

Barton Orthopedic training the best

By Jeff Munson

In nearly every professional field, the emphasis of staying ahead of the curve – particularly with technological advances – is what gives individuals and organizations a competitive edge.

South Lake Tahoe may be home to some of the best ski and snowboard athletes in the world, but what many who live here may not realize is that those world-class, high-risk athletes are getting the most cutting-edge medical attention whenever they get hurt.

It's no wonder then that Barton Health has earned the distinction of having the finest training program in the nation for orthopedic surgery, specifically in the field of sports medicine.

With 22 years of offering continued sports medical education, Barton Lake Tahoe Orthopedic Sports Medicine Fellowship has trained more than 100 of the nation's top bone, muscle and tissue surgeons.

The training program through Barton has not only provided the fellows the skills they need, but the ability to perform intricate surgeries using the latest technological instruments.

Dr. Keith Swanson is the program director, lead professor and patriarch of the fellowship. Over the years he has played a large role in seeing the program grow in curriculum, technology and success.

The highly-competitive 12-month program – among only a handful in the nation and the only one of its kind in Nevada – attracts dozens of applicants annually. Two are selected after



Photo by Taylor Flynn

Surgeons in the Barton Orthopedic Sports Medicine Fellowship train on a cadaver knee using state-of-the-art equipment under the watchful eye of Dr Keith Swanson (far right).

an intense interview process. Once the fellowship ends, doctors have gone on to hospitals throughout the U.S., and are considered leaders in their respective sports orthopedic surgery fields.

"There have been amazing changes in the way we treat patients over the years, with tools, technologies and techniques developed all over the country," said Swanson during a training intermission. "Among all the fellowships offered at universities and large hospitals, Barton is the smallest one. Lake Tahoe is very fortunate to have this level of orthopedic surgery and training."

The clinical component of the

fellowship includes about 10 to 15 surgical cases per week and two days of clinical examination, diagnosis, and treatment in the office setting. Surgical cases are focused on knee arthroscopy, shoulder arthroscopy, shoulder and knee ligament reconstruction, and extremity trauma.

Fellows gain their experience by treating expert and recreational athletes and, as was the case this month, on cadavers. Treatment of the aging athlete including joint reconstruction and arthroplasty.

Lined along the walls of Tahoe Orthopedics and Sports Medicine Center at Round Hill are dozens of the fellowship graduate photos, known as the "wall of fame." Each earned a certificate of

completion and are working at hospitals and in private practices throughout the country.

This year's fellows are Aaron Florence and Chris Walter, who have spent the past few months working alongside doctors Steve Bannar, MD; Jeff Cummings, MD, Roger Rogalski, MD, Dan Robertson, MD, Kyle Swanson, MD, Assistant Director and Education Coordinator Rob Rupp, MD., and director Swanson.

The fellows, who came to Tahoe after completing their residencies, say the training by the Tahoe doctors has surpassed all of their expectations.

"It has been everything I wanted and hoped for," said Florence, who is in his ninth month of fellowship. "In a specialized field such as this, I think the people of Lake Tahoe would be amazed to learn about the quality of doctors here. It's world-class and it is right in Lake

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– Aaron Florence

Training in Barton Fellowship

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Walter called his group of teachers "great role models" and "excellent surgeons" who have encouraged him through the process.

"The stuff I've learned here, no doubt, will carry through as I go on with my practice," he said.

Now that ski season has ended and there is a short window at the hospital before mountain biking season begins, the fellows were treated recently with the most primitive form of training: cadavers provided by medical research firm Smith and Nephew.

During the May 7 exercise, the fellows used arthroscopy to reconstruct the knee of a deceased 90-year woman. The training was a success, with Florence and Walter acknowledging that cadaver practice is perhaps the best way to learn how to use new equipment.

"It's like flight simulators that pilots use, only it's better because we're working on real tissue," said Florence.

The benefit to fellowship recipients is that their careers are now shaped by what they learn in a region with a high concentration of sports related injuries.

"It's an evolving field and we provide them the knowledge to take with them that will make a difference in the lives of those they will treat during their careers," Swanson said.

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