Defining Healthcare Through Clinical Innovation
page 2

Changing Lives Through Trauma Services
page 4

Making an Impact Across the Continuum of Care
page 10
Message From the CEO

Dear HCA Healthcare colleagues,

Our comprehensive healthcare networks play a critical role in the communities we serve. Our primary initiatives reflect this commitment. We are increasing access for patients by adding outpatient facilities to our systems. We are investing heavily to improve service offerings and quality with better clinical technology and greater physician alignment. And, we are developing more talent while creating new opportunities for our colleagues with education programs like Galen College of Nursing and the HCA Healthcare Leadership Institute.

When I visit our facilities, I see the effects of these initiatives. Our patient volumes are growing. Quality outcomes for the company are reaching new heights, and overall engagement with our stakeholders continues to improve. Every role in our organization contributes to the positive impact we have on others and the success we are experiencing. Being a part of HCA Healthcare means being a part of something bigger.

In this issue of HCA Healthcare Magazine, we explore how HCA Healthcare distinctively serves patient populations. This includes the insights we collect from millions of annual patient encounters, which inform not only the care we provide, but the care provided at other health systems. And, in a time when the demand for mental wellness resources is at an unprecedented high, HCA Healthcare is increasing investments in behavioral health services to meet the needs of our communities.

These are just a few examples of how we approach using our enterprise capabilities to support and improve care for our patients and enhance community health. Thank you for your commitment to the organization and our mission. The care you provide to our patients changes lives and makes our company stronger.

Sincerely,

CEO, HCA Healthcare

On the Cover

Front cover — Riverside Community Hospital, part of HCA Healthcare Far West Division, is a Trauma Survivors Network hospital, hosting and running its own programming as a part of the larger Trauma Survivors Network organization. Each year, Riverside Community Hospital celebrates National Survivors Day with patients and caregivers. The facility became the first hospital in Riverside County to receive Level I designation from Riverside County Emergency Services Agency (REMSA) and is one of only 10 Level I trauma centers in Southern California verified by the College of Surgeons on Trauma.
Clinical Innovation Continues To Define HCA Healthcare

Our commitment to innovative research and clinical advancements leads to groundbreaking treatments.

In healthcare, innovation is essential to the advancement of patient care. That’s especially true at HCA Healthcare, where innovation is a foundational value and continues to drive cancer research and treatment.

HCA Healthcare’s Sarah Cannon Transplant and Cellular Therapy Network (SCTCTN) comprises nine programs in six U.S. locations and three locations in the United Kingdom. The network serves patients with complex blood cancers such as leukemia and those receiving blood and marrow transplant, cellular therapy, or gene therapy for blood diseases. In 2023, the network served more than 1,000 acute leukemia patients and 1,600 transplant and cellular therapy recipients.

HCA Healthcare’s scale makes the enterprise the largest provider of complex blood cancer care in the U.S. But what truly sets us apart is the comprehensive network approach to patient care.

“Our physicians and teams work together to standardize patient care pathways, treatment regimens, quality plans and processes so that every patient receives the same high-quality care at all of our programs,” says Navneet Majhail, MD, MS, FASTCT, a board-certified hematologist and the physician-in-chief of blood cancers at SCTCTN, specializing in blood and marrow transplant and cellular therapy.

Our network approach enables us to integrate cutting-edge research for blood cancer patients. The partnership with the Sarah Cannon Research Institute provides access to collaborations ranging from first-in-human research studies to clinical trials that lead to Food and Drug Administration-approved blood cancer drugs.

Innovative cancer therapy

A shining example of the pioneering work underway at SCTCTN is chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy, also known as CAR T-cell therapy. It’s a transformational therapy that can potentially cure some patients with advanced cancers who previously had no good treatment options available,” says Dr. Majhail.

The FDA has approved CAR T-cell therapies for patients with advanced acute lymphoblastic leukemia, lymphomas and multiple myeloma. However, since T-cells can be engineered to target any cancer antigen, significant research is being done to evaluate treatment for other blood cancers and in patients with solid tumors, such as those with GI cancers, brain tumors and lung cancer.

During the CAR T-cell treatment process, T-cells are drawn from a patient’s blood and genetically engineered to recognize the patient’s cancer cells when reinjected. T-cells are effective at killing cancer cells, but under normal circumstances they need the help of other immune cells to work efficiently.

“When the technology we have available now, these cells can be taken from the body and their DNA modified such that they can start identifying cancer proteins and antigens directly,” says Dr. Majhail. Patients first undergo testing to ensure that they qualify for the CAR T-cell procedure. The patient’s T-cells are then collected by an apheresis machine that filters out lymphocytes, which are sent off for manufacturing. “Once ready, they are shipped back to us,” says Dr. Majhail. Patients then receive chemotherapy to suppress their immune system, and the CAR T-cells are subsequently given as intravenous infusions. Patients are observed very closely for four to six weeks after the infusion to monitor and manage any complications.

The challenge and a solution

CAR T-cells can sometimes cause life-threatening inflammation once infused into patients. Most hospitals in the country typically admit and keep patients in the hospital for one to two weeks to monitor potential side effects. HCA Healthcare implements a 24/7 triage plan for early detection and management, which requires efficient communication between multiple teams to ensure proper care transitions, medical assessment and inpatient observation/admission.

Recently, SCTCTN developed a remote patient monitoring care model to safely move 73% of the CAR T-cell therapy patients into an outpatient setting. This model reduced inpatient stays from an average of 16 days to about four days. It’s made possible through a partnership with CareCurrent, a home-care platform, using remote patient monitoring (RPM) technology and a nurse-staffed virtual clinical command center.

RPM includes a wearable device that continuously measures heart rate, temperature, respiration and oxygen saturation, and a tablet that allows the patient to interact with the virtual nurse team.

“Patients heal better outside the hospital if they can get these complicated therapies, which carry risk for significant complications, safely in the outpatient setting,” says Michael Tees, MD, director of Lymphoma Immune Effector Cell Therapy Program, Presbyterian/St. Luke’s Medical Center and Colorado Blood Cancer Institute in Denver, Colorado.

“We have leveraged technology and developed clinical pathways to care for patients receiving CAR T-cell therapies. Our clinical teams have accomplished this by standardizing care across a network of several cell therapy programs.”

The transition to providing this treatment in the outpatient setting has proven to be an enormous success and a game-changer for both hospital capacities and for patient access to the treatment.

“As we continue to innovate our care delivery models to enhance timely access, we are no longer bound by hospital bed capacity,” says Aravind Ramakrishnan, MD, medical director, Sarah Cannon Transplant & Cellular Therapy Program at St. David’s South Austin Medical Center in Austin, Texas.

HCA Healthcare is the only organization that has scaled up an RPM care model for CAR T-cell therapy across a multi-site network, and SCTCTN continues to innovate and refine the RPM care model through ongoing research and constant pursuit of industry-leading care.
A Trauma Service Line That’s Changing Lives

HCA Healthcare has more trauma centers than any other system in the country, providing more data and experience to inform best practices.

When someone is severely injured in the U.S., there’s a good chance they are treated at an HCA Healthcare trauma center. That’s because HCA Healthcare has the largest trauma care system in the country, with 105 trauma centers treating more than 176,000 patients annually, from Alaska to Florida. Such an expansive network yields invaluable data that’s shared with state trauma agencies, the national trauma data repository and the American College of Surgeons. These collaborations help drive valuable research and raise the bar of quality care.

Tracy McDonald, vice president of Trauma Burn and Reconstructive Surgery, HCA Healthcare, in Nashville, Tennessee, understands the numerous benefits of operating at this scale. “It allows us to do some amazing things that nobody else has the capabilities to do,” Tracy explains. Research, quality, technology and training surgeons are all areas HCA Healthcare is able to excel in due to our reach and resources. The combination of these factors results in delivering the best trauma care available.

“When we put forth enormous amounts of resources and effort to make those centers truly centers of excellence for trauma patients,” says Kaycie Banton, MD, MHA, Swedish Medical Center in Englewood, Colorado. “Those patients receive the best personnel, the latest technology, the best responses and the best quality care they could receive in those regions of the U.S.”

HCA Healthcare’s trauma centers strive to deliver the best chance of healing and recovery, from the moment a patient is admitted to the moment they’re discharged. “We do it better because we have a reputation to uphold,” she says. “We strive to continue to do it better than anybody else.”

Access to real-time data lends valuable insight

Another benefit of being part of the nation’s largest trauma care network is having access to real-time data. HCA Healthcare leverages technology to provide its trauma centers with access to a shared database, allowing clinical groups to immediately troubleshoot and identify trends. HCA Healthcare collects data locally and then centralizes it for easy access across the enterprise.

“We monitor quality trends. I can see on a day-to-day basis if there’s a mortality uptick or a complication uptick in a certain facility and what our trends look like in our key quality indicators,” Tracy says.

A national benchmarking program, the Trauma Quality Improvement Program, or TQIP, tracks data through the American College of Surgeons. TQIP reports are released twice annually to all trauma centers, but HCA Healthcare has the technology to model these reports so that results are observed in real time.

“No other organization can do that. It’s unique to HCA Healthcare,” says Tracy. “Nobody else would have this power of expertise across the organization.”

Troubling trends are observed in trauma patients, teams across the enterprise, such as the physician or trauma nurse advisory councils, can develop solutions and implement them across the organization quickly.

“We’re able to respond to these trends very fast and prevent further harm or improve outcomes for patients in real-time,” Tracy says.

The database can also identify success stories. If a top-performing trauma center emerges, that facility can share best practices and learnings throughout HCA Healthcare. Real-time trends can also often lead to more research and publications.

The HCA Healthcare centers that provide trauma care have put forth enormous amounts of resources and effort to make those centers truly centers of excellence for trauma patients. Those patients receive the best personnel, the latest technology, the best responses and the best quality care they could receive in those regions of the U.S.

Kaycie Banton, MD, MHA, Swedish Medical Center in Englewood, Colorado

(Cont. on page 6)
Research-guided trauma care yields quality patient outcomes

Research is an integral component of HCA Healthcare’s trauma program. The Center for Trauma and Acute Care Surgery Research in Nashville functions as a clearinghouse for the trauma research taking place across HCA Healthcare. Each Level I trauma center has its own research program, which contributes to the larger database in Nashville. This allows HCA Healthcare to conduct multicenter research, using data collected from hundreds of thousands of trauma patient encounters.

“We leverage data, and the information that we gain is applied to our facilities,” Tracy explains. “We advise them on changes that they can make, guidelines that they can follow, different resources that they need. I think this is an example of how research and quality go hand in hand.”

The HCA Healthcare trauma system publishes more than 20 peer-reviewed evidence-based studies annually. Such a body of work allows HCA Healthcare to leverage those experiences to address any quality concerns that arise.

Clinical training and development

An integral part of quality trauma care is the training and development of surgeons, nurses and future trauma leaders.

HCA Healthcare, which is the largest provider of graduate medical education in the country, placed more than 300 emergency medicine residents in more than 10 programs throughout the organization, as of January 2023. Additionally, nearly 400 general surgery residents were placed in over 17 programs.

“HCA Healthcare is training the majority of tomorrow’s general surgeons and trauma surgeons out there,” Tracy says. “The surgeon population right now is aging, and there is no way that the country could keep up with the need for new surgeons without our HCA Healthcare training sites,” Tracy says. “It’s really giving back to the medical community.”

HCA Healthcare trauma programs also train nurses, EMTs, firefighters and paramedics in emergency departments and elsewhere in hospitals.

A new leadership series launching this year will train future trauma leaders, educating anyone interested in trauma leadership or in roles such as trauma program manager or quality improvement specialist. There are also mentoring programs for those new to their roles in trauma care.

As a Trauma Survivor Network hospital, HCA Healthcare’s Riverside Community Hospital in Riverside, California hosts an event each year to celebrate and support survivors of traumatic injuries and their caregivers during National Trauma Survivors Day.

Injury Prevention

Injury prevention coordinators are present at each HCA Healthcare trauma center. HCA Healthcare also facilitates an Injury Prevention and Education Council (IPEC) that helps centers develop programs for communities that include safer driving, pediatrics and fall prevention.

#1 largest trauma provider in the U.S.

105 trauma programs

176,000 trauma patient encounters

Trauma Survivors Day

The Trauma Survivors Day celebration at Swedish Medical Center in Englewood, Colorado, is a chance for former patients like Sean Hall to share their stories and thank their lifesaving care teams. Sean, a paraglider, survived a 30-foot fall in 2016 that left him with severe injuries throughout his body. There are countless people to thank, Sean said that day. Usually, you don’t get to meet them, but this event makes it possible, he said.

Trauma Survivors Day also honors those who provide exceptional care. Three colleagues were honored with Excellence in Trauma Care Awards: Shelly Verdos, CNC, a 16-year multi-trauma unit (MTU) veteran; Alyssa Workman, RN, Trauma ICU; and Alexandria Latulipe, PA SCP. They were recognized for their kindness, compassion, selflessness and patient advocacy.

Humans weren’t the only ones recognized this year. Bridger Blue, a therapy mini horse, was a big hit with attendees. His handler is a Swedish Medical Center trauma survivor, a former colleague and the event’s guest speaker last year.
An Anchor Institution in Our Communities

HCA Healthcare hospitals serve our communities through employment, economic development, philanthropy and wellness.

Hospitals do more than treat those in need of healthcare. They are essential in the growth and success of a community. Jeff Cohen, senior vice president, Government Relations for HCA Healthcare, says there’s an overarching sense of comfort that community hospitals and care systems bring to cities.

“The decision to live in a community often comes down to two big factors — healthcare access and education. Hospitals and our clinician partners bring stability and opportunity to communities,” he says. “Healthcare is too often about the unexpected, the unplanned and, unfortunately, the unimaginable. The ability of our nurses and doctors to rapidly respond provides for a certain assurance and stability that both saves lives and ties together a community.”

Jeff Cohen, senior vice president, Government Relations
It was a personal experience that brought Kachiri Chamberlain, radiologic technologist at The Medical Center of Aurora, to the medical field. When her son was a little over a year old, she experienced his first seizure. “There was a lot of medical jargon being used that I didn’t understand,” Kachiri says. “I felt helpless and said, ‘Never again.’” She decided then and there that she wanted to educate herself and help others in similar situations. She started working at The Medical Center of Aurora in Aurora, Colorado, as a medical assistant and then went back to school to become a radiologic technologist after observing in that department.

HCA Healthcare fosters nationwide partnerships with educational institutions, including imaging tech training programs such as those at Concorde Career College and Community College of Denver, in Aurora and Denver, Colorado, respectively. They provide opportunities for students like Kachiri to complete clinical rotations in HCA Healthcare hospitals, ultimately creating a colleague pipeline.

“Working with those schools benefits all of us,” says Christelle Fiedland, director of Imaging at The Medical Center of Aurora. “It not only provides a place for students to do clinical rotations and gain firsthand experience, but it also exposes them to the work environment and allows them to start building relationships with colleagues in the Imaging department.”

"I love being able to help the parents, to see how happy they are when their children are made to feel more comfortable. I enjoy what I’m doing every single day."

Irene Gurrola, hospice aide at Methodist Hospice and Family Care—Hill Country

HCA Healthcare’s addition of the home health and hospice service line allows colleagues like Irene Gurrola, hospice aide at Methodist Hospice and Family Care—Hill Country, to expand their skills and explore other areas of patient care. Irene joined Methodist Hill Country in Fredericksburg, Texas, after spending more than 30 years working in nursing homes as a certified nursing assistant (CNA). She was drawn to hospice care after seeing the impact it had on one of her patients in the nursing home.

“The hospice care team was there for things like helping them do their nails or taking them outside to feel the sun on their face,” Irene says.

Now, as a hospice aide, she can provide the same one-on-one patient care she witnessed.

Working in the hospice setting allows Irene time to get to know her patients and their families and to provide the care and support needed when daily activities can be challenging. While Irene’s work includes several older patients, she also discovered that she has a knack for working with pediatric patients. When she encounters parents who are stressed and overwhelmed, her skill and knowledge ease their minds. She is able to show them how to balance their own needs with their child’s care.

"The best part of my day is when I walk into the room and I smile, and they smile back at me,” she says. “That’s the most satisfying thing, to know they’re happy to see me, without saying a word.”

Marsha Adkins joined Medical City Hospice and Family Care in Arlington, Texas, two years ago, after an almost 25-year career in hospice care elsewhere.

“I had thought to myself it was time for a change, and maybe I would go work in a hospital setting to try something new;” Marsha says. “But when I put in my application at Medical City and saw they had hospice care there, my heart was drawn back to that field.”

Marsha discovered her calling in her first role as a CNA. While working at a nursing home, she cared for a double-amputee patient who complained that her legs hurt. Though she was new and less inexperienced, Marsha instinctively wanted to ease the patient’s discomfort.

“A nurse explained that what the patient was experiencing was phantom pain. She said I would be great working at hospice and encouraged me to apply for a job at a hospice provider in our region.”

Over the years, Marsha gained valuable experience and learned much more about hospice care. But it’s her ability to connect with patients that really makes the difference in her work.

“The best part of my day is when I walk into the room and I smile, and they smile back at me,” she says. “That’s the most satisfying thing, to know they’re happy to see me, without saying a word.”

"Working in hospice care is a beautiful thing — being part of a person’s story. Everyone has their own journey in life, their own story. I let my patients know their story matters. It matters to me."

Marsha Adkins, CNA, Medical City Hospice and Family Care

Visit Magazine. HCAhealthcare.com. Read more online.
Our field has evolved to focus more on wellness ... we talk more about what wellness and healthiness look like for you and how we help you get to that place. How do we help you to be healthier and stronger?

Melissa Camp, LPC, director of Clinical Operations at Trident Health System’s Live Oak Mental Health and Wellness

HCA Healthcare is expanding services to meet mental wellness needs for all, including a growing number of young people.

The demand for behavioral and mental health services for adults and adolescents spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic and continued to rise in subsequent years throughout our communities. HCA HealthCare is committed to the belief that mental health is just as important as physical health," says Eric Paul, president of HCA Healthcare Behavioral Health Services. “Mental health is health. Behavioral Health Services has grown to become the third-largest provider of mental health services in the nation, with over 110,000 inpatient admissions annually. Supported by more than 4,300 Behavioral Health Services colleagues in 16 states, HCA Healthcare operates 58 facilities across the country. Additionally, HCA Healthcare is one of the nation’s largest employers of psychiatrists, with one of the largest behavioral health Graduate Medical Education residency programs across 14 locations. We are also the nation’s largest provider of neuromodulation procedures (also known as electroconvulsive therapy, or ECT), which help individuals suffering from severe mental illnesses that are treatment resistant. There is now a growing attention to and awareness of serving adolescents with mental health needs. More than 1 in 5 adolescents are currently experiencing, or have experienced at some point in their lives, a debilitating mental illness. Just last year, HCA Healthcare emergency departments saw more than 25,000 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 who had a primary mental health diagnosis. Additionally, suicide is now the second leading cause of death for people ages 12 to 18, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Each day, there are an average of 3,783 suicide attempts by young people in grades 9 through 12. If that average included grades 7 and 8, the number would be even higher. “Mental illness does not discriminate. It affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds, education levels, genders, ages and ethnicities,” says Amy Rushton, DNP, APRN-BC, chief nursing executive and vice president, Behavioral Health Services. “Our individual facilities provide various inpatient and/or outpatient programs, including those for older adults, adults, adolescents and children struggling with depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, eating disorders, substance abuse and mood disorders.”

A place where youth matters

In Chattanooga, Tennessee, HCA Healthcare’s Parkridge Valley Child and Adolescent Campus treats children and adolescents with emotional and mental health conditions ranging from anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and mood disorders to disorders associated with abuse and other traumas. On the 87-acre campus is a very special school — Valley Academy. “It’s about doing what is best for these kids and giving them the best opportunity to succeed,” says Hallie Bailey, Parkridge Valley’s director of Nursing. “It’s amazing that these vulnerable kids come in low-functioning and leave on-track and happy. Some kids can’t even read when they start, and they just end up blossoming.”

Valley Academy colleagues are helping students obtain their GEDs and apply to colleges. Some graduates have gone on to become nurses, and one student even returned to work at the school. The staff and faculty are not only an educational resource, but they are also bringing the kind of compassionate care to their work that matters at HCA Healthcare. In one instance, a student graduating from Valley Academy had no family present. The entire Parkridge Valley team attended the ceremony to hum “Pomp and Circumstance” and watch her receive her diploma. Hallie Bailey, Parkridge Valley’s director of Nursing, was there as well. “This is an amazing day. It’s about doing what is best for these kids and giving them the best opportunity to succeed,” says Hallie Bailey, Parkridge Valley’s director of Nursing. “It’s amazing that these vulnerable kids come in low-functioning and leave on-track and happy. Some kids can’t even read when they start, and they just end up blossoming.”

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Hallie Bailey, director of Nursing, Parkridge Valley Child and Adolescent Center

Valley Academy consists of an elementary school and a high school, and follows a 12-month schedule, with classes from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Students are children and adolescents in the residential treatment program at Parkridge Valley, where the average stay is six months.

State licensed as a special purpose school, Valley Academy follows the county’s core curriculum and includes language arts, math, science and social studies. Staff members are employees of Parkridge Valley, and the principal holds a master’s degree and certification in special education. The academy also has an educational liaison and a certified school psychologist.

Students have access to iPads, a library, a kitchen where they can learn to cook, a garden for growing vegetables and a gym for recreation. Physical activities are incorporated with school lessons and therapy, resulting in a true team approach.

“Teachers here are working year-round,” says Faerie Chastain, Parkridge Valley’s director of Social Services. “They do it because they want to see these kids thrive long-term.”

Serving youth through community partnerships

HCA Healthcare Behavioral Health Services, along with the HCA Healthcare Foundation, has partnered with several organizations to raise awareness and to support mental health needs for youth.

This includes:

• The Girl Scouts Mental Wellness patch program, with iterations for Junior, Cadette and Senior/Ambassador age groups, launched at the Girl Scout Convention last summer and is now available to all troops nationwide. Through the mental wellness patch program, over 16,000 patches have been earned to date.

• The Jason Foundation is a nonprofit dedicated to the prevention of youth suicide through educational and awareness programs. The programs equip young people, educators, youth workers and parents with tools and resources to help identify and assist at-risk youth.

Mental health and digital awareness

In 2020 HCA Healthcare formed a partnership with EVERFI from Blackboard, an international technology company driving social change through education, to implement an interactive mental health and wellness digital education course for middle school and high school students.

With HCA Healthcare’s support, EVERFI’s Understanding Mental Wellness course has reached more than 245,000 students and roughly 3,600 teachers at more than 1,600 schools. In 2023, there were three in-person events with schools focused on mental health and wellness. An event held earlier this year at Hastings High School in Houston, Texas, drew almost 150 students.

By the Numbers

HCA Healthcare hospitals serve 500,000 behavioral health patients in their emergency departments annually.

HCA Healthcare Behavioral Health Services facilities serve 110,000+ patients annually in inpatient programs and have 170,000 outpatient visits.

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Suicide is now the second leading cause of death for people ages 12 to 18, according to the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention.

Expanding Access to Care

An additional complexity in the mental health space is the reality that 11% of adults experiencing mental illness are without adequate insurance coverage and access to proper care. Nearly half of people living in the United States live in what are called Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas. “Most of the communities we serve do not have enough behavioral health beds or space to treat growing numbers of adults and adolescents,” says Amy Rushston, DNP, APRN-BC, chief nursing executive and vice president, Behavioral Health Services.

To better support more residents in more communities, HCA Healthcare has expanded existing facilities and opened new ones.

Expansions and openings

• Opened Live Oak Mental Health & Wellness in South Carolina and Sweeten Creek Mental Health & Wellness Center in North Carolina, adding more than 180 inpatient beds (combined) in 2023.

• Acquired Haven Behavioral Hospital (now Medical City Mental Health & Wellness Center) in Frisco, Texas, in March, with plans to open Medical City Mental Health & Wellness Center Alliance in Fort Worth, Texas, this winter, adding more than 150 inpatient beds (combined).

• Opening 10 mental health and wellness therapy centers across five states, focused on individual and family therapy.

• Increased offerings like intensive outpatient programs (IOPs) with group therapy and partial hospitalization programs (PHPs) for adults and adolescents struggling with conditions like depression, anxiety, eating disorders, addictions and trauma.

• Graduate Medical Education residency programs and Galen College of Nursing cultivate interest in behavioral health and increase the number of psychiatrists and clinicians in our facilities.

• Partnered with Galen College of Nursing to offer opportunities for clinical rotations and placement in HCA Healthcare behavioral health facilities.
A Conversation With Surgeons Lily Daniali and Benson J. Pulikkottil
Swedish Medical Center, Englewood, Colorado

Colleague Q&A: Leveraging Interdisciplinary Care

Surgeons Lily Daniali and Benson J. Pulikkottil experience how HCA Healthcare allows them to collaborate with colleagues across specialties to increase their offerings.

Within months of beginning their plastic surgery practice in 2016 at Swedish Medical Center in Englewood, Colorado, Lily Daniali, MD, and Benson J. Pulikkottil, MD, made national headlines with one special patient. Lee Brooke, a hunter from Pennsylvania, sustained extensive damage to his nose and upper lip in a grizzly bear attack. Over the next three years, Dr. Daniali and Dr. Pulikkottil performed roughly 30 procedures to reconstruct Lee’s face.

The resulting national media attention highlighted the cutting-edge care delivered by Dr. Daniali and Dr. Pulikkottil, their partners, and their staff at Swedish Medical Center, a Level I trauma and burn center. Since then, the husband-and-wife team has continued to expand the facility’s burn and reconstruction programs. Dr. Daniali and Dr. Pulikkottil, who first met in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, have been married for 10 years.

Q: What are your specialties?
A: Dr. Daniali - We have a very broad-based practice. We both do hand surgery, microsurgery, general reconstruction and post-cancer reconstruction. We do some nerve surgery for amputees and aesthetic surgery. We have a private aesthetic practice (The Lu’v Institute) that opened last November.
A: Dr. Pulikkottil - Both of us are double board certified in plastic surgery and hand surgery. I’m medical director of the burn unit as well. It includes Lily and two other partners (Ryan Endress, MD, and Wojciech Przybecki, MD). We secured American Burn Association verification in 2022, which is a huge deal for the hospital.

Q: Can you elaborate on the scope of your work?
A: Dr. Pulikkottil - It’s an amazing practice because we get to apply these [plastic surgery] principles to a multitude of cases. We’re not pigeonholed into one specific type of surgery. The cornerstone of the practice is burn reconstruction. We’ve put our other skill sets into this and expanded our reach throughout the hospital, providing collaborations with orthopedic surgery, head-and-neck surgery, neurosurgery, dermatology, primary care doctors and therapists. There’s a potential for us to intervene and assist with patient care in every aspect at Swedish Medical Center.

Additionally, we do a ton of burn reconstruction, and typically burn units aren’t run by plastic and hand surgeons. We add microsurgical reconstruction to a lot of burn patients’ wounds. We also have an extremely robust limb–salvage program. Not only do we save arms and legs, but we do complicated nerve work, including a procedure called targeted muscle reinnervation. We rewire the nerves of the upper and lower extremity to decrease pain or to make prosthetics work almost in a mind-controlled fashion. We and our partners do about 40 to 60 surgeries every week together.

Q: Your work with Lee Brooke created a media sensation. Can you tell us more about that?
A: Dr. Pulikkottil - He was attacked by a grizzly bear while hunting. His face was separated from his skull, specifically his nose and upper lip. We took that tissue and kept it alive by sewing it to his arm while we worked on his face. He went through roughly 30 surgeries with us. Swedish Medical Center got a lot of exposure as a center that can take care of these patients. And Lee developed this new identity as a survivor. He started publicly talking about his story and inspiring others.
A: Dr. Daniali - It thrust a lot of attention on the practice and what we could do for the region. It was really about being there for somebody and showing the power of stage reconstruction. We take great satisfaction from knowing that there’s someone who is back to living his life and spending time with his loved ones and doesn’t feel defined or held back by a truly traumatic experience.

Q: What are some advantages of being part of the HCA Healthcare family?
A: Dr. Daniali - For us, it’s really being able to leverage interdisciplinary care. We have amazing collaborations with other colleagues and specialties. HCA Healthcare brings like-minded, committed and motivated physicians together to create great programs. Whenever we’ve had a need, our administration has been very supportive and committed to quality. That’s been important for the expansion of the burn program.
A: Dr. Pulikkottil - The multidisciplinary team approach is paramount to our mutual success. Surgical success takes talented and committed nurses, APPs, nutritionists, therapists, OR staff and so many other people working together for the same goal: providing the highest level of clinical care at Swedish Medical Center.

Q: What are your specialties?
A: Dr. Pulikkottil - He was attacked by a grizzly bear while hunting. His face was separated from his skull, specifically his nose and upper lip. We took that tissue and kept it alive by sewing it to his arm while we worked on his face. He went through roughly 30 surgeries with us. Swedish Medical Center got a lot of exposure as a center that can take care of these patients. And Lee developed this new identity as a survivor. He started publicly talking about his story and inspiring others.
A: Dr. Daniali - It thrust a lot of attention on the practice and what we could do for the region. It was really about being there for somebody and showing the power of stage reconstruction. We take great satisfaction from knowing that there’s someone who is back to living his life and spending time with his loved ones and doesn’t feel defined or held back by a truly traumatic experience.

Q: What are some advantages of being part of the HCA Healthcare family?
A: Dr. Daniali - For us, it’s really being able to leverage interdisciplinary care. We have amazing collaborations with other colleagues and specialties. HCA Healthcare brings like-minded, committed and motivated physicians together to create great programs. Whenever we’ve had a need, our administration has been very supportive and committed to quality. That’s been important for the expansion of the burn program.
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Q: Your work with Lee Brooke created a media sensation. Can you tell us more about that?
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