

Provider Profile

Sally Kirkpatrick, MD Neurology

About the only thing knitting and doctoring would seem to have in common is that they involve needles. Dig a little deeper, though, and it is clear that both provided a strong sense of meaning in the life of Sally Kirkpatrick, MD, a neurologist at Pen Bay Medical Center.

Dr. Kirkpatrick joined the neurology practice at PBMC earlier this year. A graduate of the MCP Hahnemann University School of Medicine, she served her residencies at Harvard Medical School. Neurology is a branch of medicine dealing with disorders of the nervous system and includes patients suffering from conditions such as migraines, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, stroke, epilepsy, nerve and muscle disorders, and movement disorders. For more information about Dr. Kirkpatrick, call her office at 207-301-5757.



strings, it's contemplative. This approach was formalized by Susan Barrett Merrill. There is a progression to what you weave. It's like taking a journey.

What can you tell us about yourself that we probably don't know?

I home schooled my children. It was the most fun thing I have ever done. It was live neurology. I was watching these young brains learn. It gave me a lot of respect for the importance of nurturing children and being in a safe environment to learn. We started doing it because my son, who we knew was smart, was having a hard time learning how to read. We investigated a lot of options and in the end decided to try teaching him at home. He stopped being anxious and he learned to read. It turned out that he was dyslexic. We did a lot of multi-sensory learning, so it gave me an appreciation for the whole of the nervous system. I now use that experience when I talk to people with dementia. They always want to talk about their memories, but I tell them there is so much more they can do: listen to music, make music, make beautiful things, dance. There's so much more that your brain can do.

You have practiced medicine in Maine for 25 years. Why Maine?

We came here because my husband's family had a summer place here and we thought it would be wonderful to live here. Obviously, it's beautiful but we like the authenticity. People are very straightforward. It has been a great place to raise our kids. They had a ton of freedom. They could ride their bikes wherever they wanted. They could walk to friends' houses, and go buy too much candy and have the lady at the store say, "I'm going to tell your mother how much candy you're buying." It was great.

Learn more about neurology and Pen Bay Medical Center.

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How do you approach a new patient?

I start appointments by saying, "OK, tell me your story." We usually talk for half the appointment, about half an hour or so. Then I examine them. A neuro exam is different from any other medical exam. First, you only have to take off your shoes. I play games with the patient, poke them, and hit them with reflex hammers. It doesn't hurt, in fact it might tickle. I ask what some people might think are weird questions. But the patient's answers tell me about their nervous system, and it's useful. Then I tell them what I think and we go from there.

Who inspired you to go to medical school?

My dad is a doctor. I always had the impression from him that medicine was worth devoting your life to. I actually thought I wanted to be a psychiatrist. But in medical school I had wonderful rotation in neurology and that got me interested in being a neurologist.

What has been your biggest challenge in medicine?

I think that, fundamentally, medicine is a beautiful calling, but there are many obstacles. The biggest challenge is the business aspects of medicine. When a patient comes in to my exam room and we close the door, we are all that is there: no insurance, no hospital. We're not checking boxes.

What are your interests outside the hospital?

My passion is fiber arts. Knit, spin, felt weave, dye. I make clothes and felted scarves. I take an approach called 'weaving a life,' where you use weaving as a way of self-examination. You weave little items, a doll for example. They're sort of archetypal and as you weave them you think about different things. The loom becomes a framework for looking at your life. As you move the back and forth strings through the up and down



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