

HCA Healthcare Magazine

SUMMER 2023



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HCA Healthcare colleagues,

As healthcare infrastructure, our provider systems play a critical role in the health and well-being of the communities we serve. We have a sacred responsibility to deliver on this purpose for others. In pursuit of this promise, the health and safety of our patients and colleagues drive our strategy, our decisions, and the investments we make as a company. This mindset serves as the foundation of our mission.

At HCA Healthcare, we strive to empower our caregivers with tools and resources that make high-quality healthcare possible. The summer 2023 issue of *HCA Healthcare Magazine* highlights some of these investments.

Our Healthier Tomorrow Fund proactively supports meaningful community programming (page 6), while our enterprise-wide Enhanced Surgical Recovery (ESR) program transforms the patient care experience (page 2). These are just a few of the industry-leading initiatives that help address the needs of our people and patients.

Thank you for your dedication to delivering the best care possible. Your compassion and commitment to those we serve are what makes achieving our mission possible.

Sincerely,


Sam Hazen
CEO, HCA Healthcare

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On the Covers

Front cover — Kimberly Wilson, sterile processing supervisor, and Tyra Baxter, sterile processing technician, both serve patients and communities at Lee's Summit Medical Center in Lee's Summit, Missouri. Sterile processing teams like theirs are keeping operating rooms safe through meticulous care and attention to detail. Read more about how Kimberly and her team are keeping infections at bay on page 16.

Back cover — Operations Project Manager Justin Hines recently joined HCA Healthcare after retiring from the U.S. Army. At HCA Healthcare, we are honored to work alongside our nation's veterans. HCA Healthcare has been recognized as a military-friendly and military-spouse-friendly employer for 12 consecutive years by VIQTORY and by Military Times' Best for Vets for the past three years. Thank you, Justin, for all you have done and continue to do to make our mission possible!



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Read more online.

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From the physician’s office prior to surgery to follow-up care, a facility’s ESR program allows patients to play an active role in managing their own care and recovery plan.

— Randy Fagin, MD, chief medical officer of HCA Healthcare’s National Group



Enhancing Health and Safety Across the Board

Investments in patient safety and innovative care delivery are transforming the way patients experience our services.

The art of medicine, by nature, includes the never-ending search for better outcomes. At HCA Healthcare, our facilities perform well above the national averages, according to The Leapfrog Group, a patient advocacy firm. In fall 2022, 81% of HCA Healthcare facilities were recognized with an “A” or “B” hospital safety grade, a figure 24% higher than the national average of 57%. These grades reflect how well hospitals protect patients from preventable medical errors, accidents, injuries and infections.

Still, we strive to perform even better.

In mid-December 2020, HCA Healthcare adopted an Enhanced Surgical Recovery (ESR) program, a patient-centered, research-based, multidisciplinary approach to surgical recovery. Implemented in 167 HCA Healthcare facilities, it’s already demonstrated significant improvements in surgical recovery. Notable among those improvements are reducing the length of hospital stays by an average of two days and decreasing opioid usage by up to 44% for some surgeries.



Physicians like Brant Nikolaus, MD, orthopedic surgeon at St. Mark’s Hospital, are key players when it comes to standardizing ESR best practices.

“After studying more than 20 years of clinical research and peer-reviewed publications in addition to our own internal data, we discovered that a facility making a few key changes, such as using multimodal approaches to managing pain and encouraging patients to eat and walk around within 24 hours after surgery, can have a significant impact on a patient’s recovery,” says Randy Fagin, MD, chief medical officer of HCA Healthcare’s National Group. “From the physician’s office prior to surgery to follow-up care, a facility’s ESR program allows patients to play an active role in managing their own care and recovery plan.”

Building on Past Success

The ESR program derived from Enhanced Recovery after Surgery (ERAS), an existing recovery program that’s been standard practice in Europe for a number of years and consists of up to 21 surgery-related components. Publications on the positive impact of ERAS led to a collaboration between the Clinical Services Group and HCA Healthcare research colleagues, who studied the relative impact of each element.

Their findings resulted in “our focusing on a more limited set of key tactical elements that included multimodal pain management, goal-directed fluid therapy, presurgical carbohydrate-load and early ambulating,” says Kristy Frazier, MBA, BSN, RN, CSSM, assistant vice president of Surgical Services for HCA Healthcare.

In 2016, the focus was on total joint replacement procedures, followed by colorectal and major abdominal cases. By 2021, the protocol became a standard of care across all surgical cases.

HCA Healthcare’s ESR program focuses on the six tactics believed to have the greatest impact on patient outcomes:

- **Goal-directed fluid therapy.** Active monitoring of a patient’s fluid balance to achieve optimal hydration level throughout surgery.
- **Patient education.** Providing patients with a personal recovery checklist so they can take an active role in their care.
- **Multimodal pain management.** An individualized approach using opioids only on an as-needed basis, substituting non-opioid pain relievers and other pain management techniques.
- **Permissive preop hydration/carb loading.** Drinking fluids and a carbohydrate-rich drink before surgery to improve hydration and insulin resistance and curb nausea.
- **DREAM = DRinking, Eating And Mobilization within 24 hours postop.** Encouraging patients to drink, eat and move shortly after surgery.
- **Multidisciplinary team.** Creating a group of team champions — including colleagues from surgery, anesthesia, nursing and pharmacy — collaborating to guide the facility’s program and each patient’s care journey.

(Cont. on page 4)



HCA Healthcare's 182 hospitals and 126 surgery centers are collaborating with specialized physicians to provide high-quality, personalized care for those recovering from surgery.

“The program is aimed at minimizing the physiologic impact of surgery in the immediate recovery period,” says Laura Williams, MD, GYN Oncology with the Physician Services Group. “Tactics like multimodal pain control minimize opioid use, which has a profound impact on improving how quickly a patient can return to normal functions like eating, drinking and mobilizing.”

According to Dr. Fagin, nearly 1 million patients in 2022 benefited from HCA Healthcare's use of ESR as a part of our normal surgical care pathway. To better understand how the ESR program works, think of patients as athletes training for a race.

“It's important to ensure every patient is in the best medical shape before surgery, and that we work to optimize their body's performance throughout their surgical experience,” says Kristy.

A carbohydrate-rich drink consumed before surgery helps maintain whole-body protein balance and muscle function. Patients receive their first scheduled dose of a multimodal pain regimen before surgery helping to reduce their discomfort afterward.

During surgery, the anesthesia provider monitors the patient's fluids to ensure proper perfusion. Maintaining an optimal fluid balance during surgery can reduce postoperative complications.

“Most patients receive regional or epidural anesthesia for surgery in addition to multimodal pain medications to reduce the pain they experience after the procedure,” says Kristy.

Another program component avoids using tubes, lines or drains during surgery, which can minimize postop infections and complications. Nausea and vomiting can also occur after surgery, so administering medications during surgery can lower the likelihood of these unwanted side effects.

After surgery, and often while they're still in the recovery room, patients begin to eat, drink and ambulate while continuing their multimodal pain medication schedule to reduce the need for opiates.

“By controlling pain while lowering the need for opiates, which can cause drowsiness, nausea and poor coordination, ESR improves how quickly a patient can return to basic activities,” says Dr. Williams. “And the sooner the patient can get back to basic activities the sooner they can be safely discharged home.”

Patient-Caregiver Connection

HCA Healthcare also recognizes a direct correlation between patient and colleague health and safety. Ryan Sledge, MBA, MPH, vice president of our Workforce Health and Safety division, came to HCA Healthcare tasked with improving overall colleague health and welfare.

“When we think about safety — and patient safety is obviously always going to be at the forefront for any healthcare system, or should be — there is a strong link between colleague safety and patient safety,” says Ryan. “We want our colleagues to thrive so they can take better care of our patients.”

COVID-19, says Ryan, “started the conversation around how important it is to take care of ourselves in the healthcare environment.” Long shifts without breaks can lead to mental and physical fatigue.

Ryan points to the litany of health issues, including stress-related burnout, which helped fuel a “great resignation” throughout healthcare. The exodus of medical professionals is recognized as a major patient safety risk because there's a strain on patient care without appropriate staffing.

Patient care can be improved by resolving some of the challenges that lead to burnout, Ryan says.

“We can help mitigate the folks' leaving, the staffing challenge, which then trickles down to the impact on patient safety. It's all connected.”

About 45 facilities have implemented a three-pronged end-to-end solution for colleague health called Enterprise Health, which will expand throughout the enterprise.

The Enterprise Health process covers almost every stop along the employment timeline, from hiring to additional educational opportunities to creating a safer work environment. It was a massive undertaking, given the sheer scope of the enterprise.

“The major challenge across the board is that we have 182 hospitals and 1,400 physician practices. We've got all these different spaces,” says Ryan. “There was no standardization. {Each facility} had various ways of

trying to take care of their colleagues. That just led to a whole host of opportunities.”

Ryan says a team devoted just to colleague care was needed at the corporate level. From there, it could expand to the divisions and into the field. Full implementation across the enterprise is expected to take roughly two years. The program currently exists in 45 of the 185 facilities and across three of the five divisions.

Of course, any change brings the risk that some colleagues may resist a new way of doing things, and the new Workforce Health and Safety initiatives are no exception. However, Ryan says those pain points can be mitigated by making a concerted effort to work with colleagues, rather than simply installing new policies and procedures. An advisory board with representation across the enterprise aims to ensure colleague concerns are heard and evaluated.

“They are actually a part of coming up with the changes that we're going to implement,” he says, adding that the board representatives can champion health and safety initiatives in their local areas as well. It helps add buy-in to the changes when they are a part of the change.

They even seek input from colleagues who weren't selected for the board but want to be engaged.

“We find projects they can help us with, and being able to share their feedback is something that we've gotten a lot of traction from. They do feel heard,” Ryan says. ♦

More Online:
Read more about the patient-caregiver connection.



Solidify Organizational Structure

Formalizing structure to provide the right enterprise-level support, establish accountability and identify appropriate organizational structure at the division and facility level to maximize efficiency, eliminate waste and provide the best care for colleagues.



Enhance Technology

Moving away from manual processes to technology solutions that extend capacity, create reliable visibility into performance and accurately track compliance with regulatory standards.



Develop Standard Practice

By completing the steps above, HCA Healthcare can implement standards based on best practices that deliver the most value.



In partnership with the HCA Healthcare Foundation, Girl Scouts of the USA is working toward the larger goal of destigmatizing mental illness, normalizing conversations around mental health and mental illness, and delivering workshop content that will be inclusive for girls of all backgrounds.

Helping Build Healthier Communities

Collaborations and partnerships are key to providing safer, more equitable care.

At HCA Healthcare, our people-first priorities extend well beyond the walls of our facilities. We're dedicated to serving the community through partnerships with individuals and organizations that help improve the overall health of everyone.

We show our support in many ways — from the volunteer efforts of our own HCA Healthcare colleagues to the programs coordinated and sponsored by the HCA Healthcare Foundation. Two particularly exciting initiatives with national organizations are addressing both physical and mental health in local communities.

Improving Stroke Care and Health Outcomes

Getting to the Heart of Stroke™, which launched in late 2022, is a powerful and unique new initiative born of a collaboration between the American Heart Association, HCA Healthcare and the HCA Healthcare Foundation.

Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death for adults in America, and while stroke comes in at No. 5 on the list, the two are closely linked. Stroke is also one of the leading causes of

disability in America, making the identification and prevention of a second stroke that much more imperative. Research shows that individuals with atrial fibrillation (A-fib) are at up to five times greater risk of stroke. Getting to the Heart of Stroke™ is a multifaceted program that extends to both healthcare professionals as well as those in our communities. It includes programs to improve clinical education and enhance communication between cardiologists and neurologists. It aims to improve diagnosis, treatment and stroke prevention, as well as provide outreach to raise awareness and educate communities about risk factors and prevention.

“It was a natural fit for HCA Healthcare, a leader in healthcare, to work with a leading not-for-profit organization in the cardiovascular and stroke arenas to come together to educate our communities and healthcare providers, as well as improve patient outcomes,” says Steven Manoukian, MD, FAHA, senior vice president, HCA Healthcare.

“The American Heart Association brings its significant presence and immediate recognition in educating the general public, as well as being firmly rooted in research, science, publications and training for healthcare professionals,” he adds.

Funding from the HCA Healthcare Foundation supports the community impact initiatives and national consumer education campaign, while HCA Healthcare medical professionals and colleagues provide clinical input, health outcomes and quality initiatives.

The clinical quality portion of Getting to the Heart of Stroke™, funded by HCA Healthcare, includes making use of the immense amount of data available through the American Heart Association and its partners. The data suite, Get With The Guidelines® — Stroke, collects demographic and outcome measurement data for patients through a national registry, of which HCA Healthcare is a part.

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It was a natural fit for HCA Healthcare, a leader in healthcare, to work with a leading not-for-profit organization in the cardiovascular and stroke arenas to come together to educate our communities and healthcare providers, as well as improve patient outcomes.

— Steven Manoukian, MD, FAHA, senior vice president, HCA Healthcare

Dr. Manoukian explains that their plan is to leverage the data in the registry for better understanding, to identify gaps and learn how to create the tools and resources to improve their performance.

“When a person suffers a stroke, they are at risk of having a second stroke, which can often be more debilitating than the first,” Dr. Manoukian says. “Many times, we aren't able to identify the cause of the stroke, which is called cryptogenic stroke. Our hope is that the Getting to the Heart of Stroke™ collaboration with the American Heart Association will increase the teamwork and detective work by our cardiologists and neurologists, allowing us to better identify the cause of each stroke.”

Armed with that information, physicians can help patients create a plan to address those risks and work to prevent a second stroke.

HCA Healthcare professionals are also working with the American Heart Association to develop accredited education programming to be made available to all

(Cont. on page 8)

Heart of Stroke™ Communities

The 15 HCA Healthcare communities serving as the first to participate in Getting to the Heart of Stroke™ education and outreach campaigns:

HealthONE
Denver, Colorado

HCA Florida Healthcare
Gainesville/Ocala
Jacksonville
Orlando
Palm Beach
St. Petersburg/Tampa

HCA Midwest Health
Kansas City, Missouri

Sunrise Health
Las Vegas, Nevada

Mission Health
Asheville, North Carolina

TriStar Health
Nashville, Tennessee

St. David's HealthCare
Austin, Texas

Medical City Healthcare
Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas

HCA Houston Healthcare
Houston/Gulf Coast, Texas

Methodist Healthcare
San Antonio, Texas

HCA Virginia Health System
Richmond, Virginia

health professionals. The initiative, launched through a collaborative of 10 HCA Healthcare facilities across the country, will focus on continuously improving quality of care.

The public-facing piece of the Getting to the Heart of Stroke™ program includes efforts from volunteers and staff of the American Heart Association, HCA Healthcare and HCA Healthcare Foundation colleagues to implement education programs in 15 communities (see sidebar). They empower people through educational programs about stroke risk factors, high blood pressure management, healthy nutrition and tobacco use prevention. These programs are also designed to reduce health disparities.

“Black and Hispanic/Latinx populations face additional barriers to managing stroke risk factors, and this collaboration will help reduce health disparities and resource gaps,” says Mitchell S. V. Elkind, MD, chief clinical science officer for the American Heart Association.

Putting a Focus on Mental Health

The national reach of the HCA Healthcare Foundation's Healthier Tomorrow Fund has made another exciting initiative possible. This summer, the Girl Scouts of the USA will release new mental wellness programs designed for girls in fourth through 12th grades. This leading-edge curriculum is teaching participants to better understand mental wellness, and it provides them with skills to strengthen their resilience and support their peers. It's made possible by a Healthier Tomorrow Fund grant of \$1.38 million over the course of three years.

The program developed by GSUSA builds upon preexisting community partnerships across HCA Healthcare divisions, while aligning with the nationwide Girl Scout Research Institute findings about mental health stigma for girls. The objective is to spark innovation and build community relationships by aligning local engagement activities with national priority impact areas.

“The curriculum Girl Scouts of the USA is launching aligns with national community needs data around the importance of addressing adolescent mental health,” says Leah



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Our collaboration will help youth and adults across the country better prepare for and deal with the mental health crisis personally, as mentors and as peers.

— Alexandra Behette, director, Partnerships, Girl Scouts of the USA



*Photos courtesy of Girl Scouts of Colorado

Lomotey-Nakon, manager of Strategic Initiatives and Research, HCA Healthcare Foundation.

The program has already reached almost 400 girls during its pilot period, where Girl Scouts in three councils – Girl Scouts of Carolinas Peaks to Piedmont (NC), Girl Scouts of Citrus (NFL) and Girl Scouts of Colorado (CONT) – participated in mental wellness workshops.

“Our partnership enables us to have an even greater impact on young girls,” says Alexandra Behette, director, Partnerships, Girl Scouts of the USA.

“Our collaboration will help youth and adults across the country better prepare for and deal with the mental health crisis personally, as mentors and as peers.”

The curriculum, developed in collaboration with the National Alliance on Mental Illness, includes resources for girls, adult facilitation guides for troop leaders and council staff, and

resources for councils and parents. Specifically designed materials target three age groups:

- **Juniors, grades 4-5: Knowing My Emotions**
- **Cadettes, grades 6-8: Finding My Voice**
- **Seniors & Ambassadors, grades 9-12: Showing Up for Me and You**

Whether through funding, clinical research or volunteer hours, HCA Healthcare and the HCA Healthcare Foundation are finding ways to make all communities stronger and healthier.

“It's exciting to have this opportunity to work with organizations so well-known and well-respected as the American Heart Association and Girl Scouts (of the USA),” says Joanne Pulles, vice president of community engagement and president of the HCA Healthcare Foundation. “When HCA Healthcare works with either of these organizations, we are greater than the sum of our parts.” ♦

Faces of Care

Putting people first is part of our culture at HCA Healthcare. Whether interacting with patients and families or keeping facilities running from behind the scenes, our colleagues play a vital role in the care and improvement of human life.

Meet four colleagues who show a true passion for people and have dedicated their lives to helping others.

Racheal Bragg, RCIS
Lead Cardiovascular Tech
Doctors Hospital of Augusta,
Augusta, Georgia

Family is the bedrock of Racheal's life, and it's a big reason she chose a career in cardiac and vascular technology. When Racheal was a little girl, her grandfather suffered a massive heart attack and endured multiple procedures, including open heart surgery.

"I always had a love for helping other people and wanted to work in the medical field," Racheal says. "Once I started exploring career options, I chose the cardio program, in part because it was the same procedure my grandfather had multiple times. I knew the impact that team had on his life, making sure he had the best care possible in such an emergent situation. I wanted to be a part of a team like that, to make a difference in my patients' lives and also to have an impact on their families."

Racheal has worked in the cardiac catheterization lab at Doctors Hospital of Augusta for five years,

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When you work with amazing people and have a really good team mentality, it doesn't feel like work; it's more of a calling.

— Racheal Bragg



including her clinical rotation while in school. One of the things that drew her to this hospital was the family dynamic on the Cath lab team.

"When you work with amazing people and have a really good team mentality, it doesn't feel like work; it's more of a calling," Racheal says.

In her role, Racheal assists cardiologists during catheterizations and pacemaker insertions, as well as in performing cardioversions. The work is a mix of outpatient appointments and cases of emergent patients actively experiencing heart attacks. Racheal compares her team to a racing pit crew, all working together as fast as possible to treat the patient.

"In an active heart attack, every minute that passes is critical to minimizing the damage done to the heart," Racheal says. "I like to say 'time is a muscle.'"

Racheal's care for patients goes beyond the few minutes they're on the table in the Cath lab. She knows the importance of education and advocates for healthy eating habits, regular exercise and recognizing the symptoms of a heart attack. Education is extended to both patients and their friends and family.

"For me, this isn't just a job — it's something I love. Our whole team puts our hearts into everything we do, and it's important to me that people know there's always someone available to respond to a loved one having a heart attack. I might get called away from my family to help take care of someone else's family, but it's important for me that others know I do it because it's my passion, and I think it says a lot about how we care for people in my unit."

Jacque Camp

Director, Care Experience,
Spiritual Care, and Patient and Family Advocacy
Medical City Fort Worth, Texas and
Medical City Weatherford, Texas

Compassion-Connected Care®. Those words aren't just a trademarked phrase in our North Texas hospitals, it's a way of life for Jacque and the patient advocates that support the division. Her passion started with conversations she had with nurses while working as a computer programmer in a Cath lab.

"They dealt with life and death every day, and I could see their level of commitment. It's truly a calling," Jacque says. "It's what inspired me to pursue a career working to support people in those roles. I consider it an honor and privilege every day to love the teams that are caring for our community."

Jacque's work takes many forms, but through it all, she and her team spend their days advocating for patients and families, reviewing and sharing patient feedback, and working with staff and providers on how to improve care and experience, including our colleagues' experience.

Improvement opportunities could be as straightforward as addressing what is worrying a patient; compassion alleviates suffering, and that is what we, and Jacque, do well. It is also simplifying patient transfers so that their journey from the emergency department to the nursing unit is more comfortable. Or it might consist of creating a training program for nurses, providing coaching and professional development, or helping a manager stay efficient and effective with colleague rounding by helping them deepen their personal connections.

As a special focus of her holistic approach to healthcare, Jacque works to keep each person's spiritual needs front and center. The chaplaincy programs at



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We're constantly looking at the data so that we're not just reacting, solving the same problem day after day, but we're making sure we're fixing processes, providing education and creating solutions.

— Jacque Camp

Medical City Fort Worth and Medical City Weatherford fall under her supervision, and they recently began offering weekend church services at Medical City Fort Worth. The program was created after hearing that staff working on weekends missed attending church.

"We're constantly looking at the data so that we're not just reacting, solving the same problem day after day, but we're making sure we're fixing processes, providing education and creating solutions," Jacque says. "Keeping top of mind the 'why' behind what we do in healthcare is so important for our staff to be able to provide patients with compassionate care."

One thing Jacque reinforces with the nurses at her hospitals is that they can only care for others if they first care for themselves. And she emphasizes the importance of unplugging when not at work.

"Find what rejuvenates you and fills your cup, and that will allow you to give from yourself when you're at work," Jacque says.

While she, like many caregivers, can find it challenging to step away, Jacque recharges every May in Utah, taking a vacation with her husband to attend the Rally on the Rocks.

"My family and my faith are the things that keep my cup full," Jacque says.

(Cont. on page 12)



Pam Hastings, RN
Lactation Consultant
Riverside Community Hospital,
Riverside, California

Pam's day starts at 6 a.m. on the maternity unit, where nurses share updates on what transpired overnight. She learns how many babies were delivered, how many first-time moms are there, and if any babies are classified as late preterm. Then she makes her rounds.

It's not always first-time moms who benefit from Pam's experience. Every baby is different, and each one brings their own set of challenges. Recently, one mom who had just delivered her third baby asked for Pam's help.

"The baby was not able to sustain the latch in order to feed consistently," Pam says. "I learned the baby had a small cleft in her palate, and I was able to give the mother a nipple shield, which helped create the negative pressure. That mother was discharged with the confidence she needed to feed her baby and keep her healthy."

Pam's responsibilities take her all over the hospital. She might go to the emergency department to make arrangements for a nursing mother to get access to a breast pump, or she might need to review medications prescribed to a nursing mother in the ICU.

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My desire to do the best by my patients keeps me interested in my work and wanting to do what I can to research medications and conditions.

— Pam Hastings

"My goal is to see every mother every day, and most days I'm able to do that," she says.

In addition to her knowledge in lactation, Pam's vast experience from years as a practicing RN and her passion for continuing to learn new things contribute to her playing a vital role on the team at HCA Healthcare.

"My desire to do the best by my patients keeps me interested in my work and wanting to do what I can to research medications and conditions," Pam says.

She also networks with colleagues elsewhere to learn what they're seeing in their neonatal intensive care unit and maternity units, and serves on various professional committees to review hospital policies and procedures.

"Working with new moms to help them fulfill their goals and keep their new babies healthy is such a rewarding job," Pam says. "In my opinion, I have the best job in the whole hospital."

Sinisa Peric
Manager, Facilities Management
HCA Florida South Tampa Hospital,
Tampa, Florida

Sinisa Peric arrived in Miami in 2001 with his sister and parents, refugees looking for a place to settle. Born in Croatia, he left with his family during the war in the 1990s and moved around Eastern Europe, landing in Serbia before coming to the U.S.

"My parents were looking for better opportunities for our family," Sinisa says.

Once in the U.S., Sinisa started looking for work — anything he could do with his hands — and ended up as a painter in HCA Florida South Tampa Hospital's facilities management department. Twenty-two years later, he is a manager in that very same department. He keeps things running behind the scenes: everything from daily repairs to infrastructure maintenance to coordinating with contractors on new construction.

"When I first started work, there was another man, Jesse, who was a good plumber. I worked with him and learned what I could. Over time, you learn more about the job from being around people with experience," Sinisa says.

He also attended technical school as he advanced into management roles. Sinisa promotes the importance of learning on the job and supporting each other as a team.

Every day starts with a daily safety huddle to review work orders and issues with his team. Then it's off to rounding, ensuring all equipment is operating as it should, and check-ins with his leader and the rest of his team throughout the day.

"I make sure they have the tools and supplies they need to complete the job, and if they need an extra hand, I grab my tool belt and go to work with them," Sinisa says.



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My responsibility is to the patients and the staff, to ensure they have a safe, comfortable environment to work and recover in.

— Sinisa Peric

When emergencies occur, he addresses issues as quickly as possible. In one instance, the hot water heater on the fifth floor sprung a leak. In response, the on-call maintenance colleague contacted Sinisa, and he and the call team responded quickly. They activated the second tank to make sure patients had hot water in their rooms, removed water from the floors and stopped the leak in a matter of hours — and without disrupting patients.

Most of what Sinisa does is felt rather than seen. But his team's work is of vital importance to the health and safety of every single person who sets foot in the hospital.

"My responsibility is to the patients and the staff, to ensure they have a safe, comfortable environment to work and recover in," Sinisa says.

He believes it's just as important for a patient to have the TV working as it is for the temperature and humidity of the operating rooms to be at the right levels for infection control.

"We're just a bunch of people working behind the scenes, but the reason we're in this field is because we want to help people," Sinisa says. ♦

Inpatient Rehab Continues To Raise the Bar

Colleague empowerment and resourceful solutions lead to top marks in patient care.

One hallmark of a commitment to continuous improvement in healthcare is an organization that not only resists resting on its laurels, but also builds on past achievements. In 2022, 23 HCA Healthcare inpatient rehabilitation facilities (IRFs) were named on *Newsweek's* best physical rehabilitation centers. And later that year, 32 HCA Healthcare facilities earned top marks in the 2022 Press Ganey Human Experience Awards, including several inpatient rehabilitation facilities.

A prime example of maintaining and improving upon that standard of excellence is St. David's North Austin Medical Center's IRFs, which has remained in the top 10% of IRFs in the nation for 10 years running, and in the top 99% in the last six years. In 2022, the rehabilitation program relocated and expanded.

"Last year, our inpatient rehabilitation facility relocated from St. David's North Austin Medical Center

to St. David's Surgical Hospital, which is a campus of St. David's North Austin Medical Center," says Paul Pajak, director of Rehabilitation Services, Inpatient Rehabilitation, Wound Care and Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy at St. David's North Austin Medical Center. "This move allowed us to grow from 16 patient beds to 20 private rooms, including a few guest suites for patients' families.

"Moving our program to St. David's Surgical Hospital provides a completely different environment that feels less clinical," says Paul. "Large, private rooms are ideal for longer inpatient care and rehabilitation after a procedure or illness."

The new facility offers a 1,200-square-foot physical therapy gym and an occupational therapy suite with a tub, a shower, a toilet, a bed, a fully functioning kitchen and a washer/dryer for patients to practice their daily living activities. In addition, a rooftop terrace provides a great



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We attribute our facility's success to our tenured core nursing and therapy staff, as well as our facility's leadership. All of our team members are invested in providing exceptional healthcare to patients.

— Paul Pajak, director of Rehabilitation Services, Inpatient Rehabilitation, Wound Care and Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy at St. David's North Austin Medical Center

space where patients can enjoy fresh outdoor air. It's an exceptional setting for patients recovering from serious medical issues.

Its staff of 130 colleagues primarily treats patients recovering from stroke, traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries and amputations, as well as orthopedic and neurological conditions. Forty colleagues serve about 360-400 inpatient rehab patients annually, according to Paul.

Despite the obvious advantages that the new facility delivers, the most important asset is still the quality of care provided by those colleagues.

"We attribute our facility's success to our tenured core nursing and therapy staff, as well as our facility's leadership," Paul says.

In 2022, St. David's North Austin Medical Center's inpatient rehabilitation program was ranked No. 9 out of 72 HCA Healthcare IRFs for patient satisfaction. Predictably, the unit's colleague engagement rate was above 80%.

Colleagues in Control

Jon Wilke MPT, supervising therapist for Inpatient Rehabilitation at St. David's North Austin Medical Center, has been a therapist for over 25 years, including 16 with St. David's HealthCare. He says the work environment benefits from an inclusive supervisory approach that considers everyone's opinion and expertise, which makes colleagues feel valued.

They're empowered to guide and provide input in patient care plans, including what techniques might be successful.

Moreover, Jon commends the collaborative nature of the relationship between the rehabilitation team's nurses and therapists. For example, if the nursing staff is having trouble managing their patients during shift changes, therapists

step in to help patients during those times. Their shifts are also staggered so that an occupational therapist is available during mealtimes.

"We get to see the patients at different time sets, which is valuable," says Jon. "Performance often degrades as the day goes on, and you're only as good as your worst performance. We must make sure that performance is good over the 24-hour period before the patient goes home."

Resourceful Solutions

To achieve optimal patient outcomes, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) guidelines are followed closely whenever rehabilitation patients are admitted.

"Our nurse manager, medical director and I agree on each patient's individualized plan of care," says Paul. "We ask each family to take pictures of the patient's home, and we set up our activities of daily living (ADL) suite to make it look like their living room or bedroom. While most ADL suites have stationary furniture, our furniture is mobile, so we can make each patient's rehab environment as close to home as possible and even adjust for people who are right- or left-handed."

Colleagues can also think creatively and employ new methods. Therapists had used the Nintendo Wii for the past decade, but recently upgraded to the Nintendo Switch. Jon says an occupational therapist brought their own to try first.

"The Switch has taken our therapy to the next level and works more than just the legs. It's full-body activity," Jon says.

Video games can play a significant role in a patient's recovery, and they often play them on the 70-inch TV in the gym. Younger patients who grew up gaming are already familiar with them. Games can also include balance and sports activities, such as tennis and golf, which Paul says are great for knee and hip replacements. If a patient's goal is to get back on the golf course, they can practice proper movement in the gym with a video game.

"We can select games that match each patient's goals," says Paul. "We also use driving games a lot. These games come with a steering wheel that simulates real-world driving and helps patients with cognition and problem-solving skills." ♦

(This page)
Rehab facilities across HCA Healthcare are using state-of-the-art resources and techniques to get patients back on their feet.

(Next page)
Sydney Mulholland, occupational therapist at St. David's North Austin Medical Center, works with patients to ensure an easy transition back to daily life.





A Conversation With Kimberly Wilson

Sterile processing supervisor
Lee's Summit Medical Center
Lee's Summit, Missouri

Colleague Q&A: Keeping Infection at Bay

Kimberly Wilson and her sterile processing team are the ultimate "behind-the-scenes" colleagues.

In the world of medicine, infection prevention is a top priority for surgeons and caregivers. Keeping infection at bay is also the primary responsibility of Kimberly Wilson, sterile processing supervisor at Lee's Summit Medical Center in Missouri (LSMC, MidAmerica Division).

After earning her associate degree in applied sciences from Riverland Technical College in

Minnesota, the Iowa native's career started with a 10-year stint as a surgical technician at the Mayo Clinic. From there, she went to Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska, and soon joined the HCA Healthcare family.

Kimberly has been at LSMC for six years, the past two as sterile processing supervisor; where her staff of seven equips six operating rooms and several in-house and satellite clinics.

Q: In general terms, what do your responsibilities entail?

A: There are hundreds of surgical instruments and surgical sets depending on the general surgery – spine surgery, orthopedic surgery, vascular surgery – and we have different instrument sets for different surgeries. It's our job to properly clean them in the proper soap and at the proper temperature. We start with mechanical washing by hand, and then we put them in an automated washer, almost like a dishwasher, and they come out on the clean side.

When we're inspecting our trays, we make sure everything is clean, gets packaged up into that specific tray and goes into our autoclave – our steam sterilizer. Then we grab a count sheet and start assembling the trays back together, testing each instrument as we go to make sure it's working properly.

We keep records of everything. All our machines get tested – our autoclaves, our soap dispensers, our washers. We run a test on everything every 24 hours to monitor that it's calibrated correctly and working properly.

Q: What is your relationship with the surgeons at your facility?

A: There are a lot of surgeons in this facility who are very complimentary. They take our department very seriously, and I appreciate that. That also comes from my being in the OR with them. They're not afraid to call me in and say "Hey, do you think this is OK to use?" It's all about the patient in the OR and also behind the scenes. We always think "Would I want this used on me or my family member?"

Q: How does technology impact your work?

A: We have four surgical robots right now. The instrumentation, cameras and scopes that they use for those surgeries require a pretty intense cleaning process, making sure everything gets flushed and soaked and thoroughly cleaned and then inspected. We make sure it gets sterilized properly. We have two forms of sterilization: steam in our autoclaves and then a low-temp, hydrogen peroxide-based sterilization.

Q: Your team really touches every department, doesn't it?

A: We are an 80-bed hospital with six ORs, and three of those ORs have surgical robots in them. We'll work with instruments for the Cath lab, the ER and the GI lab. We also have outside clinics, like a wound clinic, that send their instrumentation to be cleaned and sterilized. We package it back up and send it out with our hospital courier. We have the pain clinic with their electrical probes that they send down to us. They're very delicate and must be treated delicately. They're very expensive and must be washed by hand, dried and sterilized in our low-temp sterilization cleaners.

Q: What best practices do you and your team employ to ensure your own safety as well?

A: We inspect instruments for bioburden (bodily fluids, including blood) in the decontamination room, where we are gowned up with our personal protective equipment (PPE), gloves, eyewear, all of that. Everything gets scrubbed down by hand and then put into our automated washers.

Q: When considering hospitals, most patients often think of doctors, nurses and perhaps the technicians they interact with. Are you and your staff the ultimate "behind-the-scenes" workers?

A: Absolutely – it's a very important job that not a lot of people know about. It's nice to get word out that there are people who take pride in and show integrity in making sure that instruments are cleaned and in proper use. It's just something people don't think about. They're concerned with their doctor and what they need to do before and after surgery.

Q: What's most rewarding about your job?

A: I have a natural desire to help others and be part of something bigger than me. We're definitely a team here, from the sterile processing of the instruments to using the instruments in the OR. You just have to be prepared for the unexpected. It can be a fast-paced environment. It's an intense place to work, and it's an intense responsibility, but I enjoy it.



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