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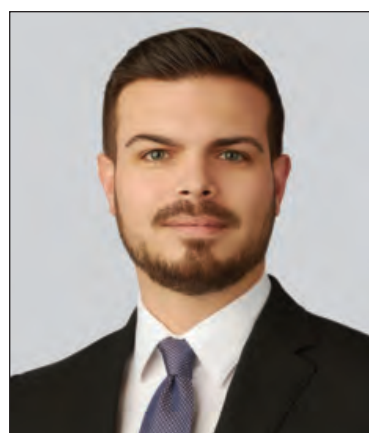
# Hospital News<sup>TM</sup> and HEALTHCARE REPORT

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THE REGION'S MONTHLY NEWSPAPER FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS & PHYSICIANS  
OUR 22TH YEAR SERVING THE HEALTHCARE COMMUNITY!

## Mental Health



Trevor Biglin

### The Growing Threat of Retroactive Clawbacks in South Florida's Mental Health Sector

BY TREVOR BIGLIN

Mental health care providers in South Florida are increasingly facing retroactive claim clawbacks, where commercial insurers demand repayment for services already approved and paid for—often months after treatment. These unexpected repayment demands can range from hundreds to tens of thousands of dollars, disrupting cash flow and forcing providers to reduce patient loads or staff.

Insurers perform retrospective claim reviews to audit past payments and recover what they consider overpayments. Their goal is to confirm that services billed were medically necessary according to plan criteria, properly coded with accurate CPT, HCPCS, and diagnosis codes, and authorized under the member's policy. A 2023 American Medical Association survey revealed that 35% of U.S. physicians experienced such retrospective denials or payment take-backs, with behavioral health among the hardest hit.

Common causes of clawbacks in men-

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## Back to School Bash Benefits South University Nurses, PAs, and PBC

BY VANESSA ORR

Since 2018, South University's College of Nursing has partnered with Palm Beach County (PBC) to help children in underserved populations get ready to go back to school. Thousands of people attend the event annually, which is held in July at Palm Beach Convention Center and the Village Academy in Delray Beach. It is an event where children receive school physicals, vision screenings, haircuts, backpacks and more.

The College of Nursing first collaborated with South University's Nurse Practitioner Program to provide student physicals, and now works with the Physician Assistant Program (PA) to carry on the tradition since the Nurse Practitioner Program tran-

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(l-r) College of Nursing Professor Kimberly Dawkins, Professor Rebecca Magwood, and Dr. Sharon Ramjohn at the Palm Beach Convention Center

## Healthcare Real Estate

### New Cleveland Clinic OP Center, Hospital to Provide Improved Access, Jobs

BY VANESSA ORR

For more than 15 years, Cleveland Clinic has served the West Palm Beach community through its outpatient center at CityPlace. Now, the internationally respected academic health system is increasing its footprint in the area with the construction of a new hospital and greatly expanded outpatient services.

This expansion, which will take place over a number of years, will begin with a new, four-floor, 120,000 sq. ft. outpatient center at 15 CityPlace, which will quadruple the square footage of the existing Cleveland Clinic Health Center. The outpatient center is expected to open in November 2027, with the new hospital slated for completion approximately four years from now.

According to Conor P. Delaney, M.D., Ph.D., executive vice president, Cleveland Clinic, and president, Cleveland Clinic Florida Market, this comprehensive healthcare plan for West Palm Beach and Palm Beach County will connect care in South Florida from Weston Hospital up the coast to Martin, Tradition, and Indian River hospitals north



Dr. Conor P. Delaney

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## Mental Health



Dr. Beth King

### Expanding Access to Mental Health Care: How Florida Atlantic's PMHNP Program Trains the Next Generation of Compassionate Providers

BY DANIEL CASCIATO

As the mental health crisis continues to impact communities across the nation, programs like the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) concentration at Florida Atlantic University are stepping up to meet the growing demand for qualified mental health providers.

At the forefront of this effort is Dr. Beth King, a professor at Florida Atlantic's Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing, who recently shared insights into the program's innovative approach to training BSN to DNP students and its broader impact on communities in South Florida.

#### A Practice-Focused Degree Grounded in Caring

The PMHNP concentration is a component of the practice-focused Doctor of

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## Milestone Case Performed at Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital

Surgeons with Cleveland Clinic in Florida have performed the regional health system's first case of robotic-assisted total pelvic exenteration (RA-TPE), a last resort treatment for the management of certain advanced primary and recurrent pelvic cancers.

The surgery was performed at Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital by board-certified urologic oncologist Alberto Pieretti, MD, and Giovanna da Silva, MD, a board-certified colorectal surgeon.

"Pelvic exenteration is among the most complex and invasive surgeries," states Dr. Pieretti. "As with so many other pelvic surgeries, such as prostatectomies and cystectomies, we have found that a robotic approach can provide many important advantages."

### Three resections in one

The milestone case involved a 71-year-old patient who was previously treated for prostate cancer with brachytherapy and years later developed a rectal cancer that invaded the prostate. The team at Weston Hospital used a fully robotic approach to remove the patient's sigmoid colon, rectum, anus, bladder, urethra, prostate and seminal vesicles, and to create urinary and bowel diversions.

"Instead of having an incision that runs from below the sternum to the pubic bone, the patient had a few 8 mm ports and one incision of less than 4 cm for organ extraction," describes Dr. Pieretti. "Some of the benefits from this approach included less blood loss, reduced pain and use of narcotics, and early mobility."

### A robotic advantage

The first case of robot-assisted laparoscopic pelvic exenteration for the treatment of recurrent cervical cancer was reported in 2009. Five years later a case of robot-assisted PE for the treatment of locally advanced rectal cancer was published.

In the years following, several case reports and small studies have demonstrated the safety and effectiveness of RA-TPE for the treatment of various pelvic malignancies. This includes a narrative review of robotic-assisted PE for locally advanced rectal cancer published in 2021, and a clinical practice review published last year on RA-TPE for patients with urological malignancies.

"There is a large body of research demonstrating the advantages of robotic techniques across many surgical fields in terms of improved access and visualization," says Dr. Da Silva. "The combination of magnified 3D vision and the enhanced dexterity achieved with articulating wristed robotic instruments allows us to perform more accurate dissections, which is particularly beneficial in the enclosed space of the pelvis."



Scan to learn more about advanced surgery at Cleveland Clinic in Florida.



For Every Care in the World

## Publisher's Note

### Back to School: 1950s vs. 2025 – A Tale of Two Eras

Ah, back to school. Three little words that once meant sharpening pencils and now mean updating your Wi-Fi so your kid's AI tutor doesn't glitch during algebra. Let's compare the good old days of the 1950s with the futuristic circus of 2025. (Yes, I'm that old.)

#### 1950s: Crisp Shirts and Cowlick Control

Getting ready in the 1950s was simple. Your mom ironed your one good shirt until it could cut glass, and your shoes got polished so shiny you could check for stray cowlicks. Supplies? Two wooden pencils, a Pink Pearl eraser that smelled like bubble gum, and maybe a metal lunchbox with Roy Rogers grinning like your cowboy guardian angel.

The night before school, kids laid out outfits like sacred relics: girls had pleated skirts, sweaters and weejun penny loafers, boys wore slacks and button-downs. Jeans? Strictly for farm chores, thank you. If you forgot lunch money, your mom pinned a note to your shirt like a badge of shame. And misbehavior? Expect the dreaded phrase: "Wait until your father gets home."

#### 2025: Wi-Fi, Wearables, and Wardrobe Algorithms

Fast forward to 2025. Back to school prep is less "sharpen your pencils" and more "should we upgrade the bandwidth so three kids can stream classes and consult their AI assistants?" The supply list reads like NASA gear: AR-enabled glasses, noise-canceling headphones, a tablet, a stylus, and a power bank roughly the size of a shoebox—because heaven forbid the holographic chemistry lab crashes mid-lab.

Clothes? Forget ironing. Kids wear hoodies with climate control and smart fabrics that change color based on mood—or whether homework is done. Hair? Who cares. Your AI avatar in the metaverse classroom will have perfect strands even if you roll in looking like a sleepy yeti.

Lunch? No PB&J. Students summon sushi burritos by drone during study hall. Forgotten lunch money? Impossible. Everything runs on retinal payments. And punishment? Parents don't threaten spanking, they revoke screen time, which is crueler than the slap ever was.

#### The Verdict

In the '50s, back to school was about polished shoes and perfect penmanship. In 2025, it's about firmware updates and avatar settings. One thing hasn't changed, though: kids in every era still claim they have nothing to wear—even when their outfits can literally change with a swipe.

Charles Felix



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- Management of valvular pathology

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## **Who Should Attend**

This symposium is ideal for cardiologists, cardiac surgeons, anesthesiologists, critical care and emergency medicine physicians, sonographers, sonography students and other clinicians involved in cardiovascular imaging and structural heart care. If you're dedicated to advancing your knowledge and staying current with evolving technologies in echocardiography and structural heart care, this event is for you.

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## How Ambient Listening Can Enhance Clinical Efficiency

Today's healthcare environment presents a unique challenge: patients expect timely, high-quality care, while physicians face increasing administrative burdens around documentation and coding as they try to convert their clinical activity into revenue. Ambient listening technology is emerging as a practical way to address both of these issues.



BY SABINA KOTELNIK

### What is Ambient Listening?

Ambient listening solutions use advanced speech recognition and natural language processing (NLP) technologies to "listen in" on conversations between patients and clinicians. These tools transcribe the dialogue, extract relevant clinical information, and generate structured notes in the electronic health record (EHR). Because this process happens unobtrusively in the background, clinicians can focus more on their patients and less on paperwork.

Early adopters of ambient listening have seen tangible benefits, including:

1. Reduced administrative burden on clinicians, freeing up valuable time for direct patient care and reducing after-hours charting
2. Improved patient experience, as clinicians can maintain eye contact and engage more meaningfully with patients
3. Higher-quality documentation
4. Greater efficiency across clinical workflows
5. Accelerated billing and improved compliance

### Considerations for Implementing Ambient Listening

When evaluating an ambient listening tool and preparing for implementation, there are important considerations to set the foundation for ongoing clinical performance improvement.

1. **Integration with EHR and Revenue Cycle Systems:** Validate the integration capabilities of an ambient listening vendor prior to making a purchasing decision to determine whether the tool can be efficiently maintained over the long term.
2. **Data Security and Privacy:** Protecting PHI and patient confidentiality is paramount. Choose a tool that complies with HIPAA and other relevant regula-

tions, and verify how data is stored, transmitted, and accessed.

3. **Accuracy and Customization:** Evaluate the tool's accuracy in medical transcription and its ability to adapt to your specialty's terminology. Customization options can help improve performance and relevance.

4. **Physician and Staff Training:** Successful implementation requires buy-in from clinicians and staff.

Provide comprehensive training and ongoing support to help everyone become comfortable with the new workflow.

5. **Cost and ROI Analysis:** Assess the total cost of ownership, including subscription fees, hardware, and potential productivity gains. Calculate the expected return on investment based on time saved and improved billing accuracy.

6. **Patient Consent and Communication:** Inform patients about the use of ambient listening technology in their care and obtain appropriate consent. Transparency builds trust and addresses potential privacy concerns. Gaining informed patient consent is also critical from a compliance standpoint.

### Looking Ahead

Ambient listening technology represents a significant leap forward towards mitigating clinician burnout, expanding clinical efficiencies, and improving revenue performance. By carefully considering integration, security, accuracy, training, cost, and patient communication, practices can unlock new efficiencies and enhance both provider and patient experiences.

*If you're interested in learning more about how ambient listening solutions can benefit your organization, or if you'd like guidance on implementation and best practices, we're here to help.*

Sabina Kotelnik, Assurance Principal, BDO, can be reached at (954) 989-7462 or [skotelnik@bdo.com](mailto:skotelnik@bdo.com).

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# Expanding Access and Elevating Care: TGH's Strategic Initiative at Lakeside Medical Center

## Q&A with Ron Doncaster, vice president of Lakeside Medical Center

Earlier this year, Tampa General Hospital reached an agreement with the Health Care District of Palm Beach County to provide administrative leadership, operational management and strategic support for Lakeside Medical Center, the Health Care District's 70-bed, acute care, public teaching hospital in Belle Glade, Florida. Together, the organizations' shared goal is to increase access to high-quality care in the rural areas of Palm Beach County.

To lead this endeavor, Tampa General tapped Ron Doncaster, a seasoned health care executive, to support the growing partnership between the academic health system and Lakeside Medical Center. Doncaster brings several decades of experience, having managed operations at some of the most prestigious health care systems, including Mass General Brigham and, most recently, as interim chief operating officer at Tampa General. Serving as vice president and administrator of Lakeside Medical Center, he oversees operations, supports the integration of enhanced services, supervises personnel, and provides strategic recommendations for innovative programming and future growth.

"Our number one goal is to meet the needs of the community," said Doncaster. "With improved delivery models and expanded access to specialists, we can elevate the level of care available in the community without losing the personal service only a local hospital can provide."

We recently sat down with Doncaster for an update on the partnership.

### **Q: Can you expand on the strategic goals behind Tampa General Hospital's initiative at Lakeside Medical Center?**

**A:** Our vision is to enhance clinical services and innovation, improve community health through support of better outcomes, and expand access to academic-based care in underserved areas, limiting the need for residents to travel far for services. Lakeside Medical Center is a vital community hospital serving the rural Glades region, and we see tremendous potential in this partnership to add more resources, more expertise and more innovation to the care we already provide, while maintaining our identity and our connection to this community. Tampa General can bring in specialists through its provider network in Palm Beach County and its Tampa hospital via telehealth.

### **Q: Why is this partnership significant for the health care landscape in rural South Florida?**

**A:** Rural hospitals like Lakeside Medical Center play a critical role in the health of their communities. With the Health Care District, we're copilots, leveraging the scale and expertise of an academic health system to strengthen operations, increase service availability locally, and ultimately, improve outcomes. It's a community-based model that could serve as a blueprint for transforming rural hospitals statewide.



Ron Doncaster

### **Q: What are the immediate areas of focus for Tampa General at Lakeside?**

**A:** Tampa General and the Health Care District are committed to developing a strategic plan within the following year. This process involves community focus groups and close collaboration with physicians and community leaders. Our goal is to define a clear vision for the next three years, identifying growth opportunities that align services with our patients' health needs.

### **Q: How does this initiative support Tampa General's academic mission?**

**A:** As one of Florida's leading academic health systems, Tampa General — through our partnership with the USF Health Morsani College of Medicine — is committed to education, research and innovation. This initiative creates opportunities to bring additional academic resources into a rural setting, supporting both training and evidence-based care delivery.

### **Q: What workforce implications does this initiative have for the region?**

**A:** Lakeside Medical Center is one of the largest employers in the Glades. Our Family Medicine Residency Program graduated its 13th class of physicians this summer. We view academic medical training as a pipeline for much-needed providers. We support access to continuing education for our hospital team and work with area high schools and colleges to strengthen talent pathways. Our aim is not just to fill positions, but to build careers.

### **Q: How does this effort align with state and federal priorities around rural health?**

**A:** This partnership expands our ability to provide long-term sustainability. It's aligned with initiatives to improve rural health access to quality care, telehealth and technology, address social determinants of health, and strengthen the rural health care workforce.

### **Q: What's your message to other health systems observing this initiative?**

**A:** Tampa General Hospital and the Health Care District's missions of caring for all and empowering communities are closely aligned. Tampa General is proud to be investing in a model that uplifts community-based hospitals through partnership — not replacement. We believe this collaborative approach can deliver measurable results for patients, providers and the broader health system.

## From Scoliosis Diagnosis to a Pain-Free Life

BY JENNIFER WILLIAMSON

When Amanda Cox was 14 years old, she experienced back pain that she thought was due to exercise. But a routine school screening revealed that she had scoliosis, a condition in which the spine curves side to side.

"When someone is diagnosed with scoliosis it's important to get regular follow-up checkups to ensure that the curve is not progressing," says J. Manuel Sarmiento, M.D., a neurosurgeon at Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital.

Amanda's pain progressed and, once she was in her 20s, she began limiting the amount of walking she was doing.

"I was laying down a lot. I was trying to see if I could avoid surgery," Amanda says. She soon realized that surgery was inevitable if she didn't want to be in pain anymore.

She found Dr. Sarmiento after doing a lot of research and says he was "direct and honest" with her. She was happy to have found someone that really cared.

"Even though Amanda was diagnosed with scoliosis as an adolescent, she was never formally treated," Dr. Sarmiento says. "This was going to be her first scoliosis sur-



Amanda Cox (center) and her parents at Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital

gery as a woman in her early 30s and that presents a little bit more challenge than in adolescence." The bones of an adult are more mature, so you must "loosen" the spine to get as good of a correction as you would in adolescence, he added.

Amanda's spine was curved in two places, which resulted in it pushing on her nerves, lungs and kidneys. The curves were symmetrical, however, which kept her head perfectly aligned over her shoulders and over her waist and pelvic area.

Amanda underwent posterior spinal fusion that involved correcting the curves in her thoracic and lumbar spine.

"The final result was a good correction of her scoliosis that kept her spine in proper balance and preserved her mobility," Dr. Sarmiento says.

Amanda has not had any pain since the surgery. She has no restrictions and is living a fully functional life.

"I have done a 360 as far as going from not being able to do anything physical to now being able to run around with the kids and get back to who I was before all of this," Amanda says. "Dr. Sarmiento gave me my younger life back and I am just grateful, very happy."

# Miami Neuroscience Institute Study Explores Safer, Less Invasive Pathway for Brain Surgery

BY DANIEL CASCIATO

At Miami Neuroscience Institute, part of Baptist Health, neurosurgeons are taking a fresh look at how to reach deep brain tumors without the trauma often associated with traditional surgery. Led by Dr. Vitaly Siomin, director of cerebrovascular surgery and co-director of skull base surgery, the team's recent study, published in *Operative Neurosurgery*, suggests that a simpler, less invasive approach could be both safe and effective.

Minimally invasive neurosurgery is a growing field that aims to access tumors and other lesions through smaller openings, specialized tools, and gentler tissue handling. The goal is to achieve the same precision and thoroughness as open surgery while reducing collateral damage to healthy brain tissue.

"We've had this idea for quite some time: accessing deep-seated lesions through a minimally invasive craniotomy with minimal collateral damage," Dr. Siomin says. "We wanted something simple, reproducible, and less damaging."

## How This Technique Differs from Tradition

Traditional brain surgery for deep lesions often requires a large craniotomy, with retractors holding back the brain for prolonged periods. While retractors improve visibility, they can exert significant pressure on the tissue, especially during lengthy tumor resections.

"There are different techniques that became traditional," Dr. Siomin explains. "One option would be just to perform a regular craniotomy, open up the brain, bring the retractors, and work step by step until you reach the lesion. But that constant pressure from the retractors can create significant collateral damage."

More recently, some surgeons have turned to tubular retractors—cylindrical devices that create a fixed channel to the tumor. While they limit the size of the opening, they still apply constant pressure and can be costly.

Miami Neuroscience Institute's approach combines precision with



Dr. Vitaly Siomin

adaptability. Instead of a fixed retraction system, surgeons use what Dr. Siomin calls "dynamic retraction," protecting the brain with small cottonwood patties and shifting them gently as they work.

"As you work on the tumor, you move the patties in various directions with the tips of your instruments, without exerting continuous and constant pressure over long periods of time," he says.

A key feature of the technique is the initial use of a flexible catheter, initially designed for navigating blood vessels. It serves as a navigated guide to reach the tumor's surface without removing large amounts of bone or tissue.

"We do not operate through the catheter itself," Dr. Siomin clarifies. "We use it as a navigated tool to penetrate the brain tissue and get to the surface of the tumor. After that, the catheter is removed, and we put in the cotton pads to protect and retract."

Once the catheter is removed, the dynamic retraction begins, ensuring that the surrounding brain tissue remains cushioned and protected throughout the procedure.

## Which Conditions Benefit Most

The study included 13 patients with serious brain conditions such as glioblastomas, metastases, and other deep-seated tumors. According to Dr. Siomin, the technique is versatile enough for many pathologies near the brain's ventricles or deep within subcortical white matter.

"We've used this approach to remove

colloid cysts of the third ventricle, central neurocytomas, glioblastomas, other malignancies, metastatic lesions; pretty much anything deep-seated where you have to penetrate through brain tissue," he says.

Beyond tumors, the approach may prove equally useful for vascular malformations and certain hemorrhages.

"We have removed cavernous malformations, arteriovenous malformations, benign brain tumors, hemorrhages—it works very well in these situations," he adds.

## Patient Outcomes and Observations

In the study, surgeons were able to remove most or all of the tumor in nearly every case. There were no major surgical complications; only one patient experienced temporary speech and movement issues, which resolved within weeks.

While Dr. Siomin finds these early results encouraging, he emphasizes that more data is needed.

"Intuitively, the incisions are smaller, the craniotomies are smaller, it's more precise, and the collateral brain damage should be less," he says. "But we haven't done thousands of patients to prove that this is actually true. We'll need more studies, larger numbers, and long-term follow-up."

MRI scans, including diffusion-weighted imaging, have not shown significant damage postoperatively, suggesting the approach may indeed minimize injury without compromising tumor removal rates.

## Challenges and Learning Curve

Interestingly, Dr. Siomin reports few technical challenges specific to this method.

"It merges traditional microsurgical techniques with what we now call a minimally invasive approach," he explains. "The learning curve is steep, but once the skill is mastered, the technique is pretty straightforward." That skill involves working within a narrow operative corridor, maintaining orientation, and controlling bleeding, all without the rigid stability of fixed retractors.

## Expanding the Applications

Could this technique become standard for certain deep brain lesions? Dr. Siomin believes it's possible but cautions that comfort and skill with the approach matter more than enforcing a universal standard.

"Many surgeons use different techniques, and it's more important for the surgeon to be comfortable with their chosen approach than to follow what's called a standard of care, especially since such standards often don't exist," he says.

## Next Steps for Research

Looking forward, the team's priority is to increase the number of cases, collect more outcome data, and incorporate neurocognitive assessments, particularly for surgeries in the dominant frontal lobe, where functions like language and decision-making reside.

"I would focus on imaging studies, diffusion-weighted images, and T2 changes," Dr. Siomin says. "Then I'd add neuropsychological evaluations before and after surgery, follow patients over time, and track recurrence and progression-free survival."

These metrics, combined with patient-reported quality-of-life outcomes, could help determine where this minimally invasive approach offers the greatest benefit.

## A Simple Tool with Big Potential

In an era when neurosurgical innovation often means high-tech devices and costly systems, this method's elegance lies in its simplicity. A repurposed vascular catheter and cotton pads, paired with microsurgical skill, may help open new pathways for patients facing complex brain surgery.

"It's not about reinventing everything," Dr. Siomin reflects. "It's about refining our approach to protect the brain as much as possible while still doing the job we need to do."

For more information, visit [BaptistHealth.net](http://BaptistHealth.net).

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## Let's Connect: ACHE of South Florida Spotlight

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# ACHE of South Florida Member Spotlight: Robert Dahl

BY LOIS THOMSON

Two key episodes in his life brought Robert Dahl, MBA, FACHE, to his current position as CEO of Broward Health Imperial Point. The first decision point occurred upon graduating from undergrad searching for his first employer, and discerning which industry to pursue. He was considering a career in choosing between work in computer sciences or healthcare. Dahl tried the computer industry first for a while, but quickly pivoted to healthcare. He built relationships, made the most of opportunities that presented, worked hard, and climbed his way up the ranks within hospital administration.

The second life event occurred when Dahl, who is originally from the Chicago area, worked with his partners and sold a national perioperative and anesthesia consulting firm to a company in Sunrise, Fla. "I consulted in some of the Florida markets, and in particular at Memorial Regional with the team. We had a very successful consulting engagement and that got me exposed to Southern Florida." He said he and his wife Michelle spent a lot of wintertime in Southern Florida, the Keys, and the Caribbean, and really enjoy this part of the country. What's not to love, right?

Dahl joined Broward Health in December of last year as the CEO of Imperial Point Hospital and is also responsible for and contributes to the system's perioperative and anesthesia services. As he explained in more detail, "Being the CEO of a hospital means I'm in charge of and ensuring for the quality, safety, growth, revenues, and strategic planning for the hospital campus in conjunction with how it integrates within the health system."

He discussed what he likes best about his work, saying: "I've always had a servant leader mentality. I consider myself to be a strong operator, and I love improving operational efficiencies, putting all aspects of the care continuum together to improve the patient experience and quality outcomes for patients."

He said he wants Broward Health Imperial Point to be the hospital of choice for patients, the employer of choice for healthcare workers, and to be the safest hospital



Robert Dahl

with the best clinical outcomes within Southern Florida. "I've been fortunate to have success in my career building strong teams geared toward those particular outcomes."

Dahl said that while working at Ingalls Memorial Hospital in Harvey, Ill., the opportunity arose to join the Chicago chapter of ACHE, the American College of Healthcare Executives. "I had the pleasure of working with a lot of very strong leaders in my career, and they strongly encouraged me to get involved." He then became a fellow in 2017, saying he looks at it as "a way of showcasing my dedication to my craft as a healthcare operator and leader."

Dahl considers that earning the distinction of fellow signifies a level of expertise, commitment, and achievement within the profession of health administration, and differentiates one as a competent leader who strives to make a difference in the health of communities.

Speaking about ACHE, Dahl said he believes the benefits vary depending on circumstances: the organization can be particularly helpful for those early in their careers because it offers incredible access to a network of professionals, and for established professionals, it provides numerous education opportunities that help support leaders.

Dahl added that the networking is what he finds to have the most impact. "No one has all the answers, so it's nice to have a network of people you can reach out to when in need. We have many hospitals in Broward County, and we can all learn from each other through the South Florida Chapter, as well as nationally through ACHE."

Giving back is also extremely important to Dahl. "I've been involved in the ACHE mentorship program with mentees or proteges throughout the country, and try to guide them in the right direction in how they can improve their careers. Nothing gives greater pleasure than seeing people self-actualize and attain their career goals."

Dahl was actively involved in the Chicago chapter, Chicago Health Executive Forum, of ACHE and has had limited exposure to the South Chapter to date. "I'm looking forward to being an active member here in South Florida and appreciate those that have already reached out and welcomed me to the community."

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# Coming Together for the Future of Medicine at the FMA Annual Meeting

The 2025 Florida Medical Association (FMA) Annual Meeting this summer was a powerful reminder that medicine is strongest when physicians unite around a shared mission. Held with participation from across the state, the FMA House of Delegates gave physicians an opportunity to listen, learn, lead, and influence healthcare policy. It was a time for open dialogue, cross-county collaboration, and thoughtful debate. Through this united process, we were able to address some of the most pressing issues affecting our patients and our profession.

The South Florida Caucus, comprising the Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach County Medical Associations, played a particularly active role, and I'm proud to report that our three submitted resolutions were adopted by the FMA House of Delegates:

**Resolution 25-302:** "Restoration of Due Process and Legal Protections for Physicians in Hospital Peer Review Proceedings" addresses concerns regarding physicians' due process and access to fair legal remedy. The resolution supports eliminating the requirement for pre-litigation financial bonds, restoring the legal standard of "malice" for claims against peer review misconduct; parity in legal cost recovery; and narrowing the scope of immunity to exclude actions taken with malice, in violation of hospital bylaws, or retaliatory intent.

**Resolution 25-401:** "Preventing Patients from Being 'Trapped' in Medicare Advantage Plans", seeks to protect seniors from misleading or incomplete marketing materials about Medicare Advantage (MA) plans. The resolution calls on the FMA to request that the Florida Insurance Commissioner provide seniors with clear and honest information about MA plan, and for the FMA to design educational handouts on MA plans that physicians can share with their patients.



BY ADRIANA BONANSEA-FRANCES, MD

**Resolution 25-402:** "Enhancing Oversight and Transparency in Healthcare Transactions", responds to the increasing influence of private equity firms, real estate investment trusts (REITs), and management service organizations (MSOs) in healthcare delivery. The resolution directed the FMA to advocate for state legislation to monitor and hold these entities accountable; implement safeguards to prevent adverse effects on patient care; and ensure that healthcare delivery in Florida remains transparent, accountable, and patient-centered.

Our caucus also supported Resolution 25-101: "Supporting Routine Immunization of all Children" submitted by the Florida Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics. The House adopted this resolution, which affirms that the FMA strongly recommends routine childhood immunizations as the safest and most cost-effective way of alleviating disease, disability, and death due to infections caused by vaccine-preventable diseases; and supports the on-time, routine immunization of all children and adolescents.

These wins demonstrate the power of organized medicine. As president of the Miami-Dade County Medical Association, I was proud to witness South Florida's leadership, especially through the efforts of Drs. Rose Berkun, Aaron Elkin, Julie Kantor, Shawn Baca, and Vicki Norton.

The FMA Annual Meeting reaffirmed our profession's core values—clinical excellence, scientific rigor, compassion, and ethical leadership—at a when healthcare faces unprecedented challenges and rapid transformation.

To my fellow physicians: advocacy begins at home. Join your local county medical association. It is where your voice matters most.

*Dr. Adriana Bonansea-Frances is President of the Miami-Dade County Medical Association.*

# KIDZ Genetics Physician Makes Neurofibromatosis Her Life's Mission

BY VANESSA ORR



Dr. Mislen Bauer

When Dr. Mislen Bauer first started the Neurofibromatosis Program at Nicklaus Children's Hospital 40 years ago, little did she know that she would develop a reputation as "the spot lady"—a moniker she proudly shares.

"I see a lot of kids with spots," she says of one of the main symptoms of neurofibromatosis, a group of genetic disorders that cause tumors to grow on nerves throughout the body. "This condition is not as rare as people think; it affects one in 3,000 babies."

Children with neurofibromatosis often develop flat, brown birthmarks on their bodies before age two, as well as freckles in areas not exposed to the sun, like the armpit or groin.

"A lot of people can have similar spots, but if a child has more than six spots with well-defined borders that are very flat and café-au-lait colored, in time, they may develop tiny little nodules that appear wherever they have a nerve," explained Dr. Bauer.

While these tumors can be benign, if they develop on the optic nerve, it can cause severe damage to a child's vision. Approximately 4 percent of children with neurofibromatosis develop facial deformities, and tumors can also form on the extremities, as well as in the brain, chest and abdomen.

"Another issue that these children face is that 70 percent of them with normal IQs have learning disabilities," Dr. Bauer added. "A lot of them are bullied and don't finish high school, so I've dedicated my life to helping them not fall through the cracks."

Dr. Bauer, who serves as the director of both the Craniofacial Center and the Neurofibromatosis Program at Nicklaus Children's Hospital, first became interested in neurofibromatosis when she was introduced to a child with an unusual tibia fracture that would not heal who showed café-au-lait spots.

"No one had realized that because she had neurofibromatosis, this fracture had to be handled very differently than a regular fracture," she said. "I later realized that while growing up, there was a little girl in my neighborhood with a deformed face and learning disabilities who had neurofibromatosis. No one would play with her, though we got to be friends. I realized that I needed to help these families. I made it my mission."

As part of KIDZ Medical Services—a private, physician-owned multispecialty healthcare organization dedicated to neonatal, pediatric, and women's healthcare—Dr. Bauer treats these children with a number of therapies, including a new oral therapy called Koselugo® (selumetinib) that attempts to control the growth of these lesions. Clinical trials showed that over 70 percent of children treated with selumetinib experienced tumor shrinkage, along with improvements in pain, function, and quality of life.

Dr. Bauer has also started a foundation to bring more awareness of the condition to the general public with the hope that children with neurofibromatosis can be identified early on and guided to the help, resources and medications they need.

"Many don't want to follow these children as they age, which happens to a lot of children with genetic problems," she said. "It is a huge concern, transitioning them from childhood to adult medical care."

She is also hoping to work with other South Florida doctors as these patients grow past the pediatric stage.

"These new therapies are promising, but they need to be taken for several years because the lesions keep growing," said Dr. Bauer. "KIDZ Medical Services is following teens and young adults through treatment to monitor their care, as well as to provide more education on the disease."

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## Cover Story: Back to School Bash Benefits South University Nurses, PAs, and PBC



South University physician assistant faculty and students with the College of Nursing students at the Village Academy

Continued from page 1

sitioned online. Nursing students assist with registration, obtain students' height, weight, blood pressure, BMI and perform vision screening, while PA students and faculty provide complete physicals for the school health entry form required by Florida schools and provide referrals as needed.

According to the College of Nursing Professor Sharon Ramjohn, a total of 368 school physicals were completed in both locations at the Back to School Bash on July 26, 2025, compared to 331 last year.

In addition to Dr. Ramjohn, nursing faculty included BSN Program Director Dr. Mary McMullen and nursing professors Dr. Sonia Brown, Dr. Susan Hamley, Dr. Priscilla Baer and Dr. Doreen McLaughlin. PA faculty included Medical Director of the South University MSPA Program Dr. Jeffrey Bishop, Program Director of the PA Program Prof. Lysa Diggins, Assistant Program Director and Back to School Bash Coordinator, Dr. Kimberly Dawkins and PA faculty members Caitlin Spaulding, Dr. Suzanne RoseGreen, Rebecca Magwood, Desiree Hussain and Dr. Sarah Aziz Mahareb.

Dr. Diggins highlighted the importance of local community outreach as, "integral to the PA programs' mission

and vision to improve healthcare equity and reduce disparity."

According to Dr. Ramjohn, the collaboration not only provided an opportunity for nursing and PA students to work together, but to collaborate with other healthcare providers to ensure that students are ready for school.

"It's a circle," she said. "Nursing does one part and PAs do another and if a referral is needed, the students are referred to additional vendors at the bash."

The students who were invited to the event by PBC Office of Community and Revitalization (OCR) can get haircuts, sneakers and school supplies. The Palm Beach Sheriff's Office also provided a bounce house, games area, food and a fire truck to make the event fun for all.

"We are teaching our students to collaborate as an interdisciplinary team," Dr. Ramjohn said. "Studies have shown that collaboration in healthcare improves patient outcomes, and that shared decision making and problem-solving increases nursing students' clinical competencies, knowledge and skills. Moreover, student participation in community activities such as this also enhances advocacy and brings awareness of the need to serve vulnerable populations."

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## How Will Your Malpractice Carrier Fight For You?



It's no longer just a matter of signs hinting at a hardening market. Indisputable evidence is now at the forefront. Malpractice rates are going up across the board. Weaker malpractice carriers are being placed into receivership or sold. Juries are making shockingly high awards. And this is only the beginning.

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These are just a few of the questions you should be asking in this volatile market. It's not too late for a no-obligation medical malpractice insurance review, just contact Tom Murphy of Risk Strategies 800.966.2120 or [tmurphy@risk-strategies.com](mailto:tmurphy@risk-strategies.com).

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## UHealth SoLé Brings More Than 650 Health Care Jobs

Opening in the fall of 2025, UHealth SoLé Mia, part of UHealth - University of Miami Health System, is bringing leading-edge academic medicine and more than 650 health care jobs to the local community.

UHealth's HR team is currently hiring experienced and dedicated health care professionals to serve the diverse local population in North Miami, Aventura, and surrounding areas. After career fairs held in North Miami and Aventura, the team is still actively recruiting for various positions.

"We are building a team where individuals feel deeply connected to our mission, to one another, and to the communities we serve," says Suelen Castro-Haylock, Human Resources' Assistant VP of Talent Acquisition with UHealth. "For many years, we have cultivated a culture where people are empowered to add value and are valued. Our goal is to foster mutual respect, open communication, and shared success. Every team member should feel like a vital part of something meaningful because they truly are."

Powered by the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine, UHealth SoLé Mia will be the health care crown jewel of North Miami. This facility will offer access to research-based, academic medicine focused on healing, wellness, and prevention — setting the standard for care in this community and beyond.

UHealth SoLé Mia will provide expert care across a wide

range of specialties, including:

- The nation's number one eye hospital (Bascom Palmer Eye Institute)
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- UHealth's nationally ranked neurology and neurosurgery programs
- One of the nation's leading centers for urological advancements (Desai Sethi Urology Institute)
- Comprehensive musculoskeletal care through UHealth's collaboration with Hospital for Special Surgery
- Comprehensive imaging and ancillary services
- Supporting amenities with a focus on best-in-class experiences for patients and staff

### Opportunities for Local Health Care Professionals

We are seeking professionals who not only meet each position's technical requirements but also fit the organization's culture and standards for patient care. "We have already welcomed some exceptional talent," Castro-Haylock says.

UHealth's patients and families interact with every member of our team — from valet services and housekeeping to the nursing team, medical technicians, and physicians. UHealth SoLé Mia team members share the institution's vision and goals, including open communication, trust, and transparency.

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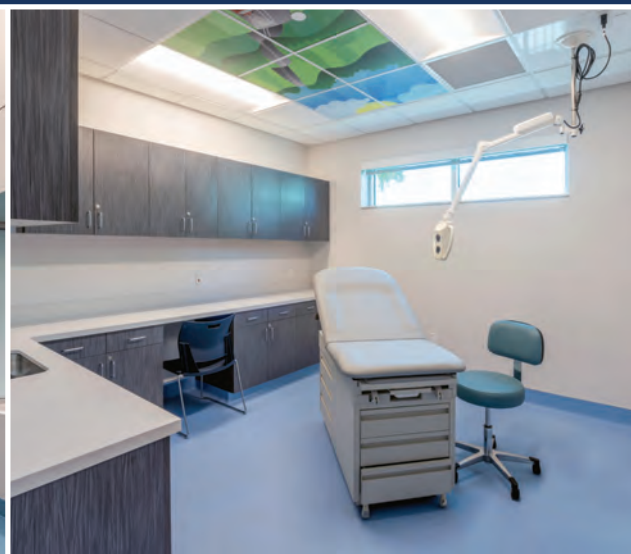
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## HEALTHCARE REAL ESTATE, CONSTRUCTION, DESIGN

# Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Healthcare Facility Design

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing healthcare design, transforming how hospitals and outpatient facilities are planned and operated. This transformation is driven by AI's ability to analyze vast amounts of data to inform design decisions that optimize patient care and staff efficiency. In the past, healthcare design was largely based on historical precedents and anecdotal experience. Now, AI tools allow architects and planners to incorporate real-time analytics into the design process, predicting patterns in patient flow, treatment demand, and staff movement to create more responsive, efficient environments.

Designing with AI allows for data-driven spatial planning. Facilities can be tailored to patient demographics and usage patterns, ensuring departments are sized and located based on actual needs. Predictive modeling can simulate future



BY CHARLES  
MICHELSON, AIA,  
ACHA, LEED AP

healthcare scenarios, such as population growth or the emergence of new treatment modalities, enabling facilities to remain adaptable for decades.

This is particularly important for outpatient facilities, where flexibility is key to supporting evolving care models like telemedicine, wellness clinics, and urgent care centers.

One emerging element shaping this evolution is the use of wearable RFID (Radio-Frequency Identification) chips by patients and staff. These devices instantly identify individuals and allow seamless tracking throughout the facility, from check-in to diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up. This technology improves safety, reduces wait times, and minimizes human error by integrating with electronic medical records and facility systems. It also enables AI-driven systems to monitor workflows in real time, identifying bottlenecks and adapting environments dynamically to improve

throughput and care coordination.

Patients benefit from environments that are calm, efficient, and personalized. Intelligent wayfinding systems reduce stress and improve navigation. Spaces can be designed to support privacy, reduce noise, and accommodate specific patient needs, whether for pediatric, geriatric, or behavioral health care. AI even contributes to enhanced safety and security, monitoring movement patterns to detect potential issues like falls or unauthorized access.

Ultimately, AI is not replacing the human element in healthcare—it is enhancing it. By incorporating AI into design, healthcare facilities become more intuitive, efficient, and supportive of both caregivers and patients. This evolution represents a major step toward more compassionate, accessible, and sustainable healthcare environments that can meet the complex challenges of today and tomorrow.

*Charles Michelson is President of Saltz Michelson Architects.  
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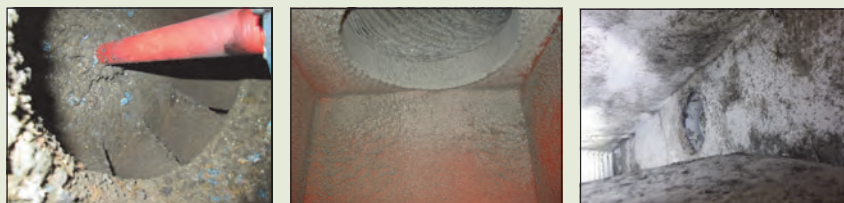
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**TOPIC** Partnerships for Success: Public Health and Health System Collaboration

**DATE/TIME** Thursday, September 11  
6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

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### **Joint Event with SF Hospital & Healthcare Association**

**TOPIC** Artificial Intelligence in Health

**DATE/TIME** Wednesday, September 17  
8:30 am to 3:30 pm

**LOCATION** Renaissance Hotel Plantation West

Register at SFHHA website using Member Fees



1.5 Hours  
(2:00 pm - 3:30 pm)  
of In-Person ACHE  
Education  
Credits

**TOPIC** Service-Line Development

**DATE/TIME** Thursday, September 18  
5:30 pm to 8:00 pm

**LOCATION** Broward Health Medical Center

Register at <https://www.acheofsouthflorida.org/events.php>

1.5 Hours of  
In-Person ACHE  
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*To learn more about ACHE and ACHE of South Florida, visit  
[www.ACHEofsouthflorida.org](http://www.ACHEofsouthflorida.org)*

## Cover Story: New Cleveland Clinic OP Center, Hospital to Provide Improved Access, Jobs

Continued from page 1

of Palm Beach.

“There are a number of drivers behind this project,” he explained. “Our mission as a not-for-profit is to serve patients and there was a gap in the network where patients were not being served. There has also been a lot of growth in this area, and we’ve been asked by the community to expand our emergency and specialty services to meet that need.”

Dr. Delaney noted that such an extensive project could not take place without the support of the community, which he credits for moving the development forward. A fundraising campaign launched in February 2025 has already raised nearly \$150 million for the \$500 million project, including a “lead gift” of \$50 million from real estate developer, philanthropist and Miami Dolphins owner Stephen M. Ross.

### New Facilities, Expanded Services

Cleveland Clinic’s new outpatient location will be located in a new building being constructed at CityPlace, near its former location. Expanded outpatient services will include chemotherapy and infusion therapy, a concierge medicine program, imaging, endoscopy and outpatient surgery.

Plans for the new hospital include approximately 150 inpatient beds with the ability to expand to 200 beds, an emergency department, a medical office building and an ambulatory surgery center. The hospital will be located on newly acquired land next to Clear Lake in West Palm Beach.

“In order to realize what the community was asking for—particularly emergency heart and stroke services—we needed an inpatient facility,” said Dr. Delaney, noting that cardiology, neurology, urology, orthopedics and cancer service lines will also be expanded.



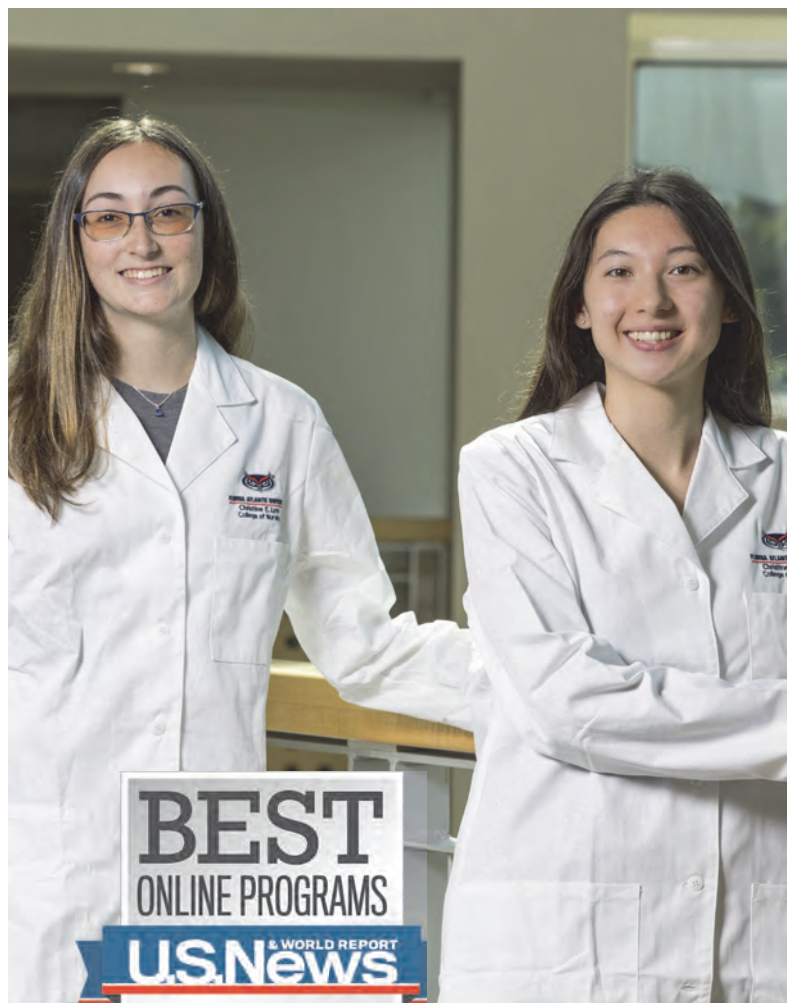
“One of the exciting things about these facilities is that they are literally less than a block from each other, allowing physicians and patients to easily go from the hospital to the ambulatory center.”

Cleveland Clinic Florida’s expansion will not only provide more access for patients and providers, but is expected to benefit the community economically as well.

“This will be the first new hospital constructed in this area in many decades, and hospitals tend to provide very good jobs in the communities they serve,” said Dr. Delaney, estimating that approximately 2,000 jobs may be created as a result of the expansion. “We are very excited about our partnerships in the community and the ability to bring in high-end, highly trained jobs.”

“We strive to bring the highest quality of care to every community we serve, from Ohio to the Treasure Coast,” he added.

To learn more about Cleveland Clinic Florida, visit <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/florida>.



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## How Broward Health Is Expanding Access and Building a Healthier Broward County

Broward Health is reshaping the way healthcare is delivered in the community through new facilities, expanded services and programs designed to bring care closer to home. With a clear focus on increasing access, improving patient outcomes and addressing the county's most pressing healthcare challenges, the healthcare system is strategically shaping the region's healthcare landscape for decades to come.

### Expanding the Physical Footprint

For the first time in over 25 years, Broward Health is undertaking several major construction projects. These projects, which include property acquisitions and new partnerships, will expand services, attract top talent in the healthcare industry and bring high-quality care closer to where people live and work.

### Medical Complexes and Physician Offices

Broward Health is investing in the future by acquiring land in Fort Lauderdale, Deerfield Beach, Oakland Park and Parkland to develop modern medical complexes and physician offices.

- **Fort Lauderdale- Broward Health Medical Center** is developing a new eight-story, 188,000-square-foot medical office building and parking garage designed to expand access and enhance patient-centered care. The facility will include 129 exam rooms, with the capacity to grow to 237, and will house a range of specialties, including cardiovascular, pulmonology, primary care, gastroenterology, neuroscience and women's services, with additional space reserved for future growth.

- **Deerfield Beach - Broward Health North** is adding a six-story, 114,000-square-foot medical office building with 75 exam rooms, expandable to 123, and specialties including cardiovascular services, neuroscience and orthopedics. A seven-story, 300,000-square-foot parking garage with about 700 spaces will enhance convenience for patients, visitors and staff.

- **Oakland Park:** A three-story property is being renovated into a medical office building that will offer primary care, multi-specialty and OB/GYN services, ensuring residents have access to a wide range of medical expertise close to home.

- **Parkland:** Broward Health has acquired a 7-acre parcel in Parkland for the future development of an outpatient center and additional medical facilities. The expansion aims to meet the growing healthcare needs of the community and improve access to outpatient services in the area.

### Freestanding Emergency Departments (FSEDs)

- **Lighthouse Point** – Now under construction, this two-story, state-of-the-art emergency department, the first in the city, will offer the same level of care as a hospital-based ED. The first floor will feature 10 exam rooms, with an additional nine on the second floor, along with medical office space. Once open, it is projected that 18,000 patients will be treated annually.

- **Sunrise** – This unique full-service emergency department is in partnership with Broward Health and Memorial Healthcare System, with Broward Health providing adult emergency care and Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital providing pediatric emergency services. Sunrise has long been considered a medical desert, lacking necessary medical services for residents. This ED will mitigate that gap.

- **Fort Lauderdale** – Broward Health has partnered with the YMCA to build a joint facility in Holiday Park that includes a freestanding full-service emergency department. Together, the YMCA and Broward Health are creating a health and wellness hub in the heart of the community.

### Meeting Communities Where They Are

Physical expansion is only part of the story. Earlier this year, Broward Health launched two innovative, transformative initiatives, Stay Healthy Together and Better Together.

### Stay Healthy Together

Stay Healthy Together is a comprehensive community health initiative designed to enhance access to preventative and primary care and improve long-term health outcomes throughout Broward County, through Broward HealthPoint, an affiliate of Broward Health.

"Our healthcare system is committed to extending care far beyond the walls of our hospitals, to bring care closer to where residents live," said Shane Strum, president and CEO of Broward Health.

Broward HealthPoint mobile units travel to targeted zip codes three days a week for at least eight weeks, offering free screenings, school physicals, primary care, nutrition



**Broward Health North medical office building**



**Medical office building at Broward Health Medical Center**

counseling and specialist referrals. After the initial eight weeks, mobile units continue visiting the area one day a week for the next two years to ensure ongoing access.

"With Stay Healthy Together, we're meeting people where they are, right in their neighborhoods," added Melida Akiti, corporate transformation executive. "This is just the beginning. We look forward to partnering with all our cities and organizations in Broward County to expand this model."

### Better Together

A partnership between Broward Health and Memorial Healthcare System, Better Together focuses on ensuring uninsured and underinsured adults and pregnant women have timely access to primary and maternal healthcare.

The program provides personalized care at every stage of life, from chronic disease management to preventive screenings. For mothers and infants, services include checkups, parenting classes and access to high-risk pregnancy specialists. Regular visits allow for early detection of potential health concerns, improving outcomes and preventing complications. A dedicated call center connects residents to nearby services, whether at a brick-and-mortar clinic or a mobile health unit.

"This call center is more than just a phone number," Akiti said. "It's a lifeline for families navigating the complexity of healthcare. By listening to our community and working collaboratively, we're removing barriers and bringing care directly to those who need it most."

### A Future Focused on Access and Innovation

From building new emergency departments and medical complexes to launching targeted community outreach programs, Broward Health is making strategic, long-term investments that address both immediate needs and future challenges.

These efforts ensure that more residents — regardless of location, insurance status or socioeconomic background — can access timely, high-quality care. In doing so, Broward Health is not only expanding its physical footprint but also strengthening the fabric of healthcare delivery across Broward County.

For more information, visit [BrowardHealth.org/News](http://BrowardHealth.org/News)



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# alzheimer's

## Advancing Brain Health at Holy Cross Health's Phil Smith Neuroscience Institute

Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia worldwide. As people live longer, the prevalence of this disease is increasing rapidly. In the U.S., an estimated 7.2 million Americans aged 65 and older are currently living with Alzheimer's disease.

In Alzheimer's disease, the brain undergoes several changes. Beta-amyloid proteins accumulate extracellularly, disrupting communication and promoting neurodegeneration. Meanwhile, tau proteins deposit intracellularly, forming tangles that interfere with the cell's transport system. These processes lead to inflammation, synapse loss and neuronal death. The disease typically begins in the hippocampus, essential for memory formation, and gradually spreads to other brain regions.

Diagnosis of Alzheimer's has improved significantly in recent years. Traditionally, it relied on clinical assess-



BY EDUARDO ZAMORA, MD

ments and excluding other conditions. Today, clinicians use cognitive testing along with neuroimaging techniques like Ultra-High-Field MRI or PET scans to observe brain changes. Cerebrospinal fluid tests that measure amyloid and tau protein levels, along with newer blood-based biomarkers, are now accessible diagnostic tools. These advancements have made early detection more accurate and less invasive.

Early diagnosis of Alzheimer's is crucial. It enables timely initiation of treatment, protection of healthy neurons, participation in clinical trials, planning for future care, and implementation of new therapies and lifestyle changes that may help slow disease progression. It also allows families to access support services and prepare for caregiving challenges.

Treatment for Alzheimer's has evolved

significantly. Older medications such as cholinesterase inhibitors—donepezil, rivastigmine, and galantamine—and the NMDA receptor antagonist memantine help manage symptoms by enhancing neurotransmitter function and slowing cognitive decline. However, these drugs do not modify the underlying disease. More recently, monoclonal antibodies such as lecanemab and donanemab, which target beta-amyloid plaques, have shown the ability to slow cognitive decline in early stages of Alzheimer's disease.

The Phil Smith Neuroscience Institute at Holy Cross Health in Fort Lauderdale offers one of the most advanced programs for early diagnosis, treatment and comprehensive care of patients with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Utilizing state-of-the-art 3T MRI, neurocognitive testing and access to novel blood-based biomarkers, the Institute provides outstanding technology and expert care for diagnosing and treating this condition.

As a board-certified neurologist who

conducted research on an experimental Alzheimer's vaccine model awarded at Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, I bring both scientific expertise and extensive clinical experience to patient care. My colleague, Dr. Michelle Ferreira, is a board-certified neurologist with deep expertise in Geriatric Neurology, including cognitive disorders. Dr. Ferreira received her medical degree from Nova Southeastern University. She completed her Neurology residency at the University of Miami and her Movement Disorders Fellowship at Cleveland Clinic Florida.

As a leading neuroscience center in South Florida, the Phil Smith Institute is committed to advancing brain health through excellence in medical care, research and compassionate support for patients and their families.

*Learn more at [HolyCrossNeuro.com](https://www.holycrossneuro.com).*

*Dr. Eduardo Zamora is a Neurologist at Holy Cross Medical Group.*

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# alzheimer's

## Advancing Alzheimer's Care in South Florida: Earlier Diagnosis, Better Outcomes, Stronger Communities



BY DR. RANJAN  
DUARA

In South Florida, Alzheimer's disease is more than a medical challenge—it is a growing public health priority. Nearly half a million Floridians are currently living with the disease, and that number is expected to rise sharply in the coming years. Meeting this challenge requires earlier diagnosis, effective treatments, and comprehensive support systems that reflect the diversity of our state.

At Mount Sinai Medical Center, our work through the Florida Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC)—a National Institute on Aging-funded collaboration between the University of Florida, University of Miami, Florida International University and Florida Atlantic University, transforming how we approach Alzheimer's care and research in South Florida. Our mission: provide the most accurate diagnoses, deliver the treatment and care to the patient and the patients' loved ones that improves quality

of life today while advancing research that shapes the future of treatment and prevention.

### Detecting Alzheimer's Earlier

Alzheimer's begins years before symptoms become obvious. At the Wien Center for Alzheimer's Disease and Memory Disorders, we combine detailed patient history, neurological and psychiatric examination, advanced brain imaging, blood biomarkers, and culturally relevant cognitive testing to detect these changes earlier than ever before.

Earlier diagnosis gives patients and families valuable time to plan, begin treatment, and access support services. This proactive approach enables eligible individuals to participate in clinical trials, potentially accessing emerging therapies before they become widely available.

Beginning in January 2026, the arrival of Leonard Sokol, M.D., will expand our diagnostic, treatment, and research capabilities. Dr. Sokol, a neurologist with expertise in behavioral neurology and palliative care, joins us from Scripps Clinic in San Diego, where he focused on conditions such as Lewy Body Dementia.

### Treatments for Alzheimer's and Related Dementias

The treatment landscape for Alzheimer's is undergoing revolutionary transformation. We are advancing beyond symptomatic treatments—which provide temporary relief but don't alter underlying disease—to groundbreaking disease-modifying therapies targeting neurodegeneration's root causes.

The most promising developments involve antibody treatments that target pathologic proteins in the brain. These therapies remove beta amyloid plaques and show potential for targeting abnormal tau protein tangles. Additionally, researchers are exploring treatments addressing brain inflammation, cerebrovascular disease, and metabolic disorders including diabetes—all contributors to cognitive decline.

The future lies in personalized combination approaches. By integrating disease-modifying treatments with symptomatic therapies and evidence-based lifestyle interventions, we are seeing encouraging results that promise to transform Alzheimer's management.

### Comprehensive Support for Families

Alzheimer's impacts entire families. Our care model is built to support everyone involved, offering counseling, caregiver training, and community resource access. This approach reduces caregiver burnout, improve patient safety, and maintains quality of life.

We also lead the Florida Brain Bank, a statewide program that provides definitive diagnoses through brain donation. This initiative not only advances research but also gives families clarity and closure.

### Research Designed for Our Community

As part of the IFlorida ADRC, we conduct studies reflecting South Florida's unique demographics. Many participants are Hispanic or bilingual—groups historically underrepresented in Alzheimer's research. By ensuring inclusivity, we develop diagnostic tools, treatments, and support programs that work for all populations.

Our research includes innovative caregiver interventions like CuidaTEXT, a bilingual text-messaging program providing daily tips to Spanish-speaking caregivers. Each project directly impacts lives today while moving us closer to a cure.

### Collaboration for Statewide Impact

Our role in the IFlorida ADRC connects Mount Sinai to leading institutions accelerating research translation into patient care and ensuring advancements reach our community faster.

Alzheimer's is a complex challenge that no single institution can solve alone. By combining patient-centered care, rigorous research, and strong partnerships, we are building a future where earlier diagnoses, better treatments, and stronger support systems are within reach for every family in South Florida.

*Dr. Ranjan Duara is Medical Director, Wien Center for Alzheimer's Disease and Memory Disorders, Mount Sinai Medical Center.*

## Innovative Alzheimer's Support Through NeuroArts and Whole-Person Wellness at Lisbet

BY HOLLY HINES AND HALEY KINNE-NORRIS

Alzheimer's disease presents a complex journey, affecting memory, behavior, and emotional well-being. At Lisbet Assisted Living and Memory Care, residents are supported through every stage of Alzheimer's with a unique blend of science, compassion, and creativity. Central to this approach is the integration of NeuroArts, a field that uses artistic expression—music, visual arts, drama, and movement—to stimulate brain function and enhance quality of life.

Lisbet's programming is thoughtfully enacted across both assisted living and memory care, ensuring that individuals in all stages of Alzheimer's receive appropriate, enriching experiences. Whether someone is navigating early cognitive changes or requires advanced support, the goal remains the same: to keep the mind and body engaged, and the spirit uplifted.

Community programs include:

- **Inspired by Music:** Weekly sessions use seasonal songs and instruments to evoke memories and emotions.
- **Relish Painting:** A no-mess watercolor activity where residents "paint" with water to reveal images that fade as they dry, fostering creativity and accomplishment.
- **You Be the Judge:** Dramatic reenactments of real court cases engage residents in role-play and imaginative dialogue.
- **Zippo Poetry:** Residents craft haiku-like poems inspired by the Wellington zip code (33414), nurturing language and personal expression.



These offerings stem from Liberty Senior Living's INSPIRE Life Enrichment and GEMMS programs. GEMMS stands for Genuine, Engaging, and Meaningful Moments, and is inspired by Teepa Snow's Positive Approach to Care. It emphasizes recognizing and celebrating the abilities that remain at each stage of dementia. INSPIRE promotes whole-person wellness through experiences that are Inclusive, Nutritional, Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Recreational, and Engaging, empowering residents to pursue passions, discover new interests, and live with purpose.

Adding to the therapeutic environment, the artwork in Lisbet's memory care neighborhood is carefully curated to stimulate nostalgic memories and feelings. Covers from *The New Yorker* and *The Saturday Evening Post* feature

children, pets, beach scenes, and autumn landscapes. Food-themed images—like old-fashioned ice cream counters, soda fountains, and sweet corn—are chosen to evoke comfort and stimulate appetite.

Lisbet's commitment to excellence is further reinforced by Liberty Senior Living's designation as an ICAA 100 Member, placing it among a select group of senior living organizations leading the way in wellness innovation. This affiliation ensures that Lisbet remains at the forefront of aging research, programming, and best practices.

Through NeuroArts, INSPIRE, and GEMMS, residents are not just cared for—they are celebrated.

*Holly Hines is Regional Dementia Care Coordinator for Liberty Senior Living and Haley Kinne-Norris is Regional INSPIRE Wellness and Life Enrichment Coordinator for Liberty Senior Living*



## The Clubhouse Model: Transforming Mental Health Recovery Through Community

The clubhouse model stands as a beacon of hope for individuals living with serious mental illness. This evidence-based approach, transforming lives for over 65 years, creates communities where people are valued for their talents rather than defined by their diagnoses.



BY ANDY  
MCAUSLAND

### What Makes the Clubhouse Model Different

The clubhouse model fundamentally reimagines mental health recovery by centering on community, peer support, and meaningful work. Unlike traditional treatment facilities where individuals are patients receiving services, clubhouses welcome "members" who work alongside staff as equals. This approach recognizes that recovery involves rebuilding lives and reconnecting with society.

The model addresses social isolation by having members participate in run-

ning the clubhouse itself, taking on responsibilities in food service, administration, maintenance, and outreach. This work-ordered day structure provides purpose and builds confidence while developing practical skills that translate to employment opportunities.

### Evidence-Based Benefits

Research consistently demonstrates the clubhouse model's effectiveness across multiple recovery domains. A 2018 systematic review found solid evidence that clubhouses increase employment rates, reduce hospitalizations, and improve relationships and quality of life for people with serious mental illness. Studies show clubhouse members experience fewer psychiatric readmissions and demonstrate better long-term outcomes compared to those receiving traditional services alone.

### Building Skills and Community

The clubhouse model emphasizes real-world skill development through genuine work that keeps the clubhouse functioning. Members prepare meals, manage databases, coordinate events, and handle administrative tasks. Through these activities, they develop vocational skills, build confidence, and establish purpose and belonging.

Peer relationships formed within clubhouses are particularly valuable. Members support each other through challenges, celebrate successes together, and form lasting friendships. This natural support network becomes crucial for long-term recovery, providing social connections that many members may have lost due to their mental health challenges.

### Mental Health America of the Palm Beaches: A Local Success Story

Mental Health America of the Palm Beaches exemplifies the clubhouse model in action. Operating two locations in West Palm Beach and Belle Glade, the organization follows internationally recognized Clubhouse International standards. Their approach demonstrates how clubhouses can meet specific community needs while maintaining core principles that make the model effective.

At MHA of the Palm Beaches, members find an environment where they are valued for their abilities and contributions. The organization provides comprehensive support including employment assistance, housing resources, educational opportunities, and access to medical and psychiatric services. Their supportive employment program offers specialized coaching for

members seeking to re-engage in the workforce.

The organization's commitment to the clubhouse philosophy is evident in their approach. Members are not referred to as patients or clients but as valued community members working alongside staff. This fundamental shift in perspective helps combat stigma and empowers individuals to see themselves as capable of meaningful contributions.

### A Model for the Future

The clubhouse model represents more than an alternative treatment approach; it offers a vision of what mental health recovery can look like through creating community. By focusing on strengths rather than deficits, work rather than treatment, and membership rather than patienthood, clubhouses create environments where people with mental health challenges can thrive.

Organizations like Mental Health America of the Palm Beaches demonstrate that with the right support, individuals with serious mental illness can lead fulfilling, productive lives integrated within their communities.

The success of the clubhouse model reminds us that recovery is possible, that every person has inherent worth, and that community support can be one of the most powerful tools in the journey toward mental wellness.

To learn more about Mental Health America of the Palm Beaches, please visit [mhapalmbeaches.org](http://mhapalmbeaches.org), call (561) 832-3755, or email [info@mhapalmbeaches.org](mailto:info@mhapalmbeaches.org).

Andy McAusland is CEO, Mental Health America of the Palm Beaches.



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## Cover Story: Expanding Access to Mental Health Care: How Florida Atlantic's PMHNP Program Trains the Next Generation of Compassionate Providers

*Continued from page 1*

Nursing Practice (DNP) program designed to equip nurses with the advanced skills necessary to diagnose, treat, and manage mental health conditions across diverse populations and settings.

"The curriculum focuses on the development of knowledge and skills to conduct psychiatric evaluations, diagnose and treat mental health needs, provide medication management, and psychotherapeutic interventions, with our practice focus grounded in caring," explains Dr. King.

Beyond clinical care, the program also prepares students to lead in shaping the future of mental health care. "In addition, DNP PMHNPs are prepared to become leaders in practice, translating research into practice, influencing mental health policy, and shaping health care delivery systems," she adds.

### Certificate Option Expands Opportunities

In addition to the full BSN to DNP pathway, the college also offers a post-graduate certificate option for already practicing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), such as Family Nurse Practitioners.

While both tracks prepare graduates for the PMHNP scope of practice, the certificate option is ideal for clinicians seeking to pivot into psychiatric mental health without repeating foundational coursework.

"The post-graduate certificate option is for advanced practice nurses, such as Family Nurse Practitioners, seeking additional knowledge and skills to assume the role of PMHNP," says Dr. King. "Their scope of practice is the same as the DNP-prepared PMHNP, with a focus on improving health outcomes."

### A Nurse-Led Clinic That Meets Real Community Needs

Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of the PMHNP program is its nurse-led clinic: the Northwest Community Health Alliance (NCHA) Community Health Center (CHC) in West Palm Beach. This federally qualified health center look-alike serves as a vital training ground for PMHNP students.

This setting provides real-world exposure to the environmental and social challenges patients face.

"With traditional educational systems, students lack first-hand experiences in working with individuals, families and populations in 'the conditions in the environment where people are born, live, learn work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality of life outcomes and risks,'" says Dr. King.

This real-world exposure addresses a key gap in traditional nursing education, which often lacks meaningful immersion in the social determinants of health, the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and age. By working in this innovative community model, students gain firsthand experience in addressing barriers to care, such as transportation, poverty, housing instability, and more.

### Addressing a Full Spectrum of Mental Health Challenges

Within the clinic, students encounter a wide range of mental health issues, from depression and anxiety to severe psychiatric disorders exacerbated by socioeconomic stressors. The hands-on practicum experience allows students to apply classroom knowledge under the close supervision of experienced practitioners.

"These students are seeing the full range of mental health issues that providers deal with every day," says Dr. King. "They're learning how to care for individuals and families with compassion and confidence."

### A Timely and Impactful Program

Florida Atlantic has been a trailblazer in psychiatric nursing education. In 2017, the College of Nursing launched the first online post-graduate certificate and DNP PMHNP program in the state of Florida. Since then, the program has graduated scores of mental health professionals who now deliver care to thousands across the region.

"Our program aims to develop a PMHNP workforce that mirrors the population of South Florida and the nation," notes Dr. King. "Today, the graduates are delivering desperately needed compassionate and competent mental health care to thousands of south Floridians."

### Grounded in a Philosophy of Caring

At the heart of the PMHNP program is the College of Nursing's unwavering commitment to caring science. This philosophy is more than just a teaching method—it is a way of life.

"We are dedicated to advancing the science, studying the meaning, and living the practice of caring every day," says Dr. King. "Our graduates don't just know how to treat patients. They know how to care for them."

That philosophy continues to shape the PMHNP program's reputation for graduating thoughtful, compassionate, and highly skilled psychiatric nurse practitioners who are ready to address the mental health challenges of today—and tomorrow.

### Looking Ahead

As the need for mental health services continues to grow in Florida and nationwide, programs like this are more critical than ever. With a blend of rigorous clinical training, innovative community partnerships, and a foundation in caring science, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing is not only preparing future leaders in psychiatric nursing, but also improving lives, one patient at a time.

Dr. King encourages those interested to connect with graduates and learn more about the program's lasting impact.

*For more information, visit [nursing.fau.edu](https://nursing.fau.edu).*

## Cover Story: The Growing Threat of Retroactive Clawbacks in South Florida's Mental Health Sector

*Continued from page 1*

tal health include authorization mismatches, such as billing for more sessions than authorized or failing to renew expired authorizations. Coding discrepancies also trigger clawbacks, for instance, billing a 60-minute psychotherapy session when only 45 minutes were authorized, or using unspecified codes without supporting documentation. Medical necessity disputes arise when insurers later claim therapy notes don't justify treatment frequency or duration, citing inadequate documentation of progress toward goals.

Another frequent cause is changes in payer internal policies. Insurers may alter their authorization, coding, or documentation rules without timely notice to providers. Third-party auditors can then apply these new rules retroactively, clawing back payments for claims that

complied with policies in place at the time of service. Florida law allows providers to dispute such retroactive clawbacks, especially when they conflict with prompt-pay and authorization protections.

South Florida providers are particularly vulnerable due to the region's diverse commercial insurance market, frequent patient coverage changes, and reliance on managed care plans. Additionally, multilingual documentation needs in Miami-Dade and Broward counties can lead to insurer claims of insufficient documentation.

Though Florida-specific clawback data is limited, the U.S. Government Accountability Office reports nationwide retrospective recoveries reach hundreds of millions annually across Medicaid and commercial plans. For small practices,

even a few thousand dollars reclaimed can threaten their financial viability.

Providers are not powerless. Florida law and federal ERISA regulations require insurers to provide clear reasons for overpayment recoveries, offer providers a chance to appeal before withholding future payments, and follow strict audit timelines. Experienced healthcare reimbursement law firms like Abril Law specialize in helping providers fight clawbacks by reviewing audit methods for errors, drafting strong appeals citing applicable laws, representing clients in arbitration or litigation, and negotiating repayment settlements that protect cash flow.

Preventing clawbacks also depends on operational diligence: verifying authorizations in writing before treatments, ensuring CPT codes precisely match

authorized services, thoroughly documenting treatment progress, regularly confirming patient coverage, and conducting internal claims audits quarterly.

Retroactive clawbacks pose a serious threat to the financial health of South Florida's mental health community. Providers who understand the causes, maintain meticulous records, and enlist expert legal support can turn clawback demands into successful disputes, safeguarding their revenue and ability to serve patients.

*If you are a behavioral health provider facing retroactive clawbacks, contact Abril Law today at (305) 373-0901 for a free consultation.*

*Trevor Biglin, Associate, Abril Law, can be reached at [tbiglin@abrilaw.com](mailto:tbiglin@abrilaw.com).*

## *A message from our President*

### **Healthcare at a Crossroads: Help Us Choose the Conversations That Matter**

Healthcare is an issue that touches every person in our community, whether directly through our own experiences or indirectly through the care of family members, friends, and neighbors. Hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, and hospices are constantly evolving to meet the needs of patients, while also adapting to rapid changes in medical technology, workforce challenges, financial pressures, and public health demands. As these issues grow more complex, it is important that we bring people together—providers, educators, community leaders, and policymakers—to have thoughtful conversations about where healthcare is headed and how we can prepare for the future.

Our association is planning a series of educational programs designed to spark dialogue around today's most pressing healthcare topics. We know that issues such as affordability, access, quality of care, workforce shortages, advances in medical innovation, and the role of artificial intelligence in healthcare are on the minds of many. At the same time, we recognize that each person brings a unique perspective shaped by his or her own healthcare journey.

For some, the focus may be on how will we ensure access to care for all patients—especially the uninsured, underinsured, and those in rural or underserved communities? How will technology—including artificial intelligence, tele-



**Jaime Caldwell**

health, and advanced medical treatments—reshape healthcare delivery? One of my favorites is how can the healthcare system better address public health challenges such as aging populations, chronic disease, mental health, and future pandemics? How can we improve mental health services and address addiction. Alternatively, how can we strengthen and sustain the healthcare workforce?

For others, it might be what the path forward is for controlling healthcare costs while improving quality? Still others may be most interested in understanding how changes in Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance affect patients and providers alike.

That is why we want to hear directly from you.

Which healthcare topics would you be most interested in learning more about? Your feedback is essential in shaping discussions that are meaningful and relevant. By sharing your interests, you help ensure that the conversations we create will resonate with our community and drive positive change. Please take a moment to reflect on the healthcare issues that matter most to you and let us know your thoughts. Together, we can shine a light on the challenges ahead and work toward solutions that benefit patients, families, and caregivers across our region.

We want to hear from you. Which of these healthcare challenges do you believe is most urgent? What topics would you like to see explored in programs or discussions? Your input will help guide the conversations that matter most. Send your thoughts to [info@sfhha.com](mailto:info@sfhha.com) and next month I will share the results and we will begin to plan a program, or two. It will be a community effort.

## *Around the Region... Around the Region... Around the Region...*

### **VITAS® Healthcare Announces CEO Transition and Appointment of New Chief Executive Officer**

VITAS Healthcare announced that Nicholas M. Westfall will step down as chairman and chief executive officer to pursue other personal and professional opportunities. Joel L. Wherley, president and chief operating officer, was appointed by the Board to succeed Westfall as chief executive officer of VITAS Healthcare.

Wherley brings nearly a decade of executive leadership at VITAS to his new role. He has served as chief operating officer for the past eight years and assumed the role of president in 2024, overseeing operational performance, strategic execution and enterprise-wide initiatives.



**Joel L. Wherley**

### **Tampa General Hospital Names National Health Leader Sarah Frahn to Head Women's Institute & Muma Children's Hospital at TGH**

Tampa General Hospital (TGH) has named Sarah Frahn, MBA, MSN, RN, NE-BC, as its new vice president of Women & Children's Services.

Frahn joins Tampa General from Seattle Children's Hospital where she led high-volume surgical programs and drove measurable improvements in access, efficiency, patient satisfaction and team engagement. As a former ICU nurse with deep experience in transplant coordination and complex specialty care, Frahn has also held leadership roles at Children's Hospital of Orange County in Orange, CA, where she supported enterprise-wide innovation and expansion. Originally from southern Ontario, Canada, Frahn holds dual master's degrees in business administration and nurse executive leadership and is board-certified as a nurse executive.



**Sarah Frahn**

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## Global Leader in Pediatric Congenital Cardiac Surgery Joins Nicklaus Children's, Faculty of FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine

Dr. David M. Kalfa, a pioneer in developing minimally invasive surgical approaches to treating congenital heart defects, has joined Nicklaus Children's as chief of the Section of Cardiovascular Surgery and co-director of the Nicklaus Children's Heart Institute. He also will serve as a professor in the Department of Pediatrics and the Department of Surgical Sciences and a researcher at the Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine.

Dr. Kalfa joins Nicklaus Children's from Columbia University Irving Medical Center in New York City, where he served as the Florence Irving Associate Professor of Surgery. He also led programs at NewYork-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, including as surgical director of the Initiative for Pediatric Cardiac Innovation and director of the Pediatric Heart Valve Center.

A native of France, Dr. Kalfa earned his medical degree from the University of Marseille and a Ph.D. in cardiovascular tissue engineering from Paris Descartes University. He completed postdoctoral training in pediatric cardiac surgery at Marie Lannelongue Hospital, Paris Sud University, followed by advanced surgical training in Quebec, Canada.



**Dr. David M. Kalfa**

## Nationally Recognized Cardiac Surgeon Tapped to Serve as New Chief Executive of the Lee Health Heart Institute

Lee Health is pleased to welcome nationally recognized cardiac surgeon Dr. Daniel O'Hair as the new chief physician executive of the Lee Health Heart Institute. With more than 25 years of experience, Dr. O'Hair is known for his leadership in advancing cardiovascular care, including expertise in robotic and minimally invasive surgery, transcatheter technologies, and building high-performing heart programs.

Before joining Lee Health, Dr. O'Hair served as the director of cardiovascular surgery at Boulder Community Health in Boulder, CO. Before that, he was a practicing cardiothoracic surgeon and executive leader of the cardiovascular service line at Aurora Health Care. He also served as a board member of the Aurora Health Care Medical Group.

Dr. O'Hair received his undergraduate degree from Marquette University, his medical degree from the Medical College of Wisconsin, and completed his residency in cardiothoracic surgery and transplantation at New York-Presbyterian Columbia University Medical Center.



**Dr. Daniel O'Hair**

## Delray Medical Center's Dr. Joseph Ricotta Named No. 2 Vascular Surgeon in the Nation by Newsweek

Delray Medical Center surgeon Dr. Joseph Ricotta, Medical Director of Vascular Surgery and Endovascular Therapy, has once again been recognized on Newsweek's list of America's Best Vascular Surgeons, ranking No. 2 in the entire country. This prestigious honor underscores Dr. Ricotta's exceptional skill, leadership, and commitment to delivering the highest quality vascular care.

Dr. Ricotta is National Medical Director of Vascular Surgery and Endovascular Therapy for Tenet Healthcare, Professor of Surgery and Vascular Surgery Fellowship Program Director at Florida Atlantic University's School of Medicine, and founder of the Prime Vascular Institute.

Dr. Ricotta's work at Delray Medical Center has brought state-of-the-art technology and advanced treatment options to patients across South Florida and beyond. His team offers a full spectrum of vascular and endovascular services, from noninvasive diagnostics to complex surgical interventions, all delivered with a focus on safety, precision, and recovery.



**Dr. Joseph Ricotta**

## Baptist Health Heart & Vascular Care Welcomes Seven Esteemed Vascular Surgeons

Baptist Health Heart & Vascular Care announces the addition of seven highly accomplished vascular surgeons to Baptist Health Miami Cardiac & Vascular Institute, further advancing its commitment to exceptional cardiovascular care.

The physicians, who have extensive experience treating a wide range of vascular conditions, include Abilio A. Coello, M.D., Howard E. Katzman, M.D., Young C. Lee, M.D., Anand N. Tarpara, M.D., Michele L. Taubman, M.D., Ignacio Rua, M.D., and Athanassios I. Tsoukas, M.D.

As members of one of the highest-volume vascular care centers in the region, the physicians will collaborate with the Institute's multidisciplinary team to deliver leading-edge surgical care through advanced diagnostics and minimally invasive and traditional surgical procedures.

## Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital Welcomes Heart Transplant Surgeon

Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital is proud to welcome Antonio R. Polanco, M.D., a board-certified and highly skilled surgeon specializing in heart transplantation, mechanical assist devices and complex adult cardiothoracic surgery.

Dr. Polanco earned his medical degree from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York. He then completed an integrated cardiothoracic surgery residency at Columbia University Medical Center and a fellowship in mechanical circulatory support and heart transplantation at Washington University.

Prior to joining Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital, Dr. Polanco elevated the Johns Hopkins Hospital heart transplant program to one of the top 15 heart transplant centers in the country. He performed the hospital's first DCD heart transplant and has pioneered work to increase ischemic times for donors, going as far as 2,000 miles to retrieve donor hearts. He also played a key role in growing the Hopkins ECMO program to one of the highest volume programs in the country.



**Dr. Antonio R. Polanco**

## Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital Welcomes Cancer Specialist

Simon Vinarsky, M.D., a board-certified hematologist and medical oncologist, has joined the Scully-Welsh Cancer Center at Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital. He holds certification from the American Board of Internal Medicine in both hematology and medical oncology.

He earned his medical degree from Dnipropetrovsk State Medical Academy in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine, and completed his residency at Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, where he refined his clinical expertise in internal medicine. He then completed a fellowship in hematology/oncology at North Shore University Hospital, Northwell Health.

Dr. Vinarsky's specialty interests include benign hematology, breast cancer, gastrointestinal malignancies, lung cancer, and lymphoma. He is committed to advancing personalized treatment strategies and improving outcomes through compassionate, evidence-based care.



**Dr. Simon Vinarsky**

## Advanced Surgical Physicians Welcomes Dr. Michael Shockley

Advanced Surgical Physicians (ASP) is proud to announce the addition of Dr. Michael Shockley, M.D., to its team of expert surgeons.

A board-certified general surgeon with specialized training in minimally invasive, foregut, and bariatric surgery, Dr. Shockley joins ASP after completing a highly competitive fellowship in Advanced GI Minimally Invasive and Bariatric Surgery at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, NY.

His extensive training also includes a General Surgery residency at the University of Central Florida/HCA Consortium of Greater Orlando, where he served as an Administrative Chief Resident. His expertise encompasses a wide range of surgical procedures with a focus on cutting-edge laparoscopic, endoscopic, and robotic techniques.



**Dr. Michael Shockley**

# WHAT'S NEW...WHAT'S NEW...WHAT'S NEW...

## Palm Beach Gardens Medical Center Becomes First in Southeast U.S. to Use SOUNDSTAR CRYSTAL™ Ultrasound Catheter



Palm Beach Gardens Medical Center is the first hospital in the Southeastern United States to utilize the SOUNDSTAR CRYSTAL Ultrasound Catheter in a procedure. The milestone procedures were completed by electrophysiologists Dr. Matthew Klein and Dr. Matthew Kolek.

The SOUNDSTAR CRYSTAL™ Ultrasound Catheter represents a significant leap forward in intracardiac imaging technology. Powered by an 88-element phased linear array, the device delivers superior image quality, allowing clinicians to visualize tissue with greater clarity and confidence.

Key benefits of the SOUNDSTAR CRYSTAL™ Catheter include:

- Enhanced Imaging Quality – Superior intracardiac images for clearer tissue visualization.
- Optimized Flexibility & Stability – Improved maneuverability and control during procedures.
- Seamless Integration – Fully compatible with the CARTO™ 3 Mapping System for efficient workflow.
- Advanced Visualization – Enhanced far-field imaging, blood-to-tissue contrast, and tissue definition for greater procedural accuracy.

## Holy Cross Health Receives \$5 Million Planned Gift to Heart & Vascular Care

Holy Cross Health has been blessed to receive one of the single largest planned gifts in its 70-year history, a transformative contribution that will benefit the hospital and patients now and in the future. Philanthropists and grateful patients, Charles “Chuck” and Jacqueline “Jackie” Frasier, have named Holy Cross Health in their estate plans, committing nearly \$5 million to heart and vascular care.

“Chuck and Jackie chose to include Holy Cross Health in their estate plan as a way to honor the exceptional high-quality care they experienced at the hospital,” said Laura Denoux, vice president and chief development officer at Holy Cross Health. “The Frasier’s extraordinary planned gift reflects their belief in the mission of Holy Cross Health and a heartfelt desire to make a meaningful, lasting impact.

Inspired by the compassionate care they received from their clinical teams, their generosity will help shape the future of our health system and extend healing to patients and families for generations to come.”

The Fort Lauderdale, Florida couple is known for their dedication as philanthropists and community leaders with a passion for education, innovation and service. Chuck, a proud Michigan State University alumnus and retired packaging industry entrepreneur, built a successful 50-year career founding and leading companies focused on engineering and logistics. Together with Jackie, they have championed causes that reflect their shared commitment to excellence, sustainability and giving back by supporting initiatives that create lasting impact in their local community and beyond.

Earlier this year, the couple also demonstrated their commitment with a generous \$250,000 multi-year pledge further strengthening heart and vascular care at Holy Cross.



**Chuck and Jackie Frasier**  
Photo Credit: Pavel Bronard



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## Accolades Accolades Accolades Accolades

### Holy Cross Health Nurse Resident Development Manager Crystal Caruthers, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, Named Leader of the Quarter



**Crystal Caruthers**

Crystal Caruthers, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, has been named Holy Cross Health’s Leader of the Quarter for Q3 2025. She began her career at Holy Cross Health in 2008 as a member of the inaugural class of the Vizient/American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) Nurse Residency Program at Holy Cross Health, the first nurse residency program in Broward County. Today, she is the Nurse Resident Development Manager and mentors graduate nurses.

In describing Caruthers, her team finds her to be an effective leader due to her superior communication skills, ability to keep them informed and the consistency of her actions. She also makes herself accessible to answer questions, to listen to her teammates and to bounce around ideas.

Caruthers has also spent more than a decade working at the bedside in the critical care setting, case management, care transitions and outpatient surgery. She has worked on initiatives focused on nurse retention and a healthy work environment and has served on numerous quality councils.

Caruthers earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Barry University in Miami and her Master of Science in Nursing with a focus on nursing leadership and management from Western Governors University in Salt Lake City, UT

### Holy Cross Health Names Surgery Schedule Coordinator Valinique Wright as August 2025 Colleague of the Month



**Valinique Wright**

Valinique Wright has been recognized as Holy Cross Health’s Colleague of the Month for August 2025. As a devoted surgery schedule coordinator for Holy Cross Health’s operating room for 12 years, Wright is an integral member of the scheduling process.

Wright is the liaison between the doctor’s office and the hospital to get patients’ surgeries on the calendar. From reserving surgical instruments to equipment to supplies to personnel and so much more, there are many working pieces when scheduling for the operating room (OR). With astuteness, experience, precision and finesse, she solves the complicated daily puzzle. Wright confirms the availability of everything that will be needed for a specific procedure, spaces surgeries with appropriate turnover time between, attempts to increase efficiency by scheduling similar surgeries back-to-back and works with the Executive Director of Surgical Services to resolve scheduling conflicts.

In nominating Wright for the award, her colleagues say she’s always courteous and works hard to meet their needs and keep everyone happy. They appreciate Wright’s kindness and work ethic noting that she also willingly helps cover the billing process for the endoscopy department.

# BUSINESS/RESOURCE DIRECTORY

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