

Department Overview: General Surgery

Samaritan’s tech-savvy, expert surgeons make it a top destination for a multitude of procedures.

The word “general” can sometimes mean “common,” but in a hospital, general surgeons are nothing short of superheroes.

“We have the opportunity to deliver great results to patients,”

Queenie McClelland, MD

“We have the opportunity to deliver great results to patients,” she said. “In a small community like Moses Lake, having access to this technology is amazing. Surgeries are easier for both patients and surgeons.”

Another key component of general surgery at Samaritan is cross-departmental collaboration. Dr. McClelland said her department frequently works closely with gastroenterology or podiatry for complex procedures like colonoscopies, but their closest partnership is family medicine.

Samaritan Healthcare’s general surgery department is home to four full-time surgeons and numerous support staff and nurses, together completing an average of 15-20 surgeries a week. If not in an operating room, surgeons are typically in the clinic seeing patients for various pre-operative, consultation, and follow-up appointments.

Dr. Queenie McClelland is a Samaritan general surgeon alongside her colleagues Dr. Andrea Matson, Dr. Jordan Smith, and the newest addition, Dr. Peter Zajac. She says while there is no “typical” day in general surgery, there are a few things they can expect throughout their day.

“Since general surgery is so broad, we see everything from gallbladder and hernia surgeries to colonoscopies,” she said. “Every day is different, which is why I enjoy it.”

General surgery frequently uses advanced technology for procedures, including the da Vinci Robotic-Assisted Surgical System, which uses robotic arms to complete surgeries with very small incisions and minimal trauma to the body. In surgeries like hernias and gallbladders — Dr. McClelland’s favorite procedure — patients recover more quickly and with less pain.

community, it’s great to be another source of connection for the patient and help them thrive.”

Big things are ahead for general surgery, including additional technological resources. While she only joined the Samaritan team a year ago, Dr. McClelland said it’s been an exciting year full of collaboration and saving lives.

“I’m excited to keep learning new procedures and honing my skills as a surgeon,” she said. “This is a kind, compassionate community. I love my job.”

Get to know our newest general surgeon, Dr. Zajac, on the inside page.

To learn more about general surgery at Samaritan, visit samaritanhealthcare.com/general-surgery.



Queenie McClelland, MD

“Many patients with chronic issues haven’t seen a primary care physician, so we establish post-surgical care for those patients with our family medicine providers,” she said. “There’s a lot of referrals, a lot of strategic back-and-forth.”

Whether working with colleagues in other departments or her fellow general surgeons, teamwork is key. Dr. McClelland said the surgeons and doctors rely on each other for everything from a quick question to walking through a surgical scenario.

Teamwork goes beyond just the surgical team — it filters down to the patient, as well. Dr. McClelland said one of the most rewarding aspects of general surgery is getting to know the patient and all aspects of their care.

“Even if it’s just a hernia repair, we still get their complete history and understand their lifestyle,” she said. “Especially in a smaller

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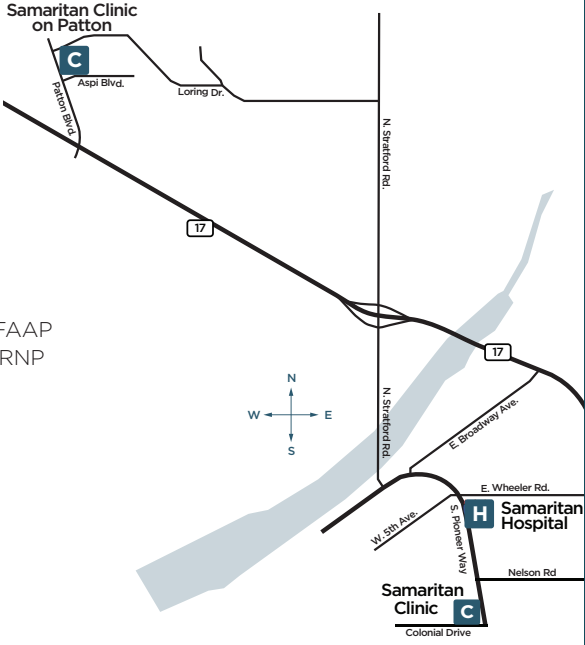
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Oh, Baby! From simple birth plans to complex deliveries, Dr. Firouzi is the expert for the job.

If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes compassionate leadership to bring that child into the world. At Samaritan Healthcare, that leadership falls to Dr. Kameron Firouzi, a skilled obstetrician-gynecologist (OB-GYN) specializing in women’s health from adolescence through menopause, including preconception care, prenatal care, delivering babies, and postpartum care.

“Labor can be unpredictable, but whenever possible, moms should have the birthing experience they want”

Kameron Firouzi, MD

Keeping High-Risk Care Local

In addition to standard obstetric care, Dr. Firouzi also handles complicated deliveries, including cesarean sections (C-Sections), twin or triplet births, vaginal births after cesarean (VBAC), and other situations. For more high-risk scenarios — such as fetal abnormalities or pre-existing conditions — Dr. Firouzi’s partnership with the maternal fetal medicine team at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center in Spokane, Washington, allows him to care for these patients, too.

“High-risk obstetric situations can be handled here without compromising care, thanks to our Providence partnership,” said Firouzi. “The fetal medicine specialists can help the patient and her medical team make decisions, read ultrasounds, and more.”

Dr. Firouzi provides state-of-the-art, Level 2 anatomy ultrasounds that assess the baby’s anatomy and development. Working with the Providence team’s fetal medicine specialists, he gains a comprehensive understanding of the situation and can provide customized care.

“Every box is checked and every concern is considered,” he said.

Schedule an appointment with Dr. Firouzi to learn more about tailoring a birth experience to your needs. Contact Samaritan at 509.765.5606.

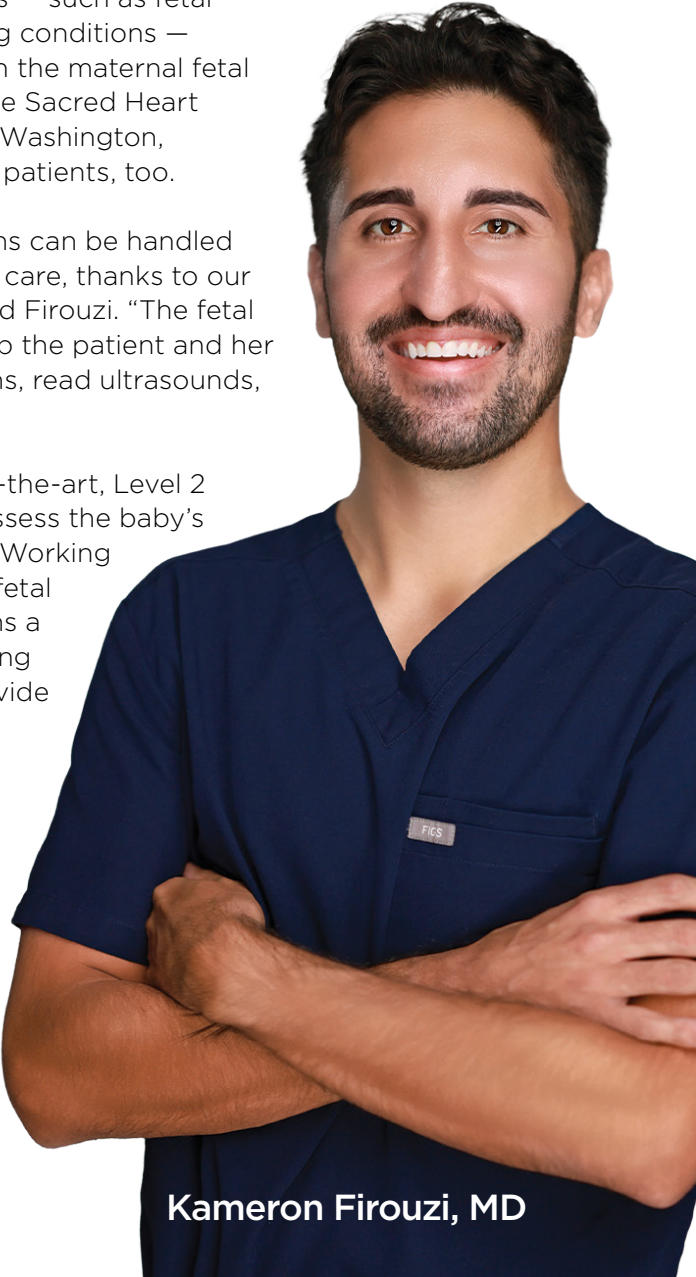
Creating a ‘Natural’ Birth Experience

A common misconception is that medical facilities will not encourage the use of “natural” birth practices, such as cord clamping, or the use of midwives or doulas. However, Dr. Firouzi prioritizes the mom’s preferred birth experience whenever possible.

“Patients often assume midwife or doula services are only offered in birthing centers or more holistic facilities, but we do that here, too,” said Dr. Firouzi. “You’re still in a medical facility, but those types of resources are available to meet your needs.”

Opting for a natural birth in a medical setting such as Samaritan can give expecting moms the best of both worlds. Dr. Firouzi said he presents patients with all available options, explains any potential risks, and discusses any concerns. If complications arise, patients can feel safe knowing they still have the backing of a medical facility where all modern resources are available.

“Labor can be unpredictable, but whenever possible, moms should have the birthing experience they want,” said Dr. Firouzi.



Kameron Firouzi, MD



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Service Highlight

A New Day in Healthcare is Around the Corner

Samaritan’s new facility makes progress in preparation to open its doors.

The new Samaritan hospital is on track to welcome patients by March 2026, but a flurry of activity will take place long before the doors open.

Now that the exterior of the building is complete, those driving by on I-90 see a finished — although perhaps bare — building, as most of the work is now taking place inside. Tom Frick, Samaritan Healthcare commissioner, said even within the new walls, it’s starting to look like a hospital.

“Every time I visit the site, something has changed,” he said. “That’s only going to increase as we get further into the fall.”

In mid-August, the new MRI machine was lowered into the building by crane, followed soon after by the CT machine and other imaging equipment. Assembling lights, booms, and sterilizers have also been installed in the new operating rooms.

Finishing Touches

Sidewalks have been placed around the building as well as exterior benches, and basalt columns and rocks have been installed in the healing garden. Fall has also led the way for landscaping in full force.

Samaritan will receive the keys to the new hospital in December, which will then kick start the installation of remaining equipment and furniture for the new building. The project’s equipment contractor estimated



that there will be twenty-six 52-foot trailers delivering equipment, at a rate of four or five a day until everything is unloaded.

“The Moses Lake and Columbia Basin region has worked hard to make this new hospital a reality, and it’s so rewarding to see it coming together for our community,” said Susan Carbon, Samaritan Healthcare commissioner.

Lay of the Land

Looking forward, Moses Lake residents can anticipate seeing signage go up after the first of the year. In January, hospital professionals will start a five-week training process in the new facility. Theresa Sullivan, Samaritan CEO, said a committee of Samaritan professionals has created numerous different patient workflow examples as well as a scavenger hunt to help staff develop muscle memory of where everything is located, as well as new procedures.

“There’s a lot of excitement building in the community and amongst our professionals,” she said. “We’re thankful that the project remains on time and on budget.”

The hospital’s “go live” date is still set for March 7, 2026. To learn more about Samaritan’s new hospital, visit samaritanhealthcare.com/ourfuturecommunityhospital.

Comfort, Clarity, and Care

Samaritan’s new mammography puts the patient experience first.

Mammograms are crucial tool for detecting breast cancer, but they can also be an uncomfortable, time-consuming experience for patients. Samaritan Healthcare’s latest diagnostic imaging resource will ease the process by offering mammograms, biopsies, and results in one system, paving the way for more women to receive a potentially life-saving diagnosis.

The Hologic 3Dimensions Mammography System will be installed in Samaritan’s new facility, opening spring 2026. The system completes a mammogram 25% faster than a traditional method, or approximately 13 minutes, and results are available in real-time.

Lois Eldridge Lee, director of diagnostic imaging, said the machine uses digital breast tomosynthesis (DBT), or mammogram stacking, to capture 3D images from various angles.

“If you picture a loaf of bread, we’re compressing it and looking at each individual slice with high resolution and sharper detail,” she said. “The procedure is streamlined with less time under compression, resulting in a more compassionate patient experience.”

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast used to detect early signs of breast cancer. The breast is placed between two plates and compressed to spread out tissue for better imaging. Some women experience discomfort during the compression, especially if it is prolonged for more accurate results.

The 3Dimensions system captures images at a faster rate, allowing patients to receive a lower dose of radiation during the process.



“Scatter radiation is what can cause damage, but the radiation is dosed in such a targeted way with this system that the risk to the patient is substantially lower,” said Eldridge Lee.

In addition to imaging technology, the 3Dimensions Mammography System is also capable of biopsy procedures with the Brevera Breast Biopsy System. During a biopsy, a tissue sample is collected for further examination. With vacuum-assisted tissue acquisition, real-time imaging capabilities, and immediate results, the patient experience is increased exponentially.

“Before, patients had to move to different rooms for the mammogram and biopsy, then wait around for sample results,” said Eldridge Lee. “Now everything is done in one room and with one integrated system, all at one time.”

In a patient survey, 90% of patients reported a more comfortable biopsy experience with the Brevera system than with other biopsy systems. Real-time imaging delivers a wealth of information at the point of care, allowing for more informed, confident clinical decisions.

“It’s more ergonomic, user friendly, and all encompassing,” said Eldridge Lee. “This mammogram system will make breast cancer screening more accessible for a variety of patients.”

3D imaging mammography appointments are currently available six days a week, including Saturday. Visit samaritanhealthcare.com/ to learn more or to schedule an appointment.

Specialty Care News

Provider Spotlight

Get to know Samaritan Healthcare’s compassionate doctors and nurses.



Peter Zajac, MD, Joshua Gonzales, MD, Katie Kist, DO, Jennifer Pearson, FNP-C

Peter Zajac, MD GENERAL SURGERY

Dr. Peter Zajac is a board-certified and fellowship-trained general surgeon with expertise in minimally invasive procedures. He is also trained in the use of the Da Vinci Robotic-Assisted Surgical System to complete surgeries with less pain and faster recovery.

“I sit down with patients and discuss their concerns, identify the problem, then determine the best course of action,” said Dr. Zajac. “I give them full autonomy over their treatment plan and guide them to the best surgical and non-surgical options to achieve their goals.”

His expertise is in foregut procedures, including anti-reflux surgeries, hiatal hernia repairs, colorectal procedures, gallbladder removal, and hernia repairs.

Joshua Gonzales, MD HOSPITALIST

Dr. Joshua Gonzales is a hospitalist at Samaritan, a position which could be described as the “quarterback” of a patient’s medical team. Hospitalists are responsible for coordinating care, educating patients, ordering lab tests, and involving the right specialists.

As a hospitalist, Dr. Gonzales is the patient’s main point of contact and believes that listening to patients is paramount in his job.

“If patients feel listened to during their stays, then our mission is accomplished.”

he said.

Dr. Gonzales enjoys being a hospitalist because he can utilize all his medical training. He calls himself a jack of all trades: part physician, part patient advocate, and part educator.

Katie Kist, DO PSYCHIATRIST

Dr. Katie Kist is a psychiatrist who is board certified in child, adolescent, and adult psychiatry. She treats a range of mental health care issues at Samaritan, such as depression, anxiety, ADHD, and parent-child attachment.

She describes her approach to patients as adaptable and empathetic with an emphasis centered on adaptability and holistic treatment.

“My style is to be my genuine self, meet people where they’re at, and understand their goals,” she said.

Dr. Kist chose to practice psychiatry after seeing a great need for mental health care access that embraced a holistic approach. She sees patients at the Samaritan Clinic, as well as virtually and on select evenings.

Jennifer Pearson, FNP-C FAMILY MEDICINE

Jennifer Pearson is a family nurse practitioner (FNP) who leads with experience and compassion. Her expertise in patient-centered interdisciplinary care allows her to manage diverse outpatient cases, develop individualized care plans, and educate patients on disease prevention and health maintenance.

Serving in the Family Medicine Department, Pearson cares for patients of all ages with a focus on preventative care. Her approach centers on listening and building trust with patients, encouraging engagement in their treatment plan.

“Education is a huge factor in patient care, and sometimes it can be overlooked in the treatment process,” she said.

Samaritan Certified as Level 2 Stroke Center

Samaritan’s stroke care certification provides assurance to patients in need.

As of August 14, 2025, Samaritan Healthcare has been certified a Level 2 Stroke Center, which serves as confirmation of its current expertise in caring for stroke patients.

The State of Washington’s Department of Health is the accrediting body for stroke care designation. Rebecca Suarez, emergency department director, said the hospital already had great success in stroke care, but the certification helped solidify their technique.

“We just needed to take time to really deconstruct the process and focus on how it is activated,” she said. “Our goal has always been to care for patients in the best way possible.”

Suarez’s first step was to create a stroke care team consisting of herself, emergency room nurses, imaging and lab professionals, quality improvement specialists, and a lead ER physician, Dr. Matthew Lockwood.

Amanda Martinez, RN, was appointed as Samaritan’s stroke and cardiac coordinator. The team developed a stroke alert protocol that largely resembled Samaritan’s existing plan, simply finalizing procedures and ensuring consistency.



“Nurses would physically go find the provider to assess the patient to determine if their symptoms aligned with a stroke,” said Martinez. “It added time to the process and wasn’t as efficient as possible.”

After gathering insights from frontline staff, the stroke team implemented a new protocol for paging an alert on the overhead speaker using the BE FAST stroke symptom acronym: balance, eyes, facial droop, aphasia, strength, and time.

If the patient’s symptoms met the criteria for a stroke alert, an overhead alert is paged.

This small change was a critical shift, as it had previously not been considered best practice. Without a defined plan, overhead alerts often led to crowding in the ER.

The new protocol stipulates that one ER nurse, one physician, one CT tech, and one lab tech respond to each page.

“We discovered that was the quickest way to get essential folks here,” said Suarez. “Every minute we delay is millions of brain cells.”

As a Level 2 Stroke Center, Samaritan is recognized as providing stroke triage services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Samaritan can do everything that

does not require an in-house neurologist, such as surgical procedures. However, Samaritan providers have access to tele-neurology, allowing the stroke alert team to “beam in” a neurologist directly to the ER. They can also give clot-busting medication and admit the patient if further specialty care is not needed.

“Patients don’t have to drive to Spokane or elsewhere for stroke care, which can be a huge hardship, especially for our elderly community,” said Martinez. “We want to educate the community on what we offer for early stroke intervention.”