

Medical Surgical Innovations Born Here



Neuroventions offers a unique, state-of-the-art surgical education facility in Napa.

BY LILY G. CASURA

By any standards, Dr. Eric Grigsby of Napa is a busy man, both professionally and personally. He has a specialty practice in pain management on Villa Lane, near Queen of the Valley Medical Center; he founded and runs Neuroventions, a surgical training center in Napa that conducts clinical research, works with biomedical device startups and early-stage companies, and trains medical personnel; and in his free time he runs Rocca Family Vineyards with his partner and wife, Mary Rocca, also a doctor.

As if that weren't enough, together they also have a nonprofit, HealthRoots Foundation, that brings medical care to the Third World—particularly Malawi, a landlocked country in Africa. He's also a draft-horse driver and a father of four.

Professionally, he claims to split his time 50/50 between patient care in his private practice, Napa Pain Institute, and clinical research, such as he conducts at Neuroventions. Neuroventions also hosts several pain conferences annually, including the 18th Napa Pain Conference, to be in mid-Sep-



Eric Grigsby, MD, founder and president of Neuroventions

tember at Napa's Meritage Resort.

An innovative surgical training facility, Neuroventions—located on Valle Verde Drive, a short several blocks' walk from Queen of the Valley Medical Center—is an unusual business to be located in Napa, typically associated with the region's food, wine and agriculture industries.

One might expect it to be located in San Francisco or Silicon Valley—not in Napa at all. But the unique blend of services it offers means that Neuroventions pulls its customers from all over the region, including Berkeley, Palo Alto and Sacramento.

Grigsby calls his company “the premier clinical research and surgical training facility in the field of pain management and neuroscience.”

According to its website, Neuroventions offers a “unique and state-of-the-art surgical education and conference facility,” with a “live operating room at the connected ambulatory surgery center, a fully equipped laboratory and a beautiful conference room.”

Grigsby explained that the teaching aspect of the “licensed and Medicare-certified operating room” means that training groups of physicians and others can view demonstrations of surgical techniques on live patients, and then “practice” those techniques on cadavers and lifelike models in the lab.

Neuroventions is heavily utilized by biotech companies, both start-up and early-stage ventures, that are interested in bringing a product to market that will enhance patients' lives. To this end, engineers and product development teams can work with Neuroventions to adapt their working model in practice; and physicians and health care practitioners can work with patients and new medical techniques that they learn at the facility.

“The idea of the surgical training facility was borne from our experience with medical device clients,” Grigsby said.

“It became clear that their engineers needed a facility where they could meet with physicians and surgeons to perfect the tools and techniques used in new therapies,” he said. “We also saw that surgeons needed high-level training on new surgical techniques.”

The facility opened in Napa in January, but Neuroventions “has been providing clinical research services to our medical device and pharmaceutical company partners” for the past four years, according to Grigsby.

At any given time, several research studies are ongoing at Neuroventions, and study participants are drawn from a reasonably local area, including Napa.

They get the word out by giving community seminars on related topics and making announcements in the local media, including radio. A study is ongoing seeking volunteers for a treatment for lumbar disc injury, which Grigsby describes as a “non-surgical injection of a biological material into the injured disc to promote healing.”

Study volunteers are compensated in part for their time with an amount that he said “covers people's basic costs, and gives them a small stipend for their time, often \$100 to \$500” over the course of the several months that the study participation typically runs.

Grigsby defined what makes Neuroventions distinct. “We play in a space between where a scientist comes up with an idea, such as at a university, and getting that idea into the marketplace by running clinical research studies so engineers can help develop the product, or training M.D.s so that they can disseminate the knowledge into the community.”

Neuroventions works with “industry leaders such as Medtronic, St. Jude Medical and several early-stage Bay Area medical device companies,” Grigsby noted.

Grigsby received his undergraduate education at Brown University, his medical education at Boston University and trained in anesthesiology and pain management at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

Later, he taught at the Mayo Medical School before moving to California in 1989 to become the founder and director of pain management services at UC Davis Medical Center.

For the past 20-plus years, Grigsby has conducted his pain management practice in Napa.