Patients who once traveled to the Bay Area or Los Angeles for brain and spine surgeries have found that expertise here at home. Over the past six years Community Regional Medical Center has quadrupled the number of neurosurgeons, opened a 20-bed neuro intensive care unit, increased surgical staff by 80% and added four more operating suites to support a surge in patients, including transfers from other Valley hospitals for brain or spine surgery.

In 2014, Community Regional became one of the first hospitals nationally to open a hybrid operating suite with biplane technology so surgical teams can go from a minimally-invasive procedure to a full open cranial or spine surgery within minutes without moving the patient to another operating room. A second hybrid operating suite is planned for 2017 to meet increased needs.

46% of all brain cancer surgeries in the 7-county region were performed at Community Regional

In 2007, medical researchers looking at Fresno, Tulare and Kings counties found an increased risk for Parkinson’s Disease among those living and working in agricultural areas sprayed with pesticides, especially for those on well water. The Central Valley has the highest rates of Parkinson’s Disease in California with Kings County being among the worst. But until recently, those with Parkinson’s had to leave the Valley to find experts in deep brain stimulation (DBS) — a treatment that has allowed many patients to continue active lives.

For 10 years, Lantricia “Duddy” Blevins, 57, needed to travel several hours away from her Clovis home to get her DBS device adjusted regularly and maintained, until last month when Blevins had her first appointment with a neurologist at Community Regional Medical Center. The neurologist, who did her fellowship training with Kings County being among the worst. But until recently, those with Parkinson’s had to leave the Valley to find experts in deep brain stimulation (DBS) — a treatment that has allowed many patients to continue active lives.

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By 2010, a third leading cause of death in California is stroke, with Fresno County among the top five counties for stroke deaths in 2013. Community Regional Medical Center is working to turn that statistic around, becoming the first certified primary stroke center in the county and bringing in the county’s only two interventional neurologists skilled in doing mechanical thrombectomy, a clot removal technology that is the only option when the clot-busting drug t-Pa doesn’t work. Kay Garabedian, a local interior design company owner, says she was lucky the evening a large clot lodged in her brain — her good friend and business partner, Suzanne Byrnes, was there and recognized the signs of a stroke. She got to a hospital right away, and the first hospital transported her to Community Regional. Neurologists used a tiny vacuum inserted through a micro-catheter, snaking it through Garabedian’s arteries and into her brain to mechanically remove a clot too large to be dissolved by t-Pa. After a couple of weeks in the hospital and extensive rehabilitation, Garabedian said she was nearly back to her old self.