

senior review

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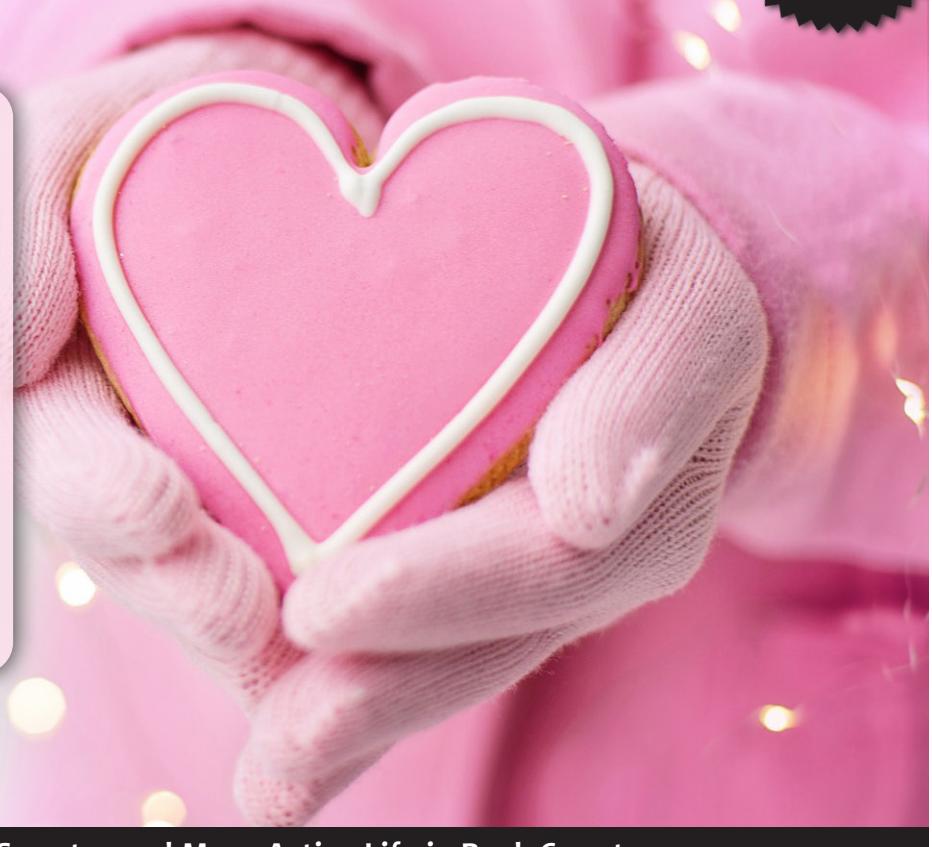
February 2026

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Happy Valentine's Day!

A Senior Magazine for Living a Healthier, Smarter and More Active Life in Rock County



Warm Hearts By Dave Olson, Realtor®, SRES™ RE/MAX EXCEL

Believe it or not, we've put wintery January behind us. The New Year is a full month under way with all that our tough Wisconsin winters have. February isn't exactly the "gateway to Spring" here in North Central Wisconsin, and the weather and cold can wear on us if we let it. Still, February does provide the beginning of longer daylight once again and that bright spot right in the middle of the month – Valentines Day!

Nothing warms up a chilly February day like sweet thoughts of the ones we love at Valentines Day. What a great time of the month to write notes or give gifts or valentines cards to our sweethearts! I'm super traditional and love "going big" to show my sweetie what she means to me each year at Valentines Day. Flowers, candy and all the traditional fixings are fine ways to express our affection, but I personally believe that handwritten heartfelt words mean the most and say it best. Write your sweetheart a simple and sweet love letter this Valentines Day. I promise you won't regret it.

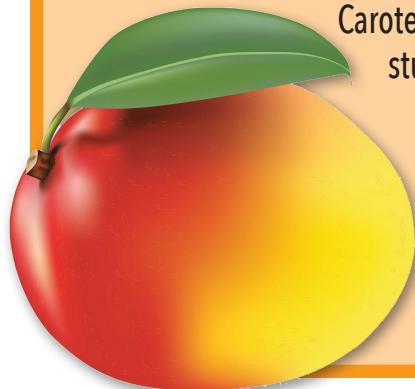
I know that not everyone still has their sweetie with them, and for each of you, I want you to know I understand how that feels. Remember though, that your circle of love extends far beyond life as a couple.



What is beautiful about our relationships is how they grow and extend to bigger and bigger circles as we get older. We have bigger families, many more friends, and a wider circle of people that we've been blessed to know. Especially for those of us with time to offer, Valentines Day is a great holiday just to reach out to anyone we care about and to tell them that! I still believe that everyone loves to get personal mail, or to be given a handwritten note.

I don't know about you, but nothing warms my heart like writing handwritten notes to the ones who mean a lot to me. Give it a whirl and see if you don't get filled with joy when you write each note. I know that I do for sure, and the best way to get love is to give it! We all love our kids, and of course those cute grandkids and our friends and family too. For many of us there are special care givers, our doctors and nurses and friendly staff we see often. There is nothing wrong with taking the time to tell someone you value them with a simple note. If you want to be warmed on the inside, take some time to write out how you feel about the ones near and dear to you at Valentines Day. It's not ONLY for romance, but a great time to share how you feel about anyone you value greatly. I promise if you spend time writing a few kind words to the ones you value most, you will be filled with joy and be very glad that you did.

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Carotenoids in orange fruits and vegetables live behind a sturdy cell wall so tough that we can only access a fraction of them. Slicing, dicing, chopping, even chewing will burst those rigid cell walls open. But pureeing frees up the most—up to 600 percent more carotenoids than just chewing. So puree apricots into a vinaigrette or blend a mango into your next smoothie.

Source: Eating Well Magazine

DID YOU KNOW?



If you are sitting for three hours or more at a time, you could be impairing circulation and damaging blood vessels - both which contribute to heart disease. One study shows that taking a five-minute break every hour for some light walking can prevent such harm from happening.

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On Friday, February 6th, wear red to help raise awareness of heart disease in women.

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Editor/Publisher: Arwen Rasmussen

Layout Design: Brigit Olson

Staff Writers: Becky Streeter, Katy Hacksworthy

3315 Nimitz Street, Eau Claire, WI 54701

P: 715-831-0325

E: seniorreviewnewspapers@gmail.com

The *Senior Review* distributes throughout the Rock County area every month.

Advertising: 715-831-0325

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Free Monthly Workshop Series for Families Raising Children with Special Needs

by the Beloit Public Library

R. Family Care Services (RFCs), in partnership with Beloit Public Library, is launching a free monthly workshop series designed to support local families—especially parents, guardians, and grandparents raising children with autism.

Launching January 10, the Strong Families, Strong Minds series will provide a welcoming space for caregivers to connect, share resources, and learn practical strategies to support their children and strengthen family wellbeing.

The one-hour support circle will be held every second Saturday of the month from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at Beloit Public Library and will be led by Raven Napoleon, Respite Coordinator at R. Family Care Services. Sessions will focus on timely, real-life topics including understanding behaviors, managing stress, building structure at home, and advocating within the school system.

The series is free and open to the public and aims to reduce caregiver isolation while strengthening access to resources, encouragement, and practical supports. No registration is required. Free snacks and onsite childcare will be provided.

Monthly sessions will include:

- **January 10** — New Year, New Strength – Setting family goals & positive mindset. Topic: Building Our Village
- **February 14** — Love in Every Form – Building patience and compassion. Topic: Beyond Labels
- **March 14** — Mindful Moments – Stress management & caregiver self-care. Topic: Mindfulness
- **April 11** — Light It Up Blue – Autism Awareness and community advocacy. Topic: Promoting understanding, acceptance, and inclusion
- **May 9** — Empowered to Advocate – Navigating IEPs & school supports. Topic: When the Helper Needs Help
- **June 13** — Summer of Structure – Balancing fun, routines, and behavior support. Topic: Routines, Structure, and Discipline
- **July 11** — Rest, Reset & Recharge – Prioritizing caregiver wellness. Topic: Showing Up in the Chaos
- **August 8** — Back to Balance – Smooth transitions into school routines. Topic: Establishing routines and consistency
- **September 12** — Voices That Matter – Strengthening family advocacy and confidence. Topic: Reset & Refocus
- **October 10** — Grace Under Pressure – Managing behaviors and emotional triggers. Topic: Establishing predictability, managing emotions, and building independence
- **November 14** — Thankful Hearts, Growing Minds – Reflecting on progress and gratitude. Topic: Family Matters
- **December 12** — Peace & Purpose – Ending the year with calm, joy, and connection. Topic: Reflections & Celebration

An online option will be available for anyone unable to attend a session in-person. Contact Tracy Dumas for a link: tracy@rfamilycareservices.com.



About R. Family Care Services

R. Family Care Services is a Beloit-based provider that supports individuals with disabilities and their families through respite and non-medical in-home/community support. Their mission is to help individuals with disabilities live their best lives through compassionate support, meaningful opportunities, and access to community resources, with a vision focused on inclusive communities and culturally competent care.

About Beloit Public Library

Located at 605 Eclipse Boulevard, Beloit Public Library serves the Beloit community by providing an outstanding array of services for people residing in the City of Beloit and outlying areas. In a community known for its diversity, BPL strives to reach everyone with unique programming for all ages, a full range of library materials, and rapidly evolving computer technology and workforce development tools and resources. Beloit Public Library is open 9:30 a.m.-9:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday.



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Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA): What It Is, Who It Affects, What Happens, and Treatment/Prevention

Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA) is a rare neurological condition that gradually impairs a person's ability to use and understand language. It is a type of frontotemporal dementia that specifically affects the parts of the brain responsible for speech and language, typically in the left hemisphere. Unlike stroke-related aphasia, which occurs suddenly, PPA develops slowly and worsens over time.

Who It Affects

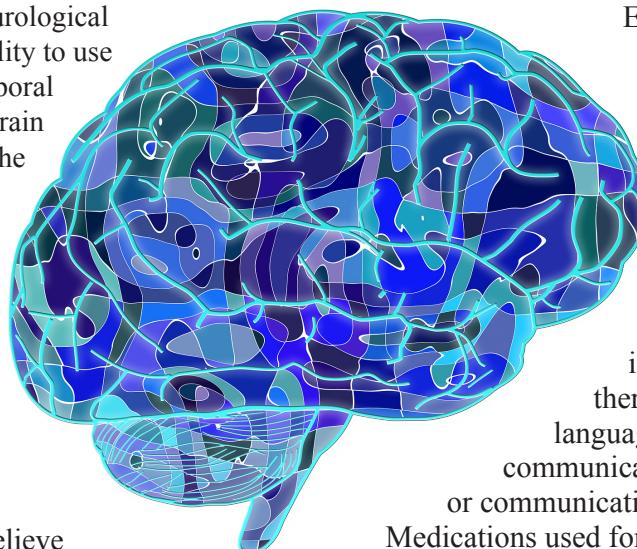
PPA most often affects people between the ages of 50 and 70, but it can occur earlier or later. It tends to strike during a person's most active and productive years, making the diagnosis particularly challenging for families.

While the exact cause is unknown, researchers believe PPA is related to abnormal buildup of certain proteins in the brain, such as tau or TDP-43. There is no clear link to stroke or injury, and while most cases are sporadic, some may have a genetic component. People with a history of learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, may be at slightly higher risk.

What Happens

PPA starts with subtle changes in language abilities. A person may begin to struggle with finding the right word, forming sentences, or understanding conversations. As the disease progresses, these difficulties become more severe. There are three main types of PPA:

- Nonfluent/Agrammatic Variant:** Speech becomes halting and difficult. Grammar may be incorrect, and understanding complex sentences becomes hard.
- Semantic Variant:** People lose the meaning of words, especially nouns. They may not recognize objects or understand what words mean.
- Logopenic Variant:** This form is marked by frequent pauses while speaking and difficulty repeating phrases or sentences, though grammar and word meaning may remain intact early on.



Eventually, many people with PPA lose the ability to speak, write, or understand language altogether. In advanced stages, other cognitive abilities—such as memory and judgment—may also decline, making daily life increasingly difficult.

Treatment Options

There is currently no cure for PPA. However, treatments can help manage symptoms and improve quality of life. Speech and language therapy is the primary form of treatment. A speech-language pathologist can help patients learn alternative communication strategies, such as writing, using gestures, or communication devices.

Medications used for Alzheimer's or other dementias are sometimes prescribed, although their effectiveness in PPA is limited. Counseling and support groups can also help patients and families cope with emotional and social challenges.

Can PPA Be Prevented?

There is no known way to prevent PPA. However, maintaining overall brain health may reduce the risk of neurological conditions. Doctors recommend the "GROWTH" approach:

- Get enough quality sleep
- Reduce chronic stress
- Open up socially and stay connected
- Work out regularly (physical activity)
- Try new things and keep learning
- Healthy diet, rich in brain-supporting nutrients

While these steps don't guarantee prevention, they support overall cognitive health and resilience.

In summary, PPA is a serious and life-changing condition that gradually robs individuals of their ability to communicate. Though there is no cure, early diagnosis, therapy, and lifestyle adjustments can help people live better with the disease.

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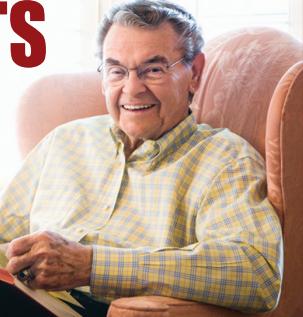
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Step Inside for Better Balance and Strength This Winter

By Mercyhealth

One of the best things you can do for your health this winter may be simpler than you think: take a walk through the store.

It may sound surprising, but walking in a big box store can improve your balance, strength and endurance. A brisk walk may even prevent future falls. That's especially important during the winter months, when cold and icy conditions often keep people inside. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, falls are the leading cause of injury for adults ages 65 and older in the United States.

While walking in a large store or mall is ideal, Mercyhealth physical therapists say you can see benefits by starting a walking routine at home. Set a timer for ten minutes and walk without breaks or sitting down. Gradually increase your time until you can walk for 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

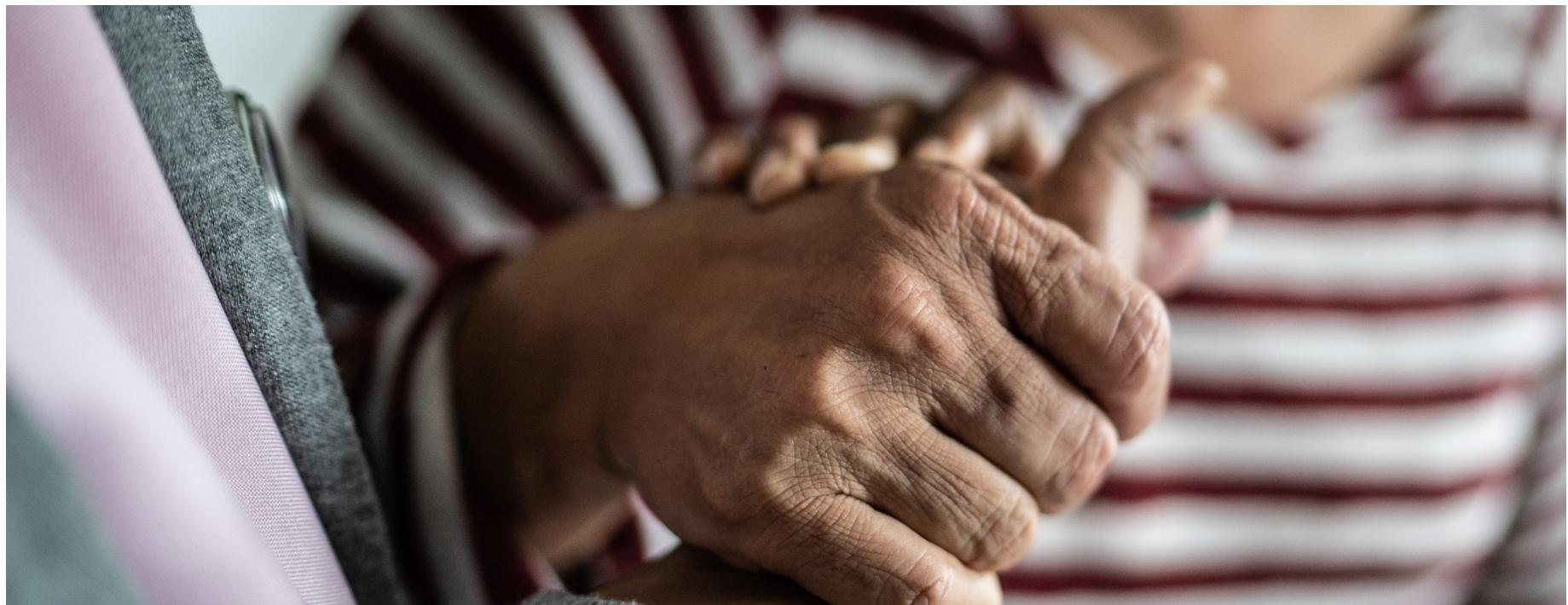


Regular walking can lower heart rate, help modulate blood sugar and reduce shortness of breath. Physical activity also improves the cardiovascular efficiency, helping the heart pump blood more effectively throughout the body.

If you start to notice balance problems or weakness, it may also be time to talk to your doctor, who can refer you to a physical therapist. Medicare often covers physical therapy consultations when a doctor provides documentation of medical necessity.

A physical therapist can evaluate whether you're experiencing normal signs of aging and recommend ways to stay as active and independent as possible. Addressing concerns early can help prevent serious injuries, like a broken hip or shoulder, and reduce complications related to inactivity during recovery.

To learn more about physical therapy or to make an appointment with a primary care provider, visit mercyhealthsystem.org or call (888) 39-MERCY.



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Practical Reminder for Gratitude and Self-Care

By Zanda Hilger, LPC, Founder, Family Caregiver & Program Manager for Family Caregivers Online

As a family caregiver, your days are often filled with an endless to-do list focused entirely on the needs of someone else. In the midst of appointments, medications, and daily tasks, it is all too easy to put your own well-being at the very bottom of the priority list. However, sustaining your ability to care for a loved one starts with caring for yourself.

This blog offers simple, practical reminders to help you weave gratitude and self-care into your daily routine. These small shifts can help combat burnout and help you find moments of peace amidst the challenges.

Small acts of gratitude

Take time to read, do something just for yourself, or give yourself a practical gift that supports your caregiving. Have you thought about that journal you've wanted, a facial, a movie, or another little treat that would lift your spirits?

Expressing gratitude in words

- Make a gratitude list: On paper, your phone, tablet, or computer, start with "I am grateful for..." and list everything that comes to mind.
- Write yourself a note: Thank yourself for the ways you make life better for your loved one. Highlight your patience, kindness, or a special memory you shared.
- Use affirmations: Try phrases like, "I make a difference" or "I am helping my loved one live better every day."
- Keep a journal: Even five minutes a day, capturing what went well, can shift your focus to the positive.

Giving yourself the gift of time and support

- Take time off: Arrange for someone to cover your caregiving duties so you can rest, recharge, or do something purely for yourself—without guilt.
- Ask for help with tasks: Delegate household chores, errands, or meals to lighten your load.
- Plan a fun outing: Spend a few hours or a day doing something you enjoy, such as a walk in nature, a movie, or a visit to a favorite spot.



Tangible self-gifts

- Use gift cards: Treat yourself with that restaurant or coffee shop card you've been saving.
- Create a self-care kit: Fill a basket with candles, a cozy blanket, your favorite snacks, or anything that helps you relax.
- Treat yourself to a meal or special treat: Enjoy a meal you didn't cook or a favorite indulgence.
- Pamper yourself: A massage, spa service, or other self-care activity can ease stress and remind you that you deserve care too.

Conclusion Self-care is not a luxury; it is a necessity for your physical and mental health. By practicing small acts of gratitude and allowing yourself moments of rest, you replenish the emotional energy needed to support your loved one. We hope these reminders inspire you to take a moment for yourself today—because you truly deserve it. What would you add to this list?

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Preserve Your Legacy Through a Memory Journal

By Hougum Law Firm

As we get older, it is natural to reflect on the moments that shaped our lives. The lessons learned, the traditions carried forward, and the stories that connect generations. Unfortunately, many of those memories are never shared. Once someone is gone, those stories often go with them.



A memory journal is a simple yet powerful way to change that.

Unlike legal documents that focus on assets and instructions, a memory journal captures the heart behind your life and your decisions. It preserves your voice, your values, and your perspective for the people you love most.

You do not need to be a writer to begin. Some of the most meaningful entries start with simple questions:

- What was your first job?
- Which family traditions matter most to you?
- What life advice would you want your grandchildren to remember?
- These reflections help future generations understand not just what you left behind, but who you were. Your humor. Your wisdom. Your personality.

Many people also choose to include stories behind family heirlooms, favorite holidays, or moments that changed the direction of their lives. You can write a little at a time, or even record audio or video messages if that feels more natural. What matters most is starting.

A memory journal is not about perfection. It is about connection.

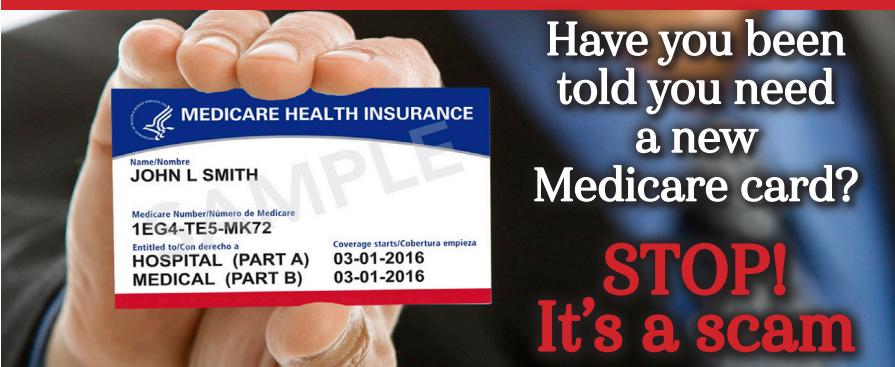
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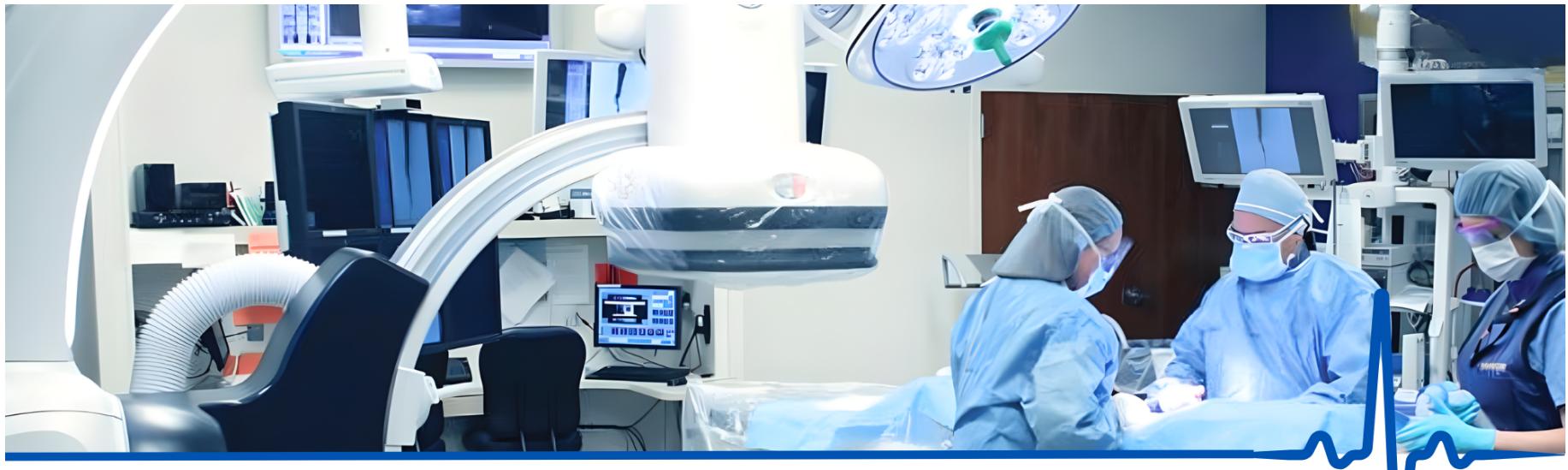
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