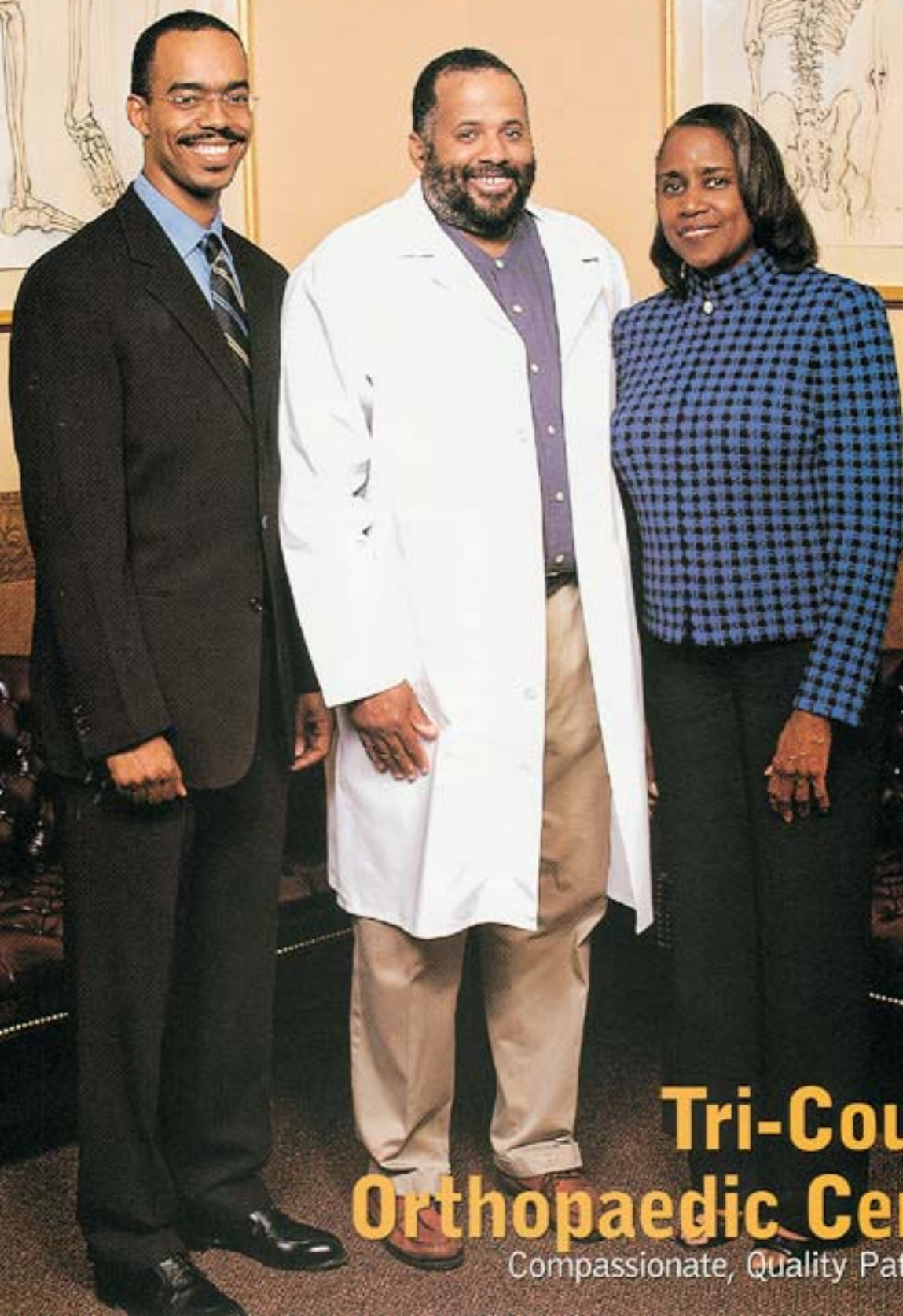


# M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS



**Tri-County  
Orthopaedic Center**  
Compassionate, Quality Patient Care

# Tri-County Orthopaedic Center

## Compassionate, Quality Patient Care

By Margaret M. Sloane, RN, BSN

When physicians join together to practice medicine, it helps to have complementary specialties, a good working relationship, and a similar, well-defined patient care philosophy. Tri-County Orthopaedic Center, a three-physician practice located in Leesburg, is not only committed to quality and compassionate care, but its partners are long-time colleagues and friends who are delighted to be working together and dedicated to providing comprehensive state-of-the-art orthopaedic care.

In the summer of 2001, orthopaedic surgeon J. Mandume Kerina, M.D., founded Tri-County Orthopaedic Center in Leesburg, a rapidly growing community with excellent demographics for an orthopaedic specialty practice. Board certified, Dr. Kerina did his fellowship in total joint replacement surgery, adult reconstructive surgery and adult spine surgery. When asked what drew him into the specialty, he says the immediate results of orthopaedic surgery excite him. "My patients' quality of life is typically improved dramatically after treatment, which is very rewarding for me personally." He says.

### PRACTICE GROWTH

Originally, the office was a solo practice, but has since expanded to include two more orthopaedists and a growing range of services to treat injuries and diseases of the musculoskeletal system that affect bones, ligaments and joints. "We see on average 175 patients a day between our surgeons, imaging center and physical therapy facility. We provide treatment for orthopaedic trauma, arthritis and sports injuries using the most up-to-date medical and surgical therapies. We have a strong sports medicine component in the practice, and we offer our patients as wide a spectrum of therapies as possible," Dr. Kerina says.

Currently, the practice consists of two offices, one in Leesburg and one in Lady Lake at The Villages. Early this year, the Leesburg office moved from an 800-square-foot to an 8,500-square-foot freestanding building to accommodate increasing patient volume and the newly recruited physicians. The new office has 10 exam rooms, two cast rooms, a large X-ray room and an extremity MRI machine, as well as an adjoining rehab facility. Physical

**Dr. Kerina, a fellowship-trained joint replacement surgeon, explains the benefits and function of an artificial knee.**





**Dr. Mitchell, an expert in upper extremity injuries and sports medicine, examines an injured shoulder.**

therapists are an important part of the integrated orthopaedic healthcare team and maintain a close working relationship with the orthopedists to return the patient to maximum function as soon as possible. “We meet regularly with everyone to discuss protocols and patient issues. From pre-op to peri-op to post-op, the patient isn’t being seen by a number of disconnected individuals,” comments Dr. Kerina. “We all work closely with each other to provide seamless patient care.”

Office manager Karen Fiedler agrees that having all these services under one roof results in more streamlined patient care. “Patients come into the office, see the physician, get an X-ray, and have a cast applied. Then, once out of the case, patients go across the hall for extensive physical therapy,” she notes. “It’s really a one-stop shopping experience for our orthopaedic patients.”

In order to maintain continuity and develop strong patient relationships, each physician has a nurse or assistant who travels between the Leesburg office and The Villages office with the physician. “Patients get to know the nurse/assistant very well, and it helps to have established rapport when communicating with the office,” Fiedler remarks. Testimony to the value placed on long-term relationships between patients and staff is the low employee turnover rate. Four of the nine employees, including Fiedler, have been with the practice since it opened, and four have worked at Tri-County Orthopaedic Center over the last two years.

### **CLINICAL PRACTITIONER GROWTH**

When Isaac L. Mitchell, M.D., joined the practice in the summer of 2003, he brought with him expertise in arthroscopic surgery of the shoulder and knee, as well as fellowship training in sports

medicine. Dr. Mitchell also has extensive experience with advanced surgical techniques for upper and lower extremity fracture management. His patients typically have knee and shoulder issues ranging from ligament or meniscus tears, tendonitis, rotator cuff tears, to arthritis and complex fractures. He places high value on innovative techniques in minimally invasive surgery (MIS) that involves very small incisions and being able to get into areas within the body that have previously required opening up a patient for access. “The camera is a great tool and functions like a pair of binoculars, allowing you to see into the nooks and crannies of a joint,” Dr. Mitchell says. “MIS is less invasive and usually results in a quicker recovery.”

General orthopaedist Claudia L. Thomas, M.D., came to Tri-County Orthopaedic Center in February of this year and brought with her three decades of orthopaedic expertise, as well as the distinction of being the first African-American female orthopaedic surgeon in the United States. During her tenure at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, she mentored many surgeons, including Dr. Kerina and Dr. Mitchell. “Although it was difficult to leave the prestige of a university setting, it has been particularly attractive to join my colleagues in a practice that shares my culture, my values and my compassion for patients,” says Dr. Thomas, who is board certified in orthopaedic surgery and fellowship trained in trauma. “I know I made the right decision when I hear my patients say that we are the first physicians to take the time to really listen and give a thorough examination.” Dr. Thomas specializes in non-surgical orthopaedic medicine, fracture treatment and independent medical evaluations. Dr. Thomas remains a full-time faculty member with Johns Hopkins.



Dr. Thomas' 12-year experience as director of the Johns Hopkins Fracture Clinic helps to mend broken bones in rural Florida.

One of the critical components of a healthy practice is good extended relationships outside the practice with referring physicians. Medicine is about the art of practice, but Dr. Mitchell points out that medicine is a business as well. “Clearly, if no one sends patients to you, it doesn’t matter how good you are, you won’t have a viable practice,” he states. “It’s important to maintain good communications, be very responsive and have the office open to be able to get patients in quickly for a fast turnaround. If a referring doctor calls and you tell him you can’t see his patient for five months, that just isn’t going work.” Fostering strong working relationships makes for happy colleagues and happy patients, which ultimately leads to positive word-of-mouth advertising and practice growth.

### **FUTURE GROWTH OF THE PHYSICIAN FAMILY**

Not one to be happy with the status quo, Dr. Kerina plans to recruit three more physicians to broaden the practice specialty expertise. Plans are underway to build a larger office in the Lady Lake area to respond to a growing patient caseload. “Within the next 18 months, we plan to bring on board three additional board-certified orthopaedic surgeons fellowship trained in foot and ankle surgery, hand surgery and spine surgery, respectively,” states Dr. Kerina. “These additions to our clinical staff and expansion to our office spaces reflect our dedication to practice excellence and our commitment to provide the latest in orthopaedic care for our patients.”

Tri-County Orthopaedic Center is a well-run business, thanks to Dr. Kerina’s careful development and implementation of a unique business model that brings a wide range of orthopaedic

services together under one roof. But all three partners agree that the primary reason for the practice’s growth in size and reputation is the family atmosphere created by a warm, caring staff. Not only are patients treated like family, but the physicians treat each other like family as well. “We hold each other in great esteem professionally and also enjoy each other’s company socially. It’s not unusual for us to spend a lot of time together outside business hours,” says Dr. Mitchell.

Dr. Kerina sums up the Tri-County Orthopaedic Center with philosophy by stating that the goal in any practice is to be respected in the community where you practice. “Based on our professional growth and positive patient feedback, I think we are earning that respect,” says Dr. Kerina.

### **TriCounty Orthopaedic Center Locations**

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