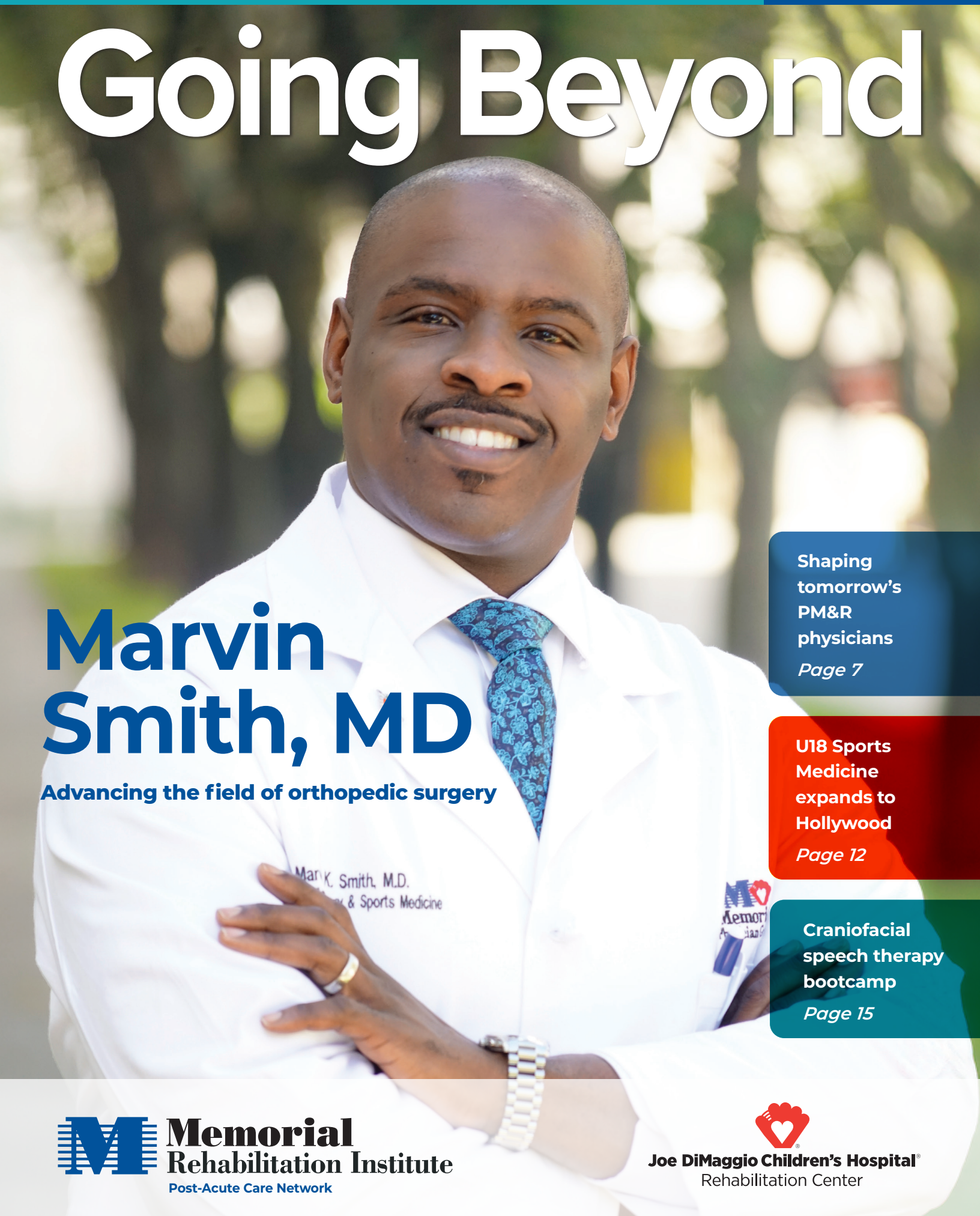
Going Beyond



Marvin Smith, MD

Advancing the field of orthopedic surgery

Memorial Rehabilitation Institute
Post-Acute Care Network

Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital®
Rehabilitation Center

Memorial Sports Medicine Journal Club & Lecture Series

Moving You Forward

Memorial
Orthopaedic Surgery and Sports Medicine Center

The **Memorial Sports Medicine Journal Club & Lecture Series** is a journal club and educational meeting with a structured format curated to appeal to a variety of Sports Medicine disciplines, including:

- **Orthopaedic Surgery**
- **Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation**
- **Physical Therapy**
- **Athletic Training**
- **Occupational Therapy**

Presenters will discuss a different topic at each meeting with articles presented from each of the following disciplines:

- **Orthopaedic Surgery**
- **Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation**
- **Physical Therapy**

Articles will be forwarded in advance to participants who have registered for the meeting. Overview presentations will rotate through disciplines and will be conducted via WebEx. Participants are encouraged to download the WebEx application to their mobile device or connect using a web browser on their computer.

The primary audience for this journal club is orthopaedic surgeons, PM&R physicians and residents, primary care sports medicine physicians, physical therapists, athletic trainers, and other sports medicine professionals from the community.

To RSVP, or for more information, please email **MemorialSportsMedicine@mhs.net**.

This course is approved for 1 CEU hour for Memorial RNs and APRNs.

1 CME has been approved for physicians and 1 BOC CEU for athletic trainers.

Physical Therapists: CEU credit hours pending.

Scan code to register

TOPICS & DATES

July 8, 2025 • 7-8 pm

Athletic Injuries and Outcome Measurement Tools

Presenter: **Stephen Henry, DO**, *Sports Medicine*
Co-presenters: **Cody Barbari, DO,** *PM&R and* **Davide Ioffredi, PT, DPT, ATC**
Location: **WebEx**

August 12, 2025 • 7-8 pm

Cardiovascular Disease in Sports Medicine – Sideline Preparedness

Presenter: **Geden Franck, MD,** *Sports Medicine*
Co-presenters: **Emma Adkins, MD**, *PM&R and* **Michaela Seckarova, ATC**
Location: **Webex**

September 9, 2025 • 7-8 pm

Sports Med Modalities: Red Light Therapy, Percussion, Compression, Cupping, Shockwave, etc.

Presenter: **Giorgio Negron, MD,** *Sports Medicine*
Co-presenter: **John Paul Mauriello, DO**, *PM&R and* **Danel Abreu, PT, DPT**
Location: **WebEx**

October 14, 2025 • 7-8 pm

AI in Sports Medicine

Presenter: **Marvin K. Smith, MD**, *Sports Medicine*
Co-presenters: **Tahreem Hashmi, DO**, *PM&R and* **Jacqueline Colon, PT, DPT**
Location: **WebEx**

November 11, 2025 • 7-8 pm

Running Gait Analysis and Shoe Selection

Presenter: **Alex Nguyen, MD,** *Sports Medicine*
Co-presenters: **Christiania Edstrom, MD**, *PM&R and* **Sharon Gregory, PT, DPT**
Location: **Webex**

December 9, 2025 • 7-8 pm

Combat Sport Injuries

Presenter: **Giorgio Negron, MD,** *Sports Medicine*
Co-presenters: **Eduardo Acevedo, MD**, *PM&R and* **Khalil Shraim, PT, DPT**
Location: **Webex**

Memorial Rehabilitation Institute

Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital®
Rehabilitation Center

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Certifications

The Joint Commission accredited

CARF-accredited (Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities)

Florida Department of Health Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program

Revolutionizing

By restoring function and mobility, Dr. Smith helps patients move forward.

Orthopedic Care

Marvin K. Smith, MD, chief of the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Memorial Regional Hospital and Memorial Regional Hospital South, has seen firsthand the rapid advancements in orthopedics and sports medicine. With more than 12 years of experience, including fellowship training in sports medicine, Dr. Smith is highly attuned to the challenges and innovations shaping the future of orthopedic care.

Over the past decade, he has observed several groundbreaking developments in orthopedic surgery. One of the most exciting advancements is the rise of orthobiologics – the use of biological tissue to enhance treatment outcomes.

"We are making incredible strides in the field of orthobiologics," Dr. Smith explains.

For example, Dr. Smith regularly performs matrix autologous chondrocyte implantation (MACI), an advanced technique used to restore damaged cartilage in joints, particularly in cases where the cartilage has been injured due to a sports injury or trauma.

The process involves harvesting healthy cartilage from the patient, growing the cells in a lab, and then implanting the cells within the injured area. This method enables Dr. Smith and his team to restore cartilage to its original curvature, providing a significant improvement over traditional joint restoration techniques. It also gives patients the opportunity to maintain or even enhance joint function using their own cells.

In addition to cartilage restoration, Dr. Smith and the Memorial Sports Medicine team of physicians also use platelet-rich plasma (PRP) therapy, another promising treatment that has shown success in promoting healing in surgeries like rotator cuff repairs. "I recently performed a revision rotator cuff repair and used PRP to enhance the healing process," he explains.

By harnessing the body's own natural healing mechanisms, PRP therapy offers a safe and effective way to enhance recovery, reduce pain, and improve long-term outcomes after surgeries, as well as being a key component of nonoperative treatment. It can be a powerful tool to help patients heal more efficiently and return to an active lifestyle.

The Growing Need for Joint Replacements

Dr. Smith has observed a growing trend in recent years: an increasing number of younger patients are requiring joint replacements. As more people participate in high-intensity activities – such as contact sports, fitness boot camps, and cycling — individuals' joints are wearing out at an earlier age.

"We're seeing patients in their 40s needing joint replacements, particularly those who were very active in their 20s and 30s, including professional athletes," he says.

In South Florida, where outdoor activities are a year-round tradition, patients who sustained injuries in their youth often are requiring joint replacement later in life. "Even after successful surgeries and rehabilitation, joints that were previously injured are at a much higher risk of developing arthritis," Dr. Smith explains.

Dr. Smith and his team also treat patients who have sickle cell disease, many of whom require joint replacements at a younger age. To address these varied needs, Dr. Smith incorporates sports medicine principles into total joint replacement procedures. This holistic approach helps patients recover more quickly and return to an active lifestyle even sooner.

Precision in Revision Surgery

As part of his role, Dr. Smith frequently treats patients requiring revision surgeries to correct issues from previous operations, which can be particularly challenging.

"Surgery and recovery are complex, with many factors at play," he explains. "When a patient comes to me after a previous surgery, I need to understand why it didn't succeed. Simply repeating the same procedure with more precision isn't always the answer."

For example, Dr. Smith recently treated a patient who required a complex revision of an ACL surgery. The patient had re-torn the ligament, lost all remaining meniscus (the crescent-shaped piece of cartilage found in the knee joint) and had previously untreated knee alignment issues.

To ensure a more precise surgery, Dr. Smith used advanced imaging and computer-assisted navigation, which uses real-time imaging and 3D modeling to guide the bone cuts for realignment more accurately. This helps improve the biomechanics of the knee and optimize the overall outcome.

"This new technology offers much greater precision, and early research suggests it may lead to better recovery outcomes," he says.

Innovative Therapies in Physical Rehabilitation

In addition to surgical advancements, Dr. Smith emphasizes the critical role of physical therapy in patient recovery.

Memorial's Physical Therapy Department offers several leading-edge therapies that are not wcommonly available in most healthcare centers. Such therapies include:

AlterG® Anti-Gravity Treadmill™ that allows patients to walk or run with reduced body weight, relieving stress on their joints during recovery.

Dry needling: A technique targeting soft tissue and tendon issues to improve muscle function and reduce pain.

Blood flow restriction (BFR) training: This method helps patients who are unable to fully bear or lift weight after surgery by simulating the effects of heavy lifting while protecting the injured area.

"By integrating these specialized therapies with our sports medicine approach, we've developed a continuum of care that accelerates recovery without compromising safety," Dr. Smith adds.

Dr. Smith with patient Kellie, who incurred a torn ACL, meniscal damage and a tibial fracture from a cycling accident. After a minimally invasive knee surgery and intensive rehab, the Memorial team got her back on her feet.

"If you take great care of patients and are passionate about helping them get back to what they're passionate about, success becomes inevitable."

A Personal Journey to Medicine

Dr. Smith's path to becoming an orthopedic surgeon was shaped by his love for sports and science. "I feel very fortunate because what I'm doing now is exactly what I've always dreamed of," he says.

As a successful Division I college football player, Dr. Smith's principal postgraduate aspirations were not to play in the National Football League. Instead, he endeavored to become a physician utilizing his experiences in sports, which have provided him with a unique perspective as an orthopedic surgeon.

Dr. Smith (center) tends to a football player on the sidelines.

"I wanted to play college football at the Division I level and be on ESPN so my family and friends could watch me," Dr. Smith admits. "After college, I always knew I wanted to go to medical school, pursue orthopedic surgery, and specialize in sports medicine."

After working out for multiple NFL teams, Dr. Smith declined offers to play for lower-tier leagues and refocused on his original goal – becoming a physician.

"I gave it my best effort primarily to avoid wondering 'what if,' but when the NFL opportunity dissolved, I fully dedicated myself to pursuing medicine," he says.

Today, Dr. Smith is dedicated to helping athletes at all levels recover from injuries and stay active.

Supporting Athletes on the Road to the NFL

Dr. Smith's connection to professional sports goes beyond his time as a player. He's also committed to helping athletes prepare for the NFL draft and recover from injuries. "I'm passionate about all sports, with football being my primary focus, since I played it at the collegiate level," he says.

Each year, after the college football season ends, Dr. Smith works closely with South Florida's pro performance gyms and elite athletic training professionals to assist athletes preparing for the NFL draft.

"We bridge the gap between their university team physician and their future NFL team physician once they're drafted," he explains.

During this critical period, many college players sustain injuries while training or participating in senior bowl events. Dr. Smith steps in to provide the necessary care.

"I take pride in preparing them for what to expect and helping them get ready for the questions and examinations they will face in front of the NFL personnel," he adds.

A Collaborative Approach to Care

One of the key factors that sets Memorial apart is its emphasis on collaboration across disciplines. Dr. Smith serves as the program director for the Memorial Sports Medicine and Journal Club Lecture Series, where orthopedic surgeons, primary care sports medicine physicians, physical therapists, and athletic trainers come together to share knowledge and discuss research.

"We work closely with our physical therapy and occupational therapy departments, athletic training staff, and other specialists to stay up-to-date with the latest evidence-based practices," he says.

This interdisciplinary approach ensures that every aspect of a patient's recovery is addressed, from surgery to rehabilitation.

"Surgery is a critical piece of the care we provide here. However, our office staff, physical therapists, and surgical services team all play crucial roles in the patient experience," Dr. Smith says..

As Dr. Smith continues to lead advancements in sports medicine and orthopedic surgery, his passion for helping others remains unwavering. Whether preparing athletes for the NFL or performing life-changing joint replacement surgery, his goal is always the same: to help patients return to doing what they love and ensure everyone has the opportunity to live an active, pain-free life.

"If you take great care of patients and are passionate about helping them get back to what they're passionate about," he adds, "success becomes inevitable."

“Our graduates are making a real impact in the field of PM&R, and that’s what makes the program so fulfilling.”

— Dr. Cohen

The healthcare landscape is constantly evolving, and nowhere is this more evident than in the field of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R). PM&R, also known as physiatry, is a medical specialty focused on diagnosing, treating, and managing patients with physical impairments or disabilities. These conditions often result from injury, illness, or chronic conditions affecting the nervous, musculoskeletal, or cardiovascular systems. The specialty emphasizes improving function, quality of life, and independence rather than simply managing pain.

Shaping Tomorrow's PM&R Physicians

At Memorial Healthcare System, the PM&R Residency Program is designed to train future physicians who possess not only extensive medical knowledge but also a strong commitment to patient care. The primary aim of the program is to cultivate well-rounded, empathetic doctors capable of addressing diverse patient needs, including those recovering from stroke, spinal cord injury, brain injury, orthopedic conditions, and more.

With a foundation in hands-on learning, personalized mentoring, and a focus on holistic well-being, the program prepares residents to care for future patients with both skill and compassion. The program ensures early exposure to diverse patient populations, providing residents with opportunities to work with patients in both inpatient and outpatient settings.

"Now in its eighth year, our program is designed to provide residents with a broad foundation across multiple subspecialties," explains Jeremy Jacobs, DO, Program Director for the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Residency Program. "At Memorial, we have many adult and pediatric programs that offer a range of specialties for residents to explore."

From the very beginning of their training, residents encounter complex cases such as traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, strokes, orthopedic trauma, and transplants. By their second year, they are already diving into these more intensive specialties.

"Our goal is early exposure to these cases, so residents are ready to care for a wide range of patients by the time they reach their PGY (postgraduate year) three," Dr. Jacobs notes. "As they progress through the program, they become more specialized, rotating through areas like musculoskeletal medicine, interventional pain management, and sports medicine. By the end of their third year, residents have seen just about everything, providing them with the foundation they need to excel."

The diverse exposure allows residents to explore various aspects of PM&R, helping them discover their own interests while maintaining a well-rounded skill set.

"Within our specialty, we have top-notch doctors in each subspecialty, ensuring residents

receive well-rounded training. Our goal is to make sure they are well-prepared across all areas," says Jackson Cohen, MD, Chief of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Medical Director of Interventional Pain Medicine. "We tell residents that even if their primary interest is spinal cord injury, they should still give 100% effort during their interventional pain and spine rotation. They never know how the knowledge gained in that rotation might apply to other areas of their practice."

A key component of the PM&R Residency Program is the extensive hands-on training residents receive. The program's one-on-one model means that residents are often performing procedures like lumbar epidural steroid injections and sacroiliac joint injections under the supervision of attending physicians. This contrasts with many other programs where fellows typically perform most of the procedures, leaving residents with fewer opportunities for hands-on practice.

Dr. Cohen highlights the importance of this approach, especially in the area of interventional pain management. "We have a well-established track record of residents being accepted into top interventional pain fellowships after completing our program," he says.

This practical, early exposure ensures that residents are confident and capable when they begin their careers. By the end of their training, residents are proficient not only in performing interventional procedures but also in diagnosing and treating a wide variety of conditions. Residents' ability to repeat procedures and build their confidence is one of the unique advantages of the program.

"Our residents get more hands-on experience earlier than they would in larger programs."

— Dr. Jacobs

"During their first year, they're introduced to difficult cases, and by their third year, they become much more proficient in them," Dr. Jacobs explains. "This repetitive exposure to procedures allows them to hone their skills over time."

Multidisciplinary Experience

Another hallmark of Memorial's PM&R Residency Program is its collaborative approach, which promotes cross-departmental learning. The program has strong relationships with various departments across the healthcare system, including orthopedics, sports medicine, and neurosciences. This integration allows residents to learn how to care for patients across multiple specialties, gaining exposure to a wide range of conditions and treatment approaches. "We tell residents to approach every rotation with the same level of dedication," Dr. Cohen says. "Even if they're primarily interested in one subspecialty, they should give 100% effort in every area. The knowledge they gain may apply to their future practice in ways they don't expect."

This cross-departmental exposure ensures that residents receive a truly well-rounded education, preparing them to treat a diverse patient population with varying needs. What's more, Memorial's commitment to continuous learning means that residents are encouraged to attend conferences, stay updated on the latest technologies, and engage in scholarly work.

PM&R residents discussing a patient's case with a physician.

"We reward residents for publishing scholarly work and provide financial stipends to attend conferences," Dr. Jacobs notes. "This not only helps them stay on the cutting edge but also allows them to bring back fresh ideas to the program."

A Small, Close-Knit Program

One of the unique aspects of Memorial's PM&R Residency Program is its relatively small size, with typically only four residents per year. While this may seem below the national average for residency programs, this structure offers distinct advantages. The small program size fosters a family-like atmosphere, promoting close relationships and a supportive environment for learning and growth.

"You definitely get to know your co-residents more," says Dr. Jacobs. "You gain trust, respect, and appreciation for each other. When someone is struggling, whether it's personal, professional, or emotional, we can intervene more easily and help them through it."

Dr. Jacobs emphasizes that struggles are a natural part of the residency journey, and the program's small size allows faculty members to provide more personalized support.

Dr. Cohen echoes this sentiment, highlighting the value of personalized attention. "We have one-on-one teaching between attendings and residents. This means that our residents get more hands-on experience earlier than they would in larger programs," he explains. "In fact, many residents perform procedures early on that would typically be reserved for fellows in larger programs." This hands-on experience is especially evident in areas like interventional spine procedures, he adds, where residents have the opportunity to gain proficiency and confidence under the supervision of attending physicians.

A Focus on Work-Life Balance

In the past, medical residencies were known for their grueling hours and high levels of burnout. The PM&R Residency Program, however, takes a more balanced approach. At Memorial, wellness is prioritized for both patients and residents.

"We focus on quality of life for our residents. It's not about working them until they can't keep their eyes open anymore," Dr. Cohen explains. "We've shifted away from the traditional model where residents work endless hours. We want our residents to enjoy their work and their life outside of it."

This emphasis on wellness is reflected in the program's policies, which ensure that residents work no more than 80 hours per week, adhering to strict guidelines set by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). As a result, the program fosters an environment where residents are encouraged to take time to recover and recharge.

"We want our residents to show up with good energy and a positive attitude, and we recognize that rest is essential for that," Dr. Jacobs says.

Additionally, Memorial provides residents with wellness days, allowing them to take a break from the demands of their training when needed. This holistic approach to resident well-being is integral to the program's philosophy, which emphasizes that doctors who take care of themselves are better able to care for their patients.

What began as a community-based residency program in 2016 has grown into one of the top programs in the region, with a reputation that extends nationally. Over the years, the program has become increasingly more competitive. "The quality of the doctors we're producing speaks for itself," says Dr. Cohen. "Our graduates are making a real impact in the field of PM&R, and that's what makes the program so fulfilling."

The program's success is also reflected in the achievements of its residents, many of whom have gone on to excel in their careers. "We've graduated three classes so far, and they're all doing great things," Dr. Jacobs adds. "Watching our residents grow, struggle, and then succeed is the most rewarding part of my job."

Enhanced LSVT BIG® Program Offers Improved Care for **Patients who have Parkinson's**

Memorial Rehabilitation Institute Outpatient Center at Memorial Hospital West has expanded its LSVT BIG program to include occupational therapists (OTs). LSVT BIG is an intensive, one-on-one treatment designed to help individuals with Parkinson's disease (PD) and other neurological conditions improve their walking, balance, and ability to perform daily activities, such as writing, dressing, and getting up from low chairs. It can also assist with job-related tasks.

This expansion builds on the success of previous enhancements, including the addition of physical therapy to the LSVT BIG program and speech therapy to the LSVT LOUD® program. With the addition of three LSVT BIG-certified occupational therapists—Valeria Garcia Mallon, MS, OTR/L; Abigail Ramdhansingh, MS, OTR/L; and Yanelis Salazar, MS, OTR/L—Memorial has strengthened its collaborative approach to therapy for those with Parkinson's disease and other neurological conditions.

"Memorial Hospital West Outpatient Rehabilitation is dedicated to providing comprehensive care that goes beyond traditional therapy."

Understanding LSVT BIG

The LSVT BIG program is an evidence-based, exercise-focused treatment designed to improve movement quality for individuals with Parkinson's disease. Based on the principles of LSVT LOUD (Lee Silverman Voice Treatment), the program focuses on increasing the size, effort, and intensity of movements. This approach promotes neuroplasticity, helping to address sensorimotor impairments, internal cueing deficits, and sensory processing issues. The goal is to help patients who have Parkinson's overcome challenges, enhance motor function, and incorporate meaningful activities into daily life, ultimately improving independence and participation in the community.

Occupational therapy plays a critical role in the rehabilitation process for individuals with Parkinson's disease. OTs focus on enhancing the ability to perform daily activities, such as dressing, cooking, and grooming, which may be impacted by the disease. Through customized interventions, OTs support individuals in regaining functional independence and improving their quality of life.

The addition of occupational therapists to the LSVT BIG program demonstrates a commitment to a multidisciplinary approach to Parkinson's care. By combining physical and occupational therapy,

Memorial can effectively address those challenges faced by individuals with Parkinson's disease. This integrated approach aims to improve functional outcomes and enhance overall quality of life for patients.

With occupational therapists now part of the team, patients will benefit from even more comprehensive rehabilitation. The collaboration between physical and occupational therapy within the LSVT BIG program will not only improve patients' motor function but also promote greater independence in daily life.

Empowering Patients for a Better Future

"Memorial Hospital West Outpatient Rehabilitation Institute is dedicated to providing comprehensive care that goes beyond traditional therapy. The expansion of the LSVT BIG program reflects an ongoing effort to offer innovative, effective rehabilitation services that enhance both the physical and emotional well-being of individuals with Parkinson's disease," says Valeria Garcia-Mallon, Occupational Therapist II at MHW.

In addition to the expanded LSVT BIG program, the Institute offers combined BIG for Life and LOUD for Life classes for individuals who have completed the LSVT BIG or LSVT LOUD programs. "The goal is to deliver patient-centered care that empowers individuals with Parkinson's disease to live their lives to the fullest," says Alison Vega, Physical Therapist III, at MHW.

Key Benefits of Occupational Therapy

- Functional independence: Occupational therapy can significantly improve a patient's ability to perform activities of daily living (ADLs). Research shows that individuals with Parkinson's disease who engage in occupational therapy have better outcomes in areas like self-care and home management.
- Cognitive and motor integration: OTs often combine cognitive exercises with physical movement to improve motor performance. Studies show that integrating cognitive tasks with physical practice can enhance motor skills in individuals with Parkinson's.
- Adaptation of activities and environments: OTs evaluate home and work environments, recommending modifications to improve safety and reduce the risk of falls, a common concern for those with Parkinson's disease.
- Engagement in meaningful activities: OTs encourage participation in activities that are personally meaningful, helping reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, which are also common in individuals with Parkinson's disease.

U18 SPORTS MEDICINE EXPANDS TO HOLLYWOOD

The U18 Sports Medicine Program at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital Orthopedic Center continues to expand its reach across Broward and Palm Beach Counties, offering top-tier care for young athletes. This summer, a new state-of-the-art 10,000-square-foot facility was unveiled by Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital to house both orthopedic physicians and U18 physical therapists, providing a comprehensive care model under one roof.

The addition of U18 physical therapy services comes in response to the growing demand for therapy services for young athletes. The new space features specialty equipment and a large open gym designed to offer individualized, one-on-one care. Highly experienced orthopedic-trained, sports-certified physical therapists work closely with physicians, families, and local school athletic trainers to provide a collaborative approach to rehabilitation.

"This holistic team effort aims to optimize outcomes and ensure young athletes can safely return to their sports, ready to perform at their best," says Michele Lederhandler, OTR.

A young female athlete in a physical therapy session.

With a focus on personalized care and cutting-edge facilities, our U18 Sports Medicine Program is proud to support the next generation of athletes.

Hope Through Peer Support

At Memorial Rehabilitation Institute, one of the most valuable experiences for rehab patients is meeting with a peer mentor—an individual who has faced similar challenges, including some who have been patients at Memorial themselves.

Leslie Pierre-Nelson, a peer mentor, aims to give patients hope. "I want them to know that even though it may be difficult, they can still have a beautiful life despite their injuries," she explains.

Leslie, who has used a wheelchair since a spinal cord injury over 20 years ago, offers support based on her personal experiences and resources available in South Florida. She is also a member of the Memorial Sharks wheelchair basketball team and serves as a voice of support, particularly for women facing similar struggles.

Leslie Pierre-Nelson

"I want to be that voice of support for a person who is going through the same struggle and loss, especially as a woman," she adds.

As of early 2025, Memorial's peer mentor program includes mentors for individuals with spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, strokes, Guillain-Barré Syndrome, and limb loss. In 2024, peer mentors connected with 340 patients across multiple Memorial locations, not just those patients on the rehab floors.

Allyn Bernstein, a former Memorial South patient, now serves as a peer mentor. She is grateful to encourage stroke patients, including Manny Rocha, who became a peer mentor in 2024.

Manny credits Allyn's support during his stroke recovery in 2022 for inspiring him to join the peer mentor program, where patients become part of a larger supportive community.

"She gave me hope and motivation," Rocha says.

Pain Neuroscience Education Improves Patient Outcomes

Imagine if the outcome of a surgical procedure could be improved simply by using specific, scientifically proven words and stories to decrease pain and boost patient satisfaction. What if it were possible to alleviate pain non-invasively, through education and altering brain perceptions?

This is exactly what the physical and occupational therapists at Memorial Rehabilitation Institute Outpatient Center at Memorial Hospital Miramar are achieving with patients who require total knee replacement. This well-researched but underutilized intervention, known as Pain Neuroscience Education (PNE), can be applied both before and after surgery.

PNE uses a series of carefully crafted stories to help patients understand the biology of pain, together with simple cognitive exercises designed to refine the brain's pain maps. These interventions significantly reduce the pain experienced by those patients facing or recovering from total knee replacement..

The stories are simple and clear, comparing the nervous system to a sensitive alarm and showing how thoughts and beliefs can affect its sensitivity. The role of nerve sensors is also discussed—showing how these sensors relay information to the brain, and how an imbalance can lead to pain. By learning that pain is not a direct reflection of tissue damage but rather a warning system created by the brain, patients can reduce their perception of pain. They also gain increased confidence in managing their recovery.

"With this new understanding, patients begin to recognize why their knee hurts more when it's cold, why other joints may begin to ache, or why pain can persist after surgery—even when the knee is 'fixed,'" says Heather Flores, DPT. "This knowledge makes pain less threatening, resulting in reduced pain signals from the brain over time. Patients also report feeling more confident in their surgery, post-operative rehab, and their ability to manage their pain."

Most patients undergo total knee replacement surgery due to chronic knee osteoarthritis. Studies have shown that one in five of these patients experience central sensitization—a condition where the central nervous system becomes overly sensitive, heightening pain during the peri-operative period. This, combined with poor coping mechanisms and fear surrounding the surgery, can predict long-term pain and dissatisfaction. Those who respond well to PNE typically include individuals with central sensitization, chronic pain, a strong tendency to catastrophize, or fear avoidance behaviors, all of which are common among patients who have undergone total knee replacement.

In one recent study, 12 total knee replacement patients were given PNE, and researchers measured pressure pain sensitivity before and after the intervention. In three areas—the surgical knee, the opposite knee, and the dominant hand—pain sensitivity decreased. After PNE, the amount of pressure that could be tolerated on the surgical knee increased by 20 percent.

Another study found that six months after surgery, the PNE group reported similar pain levels to the control group but significantly higher satisfaction with their surgical experience and post-operative care. They also had a more positive view of their personal experiences, highlighting PNE's key role in improving patient outcomes.

"Pain neuroscience education is a simple, effective, and non-invasive intervention for patients preparing for or recovering from total knee replacement," adds Flores. "When used alongside traditional physical therapy and surgical interventions,PNE supports a comprehensive biopsychosocial approach to care, addressing not just the physical, but also the psychological aspects of recovery."

Special Needs Fair Connects Families with Resources

Every September, Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital sponsors the Special Needs Fair. This free community event is designed for children with special needs and their families, offering a valuable opportunity to discover essential resources on educational advocacy, therapeutic programs, recreational activities, and support networks.

Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, along with various Memorial facilities, partners with 30 local agencies and healthcare clinics to provide informative, fun-filled information booths showcasing the various services available to families.

The team provides information and offers discussions on topics such as augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, specialty services for the pediatric population within Memorial's outpatient rehabilitation centers, and how to access these services.

"The Special Needs Fair is more than just an event—it's a place where families connect with resources, find support, and experience a sense of belonging in a community that truly understands their needs," says Vanessa Gallardo-Figueroa, a speech language pathologist at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital.

The event also serves as a networking opportunity for pediatric therapists to connect with local agencies that provide valuable resources for families.

For parents of children with special needs, the fair is a place of support, assistance, and acceptance – and an event they look forward to every year.

From left to right: Alison Needle, OTR; Kirstin Yanke, SLP; Rossana Rojas, DPT; Vanessa Gallardo-Figueroa, SLP; and Amy Zuluaga, DPT

Craniofacial Speech Therapy Bootcamp: Empowering Professionals and Families

Local speech-language pathologists (SLPs), graduate students, parents, and children gathered at Memorial Regional Hospital's Convention Center for an enriching two-day event focused on craniofacial speech therapy. Hosted by Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital Cleft and Craniofacial Center, the Speech Therapy Bootcamp offered a unique opportunity for professionals to enhance their skills, while also allowing parents to socialize and children to participate in play-based and individualized speech therapy sessions.

Day One: Comprehensive Learning for Professionals

On Friday, Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital's Craniofacial Team, including speech-language pathologists Kristen DeLuca (CL III), Yitzella Camargo (CL III), Raquel Garcia, and Diana Acevedo, led an in-depth educational session focusing on the various aspects of assessment and treatment of velopharyngeal dysfunction (VPD). The full-day, comprehensive course addressed the challenges many professional speech-language pathologists face when treating patients with suspected VPD.

The session covered a range of key topics, including the anatomy and physiology of the velopharyngeal structures, genetic factors, and effective assessment and treatment strategies. Attendees, which included professional speech-language pathologists and graduate students, were also given access to a digital drive folder containing valuable resources such as research studies, assessment tools, and specific treatment strategies. Additionally, an "SLP tool kit" was provided, offering basic materials for use during the therapy sessions with children at the bootcamp.

"The goal of this session was to equip speech language pathologists with the knowledge and confidence to assess, refer, and deliver effective care for patients with VPD. By doing so, the event aimed to improve speech outcomes and patient care within the community," notes Kristen DeLuca, MS CCC-SLP.

Chelsea Sommer, PhD, CCC-SLP (left) with a camper.

Day Two: Hands-On Therapy for Families and Children

On Saturday, the event shifted focus to the families and patients of the Cleft and Craniofacial Center, who arrived for their individualized therapy sessions. Each camper was paired with a speech language pathologist for a full day of assessment and treatment. The speech language pathologist began by evaluating the camper's articulation (the movement of mouth and articulators like teeth, tongue, and lips to produce speech sounds) and resonance (the balance of airflow between the oral and nasal cavities during speech).

Following the assessment, the SLPs provided individualized speech therapy treatment, applying the skills, strategies, and knowledge they gained during the lecture. Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital Craniofacial Team SLPs visited each camper-SLP pair to further support therapy techniques and offer hands-on guidance. At the end of the session, families were given a home exercise program tailored to their child's needs, along with encouragement to continue working on their goals at home.

Research Collaboration: Measuring the Impact

This marked the fourth year of providing this training to the community, and to further enhance its impact, Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital partnered with the Communicative Sciences Department at FIU to launch a research collaboration. The goal is to assess the effectiveness of the training for the speech language pathologists. The research used a multimethod design to collect both qualitative and quantitative data to assess the impact of the educational seminar.

Miami Sharks and Memorial Sports Medicine: A Game-Changing Partnership for Rugby's Future

In the competitive world of professional sports, athlete health and performance are critical components of success. This past year, the Miami Sharks rugby team made significant strides in both areas through their collaboration with Memorial's Sports Medicine team. This partnership has not only resulted in a successful first season for the Sharks but has also set a precedent for how sports medicine can enhance athletic performance and safety in rugby, a sport that is gaining traction in the United States.

(Left) Dr. Geden Franck and Dr. Marvin Smith at a February 2025 Miami Sharks game. (Right) The Miami Sharks in action.

From the outset, the collaboration aimed to provide comprehensive sports medicine coverage during games, ensuring that players received immediate and high-quality care. The physicians involved brought a wealth of expertise, specializing in various procedures that addressed the unique needs of rugby players.

Notably, the team successfully performed surgical repairs for injuries to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), pectoralis, and biceps muscles—an essential service considering the physical demands of the sport. These interventions not only facilitated swift recoveries but also helped players return to the field with confidence.

In addition to surgical interventions, Memorial's Sports Medicine team implemented a robust program for managing soft tissue injuries. Utilizing advanced diagnostic musculoskeletal (MSK) ultrasound, they were able to accurately assess injuries and tailor treatment plans accordingly. This high-tech approach allowed for precise injections and guided physical therapy, which significantly improved recovery timelines and outcomes for players. The focus on individualized care helped ensure that each athlete received the attention they needed to thrive both on and off the field.

The partnership has also played a pivotal role in raising awareness of rugby in the United States. As the sport continues to grow in popularity, the Sharks and Memorial Sports Medicine have committed to promoting its benefits and attracting new fans.

By showcasing the rigorous training and medical support that professional players receive, they're helping to foster a deeper appreciation for the sport, its athletes and the importance of high quality medical care.

As the Sharks prepare to enter their second season, the momentum generated by this collaboration is palpable. Memorial has recently hired a new head athletic trainer, Michaela Seckarova, who brings a wealth of knowledge, experience, and dedication to the team. This addition will bolster the already strong medical support system in place, ensuring that players have access to the best possible care and recovery strategies.

The upcoming season promises to build on the successes of the first, with both the Sharks and Memorial Sports Medicine eager to refine their partnership further. The focus will remain on injury prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation, with an emphasis on keeping players healthy throughout the grueling rugby season.

By continuing to leverage the expertise of Memorial's Sports Medicine team, the Sharks are setting themselves up for not just a competitive edge, but also a sustainable model for athlete care. As both organizations continue to work hand in hand, the future looks bright for the Sharks and their dedicated medical team.

Memorial Rehabilitation By the Numbers

January-December, 2024

Adults

Total Admissions

1,881

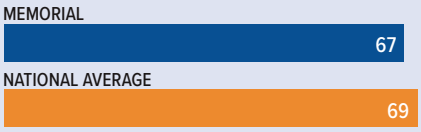
Average Length of Stay (days)

13.1

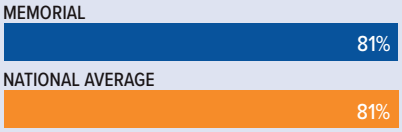
Average Daily Hours of Therapy per Week (5 days)

3.2

Average Patient Age



Discharge to Home

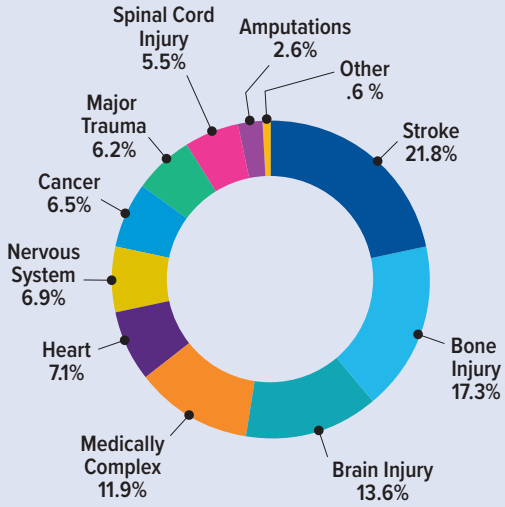


Patient Satisfaction (%)

95.1

Press Ganey, Inc.

Admission Diagnoses



Pediatrics

Total Admissions

71

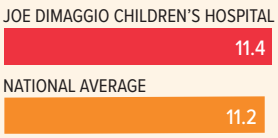
Average Daily Hours of Therapy per Week (7 days)

2.55

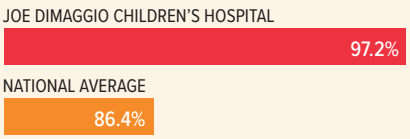
Patient Satisfaction (%)

95.7

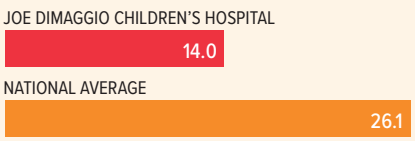
Average Patient Age



Discharge to Community

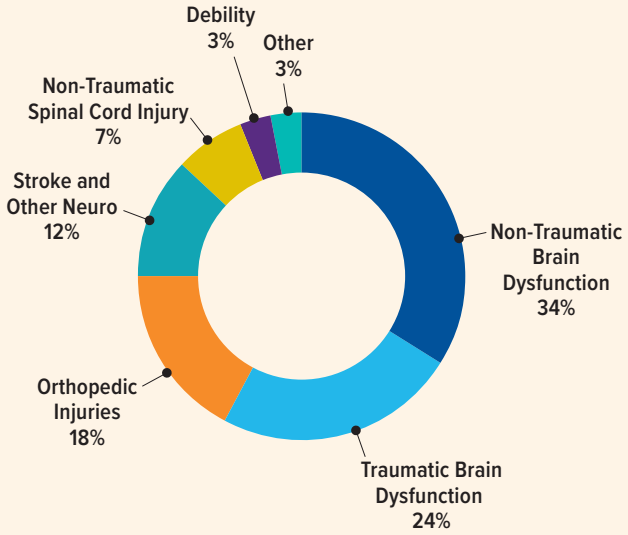


Length of Stay (days)



Improvement Rating Increase per Day

Top Diagnoses



Memorial Rehabilitation Institute

3600 Washington Street
Hollywood, FL 33021

Inpatient and Outpatient Rehabilitation Locations

INPATIENT REHABILITATION

Memorial Regional Hospital South
3600 Washington Street
Hollywood, FL 33021
Main Hospital: 954-966-4500
Rehab Admissions: 954-518-5725

Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital
1005 Joe DiMaggio Drive
Hollywood, FL 33021
954-518-5725

OUTPATIENT REHABILITATION

Memorial Regional Hospital South
Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital
300 Hollywood Way
Hollywood, FL 33021
954-265-5453

Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, [U18] Sports Medicine
3440 Hollywood Boulevard, Suite 140
Hollywood FL 33021
954-276-9276

Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, Coral Springs Specialty Center
5830 Coral Ridge Drive, Suite 120
Coral Springs, FL 33076
954-575-8962

Joe DiMaggio Children's Health Specialty Center
3377 South State Road 7
Wellington, FL 33449
561-341-7005

Memorial Hospital West
703 North Flamingo Road
Pembroke Pines, FL 33028
954-844-7180

Memorial Hospital Miramar
1951 Southwest 172 Avenue, Suite 109
Miramar, FL 33029
954-538-4760

Memorial Orthopaedic Surgery and Sports Medicine Center
2122 West Cypress Creek Road
Suite 220
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309
954-276 9660

SKILLED NURSING

Memorial Manor
777 South Douglas Road
Pembroke Pines, FL 33025
954-276-6200