

EXPERIENCED GENERAL SURGEONS JOINS ST. GABRIEL'S HOSPITAL STAFF

People throughout central Minnesota have a new option for surgical care, thanks to the recent addition of a board-certified and experienced general surgeon to the medical staff of St. Gabriel's Hospital in Little Falls.

Saung Park, MD, who is board-certified in general, vascular and thoracic surgery, was born in Seoul, Korea, but immigrated to the United States with his parents and sister when he was just 11 years old. His father had developed a strong interest in coming to the U.S. During the Korean War, he had met an American soldier who became his father's lifelong friend, helping to teach him English and encouraging him to relocate to the U.S. The family eventually came to this country in 1978. Ironically, immigrating to the U.S. helped ignite Dr. Park's interest in a medical career when, soon after arriving in this country, Dr. Park's father got ill and since his mother didn't speak English, he began to serve as an "interpreter" between his mother and the doctors. That regular contact with physicians led to his interest in medicine.

"When my dad got sick, I spent a lot of time talking to doctors and relaying the information to my mother," Dr. Park recalled. "That exposure to medicine probably got me to start thinking about becoming a doctor."

The rest, as they say, is history.

Dr. Park's list of medical credentials is extensive. He completed a comprehensive, five-year general surgery residency at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN, after earning his medical degree from Tufts University School of Medicine, Boston, MA. He completed a cardiovascular and thoracic surgery fellowship at Baylor University School of Medicine in Houston, TX, and a vascular surgery fellowship at the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH. He is also an Associate Fellow in the American College of Surgeons.

The general surgery residency at Mayo was the highlight of Dr. Park's medical education.

"After medical school, I wanted to go to either John Hopkins (Baltimore) or the Mayo Clinic," he said, "I applied to both programs, which are very difficult to get into, and the process is extremely competitive. When I was accepted at Mayo, I was ecstatic."

In addition to completing the general surgery residency, Dr. Park also received his certification in lower endoscopy from the Mayo Clinic Department of Colon and Rectal Surgery. The positive experiences at Mayo were part of the reason he decided to return to Minnesota after nine years in private practice in Tennessee and, most recently, Texas.

Dr. Park is excited to be coming to central Minnesota.

"I wanted to come to Little Falls because I feel there is a definite need for my services," he said. "There hasn't been a general surgeon based at St. Gabriel's since late last year and I can fill that void and make a significant contribution to the community. I chose Minnesota because I had a very positive experience at the Mayo Clinic, and Little Falls has a similar make-up as Rochester where the people, your patients, have a strong work ethic."

Mary Klinker, MD, Chief of the Medical Staff at St. Gabriel's Hospital, said the hospital and Family Medical Center are pleased to have a general surgeon with Dr. Park's credentials join the staff.

“We are very excited that Dr. Park has joined our local medical team and believe he is a great addition,” Dr. Klinker said. “He brings outstanding qualifications, which will be of great benefit to the people of Morrison County and beyond.”

Dr. Park, who joined the medical staff on May 1, will be performing a wide range of surgical procedures at St. Gabriel’s Hospital and seeing patients at Family Medical Center. The list of procedures include some of the more common procedures like gallbladder removal, hernia repair, appendectomies, breast surgery and colonoscopies as well as some newer procedures not previously performed at St. Gabriel’s such as a new VNUS vascular procedure for varicose veins.

People interested in making an appointment with Dr. Park can talk to their family physician or call the Family Medical Center’s appointment line, 320-631-7000. He will also be taking part in the St. Gabriel’s Hospital Surgery Open House from 4:30 to 7 p.m. on May 11 and people are welcome to stop by to meet him there.