

# Trauma Team

Approximately 150,000 Americans die each year due to accidental injury. Another 400,000 are disabled. The courageous people who take on the responsibility of treating these patients — and, when possible, saving their lives — must be able to perform technically complex operations on critically ill patients at a moment's notice.



At SRO, we're proud to have Sonoma County's preeminent orthopaedic trauma surgeons on our team: Frederick S. Bennett, MD, and Nathan R. Ehmer, DO. Drs. Bennett and Ehmer work shifts at both Sutter



Frederick S. Bennett, MD



Nathan R. Ehmer, DO

Medical Center of Santa Rosa and the trauma center at Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital (SRMH). As the area's primary trauma care hospital, SRMH provides trauma care for nearly two million people within a five-county region. Either Dr. Bennett or Dr. Ehmer is the on-call orthopaedic trauma surgeon during two out of three shifts at SRMH's trauma center, making the doctors' expertise vital to the quality of trauma care available locally.

In interviews with Dr. Ehmer and Dr. Bennett, both surgeons provided fascinating insights about the demands and rewards of orthopaedic trauma care.

Dr. Bennett is a board-certified orthopaedic surgeon, with subspecialty interest and fellowship training in orthopaedic trauma. Before relocating to Santa Rosa in 1997, he spent four years in private practice at the University of Tennessee's Level 1 Trauma Center in Knoxville. "Over time," Dr. Bennett says, "you learn how to cope with the stress and perform your best work under pressure—even when dealing with severe fatigue. It was exciting when I first started, and

every shift felt like a challenge; although I admit I prefer it today when I have over 25 years of experience under my belt. I'm much more confident in myself and aware of my abilities. I feel that my experience and my ability to remain calm in stressful

situations create an organized, harmonious work environment that the entire team can appreciate."

What Dr. Bennett loves most about his job is the variety of patients he works with in the trauma center. Dr. Bennett understands that traumatic injury happens to people from all walks of life, without regard to socioeconomic status, nationality, or age. Misfortune can strike at any time, often when people least expect it. Dr. Bennett has developed immense appreciation and respect for all patients' life-stories, and when they arrive at the trauma center, he feels a personal responsibility to help those stories continue. To relax after an intense shift in the trauma center, Bennett enjoys cycling the hills of Sonoma County, taking ambitious backpacking trips with friends, and spending time with his wife and two daughters.



Dr. Ehmer, is a board-eligible orthopaedic surgeon, with subspecialty fellowship training in trauma, complex fracture care, pelvic and acetabular reconstruction. He has additional interest in total-joint reconstruction. Before joining SRO, he served as a clinical faculty member in the Department of Orthopaedic Trauma at UC San Francisco/San Francisco General Hospital, where he completed his fellowship in orthopaedic trauma. In the interview, Dr. Ehmer fondly related that his uncle, an osteopathic anesthesiologist, taught him that doctors should be humble social servants. People often forget that providing healthcare to patients is a career of service, and that doctors are always obligated to care for patients, even at inconvenient times. Dr. Ehmer explains, "Working in emergency situations requires a certain personality. I am very grateful to be gifted with the drive and creativity necessary to serve as a trauma doctor. I find great satisfaction in being able to help people when they're most broken, both physically and mentally."

With a degree in Osteopathic Medicine, Dr. Ehmer is dedicated to treating and healing the patient as a whole, rather than focusing on one system or body part. He respects the wholeness of the individual's mind and body connection, and he keeps the individuality and personhood of his patients foremost in his mind. "Knowing that the person on the operating table is someone's spouse, child, or parent gives me the drive to work harder," Dr. Ehmer says. "Fixing the patient's injury is only the first step towards success. When people leave the hospital with their livelihood intact, that's when I feel the best about my work." In his free time, Ehmer enjoys relaxing with his wife and kids, snowboarding, cycling, woodworking, and cooking.

The creative aspect of trauma surgery captivates both surgeons. While all orthopaedic operations require an artistic touch in order for the surgeon to achieve the best results, this is especially true in trauma centers. No two fractures are alike. Like grandmasters in chess, trauma surgeons must stay three moves ahead, and swiftly adapt to any changes in situation. The orthopaedic trauma surgeon first

identifies multiple ways to fix the patient's injury, and then chooses which solution will offer the best results depending on the exact nature of that injury. Contrast this with total-joint replacement operations, where more standardized and routine procedures are performed in controlled conditions. Drs. Ehmer and Bennett enjoy the challenge of trauma surgery's unpredictability, and they both say it never gets boring.

Having worked closely together for several years now, Drs. Bennett and Ehmer have developed a strong collaborative approach to their work, strengthening their practices, and directly benefiting their patients. A special toughness, drive, and compassion are essential prerequisites for a career in orthopaedic trauma surgery. For these reasons, we at SRO can't help expressing the extreme pride and gratitude we feel for our two exceptional orthopaedic trauma physicians.

