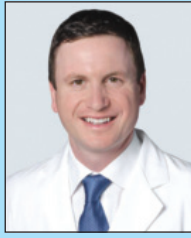


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November 2025

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

Healthcare Education



(l-r) Shanel Cantave, Ava Padmore-Lewis, Khadijah Norelus

VITAS and Miami Dade College Partner to Shape the Next Generation of Compassionate Nurses

BY DANIEL CASCIATO

For Miami Dade College (MDC) nursing students Khadijah Norelus and Shanel Cantave, the decision to pursue nursing came from deeply personal experiences. Shanel was inspired after nearly losing her father to a hemorrhagic stroke. Khadijah's calling was born when she witnessed the care and compassion a hospice nurse gave her cousin in his final moments.

Today, both women are VITAS Scholars—recipients of the Miami Dade College LPN Scholarship supported by hospice provider VITAS Healthcare—and represent the next generation of caregivers preparing to serve South Florida's communities amid a national nursing shortage.

Their journeys, rooted in empathy and personal purpose, reflect the very essence of what VITAS seeks to cultivate through its partnership with MDC: a channel of nurses who see healthcare as both a science and a calling.

Continued on page 16

South University Accelerated BSN Degree Program Opens Door to Career Opportunities



Teamwork and hands-on training are in full swing at the simulation lab, preparing this motivated group to be the next generation of amazing registered nurses.

BY VANESSA ORR

Nurses are always in high demand, and students at South University in West Palm Beach can get out of the classroom and into a real-world nursing position more quickly than ever before. Through the College of Nursing's accelerated BSN program, students can join the job market in 18 months, compared to the traditional two-year classroom route.

The BSN degree program is designed to improve management capabilities and skills like critical thinking, delegation, prioritization, and decision-making. BSN graduates learn to incorporate the concepts of caring, communication, critical thinking, profession-

Continued on page 17

Teaching Students to Collaborate and Communicate: Purpose of FAU's Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice

BY VANESSA ORR

Traditionally, health professions have been taught in silos despite the fact that doctors, nurses, social workers, pharmacists and more are expected to function as teams once in practice. To prepare students to successfully work together, Florida Atlantic University created the Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice (IPE&P) to enhance the abilities of students, faculty, and providers to engage in effective, person-and-family-centered interprofessional practice across a range of educational and practice settings to improve overall population health.

"Students from across the health professions, including medicine, nursing, social work, phar-



Dr. Terry Eggenberger

Continued on page 16

Hospice



Ava Padmore-Lewis

VITAS Named a 2025 Top Workplace in Healthcare as Result of Employee Input

BY VANESSA ORR

Providing end-of-life care is incredibly challenging, but one thing that makes it easier is if employees work for a place they love. The employees of VITAS Healthcare, the nation's leading provider of end-of-life care, recently showed their appreciation for their company by helping it earn the title of a 2025 Top Workplace in Healthcare.

Recognized by Top Workplaces USA, a national program that honors organizations based solely on employee feedback, VITAS was selected as one of only 57 healthcare organizations nationwide with more than 1,000 employees to receive this distinction.

Founded in 1978, VITAS employs nearly 12,000 professionals across 15 states and the District of Columbia, delivering compassionate hospice and palliative care to more than 22,000 seriously ill patients each day. Its team members were invited to share their experiences in a confidential survey earlier this year, and responses measured key drivers of engaged workplace cultures, including alignment, connection and purpose.

Continued on page 13

Honoring Wayne Brackin



950 AWARD RECIPIENT

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We are pleased to join The George Washington University alumni community, far and wide, in honoring our president & CEO, Wayne Brackin — a recipient of the Milken Institute School of Public Health's prestigious 950 Award.

The 950 Award recognizes Mr. Brackin's outstanding service to the school and honors alumni who have made significant strides in their careers in public health, health policy, and health management.

As a pediatric and women's healthcare organization serving South Florida for nearly 40 years, we are excited to celebrate a respected, visionary healthcare executive who has helped shape and elevate our community's healthcare services. We are proud to have him at the helm of our organization.



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Publisher's Note

The Lights That Never Go Out: A Healthcare Holiday Story

Ah, the holidays—a magical time when the world slows down. Offices close. Emails bounce back with cheery messages like, “I’m out of office until next year!” Social media floods with photos of people sipping cocoa by fireplaces or posting their fourth “grateful for downtime” selfie.

Meanwhile, in hospitals, the only thing glowing brighter than Christmas lights are the fluorescent bulbs that never, ever switch off. Healthcare professionals don’t get the “out of office” luxury. Their version reads more like, “Currently elbow-deep in patient care. Will respond after resuscitating the festive spirit.”

On Christmas morning, while most people unwrap gifts, nurses are unwrapping sterile dressings. Doctors are diagnosing whether someone’s “holiday chest pain” is due to stress, sugar cookies, or the fifty-pound turkey they just inhaled. And let’s not forget the pharmacists—elves of modern medicine—dispensing joy one prescription at a time.

Of course, it all starts with Thanksgiving—the unofficial kickoff to the “Holiday Injury Season.” Somewhere between the deep-fried turkey experiments, carving mishaps, and “I swear I can fit one more plate” moments, the ER fills with a festive mix of burns, cuts, and indigestion. Every healthcare worker knows the drill: it’s not truly Thanksgiving until someone shows up with stuffing-related regret and cranberry sauce still on their scrubs.

In healthcare, the holidays are just... days. The body doesn’t care that it’s New Year’s Eve. Appendices still burst. Babies still arrive (often right as the clock strikes midnight, because of course they do). And someone, somewhere, will still attempt to deep-fry a frozen turkey, keeping the burn unit fully booked through January.

Even the decorations in hospitals have that practical flair. Forget mistletoe—there’s sanitizer. Forget candles—fire hazards. The “tree” might just be an IV pole with tinsel, and the star on top? Probably a strategically placed ECG lead.

Yet, in all the chaos, there’s something quietly beautiful about it. Healthcare workers become the steady heartbeat of the holidays. While the rest of the world takes a collective nap, they’re the ones keeping the lights—literal and metaphorical—on.

They share pizza in the break room instead of turkey, swap “thank you’s” instead of presents, and celebrate in 15-minute bursts between call lights. The carols come from machine alarms, the snow from the pharmacy fridge frost, and yet—somehow—the spirit still shines.

Because while everyone else takes a break from their world, healthcare professionals step up to hold it together. They’re the reason the rest of us can relax, knowing that even on the quietest, coziest night of the year... there’s always someone awake, in scrubs, making sure the lights stay on.

From all of us at *Hospital News*, Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa, and may your gravy be smooth, your turkey be thawed, and your local ER stay blissfully empty.

Charles Felix



You can reach Charles Felix at
Charles@southfloridahospitalnews.com



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TAMPA GENERAL: EXPERT CANCER CARE POWERED BY ACADEMIC MEDICINE



Dr. Adam J. Kotkiewicz

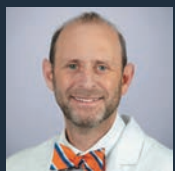
An established oncologist in South Florida, Dr. Kotkiewicz is a board-certified medical oncologist specializing in genitourinary cancers and blood disorders, including prostate, kidney, testicular, ureter and penile cancers, and the diagnosis and management of noncancerous blood disorders.



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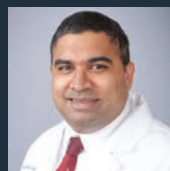
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Abraham Schwarzbarg, MD



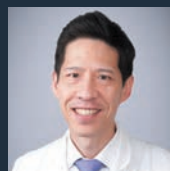
Talya Schwarzbarg, MD



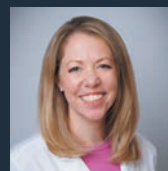
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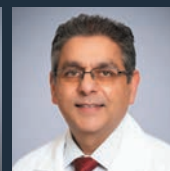
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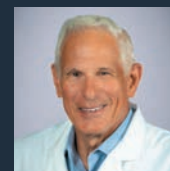
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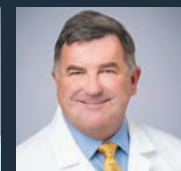
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Understanding the New Medicaid Redetermination and Work Requirements

Hospitals today are already facing significant financial pressure, as the rising costs of care, labor, and materials combined with lower reimbursement rates compress healthcare margins. Now, hospitals face a new challenge: Medicaid program cuts.

How is Medicaid Changing?

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) has introduced several new Medicaid requirements, two of which carry significant implications for hospitals and patients:

1. Work Requirements

Individuals aged 19-64 applying for Medicaid coverage or those who are enrolled through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) expansion group must now participate in qualifying work activities for at least 80 hours a month, with very few exceptions. This requirement will go into effect on December 31, 2026.

2. Medicaid Redetermination

Each state is now required to redetermine Medicaid eligibility for expansion populations at least every six months instead of once per year, increasing the frequency of patient disenrollments. This requirement will go into effect on January 1, 2027.

Under these new requirements, fewer patients will be eligible for Medicaid, which will expand the uninsured popula-



BY SABINA KOTELNIK

tion and increase the risk of disruption of patient care and worse health outcomes.

Providers will in turn receive less reimbursement from the government and see possible increases in the cost of collections. Additionally, over time, providers may start seeing patients with greater acuity as patients delay preventive care due to high costs and lack of insurance.

Developing a Medicaid Redetermination Support Program

Hospitals need to preserve their financial health and support their patients while maintaining compliance with Medicaid requirements. To do so, providers should develop their own Medicaid redetermination support programs.

A well-designed program should incorporate the following elements:

- **Patient Tracking:** The program should track each patient's Medicaid coverage status and use. The hospital can then incorporate this information into both patient communications (e.g., alerting them to a change in their coverage) and financial forecasts.

- **Medicaid Application Support:** Program workflows should support patients wherever they are in the Medicaid application process, including helping recently disenrolled patients apply for new coverage through the health insurance

marketplace or other appropriate programs.

- **Staff Training:** The program should offer training for frontline and administrative staff so they are equipped to support patients through the application process and guide them to additional resources as needed.

- **Compliance Support:** Maintaining compliance with Medicaid requirements is a key component of any Medicaid redetermination support program. Hospitals should focus on implementing strong internal controls and preserving accurate, organized, and accessible documentation to support reporting requirements.

How BDO Can Help

Looking to develop or enhance your own Medicaid redetermination support program? BDO can help. Our professionals have deep experience in healthcare compliance, operations, technology, and financial management. We can design a program that helps you comply with new Medicaid requirements while maintaining financial stability and supporting your patient population.

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

Contact:

*Angelo Pirozzi, Managing Director,
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KIDZ Pediatric Hematologist/ Oncologist Cares for Children On and Off the Job

BY VANESSA ORR

Dr. Maggie E. Fader's love of medicine started early. Not only was her mother a pediatric endocrinologist, but her younger brother was an extremely premature neonate who required extensive medical care. As she grew older, she became involved in athletics, which piqued her interest in orthopedic surgery.



Dr. Maggie E. Fader

as it gives my patients the best experience possible."

While dealing with childhood cancer can be incredibly difficult, Dr. Fader appreciates the resiliency of her young patients.

"Pediatric patients are more positive than you can ever imagine; kids are naturally optimistic and very quick to see the bright side of things," she said. "They are adaptable and strong, and if

they can't change a situation, they quickly adjust to it.

"Some patients have to have amputations, and the way they cope is so inspiring," she added. "They want to know how fast they can get a prosthesis and get back on their feet."

Outside of work, Dr. Fader spends time with her husband, four children, and extended family, and also volunteers with several cancer nonprofits. She has been on the board of the Children's Bereavement Center for 10 years and also serves on the medical advisory board of the Make-A-Wish Foundation®. Dr. Fader also mentors fundraising groups for Cancer United and serves as the camp physician at Camp U.O.T.S. every year, which serves children with cancer and blood disorders.

"Unfortunately, in this field, and in medicine in general, there is always the chance for loss," she says of her commitment to the Children's Bereavement Center. "Having families where the parents have lost a child, or siblings have lost a brother or sister, is not infrequent.

"Losing a child is so unnatural, it's often hard to move forward," she added. "The bereavement center introduces these people to others who are suffering from something similar so that they can cope together. And their services, which include support groups, are free."

Dr. Fader has been involved with the Make-A-Wish Foundation® for the past eight years. She especially appreciates that it provides kids with a distraction and something to hope for that is not related to their illness.

"These kids spend a lot of time in the hospital, and this gives them a change of focus. They can look forward to something they really want to do, whether that's a trip with their family, or meeting someone famous, or going on a shopping trip," she explained. "It's good for their mental health to have something to keep their minds off of pain and suffering for a while."

Dr. Fader is board-certified by the American Board of Pediatrics with subspecialty certification in pediatric hematology-oncology and is also board-certified in hospice and palliative medicine.

"There is a strong fellowship between palliative care and the delivery of oncology care," she said. "It's hard to do one without the other, as palliative care deals with pain management and symptom management."

Now a leading pediatric hematologist/oncologist with KIDZ Medical Services, and based at the Helen & Jacob Shaham Cancer & Blood Disorders Institute at Nicklaus Children's Hospital, Dr. Fader lives her purpose every day. She currently serves as the medical director of the Sarcoma and Solid Tumor Program.

"Most oncology patients face a lot of challenges dealing not only with their illness and its treatment, but with recovery from painful surgical procedures," she said. "Palliative care is important to me

VITAS® Healthcare Hosts Free CE Webinar for Healthcare Professionals During National Care at Home Month

Save the
DATE!

In honor of National Care at Home Month, VITAS Healthcare invites healthcare professionals to a free, accredited webinar titled "From Cure to Comfort: The Hospice Journey to What Matters Most." The virtual event will take place on Wednesday, November 19, 2025, from 1:00–2:30 p.m. ET / 10:00–11:30 a.m. PT. Early registration is encouraged as space is limited.

This live, interactive session offers up to 1.5 continuing education credits (CE/CME) for nurses, social workers, case managers, licensed nursing home administrators in Florida and Illinois, physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Attendees will gain practical insights into identifying hospice-eligible patients, guiding goals-of-care conversations and supporting families through interdisciplinary collaboration.

Webinar Highlights:

- Real-world case studies demonstrating the impact of timely hospice enrollment
- Strategies for improving symptom management and holistic patient support

- Guidance on navigating medical, psychosocial, and spiritual needs

Expert Panelists Include:

- Dr. Joseph Shega, EVP & Chief Medical Officer
- Dr. Lauren Loftis, Regional Medical Director
- Dr. Sandhya Bhalla-Regev, Regional Medical Director
- Patty Husted, EVP, Patient & Family Supportive Services
- Jason Cooper, Lead, National Spiritual Services
- Maite Hernandez, RN, Senior Director, Patient Access Development

ACHE November Educational Virtual Event

ACHE of South Florida
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Employing Social Media to
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Balancing Compassion, Accountability, and Access to Care

On Saturday, September 20, 2025, the Miami-Dade County Medical Association (MDCMA) hosted a Legislative Gathering at the Coral Gables Museum, convening members of the Miami-Dade Legislative Delegation and our physician leadership ahead of the 2026 Florida Legislative Session.

This annual meeting provides a vital opportunity for physicians and legislators to exchange perspectives, share priorities, and work collaboratively toward policies that promote high-quality, patient-centered health care in our community. I had the honor of opening the session alongside Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez, Chair of the Miami-Dade Delegation. Her leadership and continued partnership with our physician community are invaluable as we navigate complex issues that affect both medical practice and patient well-being.

Our discussion centered on several key legislative priorities for the upcoming session. One of the most pressing continues to be the expansion of scope of practice initiatives. While we value the contributions of every member of the health care team, we must maintain clear boundaries that protect patient safety. Physicians' extensive training and clinical expertise are fundamental to managing complex cases, and MDCMA continues to advocate for policies that preserve these standards and uphold quality care.

We also addressed proposed reforms to Florida's Wrongful Death law. The MDCMA supports legislation that would permit the recovery of noneconomic damages by adult children for the loss of a parent, and by parents for the loss of an adult child with no surviving spouse or children, in a medical malpractice wrongful death claim, if reasonable caps on noneconomic damages are included in the legislation. Without such caps, a clean repeal bill could make medical malpractice insurance unaffordable or unavailable, worsening the physician workforce crisis and reducing patient access to care. Physicians are already held accountable for their actions by their licensing boards, hospitals, employers, and specialty boards. Allowing unlimited pain and suffering



BY ADRIANA BONANSEA-FRANCES, MD

awards could lead to an explosion of liability claims and threaten access to medical services. According to the American Property Casualty Insurance Association (APCIA), "Our number one priority is still addressing legal system abuse, because it is the major cost driver that's having a huge negative impact on insurance availability and affordability." Data show that the average personal injury verdict has increased 319% in

the past decade, while nuclear verdicts, that is, jury awards exceeding \$10 million, have risen 350% in the last six years. These realities underscore the urgent need for balance and reform.

Another area of concern discussed was Medicaid's limited oversight of Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs). Many of our physicians face persistent administrative burdens, delayed payments, and claim denials that disrupt patient care. Stronger oversight and greater transparency are essential to ensure that the system works as intended for both physicians and patients.

Finally, we addressed the Surgeon General's recent announcement to repeal vaccine mandates, a reminder of the ongoing balance between individual rights and public health. As physicians, we stand firmly on the side of science and evidence-based medicine. Vaccination remains one of the most effective tools for disease prevention and community protection.

I would like to thank Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez, Representatives David Borrero and Wallace Aristide, and our MDCMA leaders: Drs. Veronica Alvarez-Galiana, Patricia Ares-Romero, Rose Berkun, Maria Cabreja, Rafael Fernandez, Raul Grosz, Patricia Junquera, Juan Diego Oms, and Estelamari Rodriguez, for their commitment to this dialogue.

As we look toward the 2026 Legislative Session, MDCMA remains committed to its mission to advocate for physicians, protect the patient-physician relationship, and advance policies that strengthen the health and future of our community.

Dr. Adriana Bonansea-Frances is President, Miami-Dade County Medical Association.

Advocating for Balance and Accountability in Health Care Policy

On September 19, 2025, the Broward County Medical Association (BCMA) hosted members of the Broward Legislative Delegation for an engaging and productive legislative gathering ahead of the 2026 Florida Legislative Session. The event provided a valuable opportunity for physicians and policymakers to come together in frank dialogue about the challenges and opportunities shaping health care delivery in our community.



BY KAYVAN AMINI, DO

awards could trigger an explosion of liability claims, making malpractice insurance unaffordable or unavailable, intensifying our physician workforce crisis, reducing patient access to care, and threatening the stability of Florida's health care system.

We also discussed the ongoing challenges physicians face with Medicaid and Health Maintenance

Organizations (HMOs). Many of our members report significant delays in reimbursements, claim denials, and administrative burdens that interfere with the delivery of quality care. Greater accountability and transparency in managed care are essential to restore balance and support both patients and physicians alike.

Finally, we reflected on the recent policy shifts regarding vaccine mandates. While respecting individual rights, BCMA continues to advocate for evidence-based medicine and public health strategies that protect our communities and strengthen the trust between patients and providers.

I extend my sincere gratitude to Representative Marie Woodson, Senators Dr. Rosalind Osgood, Tina Polsky, and Dr. Barbara Sharief; Representatives Robin Bartleman and Felicia Simone Robinson; and Executive Director Robert Mayersohn for joining us in this vital exchange.

As we move toward the 2026 Legislative Session, I urge all physicians to remain engaged and informed. Through collaboration and advocacy, BCMA will continue to be the voice of Broward physicians, championing fairness, accountability, and the highest standards of patient care.

Dr. Kayvan Amini is President of the Broward County Medical Association.

Salute to Chief Information Officer...

MOUNT SINAI MEDICAL CENTER

Tom Gillette
Chief Information Officer



Tom Gillette doesn't just manage technology—he reshapes how it connects people. With 25 years in healthcare IT, including two decades at Mount Sinai Medical Center, his leadership earned him the 2025 South Florida ORBIE Award for visionary innovation.

Under his direction, Mount Sinai has become a digital front-runner: AI tools that sharpen diagnoses, real-time monitoring that keeps patients safe at home, and a unified mobile app that brings scheduling, results, and telehealth into one touch.

Most recently, he led Mount Sinai's collaboration with Epic to launch the world's first Spanish-language AI messaging tool, making communication faster, clearer, and more inclusive for South Florida's diverse community.

"The best technology quietly removes friction," says Gillette. "When patients can access care easily and providers can focus on what matters most, everyone wins."



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ACHE of South Florida Member Spotlight: Marcella Gravalese

BY LOIS THOMSON

Giving back. You don't have to talk long with Marcella Gravalese to learn that giving back is what is most important to her. Gravalese is the Vice President of Baptist Health Medical Group for the Palm Beach and Broward regions, and of her responsibilities she said, "We have about 200 providers, and I oversee full operations for 55 locations within the northern area. I have a multi-disciplinary medical group, made up of primary care physicians, medical specialists, and surgical specialists, and advanced practice providers who support those physicians and surgeons in caring for our patients."

She pointed out that there is considerable competition in the market, so she focuses on facilitating the best care for the patients and communities being served. That includes the snowbirds who come down during the winter months: "We want them to know they have the same quality care right here locally, and we can work with their providers."

Gravalese has been with Baptist Health since 2021, and in healthcare overall for more than 20 years, but that was not her original career choice. She attended Michigan State University, where she was in a general studies program and also played volleyball. "I suffered an injury and had to go through a lot of therapy, two surgeries, post op, rehab – it really intrigued me, and I changed my major to medicine. God had a bigger plan for me."

She developed a strong passion for healthcare and said her real focus is providing a responsible ambulatory care network. "We're making sure we have seamless integration from inpatient care to outpatient care, and I pride myself on leading this medical group."

However, now that Gravalese is more than 20 years into her career, she said she wants "more than a paycheck," she wants to feel as if she is making a difference. "Now that I've grown to the highest level of my career that I'd like to achieve – I've accomplished everything I set out to accomplish – I want to help develop and teach others." She said she relishes giving back, and remembers the help she received from her first mentor. "Now I enjoy developing younger talent."

Let's Connect: ACHE of South Florida Spotlight

ACHE of South Florida
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Gravalese's association with ACHE – the American College of Healthcare Executives – presents her with even more opportunities to give back. A member since 2016, she was chosen back then as a Thomas Dolan Scholar, one of ACHE's diversity programs, where a handful of people are selected each year to work on projects and travel to different areas. She explained that the social economic types in Florida may not be the same as those in San Diego or the inner-city of Chicago. "In South Florida, we have a large aging population, so you're taking care of an older demographic. In San Diego, a lot of folks who come from South America and migrated into the San Diego market, for the first time sought care for children who have different medical needs; it's amazing to see how they address concerns. In Chicago, you see how they take care of the underserved community with little resources."



Marcella Gravalese

Calling herself "a forever learner," Gravalese also likes ACHE's networking opportunities that allow her to interact with multiple different leaders. "I like to stay cutting-edge and learn from other amazing people. ACHE does a great job of bringing people who are like-minded together, who have the same passion and drive." She is also looking forward to taking her Fellow exam in December.

Additionally, Gravalese is working on her second doctorate, saying she wants to create curriculum for other leaders. "There are a lot of physicians and nurses who want to embark on the healthcare administration side, but they don't know how. I think with my experience having both education and experience, I can help navigate this world for them to strive to become the best leader." Gravalese is using her experience and passion to incorporate what's most important – giving back – into her career.

Holy Cross Health's Just Breathe Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program Acknowledges World COPD Day

BY HELEN VISCO, BSRT, RRT-NPS, CPFT

To raise awareness about chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), November 19 annually marks World COPD Day. It's an opportune time to highlight the treatments and resources that improve the quality of life for patients living with chronic lung conditions. At Holy Cross Health in Fort Lauderdale, our Just Breathe Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program provides patients with the tools, support and expertise they need to breathe easier and live stronger.

Why Pulmonary Rehab Matters

COPD is one of the leading causes of disability and hospitalization in the U.S. While there isn't a cure, pulmonary rehabilitation is proven to reduce symptoms such as shortness of breath and fatigue; improve exercise tolerance and daily activity levels; boost mood and confidence through education and support; and decrease hospital readmissions by teaching patients how to better manage flare-ups.

The Just Breathe Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program combines individualized exercise training, education and counseling to help patients gain control of their condition and rediscover the activities they love.

What to Expect in Therapy

At Holy Cross Health, pulmonary rehabilitation is more than exercise. It's a comprehensive approach that includes supervised exercise sessions tailored to each patient's abilities; education modules covering breathing techniques, nutrition, medication management and energy conservation; one-on-one coaching from specially trained respiratory therapists and exercise physiologists; and peer support in a welcoming group setting, where patients share encouragement and success stories.

Expanding Services for the Community

As the COPD Clinic at the Catherine Yardley Comprehensive Pulmonary Center at Holy Cross Health continues to grow, services are expanding to include exercise challenge testing to better identify and treat exercise-induced symptoms; patient navigation and referral coordination to connect patients with the right care at the right time; and specialized wellness tools like TRX suspension training, breathing games and interactive education corners.

These innovations reflect Holy Cross Health's commitment to being more than a clinic, but also a partner in long-term lung health.

A Message of Hope on World COPD Day

On this World COPD Day, we celebrate the resilience of patients and the dedication of the pulmonary rehab team. With the right care, life with COPD can be full, active and hopeful.

Helen Visco is Clinical Manager of the COPD Clinic at the Catherine Yardley Comprehensive Pulmonary Center at Holy Cross Health in Fort Lauderdale.



Members of the Pulmonary Team at Holy Cross Health
Photo credit: Robert Mayer, Holy Cross Health



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Genetics Program for Cancer Risk Now Available to Patients in Palm Beach and Martin Counties

TGH Cancer Institute | Cancer Center of South Florida (CCSF) now offers a genetics program for patients in Palm Beach and Martin counties who wish to take a proactive stance to determine their risk for cancer. The Hereditary Cancer Prevention & Risk Program is available to:

- Anyone with active cancer
- Those previously diagnosed with cancer
- Those with a family history of cancer

The program is led by hereditary risk counselor, Catherine Marinak, APRN, MSN, AOCNP, a nurse practitioner with an advanced specialization in cancer risk assessment. Each patient starts the program with an in-depth consultation with Marinak to discuss and review their family's medical history. From there, she evaluates if the patient will benefit from a personalized, high-risk assessment and possible testing.



Catherine Marinak

"Through this program, we're giving patients and their families the knowledge and support they need to take control of their health," said Marinak, director of Hereditary Risk Assessment & Early Detection at the TGH Cancer Institute | CCSF. "By understanding genetic risks, we can take meaningful steps toward preventing cancer or catching it early, when treatment has the greatest impact. If a patient decides to pursue genetic testing, our team will be there to guide them every step of the way."

Board certified in oncology, Marinak earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Vanderbilt University, and her Master of Science in Nursing from Florida Atlantic University, where she completed a thesis on cancer survivorship. She enhanced her specialization in cancer risk assessment and hereditary cancer counseling through advanced training at renowned institutions such as Fox Chase Cancer Center, Harvard Medical School and City of Hope. Marinak is an active member of the Oncology Nursing Society and the International Society of Nurses in Genetics, where she serves on the education board. She joined TGH Cancer Institute | CCSF in early 2025.

"Our Hereditary Cancer Prevention & Risk Program complements the game-changing, academic-based care we provide to our patients," said Dr. Abraham Schwarzbarg, executive vice president, chief of oncology at Tampa General Hospital and TGH Cancer Institute | CCSF; president, Tampa General Provider Network; and co-vice president, clinical and translational research, TGH | USF Health Office of Clinical Research. "Cathy is a dedicated, knowledgeable and compassionate clinician. We're thrilled to have her helm this program."

The Hereditary Cancer Prevention & Risk Program reflects the partnership between TGH Cancer Institute and CCSF, which has offered exceptional, academic-level care to patients in Palm Beach and Martin counties since 2020. Led by a dedicated team that provides personalized patient care and state-of-the-art treatments, patients also benefit from access to Tampa General, an academic health system with multidisciplinary experts, advanced clinical trials and comprehensive support services.

TGH Cancer Institute has been named Top 10% in the Nation for Cancer Care by U.S. News & World Report's 2025-26 Best Hospitals, and is named one of America's Best Cancer Hospitals by Newsweek for 2025. The institute is accredited by the American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer accreditation and certified by the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) for meeting the strict standards required by the society's Quality Oncology Practice Initiative (QOPI) program.

What Does the Assessment Include?

If it's determined that the patient should pursue a full risk assessment and/or genetic testing, the program includes:

- Discussion of the various genetic testing options
- A review of the benefits of testing, including insurance coverage and confidentiality
- Helping patients decide if genetic testing is right for them
- Explaining the genetic testing process
- Discussing medical management options based on family history and/or testing results
- Addressing emotional impact of cancer risk information on individuals and families

Moving Forward with Genetic Testing

For patients who proceed with genetic testing, Tampa General's experienced and compassionate team will explain their results clearly and understandably to help determine the next steps for the patient and their family. Tampa General works with a team of multidisciplinary specialists to help reduce your cancer risk or to detect and treat cancer early if there are treatment options available. Specialists may suggest genetic testing if a patient's family members have had one of the following:

- A cancer diagnosis before age 50
- Multiple cancer diagnoses
- Several relatives with similar cancers
- Ovarian, pancreatic or high-risk prostate cancer
- Rare cancers such as male breast cancer, adrenocortical carcinoma or pheochromocytoma/paraganglioma
- Family members with a genetic test result that indicates an increased cancer risk

The Hereditary Cancer Prevention & Risk Program is offered at TGH Cancer Institute | CCSF's locations in Palm Beach Gardens and Palm Springs, Florida. Referring physicians can call (561) 221-2660 for more information.

RECOGNIZING THE BEST OF THE BEST IN THE HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY



The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce is now accepting nominations for the 2026 Health Care Heroes® Awards Program; deadline is December 15. The 27th Annual Health Care Heroes® Awards Luncheon will take place May 14, 2026.

WHO IS A HEALTH CARE HERO?

An individual, organization, professional, student, volunteer, or program, who, through their individual or collective actions have made an extraordinary impact in the South Florida health care community. Their acts of heroism represent a display of dedication to excellence in their area of expertise beyond the scope of their jobs. Through their commitment to their profession and community, they serve as an inspiration to others in an effort to improve the quality of health care and discover new ways to assist those in need.

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Fred Turner and Curative: Reinventing Health Insurance by Removing Financial Barriers to Care

BY DANIEL CASCIATO

At just 30 years old, Fred Turner, co-founder and CEO of Curative, is no stranger to building big things under pressure. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Turner led one of the nation's largest testing operations, standing up CLIA-certified labs, administering millions of tests, and operating across nearly every U.S. state. But it wasn't just the scale that left its mark on him; it was what the experience revealed about the U.S. healthcare system.

"Scaling a national testing operation during COVID fundamentally shaped how we run our health plan today," Turner says. "We learned how to move fast without losing focus on our purpose and the member experience—and always putting that first."

That relentless focus on the end user, whether a patient or a provider, is now the cornerstone of Curative's mission: a health insurance plan that removes financial barriers to care.

From Pandemic Response to Health Plan Reinvention

Curative's origins as a pandemic testing company gave Turner a unique lens into how the system works, and often fails. "Running one of the largest testing operations in the country meant interacting with nearly every payer in America, in 49 states," he recalls.

"We saw firsthand how complicated and inconsistent the system was, even as something as simple as processing the correct CPT code two years into the pandemic."

That dysfunction sparked an idea: if the root of the problem is how care is paid for, the only real way to fix it is to become the payer.

As an employer trying to provide coverage for 7,000 workers during the height of the pandemic, Turner says Curative struggled to find a plan that encouraged pre-



Fred Turner

ventive care rather than delaying it.

"Everything had trade-offs that discouraged the very behavior you want—using preventive care early," he explains. "We ultimately landed on the idea that to truly move health, you have to be the payer. If the payer covers care, people get it. If they don't, they don't."

That realization became the foundation for Curative's zero-deductible, zero-copay commercial PPO plan, now offered to employer groups in multiple states.

The \$0 Out-of-Pocket Cost Model: Not a Leap of Faith—A Logical Response

In an era dominated by high-deductible health plans, Curative's approach sounds almost radical. But Turner insists it's not ideology; it's evidence.

"High-deductible plans were built on the premise that members needed to have skin in the game," he says. "In reality, the complexity and lack of transparency make it impossible for individuals to analyze their options. What happens instead is people skip preventive visits and delay treatment—and the costs show up later."

Curative flipped that model by removing cost-sharing entirely for in-network care and most prescriptions. Members begin their coverage with \$0 out-of-pocket costs, and by completing a "Baseline Visit" within 120 days of their plan start date, they continue to maintain those \$0 costs. There is no waiting period—just a simple step designed to keep members engaged with their care from the start.

"Eliminating copays and deductibles wasn't a leap of faith, but rather a logical response to what the evidence showed: when people can afford to engage earlier, they do, and the whole system performs better," Turner explains.

Financially, the company controls costs through proactive engagement and high-value care.

"We control trend through proactive

management to high-value providers, and a modern claims and pricing infrastructure that limits administrative waste," Turner says. "We're exchanging deferred, high-cost care for earlier, lower-cost intervention."

The Baseline Visit: Turning Coverage into Action

The Baseline Visit is more than onboarding. It's the foundation of Curative's engagement model. "It's a structured process that ensures people understand their benefits, know how to access care, and start building healthy habits from day one," Turner says.

The process pairs members with both Curative clinicians and care navigators. The clinician reviews medical history, labs, and preventive needs, while the navigator helps schedule next steps and serves as a continuing point of contact.

That early engagement is paying off. Curative reports 98 percent completion rates for Baseline Visits, with 90 percent of members with chronic conditions identified early, before claims hit. "When people understand their benefits and feel confident using them, engagement and outcomes both improve," Turner says.

A Health Plan Providers Actually Like

Curative's pitch to providers is simple: fewer headaches, faster payments, and no chasing patients for unpaid balances.

"We've focused on fixing the parts of the payer-provider relationship that waste time and create friction," Turner says. By removing patient billing layers and simplifying coverage rules, Curative reduces administrative burden and smooths cash flow for provider organizations.

The company's provider letter highlights those same advantages: "No more bad debt write-offs from uncollected copays and high-cost deductibles. The bill stops with us, not the patient."

That streamlined approach has helped Curative build goodwill among hospital systems and physicians in its original state of Texas and as it expanded into states like Florida and Georgia.

Built to Last: Financial Rigor Meets Mission-Driven Design

For a young company, Curative's financial credentials are impressive. It holds an A- (Excellent) rating from AM Best and is fully funded for three years with the Texas Department of Insurance. "From day one, we've prioritized financial rigor," Turner says. "Our A- rating reflects that stability, and our three-year funding ensures member protection and solvency."

Curative's financial model is sustainable, Turner explains, because it aligns incentives between members, providers, and the company itself. "When members engage early and providers are paid cleanly, everyone wins."

The Future: Reimagining What Insurance Can Be

Looking ahead, Turner envisions a future where "no deductible" isn't the differentiator. It's the standard.

"Five years from now, I think the biggest change in health insurance will be a mindset shift," he says. "Everyone is starting to realize that deferred care is the real cost driver, not utilization itself."

He predicts that the most successful plans will be those that align incentives around prevention, transparency, and trust. "By then, 'no deductible' won't be the differentiator, but the expectation for what functional, modern health insurance looks like."

For Curative, the path forward is clear: scale the model nationwide, deepen provider partnerships, and continue proving that a health plan built around engagement, not avoidance, can both improve outcomes and lower costs.

As Turner puts it, "Ultimately, we're applying the same approach that worked during the pandemic—identify what's broken, remove the barriers that don't add value, and build a system that performs better for both the people who use it and the ones who deliver care."

For more information, visit curative.com.

Lung Cancer Survivor Counts Her Blessings for Early Detection

Lung cancer can be a silent killer because the cancer can develop before symptoms such as shortness of breath, wheezing, phlegm and a persistent cough present themselves. It's rather common to discover the presence of lung cancer when a patient seeks medical treatment for another condition.

Such was the case for my patient Barbara Lee Lynn. Over Christmas, she fell ill with the flu and pneumonia, and that led to a CT scan. Upon review by a radiologist, the image revealed a suspicious nodule in the upper right lobe of her lung. The findings were brought to the Tumor Board Conference to confirm it was in fact a tumor and to discuss next steps.

Weeks later, Lynn made an appointment at Holy Cross Health's pulmonology office, and we delivered the news that there was a tumor. My colleagues and I began treating her.

"I smoked and stopped at least 15 years ago," the 73-year-old Pompano Beach resident said. "I never did any kind of lung cancer screening, although now it is very popular and very important. I had no symptoms while the cancer was growing. Had I not been sick, I would not have discovered the nodule."

Lynn underwent a robotic-assisted bronchoscopy with Ion. During the procedure, a physician guides an ultra-thin catheter through the patient's airway to the area of the lung that requires a biopsy. The small, flexible catheter can reach all segments of the lung, even far into the outer lung. Once at the location of the nodule to be biopsied, the catheter locks in place and the physician inserts biopsy tools through the catheter to take a lung tissue sample. Lynn then had a robotic-assisted surgery to remove the nodule.

"By the grace of God, other tissue was negative," Lynn said of her biopsy results.



BY SEMAAN "SAM" KOSSEIFI, MD

Lynn is thankful her tumor was caught at stage 1A. Although no treatment is required at this time, my colleagues and I continue to monitor her case closely. She regularly follows up with us every three months. We take liquid DNA samples to track her lung cancer to see if it's spread.

"What they are doing now in the field of lung cancer is wonderful," Lynn said in praise of the innovation.

From diagnosis to treatment to ongoing care, Holy Cross Health's specialty medical practices and our Michael and Dianne Bienes Comprehensive Cancer Center offer a wide range of services and providers who take a multidisciplinary approach to treat our patients' unique cases. We work together as a team to provide our patients and families with options and guide them on their journeys to making an educated decision on their individualized course of action. They not only rely on our medical expertise, but our compassionate care every step of the way. Our nurse lung navigator steers the process, so the patient and physicians are always on the same page and kept well informed.

Because of the advances in the field, early detection and swift response to her lung cancer diagnosis, Lynn can now enjoy this Christmas with her family and reflect on the challenging year she endured. During the holidays, we focus so much on the gifts under the tree, but there really is no greater gift than life and good health.

Dr. Kosseifi is a pulmonologist at Holy Cross Health in Fort Lauderdale.

Honoring the Individuals Who Make Florida's Hospitals Special



BY MARY C. MAYHEW

Last month at the annual meeting of the Florida Hospital Association, the state's largest hospital association, hospital leaders had the distinct privilege of recognizing two individuals with the association's highest honors, Caregiver of the Year and Health Care Leader of the Year.

Each year, FHA receives nominations from hospitals across the state for these prestigious awards, and each year, the commitment, care, and leadership demonstrated by the nominees serve as an inspiration. From the bedside to the back office, the nominees represent the diverse clinical, operational, and strategic work that goes into sustaining a modern, sophisticated, and compassionate health care system. These dedicated individuals who choose to give their time, talent, and service to Florida's

hospitals, patients, and communities are the reason Florida is leading the way in health care innovation and outcomes.

This year, Gail Ryder, vice president of behavioral health at BayCare Health System, was chosen as FHA's 2025 Health Care Leader of the Year, and Dr. Alfred Gitu, family medicine physician and chief academic officer at Lee Health, was chosen as FHA's 2025 Caregiver of the Year.

The FHA Health Care Leader of the Year Award honors a hospital or health system leader who has contributed significantly to the health of the community with their leadership and guidance. The panel of judges chose Ryder in recognition of her visionary leadership to advance timely behavioral health access across Florida communities.

Over more than 30 years, Ryder has lived the mantra that "there is no health without mental health." She spearheaded the health system's Behavioral Health Integration program, enhancing early detection and intervention, ultimately improving patient outcomes. She cultivates strong partnerships with law enforcement, public health agencies, and community organizations to promote coordinated and proactive care. Her leadership brought to life the West Central Florida region's first-of-its-kind urgent behavioral health care center, improving patient outcomes and alleviating pressure on emergency departments.

Her work also extends to serving as a tireless advocate for mental health policy reform. Collaborating with local and state leaders to secure funding, improve access, and reduce stigma, her advocacy has led to significant and tangible improvements that benefit countless individuals and families.

The second award is the FHA Caregiver of the Year. It recognizes individuals for outstanding patient care services and for exemplifying a commitment to quality patient care.

Dr. Gitu has led Lee Health's Family Medicine Residency Program since 2018 in partnership with the Florida State University College of Medicine and was instrumental in incorporating lifestyle medicine into the family medicine curriculum. Under his leadership, the graduate medical education program has maintained a 100 percent board pass rate with zero citations and increased the number of residents from 24 to 33 per year. In his most recent role as chief academic officer, Dr. Gitu oversees education, research and training programs to ensure the highest standards of academic and clinical excellence. As his team wrote in the award nomination, "[Gitu's] mentorship and leadership cultivate an environment that values patient satisfaction, professional development, and community health And his dedication extends beyond our hospital."

FHA proudly recognizes and thanks Dr. Alfred Gitu and Gail Ryder for their service and leadership. They embody the innovation and drive that are so vital to transforming our health care system, making Florida the best in the nation for health care access and outcomes and ensuring Florida's hospitals are among the best in class.



(l-r) Mary C. Mayhew, president and CEO, FHA; Dr. Randy Haffner, president and CEO, AdventHealth's Florida Division; Gail Ryder, vice president of behavioral health, BayCare Health System; Dr. Larry Antonucci, president and CEO, Lee Health



(l-r) Mary C. Mayhew, president and CEO, FHA; Dr. Larry Antonucci, president and CEO, Lee Health; Dr. Alfred Gitu, chief academic officer, Lee Health; Dr. Randy Haffner, president and CEO, AdventHealth's Florida Division

Mary C. Mayhew is President and CEO, Florida Hospital Association.

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WHAT'S NEW...WHAT'S

UHealth SoLé Mia Medical Center Opens in North Miami, Redefining the Future of Health Care

The University of Miami Health System (UHealth) has opened the doors of UHealth SoLé Mia Medical Center, an unparalleled new destination for health care in South Florida. The seven-story, 363,000-square-foot facility is the largest ambulatory center in UHealth's network yet and represents a transformative investment in the region's future. SoLé Mia is the latest in a series of major expansions - joining UHealth Doral Medical Center and The Lennar Foundation Medical Center - and builds on the advanced specialty care delivered at UHealth's flagship hospital in downtown Miami. Collectively, these facilities are part of a master plan to bring world-class academic medicine closer to home, with nationally recognized expertise, AI-enabled technology, and healing-focused environments.

Within SoLé Mia's walls, patients will find nationally ranked specialty care that defines UHealth's reputation: nationally ranked Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, South Florida's only NCI-designated cancer center; Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, ranked #1 in the nation for 24 years; and Desai Sethi Urology Institute, delivering innovative urologic care. In addition, a groundbreaking collaboration with the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) brings together two powerhouses in musculoskeletal care. Additional specialties include neurology and neurosurgery, cardiology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, dermatology, otolaryngology, and gynecology.

Nicklaus Children's Hosts Ribbon Cutting for Orthopedic, Sports Medicine and Spine Institute

Members of the community recently joined hospital leaders, physicians and patients for the ribbon cutting of the state-of-the-art Nicklaus Children's Orthopedic, Sports Medicine and Spine Institute.

The new space, located on the third floor of the George E. Batchelor Research and Academic Pavilion boasts 19,000 square feet and features expanded treatment areas designed with patient and family comfort in mind. This new location houses an imaging suite with an EOSedge imaging system, two x-ray machines, 18 exam rooms, cast rooms and meeting spaces.



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Cover Story: VITAS Named a 2025 Top Workplace in Healthcare as Result of Employee Input

Continued from page 1

"We are so excited that our employees are so passionate about working at VITAS; this is a really prestigious award for us because it is based on employee experience," said Ava Padmore-Lewis, senior vice president and chief human resources officer for VITAS.

"We appreciate and find it a privilege when patients and families choose us to support their loved ones at this point in their life's journey. To be named a Top Workplace in Healthcare, when we are truly living our mission and purpose, is a celebration of those employees."

According to Padmore-Lewis, one of the things that draws people to VITAS is its purpose-driven culture that supports employees while enhancing the quality of hospice and palliative care delivered to patients and families.

"People who do well and enjoy working here resonate with the VITAS Values," she said. "They feel like they belong here." The VITAS Values are: patients and families come first; we take care of each other; I'll do my best today and do even better tomorrow; and I'm proud to make a difference.

"Starting with orientation, onboarding and training of our employees, we ensure that every person, whether in clinical, administrative or support roles, remembers our purpose and that each person is working toward a common vision—that patients and families are supported with dignity at the end of life," said Padmore-Lewis.

VITAS takes care to select people who are compassionate, are comfortable interacting



Pictured at the VITAS Inpatient Unit at MedSquare Kendall, the interdisciplinary hospice care team consists of a physician, nurse, hospice aide, social worker, chaplain, volunteer, and bereavement specialist.

with a diverse variety of patients, and who respect the people in their care at such a critical and sensitive time.

Employees also appreciate that they feel heard at VITAS. In addition to participating in the Top

Workplaces survey, the company conducts its own in-house surveys focused on measuring employee engagement, leadership and other key areas, and then takes action based on the feedback received.

"Year over year, we've made significant progress with our employee engagement scores, having seen a 10-point increase since launching our internal survey in 2022," said Padmore-Lewis. "We recognize our employees, listen to them and respond in a way that's valuable."

She added that it's important to keep employees happy, because people have options of where to work.

"We focus on the lifecycle of the employee: we select people who are aligned with our mission, vision and values, and once they're on board, we train

them well and provide them with the right resources," she said. "A huge part of a good employee experience is that they are recognized and celebrated, and we ensure that we uphold this throughout the employee lifecycle, which increases morale and performance." Padmore-Lewis notes that the company is currently in its annual VITAS recognition period, which is referred to as "VITAS Best." The company recognizes those employees who embody its values and missions throughout the year using a variety of objective and anecdotal measures, including patient, family and peer feedback.

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Dr. Joseph Shega
Chief Medical Officer, VITAS





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VITAS[®] Healthcare

Cover Story: Teaching Students to Collaborate and Communicate: Purpose of FAU's Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice

Continued from page 1

macy and speech-language pathology complete foundational, intermediate and advanced IPE&P programming throughout their academic journey," explained IPE&P Executive Director Dr. Terry Eggenberger, noting that FAU was at the forefront of these efforts, establishing the office well before it became an accreditation mandate.

Programming includes activities focused on building the core competencies outlined by the Interprofessional Education Collaborative including Values and Ethics, Role and Responsibilities, Communication, and Teams and Teamwork. Activities may also include workshops providing an introduction to interprofessional healthcare communication techniques; learning activities centered on a drug interaction case, and a simulation-based learning activity to enhance interprofessional communication.

"Students who participate in interprofessional programming utilize evidence-based approaches to collaborate with individuals and families as part of an interprofessional healthcare team across various learning and real-world settings," said Dr. Eggenberger. "They also connect with the community, working

directly with community partners to design and support real-world interprofessional projects and collaborative practice opportunities."

There are many benefits to working as interprofessional teams, according to Dr. Eggenberger. Addressing patients' needs from multiple perspectives leads to care coordination, while avoiding duplication of services, preventing complications, and managing chronic conditions more effectively.

"Collaboration also enhances the patient experience by ensuring care is person-centered, communication is clear and consistent, and patients feel supported and involved in decision-making," she added.

One example of this is the Senior Adult Geriatrics Education (SAGE) Mentor Program, an interprofessional learning experience designed to help students from different healthcare professions collaborate while learning about healthy aging directly from older adults. During SAGE mentor visits, students meet with a senior adult who serves not just as a patient but as a mentor and educator who is considered a key member of the healthcare team.

"Students from different healthcare disciplines learn about, from, and with one another—and with the SAGE mentor—to

understand each team member's role in providing holistic care; practice effective interprofessional communication; conduct collaborative assessments and screenings; develop ethical responses to identified needs, and build trusting, patient-centered relationships," said Dr. Eggenberger.

She added that the program also aims to deepen students' understanding of healthy aging, emphasizing disease prevention, lifestyle choices, functional independence, and active engagement with life, while preparing them to translate these concepts into clinical practice.

To date, SAGE program results have been highly positive, with students gaining a deeper appreciation of collaborative care and learning how coordinated teamwork can improve patient outcomes.

"By working closely with mentors, they see firsthand how interprofessional practice enhances population health, reduces unnecessary interventions and costs, and improves the patient experience through more personalized, respectful and effective care," said Dr. Eggenberger.

"Many also note that interacting with the SAGE mentor helps them build confidence in their clinical and communication skills, preparing them for future careers in healthcare where teamwork and patient-centered approaches are

essential."

"In essence, the SAGE mentor visits transform theoretical classroom learning into meaningful, hands-on experiences, benefiting students, older adults, and the healthcare system as a whole," she added.

Partnerships beyond FAU play a crucial role in making the SAGE Mentor Program possible. Community partners include Abbey Delray, the Weisman Delray Community Center, and the West Palm Beach Housing Authority. IPE&P also works closely with Palm Beach Atlantic's University School of Pharmacy, whose students join FAU students from medicine, nursing, social work, and speech-language pathology to form interprofessional teams.

"Many of these partnerships, some of which have lasted over a decade, have helped the program grow into a sustainable, community-centered initiative," said Dr. Eggenberger. "These collaborations not only enrich student learning but also strengthen relationships with local organizations, ultimately improving care delivery and promoting healthy aging in the community."

To learn more about IPEP, visit <https://www.fau.edu/provost/oipe>.

Cover Story: VITAS and Miami Dade College Partner to Shape the Next Generation of Compassionate Nurses

Continued from page 1

A Partnership Nearly 50 Years in the Making

The relationship between VITAS Healthcare and MDC is one built on mutual values and a deep commitment to compassionate care.

"VITAS Healthcare's partnership with Miami Dade College dates back almost 50 years, rooted in a shared commitment to advancing patient care and healthcare education in our community," says Ava Padmore-Lewis, Chief Human Resources Officer at VITAS Healthcare.

That connection began when Esther Colliflower, a nurse, and Hugh Westbrook, a minister, met at MDC as faculty members and began teaching a course together on the topic of death. By 1978, the two founded the hospice which would become known as VITAS Healthcare. Over the years, the partnership has grown through clinical training opportunities, workforce development initiatives, and this nursing scholarship—all designed to inspire and support the next generation of caregivers in hospice and palliative care.



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Cover Story: South University Accelerated BSN Degree Program Opens Door to Career Opportunities

Continued from page 1

alism, and holism to provide care for individuals, families and communities.

After successful completion of the nursing program, graduates must pass the National Council Licensure Examination Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN)® in order to obtain state professional licensure and begin practice as a registered nurse.

"In the past two years, South University students have had a 100 percent pass rate on the NCLEX," said Program Director Dr. Mary McMullen. "Our students finishing senior practicums are getting job offers before they leave the floor."

"We've had students hired after graduation into obstetrics, surgical units, ICUs and more, and they continue to thrive," she added. "We not only teach the skills of nursing, but also encourage the care and compassion of it. They leave here very well-rounded."

The BSN degree program is designed for the non-registered nurse student. Prerequisite courses are completed over six quarters, after which students apply to the professional phase of the nursing program. The professional phase is taught over seven quarters.

"The prerequisite portion can be done online, but the nursing courses are completed on campus," said Dr. McMullen. "Every course we teach has a clinical com-

ponent including Fundamentals, Medical-Surgical classes, Obstetrics, Pediatrics, Mental Health, and the Transitions to Professional Practice."

During the week, students transition out of the classroom to perform a 10-hour shift in a clinical setting at one of the local hospitals in Martin County or Palm Beach County.

"By caring for real patients, students experience hands-on what they are learning in class," said Dr. McMullen. "For example, they can experience taking care of a patient with cardiac issues while at the same time learning about it in the classroom."

Dr. McMullen notes that students in the School of Nursing also have access to high-fidelity simulation experiences in order to have hands-on experience prior to going out into clinicals.

Another advantage of the BSN program is that classes are led by faculty with advanced degrees (DNP, PhD) and experience, who can share this with students.

"It is incredibly important to have faculty with clinical experience in these situations in the real world teaching students," said Dr. McMullen. "Students aren't just reading from a book, but are hearing about real-life experiences with real patients."

Dr. McMullen notes that the faculty is a valuable key to student success, making

themselves available whenever possible. The university also provides tutoring, one-on-one coaching and counseling to help students through their educational journey.

"We develop a rapport with our students, and they know that they can come to us anytime they don't understand something," said Dr. McMullen. "This collaboration between our faculty and students, and our students' drive to want to be successful definitely sets South University West Palm Beach apart."

Earning a BSN degree can open the doors to numerous career opportunities in a range of different modalities, including informatics, critical care, obstetrics, pediatrics, operating room, outpatient doctor's offices, education and more.

"Even more important, you are genuinely helping people; oftentimes when they are not feeling well," said Dr. McMullen. "Nurses have the opportunity to bring light to their patients' days and give them comfort. It's a very rewarding career."

Prospective students are welcome to visit the campus to learn more about the program and can even see simulations in practice.

For more information, visit <https://www.southuniversity.edu/degree-programs/nursing/nursing-bsn>.

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CAROL FELIX**
Publishers

NANCY LAMMIE, Editor

JUDY GRAMM
Editorial Manager & Webmaster

JMC GRAPHICS
Art/Production
lammienancy@aol.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Daniel Casciato, Barbara Fallon
Vanessa Orr, Lois Thomson

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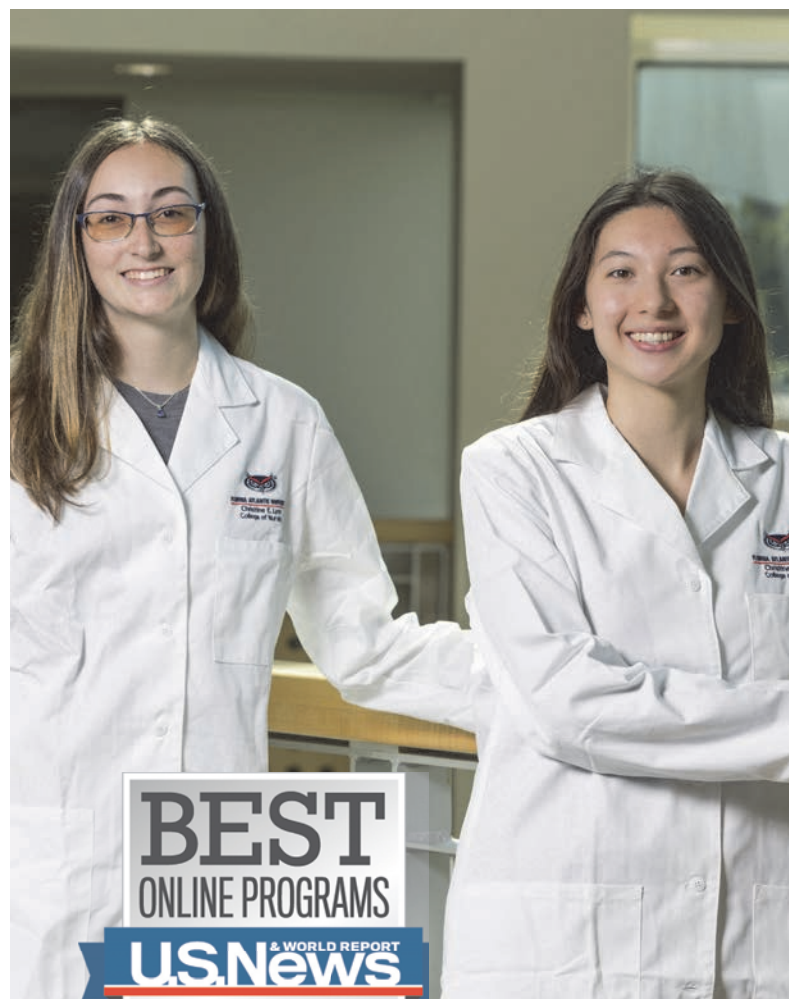
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The baccalaureate, master's and DNP programs at Florida Atlantic University's Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.

FIU College of Medicine and Miami VA Healthcare System Announce Joint Appointment to Advance Geriatric Care and Research

In a groundbreaking collaboration to address the rapidly growing health needs of aging veterans, Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (FIU Medicine) and the Miami VA Healthcare System (Miami VA) have created a unique joint position to advance geriatric research, education, and care.

Jennifer Martin has been appointed to serve in pivotal leadership roles at both institutions. At FIU Medicine, she'll serve as the Leon Medical Centers Professor in Geriatrics and director of the Benjamin Leon, Jr. Family Center for Geriatric Research and Education. At the Miami VA, she'll be a senior psychologist and director of the Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center.

Martin, a licensed clinical psychologist with nearly two decades of experience in geriatrics and veteran-centered research, joins FIU and the Miami VA after serving as associate director for clinical and health sciences research at the Greater Los Angeles VA GRECC and as professor of medicine at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine. She brings expertise in geriatrics, behavioral sleep medicine, and translational research.

"This unique role bridges two missions—delivering world-class care to veterans while advancing cutting-edge research and education in geriatrics through a prestigious academic partnership and endowed program," said Dr. Juan C. Cendan, dean of FIU Medicine and senior vice president for health affairs at FIU.



Jennifer Martin

Indian River State College's Nursing Dean Recognized Among Florida's 50 Most Influential Women Leaders

Dr. Patricia Gagliano, Dean of the School of Nursing at Indian River State College ("The River"), was honored as a recipient of the News Service of Florida Above & Beyond Award at the organization's 3rd annual Above & Beyond Gala at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Tallahassee.

The Above & Beyond Award celebrated the 50 most influential and thought-provoking women in Florida who have demonstrated exemplary leadership in their respective fields while making significant contributions to society. Dr. Gagliano was selected for her transformative work in nursing education and her dedication to advancing the nursing profession across Florida.

As Dean of the School of Nursing since 2017, Dr. Gagliano oversees multiple nursing programs across six sites, managing everything from curriculum development to regulatory compliance and clinical partnerships. Under her leadership, The River has successfully implemented concept-based curriculum, NCLEX blueprinting, and NextGen assessment methodologies, resulting in strong licensure attainment and job placement rates for graduates.

Dr. Gagliano holds a PhD in Nursing from Barry University, where she focused her dissertation research on predictors of academic success for nontraditional nursing students. She also earned her master's degree in nursing administration and bachelor's degree in nursing from Barry University. Her 27-year tenure at Indian River State College includes 18 years as a nursing instructor and professor before assuming her current role as Dean.



Dr. Patricia Gagliano



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Barry University Celebrates Milestone Realignment of its College of Health Professions and Medical Sciences



Audrey Miller, dean of the School of Nursing; Eneida Roldan, executive dean of the College of Health Professions and Medical Sciences; Madelin Ramil, dean of the School of Podiatric Medicine; Rodolfo Bonnin, dean of the School of Mental Health and Social Work

Barry University announced the largest realignment of its College of Health Professions and Medical Sciences in more than a decade. The university introduced three new deans to lead its schools of Nursing, Podiatric Medicine, and Mental Health and Social Work, and unveiled strategic partnership agreements with Larkin Health and Independent Living Systems.

Barry University Announces New Leadership Shaping the Future of Healthcare Education

Barry's new leadership team reflects the breadth of expertise needed to meet today's healthcare education challenges.

Dr. Audrey P. Miller, alumna and nationally recognized nurse educator, will lead the College of Nursing and Health Sciences after a distinguished career in pediatric transplant care, nursing workforce development, and health equity, with senior appointments at Florida International University, Jackson Health Systems, and the University of Miami.

Dr. Madelin Ramil steps into the role of Dean of the School of Podiatric Medicine after a career spanning private practice, residency leadership at HCA Florida Westside Hospital, and international surgical training in Spain and Italy. A Barry graduate and co-founder of The Dr.

Charles C. Southerland Jr. Yucatan Children's Project, she has dedicated nearly two decades to advancing podiatric care for underserved children. Dr. Rodolfo Bonnin will serve as the inaugural Dean of the School of Social Work and Mental Health. A psychologist and researcher with nearly two decades of experience, he previously served as Assistant Dean for Institutional Knowledge Management and Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Florida International University's Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, where he developed nationally recognized curricula in suicide prevention and emotional intelligence. At Barry, he will expand experiential learning, strengthen research, and deepen community engagement.

Strategic Partnerships Open New Opportunities for Students

The newly signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with Larkin University, Larkin Health System, and Independent Living Systems will provide students with clinical training sites, research opportunities, and direct hands-on experience and pathways into the professional field. This collaboration is the first of many coming to the College and Barry continues to reinforce the importance of strategic partnerships to bring new opportunities for students.

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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.

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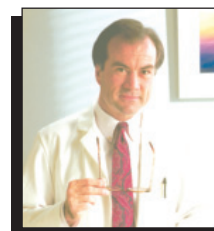


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Nicklaus Children's Heart Institute Launches Bedside Transcatheter PDA Closure Offering for Newborns

Nicklaus Children's Heart Institute is now offering bedside transcatheter patent ductus arteriosus (PDA) closures for medically fragile newborns. This new offering brings advanced therapy directly to the neonatal intensive care unit, allowing procedures to be performed within the baby's own isolette or crib. This eliminates the need to transport the infant to a catheterization laboratory or even outside of their NICU room, removing any risks associated with moving fragile babies.

A PDA is a small blood vessel that normally closes after birth. In some premature infants, the vessel remains open, allowing extra blood to flow to the lungs. This can lead to breathing difficulties, feeding challenges, growth delays, and other complications. In cases where a PDA does not respond to medication or close on its own, closure may be needed to stabilize the infant's condition. The minimally invasive procedure involves placing a small catheter through a vein to deliver a tiny device that seals the PDA from within.

The newly appointed chief of cardiovascular medicine and co-director of the Nicklaus Children's Heart Institute, Dr. Shyam Sathanandam, is the pioneer of the minimally invasive technique now adopted by Nicklaus Children's. Under his leadership, the Heart Institute is on track to become the first hospital in the nation to offer a traveling PDA closure program for children admitted at other hospitals throughout South Florida.

Good Samaritan Medical Center Offers Advanced Treatment for Radiation Fibrosis

Good Samaritan Medical Center now offers advanced treatment for radiation fibrosis, a serious long-term complication of cancer therapy that can greatly impact a patient's quality of life.

Radiation therapy is an effective treatment for many cancers, but it can sometimes cause the body's tissue to become scarred, stiff, and less functional over time, a condition known as radiation fibrosis. For patients treated in the head and neck area, this can mean difficulty with swallowing, eating or even opening the jaw.

"Radiation fibrosis is a challenging condition that can affect mobility, comfort, and everyday life for cancer survivors," said Dr. Anastasia Quimby, head and neck oncology and microvascular reconstruction surgeon at Good Samaritan Medical Center. "At Good Samaritan, we're using innovative approaches such as NanoFat Therapy to actively reverse tissue damage, restore function, and improve long-term outcomes for our patients."

Traditional treatments for radiation fibrosis have been limited to medications and physical therapy, often with only partial relief. Good Samaritan Medical Center now offers NanoFat Therapy, a regenerative treatment that uses highly refined fat enriched with stem cells and growth factors to:

- Break down scar tissue
- Reduce chronic inflammation
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Dr. Anastasia Quimby

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Point-of-Care Intestinal Ultrasound for Inflammatory Bowel Disease

BY JENNIFER WILLIAMSON

Intestinal ultrasound (IUS) has emerged as a noninvasive, radiation-free alternative for tracking disease activity that is helping clinicians provide treat-to-target care for patients with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

It is estimated that between 2.4 and 3.1 million people in the United States have IBD, a chronic, relapsing-remitting inflammatory condition for which there is no cure. The most common forms of IBD are Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, both of which require continuous monitoring to assess disease activity and guide treatment decisions.

According to a 2024 report from the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA), a growing number of providers are incorporating IUS for the management of IBD. That includes board-certified gastroenterologist Asad ur Rahman, M.D., Medical Director of the Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center at Cleveland Clinic in Florida, one of the few IBD referral centers in southeast Florida.

"Intestinal ultrasound provides a detailed, real-time view of the bowel that supports an enhanced level of monitoring while reducing exposure to the risks and burdens associated with traditional imaging techniques," states Dr. Rahman. He is the first within Cleveland Clinic's five-hospital regional health system in Florida to use point-of-care IUS as part of a broader monitoring strategy for IBD.

How IUS works

IUS requires two different ultrasound probes to capture both global and detailed views of the bowel. The first is a low-frequency curvilinear probe that provides a general view of the entire bowel and helps identify areas of significant concern. A high-frequency linear probe is then used to zoom in on specific segments of the intestine and measure critical indicators of disease activity.

"Advancements in ultrasound technology have improved the resolution of the images captured and our ability to see disease activity, making it very useful for monitoring patients with IBD," says Dr. Rahman. "IUS typically takes less than 30 minutes to perform, which also makes it a convenient point-of-care option that is noninvasive and repeatable."

Applications in IBD management

While not a standalone diagnostic tool for IBD – since endoscopic and histologic confirmation are still required – IUS enhances clinical decision-making by providing objective data on disease extent and severity. "It is particularly useful for examining the ileum and colon, with the exception of the rectum, and for establishing a baseline of disease activity," says Dr. Rahman.

One of the most significant advantages of IUS is its ability to track disease activity over time through quantifiable markers such as bowel wall thickness and vascularity. These indicators closely correlate with inflammation and allow clinicians to detect subtle disease changes and track disease progression beyond symptom reporting.

"IUS supports early detection of disease flare-ups or complications and enables



Dr. Asad ur Rahman

treatment decisions based on the most current and precise data available," says Dr. Rahman. "It also offers a fast, accessible way to guide therapy adjustments without relying solely on symptoms or invasive procedures."

Benefits of IUS

Clinically, IUS is quick, accessible, and does not require any special preparation. This allows for point-of-care assessments during routine visits, enabling timely evaluation of disease activity without the delays or logistical complexity of more invasive tests. "Patients do not undergo bowel prep or sedation, which improves comfort and adherence to follow-up protocols," says Dr. Rahman.

Unlike traditional imaging techniques, IUS does not require radiation or contrast agents, making it a safer option, especially for younger patients and those needing frequent monitoring. It also

reduces the cumulative risk associated with repeated imaging and contributes to lower overall healthcare costs.

Importantly, IUS provides real-time visualization of disease activity. This immediacy allows clinicians to assess therapeutic response on the spot and supports dynamic treatment decisions.

Complementing colonoscopy

Because IUS cannot distinguish between IBD and other causes of colonic or small bowel inflammation, such as infectious or drug-induced colitis, colonoscopy remains the gold standard for definitive diagnosis and tissue sampling.

Dr. Rahman points out that direct visualization of the mucosal surface and targeted biopsy are essential for dysplasia surveillance. It is the primary tool used to monitor disease activity for people who have a risk of dysplasia or a previous history of dysplasia.

"Patients with primary sclerosing cholangitis as well as other patients with longstanding inflammation should undergo colonoscopy with biopsies to assess for dysplasia," he says. "For patients who have not had longstanding inflammation and have achieved endoscopic healing, IUS is a good test for ongoing monitoring."

Expanding the role of IUS in IBD Care

Dr. Rahman expects that IUS will become more widely adopted over the next several years, expanding beyond the academic health systems, like Cleveland Clinic, that have embraced the technology in the past three to four years.

"I think IUS will become a mainstay of monitoring disease activity and will probably replace the need for a lot of cross-sectional CT and MRI scans," comments Dr. Rahman. "We'll also likely be able to avoid annual colonoscopies for many patients, and limit its use in ongoing care to dysplasia surveillance and the evaluation of precancerous changes."

FAU Unveils World's First "Bench-To-Bedside" MRI

In a global first, Florida Atlantic University has unveiled an unprecedented research initiative uniting advanced MRI and focused ultrasound technologies into a single, preclinical and clinical research platform that promises to accelerate the pathway from scientific discovery to patient care. This state-of-the-art initiative at the Florida Atlantic NeuroInnovate Center empowers scientists to explore the brain and body with exceptional precision, advancing the understanding of complex neurological diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and more. Integrating a comprehensive "bench-to-bedside" approach, the initiative will significantly accelerate the discovery, development and delivery of new treatments, ultimately transforming patient care.

Researchers will now have access to a fully integrated system that allows them to study disease mechanisms, test treatments in real time, and apply those therapies directly to patients. It begins with the preclinical MRI, designed for research using translational models. Once a treatment shows promise, it can move seamlessly to human trials using the clinical MRI system that guides and monitors therapies in a safe, controlled setting.

Focused ultrasound uses precise acoustic energy, like sunlight through a magnifying glass, to target tissues safely. Multiple beams converge at one point, producing mechanical or thermal effects. This non-invasive, rapidly advancing therapy has growing clinical uses in a wide range of diseases including neurological disorders, cancer, cardiovascular and metabolic diseases, and pain management.



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ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY

Bringing Urgent Care to Your Fingertips: How Baptist Health's PineApp Is Revolutionizing Virtual Care in South Florida

BY DANIEL CASCIATO

In a digital age where convenience meets necessity, Baptist Health is leading the charge with its virtual urgent care platform, PineApp. As telehealth becomes a standard feature of modern healthcare, the platform is redefining how and when patients can access medical care, making it possible to consult with a physician within minutes, from anywhere.

David Mishkin, M.D., assistant medical director of Emergency Medicine and medical director of Virtual Urgent Care/Urgent Care Express at Baptist Health, says the goal is simple: "To provide safe, high-quality, and efficient care without sacrificing convenience."

Treating Everyday Illnesses Virtually

Virtual urgent care, Dr. Mishkin explains, is best suited for non-life-threatening conditions that don't require hands-on procedures or extensive testing. These include "minor respiratory infections, allergic reactions, eye complaints, minor skin and soft-tissue issues, and uncomplicated urinary tract infections."

The platform helps patients quickly distinguish when they can be treated remotely and when they should seek in-person care. "Chest pain, shortness of breath, severe abdominal pain, or neurologic complaints" are red flags that warrant immediate, physical evaluation. "We also are very cautious with patients who are very young, such as infants, and our geriatric population as well," he adds.

Virtual Care's Post-Pandemic Momentum

Like many healthcare innovations, PineApp saw exponential growth during the COVID-19 pandemic. "The pandemic forced a rapid expansion of telehealth adoption," says Dr. Mishkin. "Our health system converted to telehealth within days."

What began as a necessary response to a global health crisis has since become a permanent fixture. "Over the past several years, we have continued to see sustained adoption and utilization for virtual urgent care," he explains. "As patients are demanding both accessible and lower-cost alternatives to care, we remain a trusted source to efficiently meet that demand."

Seamless From Start to Finish

Using PineApp is intentionally straightforward. After downloading and registering, patients simply tap "Get Care" and choose "Same-day Care." A symptom questionnaire helps triage the case and matches the patient with an available provider.

"One of our Baptist Health Virtual Urgent Care providers will then be readily available to conduct a brief history and exam to properly address the patient's medical concern," says Dr. Mishkin.

Depending on the condition, the provider may prescribe medications, offer self-care instructions, or recommend an in-person follow-up. "The visit is documented in the patient's medical record, so their PCP or specialist can review the care at a later time."

Fast, Affordable, and Available 24/7

When it comes to benefits, virtual urgent care shines in areas patients value most: speed, accessibility, and cost.

"Patients can usually be seen in minutes, whereas visits to both urgent care and emergency departments can take several hours," says Dr. Mishkin. "Our Virtual Urgent Care is also open 24/7, so patients do not need to wait for clinic



Dr. David Mishkin

hours to be seen."

Convenience is further amplified by the ability to log in from home, work, or even while traveling. "This eliminates driving and sitting in crowded waiting rooms," he says. Prescriptions are sent electronically to the pharmacy of the patient's choice, and records are stored securely in the electronic health system.

Equally important is the cost. "Our virtual urgent care visits are intentionally designed to be low-cost," Dr. Mishkin emphasizes. "Patients are only responsible for a one-time fee to access care."

Quality Without Compromise

Skepticism around virtual care has diminished significantly in recent years, but Baptist Health has taken extra steps to ensure quality and safety remain on par with in-person visits.

"All our providers are specially trained in delivering virtual care," says Dr. Mishkin. "We focus on expertise utilizing the technology along with what we call delivering excellent 'webside manner.'"

That training isn't isolated to virtual care. Providers also rotate through Baptist Health's same-day sites, primary care, urgent care, and emergency departments, ensuring they stay current with in-person workflows and standards.

Rigorous oversight is also a key part of the model. "We conduct ongoing quality reviews for virtual visits, including case reviews, to ensure we are meeting best practices and evidence-based guidelines," he adds.

Changing Minds and Building Trust

While early skepticism around virtual visits has faded, Baptist Health continues

to prioritize patient trust. "Had you asked me this question several years ago, I would have a very different answer," Dr. Mishkin admits.

"Today we find that patients are very comfortable with virtual care, with many preferring virtual over an in-person visit."

That trust has been earned through consistent care, reliable outcomes, and a platform designed with transparency in mind. "Our commitment to provider expertise, quality oversight, and patient transparency are our driving forces as we build continued trust in this delivery model," he says.

A Glimpse Into the Future

Looking ahead, Dr. Mishkin sees virtual urgent care as not just a convenient option, but a primary entry point into the healthcare system.

"We anticipate virtual urgent care becoming a more central part of how our patients access care," he says. "No longer just focusing on convenience and cost alone, but also an alternative to being a standard first point of entry into our health system."

He also anticipates that artificial intelligence (AI) will play a growing role in enhancing the patient experience. From triaging symptoms to offering diagnostic support, AI will likely expand the scope and scalability of virtual care.

"Virtual urgent care has the potential to accommodate higher patient volumes while maintaining the same consistency, accessibility and affordability that patients have come to expect from our service."

As South Florida's healthcare needs evolve, Baptist Health's PineApp is proving that high-quality care doesn't always begin in a waiting room—it can start with a tap on your phone.

For more information, visit [BaptistHealth.net](https://www.baptisthealth.net).

Innovation in Motion: Mount Sinai's Breast CT Study Brings 3D Imaging to the Forefront

Breast cancer remains one of the most prevalent health challenges for women today, and early detection continues to be our most effective defense. Yet despite widespread awareness, many women still delay or avoid mammograms—most often because of discomfort caused by compression. At Mount Sinai Medical Center, we are committed to improving both the accuracy and experience of breast imaging, which is why we are evaluating an innovative new technology: the Koning Vera Breast CT.

The Koning Breast CT is the first dedicated breast computed tomography system installed within a comprehensive breast center in Florida. Unlike traditional mammography, which produces two-dimensional images and requires compression, this system creates a true three-dimensional, 360-degree image of the entire breast in a single seven-second rotation, without any compression. The result is a fast, comfortable exam that produces detailed volumetric images, allowing radiologists to see through dense tissue with exceptional clarity.

The medical center is currently conducting a clinical study to evaluate how this technology compares with mammography and MRI in women who have undergone prior imaging. To date, more than 20 patients have enrolled, with plans to continue for at least 12 months. The study is particularly focused on women with dense breast tissue, where traditional mammography can sometimes obscure small but clinically significant findings.



BY STUART S. KAPLAN, MD, FACR, FSBI

The exam's radiation dose is comparable to that of a standard mammogram, an important consideration for referring physicians and patients alike. For women who cannot tolerate MRI because of claustrophobia, metal implants, or time constraints, breast CT offers a comfortable, efficient alternative. The system also allows for contrast-enhanced imaging, providing additional diagnostic information similar to MRI for select patients.

The goal is to determine whether this technology can improve detection and streamline the diagnostic process without adding complexity or discomfort. Early results have been encouraging, and patient feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly among women who have avoided screening in the past because of discomfort.

As we look toward the opening of Mount Sinai's Braman Comprehensive Cancer Center in 2026, innovations like the Koning Breast CT reflect our ongoing commitment to advancing medicine through innovation, research, and compassionate, patient-centered care.

By removing barriers to screening and improving diagnostic precision, we can help more women detect cancer earlier—and that can make all the difference.

Dr. Stuart Kaplan is Section Chief, Breast Imaging, Mount Sinai Medical Center.

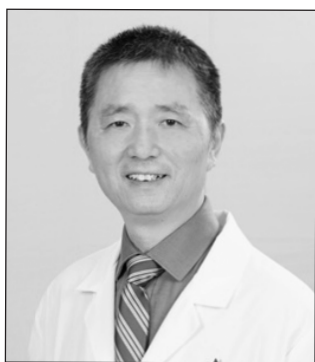
Broward Health Offers a Holistic Approach to Treating Diabetes

November is National Diabetes Month, a time to raise awareness about a disease that affects millions of Americans. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 38 million people in the United States, about one in 10, have diabetes, and one in five are unaware of their condition.

"Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases we treat, and yet it's also one of the most preventable," said Wu Wen, M.D., an endocrinologist with the Broward Health Physician Group. "We take a holistic approach, focusing not only on medications and technology but also on lifestyle, nutrition, education and emotional support. Managing diabetes successfully requires attention to the whole person, not just their blood sugar levels."

Understanding Diabetes

Diabetes occurs when the body either cannot produce enough insulin or cannot effectively use the insulin it produces. This results in elevated blood glucose levels that, if left unmanaged, can damage the heart, kidneys, eyes and nerves. There are three main types—Type 1, Type 2 and gestational diabetes,



Dr. Wu Wen

with Type 2 being the most common, often linked to lifestyle factors such as diet and physical activity.

Recognizing symptoms early is key to preventing complications. While increased thirst, frequent urination and fatigue are well-known warning signs, other symptoms may be overlooked, such as blurred vision, dry skin, frequent

yeast infections, intense hunger, unexplained weight loss and slow-healing cuts or sores.

"If you're experiencing any of these symptoms, it's important to see a healthcare professional," Dr. Wen said. "Early detection allows us to intervene before diabetes leads to more serious complications."

The Double Challenge

Diabetes often coexists with other chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney disease and depression. Without proper management, it can cause complications ranging from gum disease and hearing loss to nerve damage, blindness and stroke.

For that reason, Broward Health emphasizes a multidisciplinary team approach, where primary care physi-

cians, endocrinologists, dietitians and behavioral health professionals work together to help patients manage every aspect of their condition.

Advances in Treatment

Traditional methods, including blood sugar monitoring, medication adherence and healthy lifestyle habits, remain the foundation of diabetes care. But new therapies are expanding into what's possible for patients.

"Recent advances have given us more tools to help our patients live better, longer lives," said Dr. Wen. "For example, medications such as GLP-1 agonists and SGLT-2 inhibitors not only improve blood sugar control but can also support heart and kidney health. And for certain individuals at high risk for Type 1 diabetes, a medication called teplizumab can delay the onset of the disease."

Dr. Wen added that continuous glucose monitors and insulin pumps have also revolutionized care, allowing patients to track and manage their blood sugar levels in real time.

The Power of Prevention

While genetics play a role, lifestyle choices remain the most powerful defense against Type 2 diabetes. For people with prediabetes, those with elevated blood sugar that has not yet reached the diabetic range, small, consistent changes can make a big difference.

"Even modest weight loss, about 5% percent of body weight, can significantly reduce your risk," said Dr. Wen. "Combine that with regular exercise, such as brisk walking, biking or swimming for 30 minutes at least five days a week, and you can lower your chances of developing diabetes dramatically."

Beyond physical health, Broward Health encourages patients to prioritize emotional well-being. Living with a chronic condition can be stressful, and support systems are vital. The health system offers access to diabetes education programs and community resources designed to help patients make sustainable changes and feel less alone in their journey.

"Managing diabetes is not just about numbers on a glucose meter," Dr. Wen emphasized. "It's about empowering patients to take control of their health, body, mind and spirit."

Take the First Step

If anyone is concerned about their risk of diabetes, it is advised that they speak with a healthcare provider about screening options and preventive steps. Early detection and proactive management can help everyone live a longer, healthier life.

To find a Broward Health primary care physician or endocrinologist, visit [BrowardHealth.org/Wellness](https://www.BrowardHealth.org/Wellness).



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A message from our President

The Cost of Tariffs: Why China Still Matters

Every day, we seem to witness the theater of high-stakes negotiations between the United States and China. Just a few days ago, the President announced a new 100 percent tariff on Chinese imports—only to reconsider shortly after. It's easy to tune out this back-and-forth, but in truth, we can't afford to. The consequences reach far beyond politics and headlines—they reach directly into America's hospitals, clinics, and homes.

Understanding Tariffs and Their Impact

A tariff is essentially a tax on imported or exported goods. In most cases, the cost of that tax is passed down the supply chain, meaning that buyers—rather than suppliers—end up paying more for the same products. In healthcare, this translates to higher costs for hospitals and other providers, and ultimately higher costs for patients.

Economists generally agree that tariffs are harmful to the broader economy. They raise consumer prices, reduce trade (for example, China imported no U.S. soybeans in September for the first time in seven years, according to Reuters), and often prompt retaliatory actions from trading partners. While tariffs can offer short-term protection to certain domestic industries, they tend to create inefficiencies, discourage investment, and slow economic growth. In short, they distort markets rather than strengthen them.



Jaime Caldwell

Why China Matters to U.S. Healthcare

So, why should healthcare leaders care about China? Well, because China is a critical link in the global medical supply chain. In 2018, the U.S. imported more than \$29 billion in medical equipment, with China supplying roughly 28% of that total. By 2024, U.S. pharmaceutical imports from China reached about \$7.84 billion.

For many consumable supplies—such as gloves, gowns, dressings, and syringes—China is the dominant source. Some analysts suggest that more than half of the U.S. supply of these basic medical goods comes from Chinese producers. When it comes to capital equipment like imaging systems and surgical devices,

China's role is smaller (around 14% of devices sold in the U.S.) but still significant.

Because medical supply chains are both global and lean, disruptions in China—whether due to tariffs, logistics challenges, or export restrictions—can quickly ripple through the U.S. healthcare system. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated this vulnerability in stark terms: shortages of PPE, masks, and basic medical equipment revealed how dependent we had become on a limited number of overseas suppliers.

The Bigger Picture

To be clear, the U.S. is not wholly dependent on China. About 70% of medical equipment used here is domestically produced, and other countries such as Germany, Ireland, and Mexico play major roles in the supply chain. Still, China remains indispensable in many categories of essential medical products.

As trade tensions escalate, healthcare organizations must prepare for continued volatility. Tariffs and national-security reviews may eventually shift sourcing and production patterns, but in the near term, one thing is certain: the cost of care will continue to rise.

Around the Region... Around the Region... Around the Region...

St. Mary's Medical Center Names Netonua Reyes as its Chief Nursing Officer

St. Mary's Medical Center appoints Netonua Reyes as its new Chief Nursing Officer (CNO). Previously, Reyes served as CNO for Cedar Hill Regional Medical Center, GW Health in Washington, D.C. Reyes was also the CNO and Chief Operating Officer at Broward Health Imperial Point in Ft. Lauderdale.

Reyes is an experienced healthcare executive with an extensive background in nursing, working as a nurse for more than 25 years. She earned her nursing degree and Master of Science in nursing from Nova Southeastern.



Netonua Reyes



Carlos Vidueira
Past Board Chair



Patrick Rooney, Jr.
Current Board Chair



Tammy Jackson-Moore
Vice Chair



Tracy Caruso
Secretary

Nicklaus Children's Health Care Foundation Names Rachel Azqueta as Chief Operating Officer

Nicklaus Children's Health Care Foundation (NCHCF) is honored to announce the appointment of Rachel Azqueta as its chief operating officer, a newly established position for the Foundation. Azqueta's promotion showcases her dedication to the Foundation's mission of advancing and enhancing health care for children.

Previously serving as the NCHCF's chief development officer, Azqueta has been with the organization for 10 years, beginning her tenure as the director of communications and special events. Throughout this time, Azqueta has been instrumental in growing signature special events and launching new fundraising programs and marketing initiatives, including the Foundation's Fore The Children annual publication and the Golden Cub Ambassadors Club to inspire and engage the next generation of philanthropists.



Rachel Azqueta

Health Care District Board Elects New Officers

The Health Care District of Palm Beach County's board elected three new officers at its September 30th meeting: Patrick Rooney, Jr. as chair, Tammy Jackson-Moore as vice chair and Tracy Caruso as secretary. Rooney succeeds Carlos Vidueira, who served as chair for the past three years and will continue his service as a member of the board.

Rooney, appointed to the board by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis in 2022, most recently served as vice chair. He is president of the Palm Beach Kennel Club and a former member of the Florida House of Representatives (2010–2016). Prior to that, he served on the South Florida Water Management District Board (2007–2010). He currently serves as vice president of the Autism Project of Palm Beach County, co-chair of Rooney's Golf Foundation, and president of Potentia Academy in Greenacres.

Jackson-Moore, appointed by the County Commission in 2019 and reappointed in 2023, represents the rural Glades communities and has vast experience working in various government roles. She is the co-founder of Guardian of the Glades and previously served as board secretary.

Caruso, appointed by Gov. DeSantis in 2022 and reappointed in 2025, is president and owner of Delray Beach Executive Suites. In addition to her entrepreneurship, she is also editor at large for the publication, Florida Jolt. Caruso is dedicated to community service and mentorship initiatives that promote education, empowerment and opportunity.

MAKING ROUNDS... MAKING ROUNDS... MAKING ROUNDS... MAKING ROUNDS... MAKING ROUNDS...

Lee Health Announces Promotion of Dr. Mary Beth Saunders to Vice President of Medical Affairs

Lee Health is pleased to announce the promotion of Dr. Mary Beth Saunders to Vice President of Medical Affairs.

Dr. Saunders founded and directed Lee Health's infectious disease practice and has served in key leadership positions within Epidemiology and Infection Prevention since 2003, first as Director and later as System Director. She also serves as Medical Director for Antimicrobial Stewardship at Lee Health. Prior to these leadership roles, she was a practicing internal medicine and infectious disease physician.

Dr. Saunders received her Doctor of Osteopathy degree from Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences in Kansas City, MO, and completed her residency in internal medicine at Garden City Hospital in association with Michigan State University College of Medicine, and her fellowship in infectious disease at Henry Ford Hospital/Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills, MI.

She also holds a Master of Public Health degree in Health Services Administration from the University of Arizona in Tucson, AZ, and maintains board certification in infectious diseases.



Dr. Mary Beth Saunders

Yelenis Seijo De Armas, MD, Joins Baptist Health Heart & Vascular Care

Cardiologist Yelenis Seijo De Armas, M.D., has joined Baptist Health Heart & Vascular Care at Baptist Health Miami Cardiac & Vascular Institute. Dr. Seijo De Armas diagnoses, treats and manages a wide range of cardiovascular diseases, and her clinical interests include the optimization of cardiovascular health in women and expectant mothers.

Dr. Seijo De Armas earned her medical degree at Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine in Miami. She completed an internal medicine residency as well as a cardiovascular disease fellowship at Cleveland Clinic Florida in Weston, FL.



Dr. Yelenis Seijo De Armas

Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital Expands Cardiology Team

Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital welcomes Antonio Lewis-Camargo, M.D., a board-certified cardiologist specializing in advanced heart failure and transplant cardiology. Dr. Lewis-Camargo completed his medical education at Universidad de La Sabana School of Medicine in Bogotá, Colombia. He pursued residency training in internal medicine at Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital, followed by fellowships in cardiology and advanced heart failure & transplant cardiology at Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital and Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, OH.

His clinical interests include heart failure, cardiac transplantation, ventricular assist device therapy, amyloid and Chagas cardiomyopathy, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and preventive cardiology.



Dr. Antonio Lewis-Camargo



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Clinical Cardiac Electrophysiologist Alexandra M. Sanchez, MD, Joins Holy Cross Medical Group

Holy Cross Health is adding to an already impressive list of heart and vascular care specialists with the announcement that clinical cardiac electrophysiologist Alexandra M. Sanchez, M.D., has joined the Holy Cross Medical Group.

While completing her internal medicine internship and residency at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine at Holy Cross, Dr. Sanchez founded the Women's Mentoring Program and co-founded the Cardiometabolic Clinic. She also served as a representative on the Graduate Medical Education and Resident Wellness Committees, as well as the Florida American College of Physicians (ACP) Resident Council. In 2019, the ACP Florida Chapter named her Resident of the Year for excellence in internal medicine. Dr. Sanchez also served on the Board of Directors of the Broward Community Medical Association, participated in the Adult Congenital Heart Clinic at Holy Cross and completed an elective rotation at Cleveland Clinic Florida to gain additional experience in heart transplant management.

Dr. Sanchez then pursued fellowships in cardiology and clinical cardiac electrophysiology at Ochsner Medical Center in New Orleans, Louisiana, where she was named Cardiology Fellow of the Year in 2023 and served as Chief Cardiology Fellow. Prior to earning her medical degree from Universidad Iberoamericana School of Medicine in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Dr. Sanchez graduated from Florida International University (FIU) with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. She was a recipient of the Florida Bright Futures Medallion Scholarship and a graduate of FIU's Honors College.

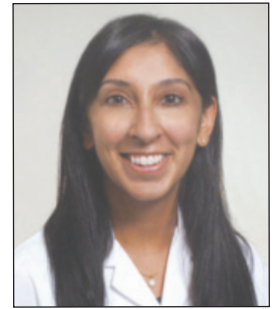


Dr. Alexandra M. Sanchez

Cleveland Clinic Adds Concierge Medicine Physician to West Palm Beach Location

Shilpa Kumar, M.D., is a board-certified internal medicine physician with over a decade of experience providing exceptional healthcare. Since beginning her practice in 2014, she has developed a reputation for delivering comprehensive patient-centered care with a strong focus on the prevention and early detection of disease. Dr. Kumar's clinical interests include the management of chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. She is also passionate about creating tailored care plans that focus on long-term health and quality of life.

"In concierge medicine, I look at every patient as a partner in their own health journey," says Dr. Kumar. "My passion lies in building deep and meaningful relationships where care goes beyond the diagnosis. I believe that in this environment, healthcare becomes a collaborative process, where prevention, education, and proactive care are the pillars of long-term health. It's about empowering patients to live their best lives, with the attention, time and resources they deserve."

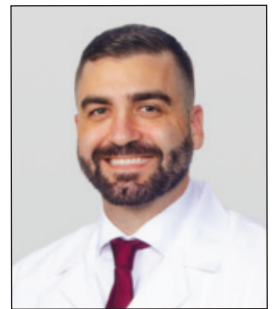


Dr. Shilpa Kumar

Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital Welcomes Neurologist

Ryan Naum, D.O., a board-certified neurologist specializing in neuromuscular disorders, has joined Cleveland Clinic Weston Hospital. Dr. Naum earned his medical degree from the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. Following his internship in internal medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University, he completed a fellowship in neuromuscular medicine at Duke University.

Dr. Naum's clinical interests include the diagnosis and management of complex neuromuscular conditions such as myasthenia gravis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), autoimmune neuropathies including CIDP and Guillain-Barré syndrome and inherited neuropathies like Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease and amyloidosis, as well as acquired neuropathies and myopathies.



Dr. Ryan Naum

Dr. Juan Pablo Umaña Joins the Miller School and UHealth as Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery

The Miller School of Medicine and UHealth – University of Miami Health System welcome Juan Pablo Umaña, M.D., an internationally recognized leader in cardiovascular surgery, as professor and Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery. Known for his pioneering contributions to aortic and mitral valve repair, Dr. Umaña brings not only surgical excellence but also a deep commitment to patient-centered care.

Dr. Umaña earned his medical degree from the University of El Rosario in Bogotá, Colombia. He deepened his expertise through social service and research in England before completing advanced surgical training at Columbia University in New York City and Stanford University in California. His leadership at Fundación Cardioinfantil – Instituto de Cardiología transformed it into one of Latin America's premier cardiovascular centers. Most recently, he chaired the Division of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery at the Cleveland Clinic Florida.

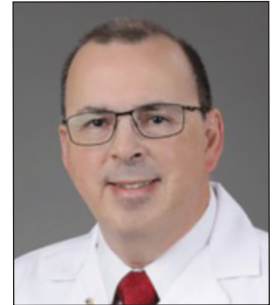
Dr. Umaña will also be program director of the Cardiothoracic Surgery Fellowship Program at the Miller School of Medicine.



Dr. Juan Pablo Umaña

Alvaro I. Martinez Jr., MD, FACC, Joins Baptist Health Heart & Vascular Care

Board-certified cardiologist Alvaro I. Martinez Jr., M.D., has joined Baptist Health Heart & Vascular Care at Baptist Health Miami Cardiac & Vascular Institute. He has more than 25 years of experience in patient care and the management of cardiovascular conditions. Prior to joining Baptist Health, Dr. Martinez practiced at Personalized Medicine Institute/CordiCare in Davie, FL. Dr. Martinez earned his medical degree at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. He completed an internal medicine internship and residency at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C., and a cardiology fellowship at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach. He contributes to the medical community as a fellow of the American College of Cardiology and member of the American Heart Association.



Dr. Alvaro I. Martinez Jr.

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Accolades Accolades Accolades Accolades

Holy Cross Health Names Pharmacist Richard Wong the Colleague of the Month

Richard Wong, PharmD, BCNSP, BCPS, has been recognized as Holy Cross Health's Colleague of the Month for September 2025. As a clinical pharmacist in the critical care setting, Wong optimizes medication use, prevents adverse drug events, and ensures patients receive the most effective and safe medication therapies for their conditions.

A highly skilled pharmacist, Wong carefully reviews patient profiles to identify and prevent potential drug interactions and side effects. He also monitors medication regimens and collaborates with healthcare providers, educating nurses and residents about medications to make sure they understand treatment plans, potential side effects and the importance of adhering to drug administration instructions.

Wong stays up to date with the latest advancements in pharmacotherapy and applies evidence-based practices in his daily work. He is well rounded in his clinical knowledge, always attentive, and participates in the morning intensivist rounds and multi-disciplinary rounds three times a week.



Richard Wong

Health Care District of Palm Beach Honors Heroic First Responders



(l-r) Carlos Videiura, Health Care District Board Member; Albert Borroto, Board Member; Dr. Jyothi Gunta, Board Member; Tony Camejo, Health Care District Paramedic; Tre' Lawrence, Health Care District EMT; Pat Rooney, Jr., Board Chair; Tracy Caruso, Board Secretary and Darcy J. Davis, Health Care District President and CEO.

The Health Care District of Palm Beach County's board of commissioners recently recognized two of their first responders on the District's ground transportation team - paramedic Tony Camejo and EMT Tre' Lawrence - who went above and beyond to protect and serve our communities. While returning from a transport in the rain the night of August 29, they noticed a woman walking alone along Southern Boulevard who appeared to be in distress. When they stopped to assist her, the team contacted the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, which confirmed she had been reported missing. As a result of their public service, Tony and Tre helped reunite the woman with her grateful family.

One of the Health Care District's school nurses, Luisa Lara, was also honored at the meeting for receiving the American Heart Association's Lifesaver Award. Luisa was recognized for her quick and heroic actions while working as the school nurse at Palm Springs Middle School. She implemented CPR and used an AED to revive a 14-year-old student who collapsed on campus - his heart wasn't beating.



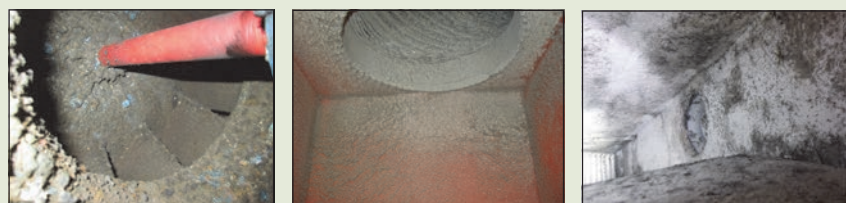
(l-r) Jessie Brooks, Senior Development Director, American Heart Association, Palm Beach County, and Luisa Lara, Health Care District School Nurse

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