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Moving medicine forward because every patient deserves a chance.

The high-quality health care we enjoy today is the result of years of hard work by physicians, PhD scientists, medical researchers and other professionals who investigated the causes and potential treatments for disease. It is because of their tireless efforts that several once life-threatening afflictions have been eradicated.

While great progress has been made, there is still much more to do. Researchers continue to see promising results for some of our biggest health problems, such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease, through their ongoing studies. As investigations continue and more findings are made, we will continue to see profound changes in our approach to treatment.

UF Health and the University of Florida colleges of Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy are at the forefront of many of these advancements. As an academic health center, our physicians capitalize on many breakthroughs by taking discoveries directly from the laboratory setting into our exam rooms and specialty practices with the help of patients.

In order to improve treatment options or increase the survival rates for specific diseases, we must test new treatments against current therapies. Sometimes important clinical research isn't completed because enough people could not be recruited. Through developments in genetics, we also know it is important for volunteers to come from diverse backgrounds, further increasing the challenges for many current clinical studies and trials.



UF Health Jacksonville is working to change that through our new Jacksonville Aging Studies Center, or JAX-ASCENT. The new center will connect older adults who are interested in participating in medical studies with study investigators, a major part in the process of enhancing health care. By conducting and participating in research, we aim to provide hope for patients who are limited by their conditions. This clinical registry fulfills an important need — allowing us to move medicine forward because every patient, regardless of age, deserves a chance.

Sincerely,

Leon L. Haley Jr., MD, MHSA, CPE, FACEP

UF Health Jacksonville is home to one of Florida's two tuberculosis units.

It is one of the world's deadliest diseases, killing 1.7 million people in 2016, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It only takes a cough or sneeze for tuberculosis to spread. Once you breathe in the bacteria, TB can settle in your lungs and eventually spread to your kidneys, spine and brain.

In July 2012, the Florida surgeon general permanently closed the only tuberculosis treatment facility in the state. The Florida Department of Health turned to UF Health Jacksonville and Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami to provide specialized care for patients with TB.

The Florida Department of Health must be notified of anyone diagnosed with TB, to prevent an epidemic. If patients comply with treatment, they can often complete their regimen at home. Noncompliant patients — those who refuse treatment or miss checkups — are court-ordered to receive care at one of the two designated hospitals in the state.

The focus of UF Health Jacksonville's TB isolation unit is to protect the public from tuberculosis and to provide comprehensive treatment for adult and pediatric patients. The unit becomes the patient's home, with the average stay lasting six months. They can have visitors, but cannot freely come and go until they are no longer contagious.

Comolita Fagan, RN, serves as the nurse manager of the unit and is part of the multidisciplinary care team of UF Health pharmacists, hospitalists, case managers and respiratory therapists as well as physicians from the Florida Department of Health. They meet weekly online to discuss each patient's care plan, including medication and behavioral therapy. They invite the families of patients to join and ask questions.

"The treatment is truly multidisciplinary and includes family collaboration," Fagan said. "Having the patient and family involved every week makes the process much more successful."

In order for the unit to uphold national standards, specialized training is key. All nursing staff go through 16 hours of training on TB regulations set by the CDC, and must pass a competency exam. They are also required to complete eight hours of training annually.

UF Health Jacksonville was selected as one of the two approved facilities partially for its location — one hospital for patients in North Florida and one for those in South Florida — but largely because of its staff's experience in treating the homeless population. According to the CDC, this group has a high occurrence of conditions that increase the risk of TB, such as HIV, substance abuse

and living in close quarters, like shelters.

"We have incorporated an Alcoholics Anonymous program into the resources for these patients, so they have the opportunity to attend once they are no longer TB-positive," Fagan said. "Many of them have addictions, so they can get help before they leave."

UF Health Jacksonville also partners with the Sulzbacher Center and the health department to provide patients who are homeless with resources for housing, insurance and education. They are not discharged without being set up for success and a hopeful future.

The mental health needs of patients with TB have also become more apparent over time. "We realized after starting the program that the mental health component was a major part," Fagan said. "These patients are here for months and they need someone to talk to. We now complete annual training for competencies addressing the psychosocial aspect of their care."

UF Health Jacksonville's ability to manage high-risk TB cases benefits the patients they serve and ensures the safety of residents throughout Florida.

"We're known across the state for collaborating within the community in order to make it better," Fagan said. "We know we're making an impact by preventing TB from spreading through the community. We live our mission."

CONTAINING A DEADLY DISEASE FROM THE COMMUNITY

LIVING LONGER, BETTER



JAX-ASCENT seeks adults 60 and older for a medical research registry.

Adults 60 and older are invited to join a registry that will help propel aging research at the University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville.

The Jacksonville Aging Studies Center, or JAX-ASCENT, will serve as a hub for behavioral, nutritional and pharmacologic clinical trials targeting older adults, particularly racial minorities and people of low socioeconomic status. Researchers will also study social determinants of health that contribute to chronic diseases and functional decline within those demographic groups.

Organizers are using a five-year award from the National Institutes of Health to develop the center, which will be housed in the Professional Office Building on the UF Health Jacksonville campus. Space renovations began in December and wrapped up in March. A ribbon-cutting ceremony is set for May 11.

"JAX-ASCENT was specifically created to provide an integrative physical and intellectual environment in which trainees at all levels and scientists from diverse disciplines can interact and conduct clinical and behavioral translational research on aging and independence of older adults," said Tina Bottini, assistant dean for research administration and compliance at UF COMJ.

Bottini said the first planned study is a trial on age-related muscle mass loss. When the center becomes self-sustaining, there may be at least 10 research studies under way at any given time.

The center will include interview and examination rooms for health assessments, physical performance measures and cognition, memory, body composition and strength tests. JAX-ASCENT members will collaborate with UF faculty from the Gainesville campus, including personnel from the Institute on Aging and the Claude D. Pepper Older Americans Independence Center.

The facility will house not only UF researchers, but also investigators from other institutions, some of whom will be funded by the NIH.

SEEKING PARTICIPANTS

JAX-ASCENT wants to register 1,000 people each year. Registry members will receive information about the latest research being conducted and, if they qualify, may be invited to take part in a variety of studies.

There is no cost to participate and compensation may be provided, as well as transportation to and from the center, if needed.

Bottini says among older adults, racial minorities and people of low socioeconomic status have been underrepresented in clinical research, making it more difficult to develop the best prevention and treatment approaches to assist them. Jacksonville is an ideal location for this center because of the high concentration of residents who fall into those demographic groups.

"JAX-ASCENT will fill a critical gap in knowledge regarding the translation and dissemination of research from efficacy studies to underserved, minority older adults who are at high risk for geriatric conditions," Bottini said.

For more information or to sign up for the registry, visit UFJaxAgingStudy.com or call toll-free at 866.386.7730.



PARAMEDIC CONTINUED TO SAVE LIVES EVEN AFTER LOSING HIS OWN

Christopher "Bek" Gardner is one of 14 UF Health Jacksonville patients who will be honored for donating organs during the 2018 Tree of Life Ceremony.

Christopher "Bek" Gardner, 43 was always a caretaker. It started at a young age when he took on the role of "man of the house," vigilantly watching over his little sister and mother until she remarried when he was 16. He later joined the fire department as an emergency medical technician and became a paramedic right away.

"Bek hated dropping patients off at the hospital and not knowing what happened to them," said Carlie Watt, Gardner's sister. "He wanted to follow through with their treatment, so he went back to school online and was in the process of becoming a nurse."

Gardner worked in the emergency room of a local hospital, where he picked up extra shifts whenever he could. Outside of work, Watt said he spent most of his extra time visiting their grandmother, who was in an assisted living facility.

"Bek was known for his bedside manner and could calm the most irate patient down," Watt said. "He also had a very steady mind and hand, and even had a reputation for always being able to place an IV successfully. It was ridiculous."

Gardner was driving home after covering a co-worker's shift Oct. 22, 2017, when he rear-ended a semitrailer on Interstate 295. He was transported to UF Health Jacksonville with a severe head injury.

"I got a call at 9 p.m. that night saying it was very serious and I needed to be there," Watt said. "I was still on my way to Jacksonville from Atlanta when a doctor called asking if I was going to sign a do-not-resuscitate order. That's when I knew it was bad."

Twenty-four hours after the accident, Watt was ready to sign the DNR, when her aunt asked her if Bek was an organ donor. He was and Watt immediately called a nurse, making it her mission to ensure his organs would be donated. She even remembered a conversation Bek had with her 15-year-old daughter a year earlier about why he became an organ donor.

"He explained to my daughter that there are thousands of people, many on their deathbeds, who wait by their phones for the call," Watt said. "He told her with your organs, you can help them live a life they never thought they could."

Gardner was able to donate his heart, lungs, liver and both of his kidneys, saving five lives. He also donated both of his corneas. He was one of 14 patients who became organ donors at UF Health Jacksonville last year. Each donor will be celebrated during the Tree of Life Ceremony at 10 a.m. Tuesday, April 24, in the LRC Auditorium.

"There are more than 114,000 patients on the national transplant waiting list, including more than 5,400 listed at transplant centers in Florida," said Kathleen Giery, director of donor program development for LifeQuest Organ Recovery Services. "For each of them, a lifesaving organ transplant is their only hope."

Every day, an estimated 22 people die in the United States waiting for an organ transplant. LifeQuest is the federally designated organ procurement organization that serves a 36-county region in North Florida.

"As the region's only Level I adult and pediatric trauma center, the staff and trauma surgeons work hard each day to improve the lives of injured patients," said Brian Yorkgitis, DO, a UF Health trauma surgeon. "Sometimes, the patient's injuries are so severe, we can't restore their health. It is a difficult time for the patient's loved ones when the loss is so great. In that loss, hope can come through the gift of life — organ donation. It is powerful to witness a grieving loved one achieve so much peace when they know their family or friend lives on after giving the gift of life."

Last year, UF Health Jacksonville's 14 organ donors provided 46 organs to patients in need.

"The heart Bek used to love me with gets to love others," Watt said. "His lungs are now breathing new life into someone else. Losing Bek was one of the hardest things I had to go through, but allowing him to help others — even after he died — was the easiest."

Every organ donor can save up to eight people and improve up to 50 lives, with tissue, bone and cornea donation. Visit DonateLifeFlorida.org to register to become an organ donor.

Breaking Communication Barriers in Health Care

UF Health serves a diverse population of patients who may have difficulty communicating because they have impaired vision, they have some degree of deafness, English is their second language or they speak no English at all.

Medical interpreters are available at no cost 24/7, in compliance with federal and state laws, to assist patients, their family members and other legally authorized persons.



OVER-THE-PHONE INTERPRETERS

Translation services are available by phone for non-English speakers. Follow these instructions when using any UF Health CyraCom phone:

Receiving Calls

- Ask the patient to hold
- Press the transfer button
- Listen for a dial tone
- Dial 52000
- Say the language you want
- Confirm the language

Placing Calls

- Dial 52000
- Enter PIN number 9791
- Say the language you want
- Confirm your language
- When asked if you want to add an additional person, say "Yes" or press 1, for international calls press 2
- Enter the phone number you want to reach

For more information, call Patient Relations at 244.4427.



IN-PERSON INTERPRETERS:

- American Sign Language for patients who are hearing-impaired
- Language interpreters for non-English speakers
- Tactile interpreters for patients who are blind, deaf or hard of hearing

An interpreter can be requested for future appointments by filling out the Interpreter Request Form on the Bridge under Employee Services. For same-day services, call 244.4427.

Pelvic organ prolapse surgery is among the most performed robotic-assisted procedures at UF Health Jacksonville.

It is a common issue that is rarely discussed. Yet, one in three women has a pelvic floor disorder, such as chronic constipation, urinary or bowel incontinence or sexual dysfunction. There are many contributing factors to PFDs, such as genetics, race, injury or childbirth, but many women lack the general knowledge about their conditions and are unsure about when to seek a professional for help.

Meadow Good, DO, FACOG, a UF Health urogynecologist and chief of female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery, is focused on helping women understand their options to improve their quality of life. Good is board-certified in two specialties: obstetrics and gynecology, and female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery.

"If your symptoms are bothering you, seek treatment and get educated about your options," Good said. "These issues are not a normal part of aging."

Good built a specialized team of professionals who are dedicated to compassionately treating women with PFDs. The team includes Ruchira Singh, MD; Monica Major-Harris, ARNP, a women's health nurse practitioner; Eliza Rivera, PT, DPT, WCS, a board-certified pelvic floor doctor in physical therapy; and two urogynecology nurse care coordinators.

Currently, female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery, a division of the department of obstetrics and gynecology, is performing more pelvic floor repair surgeries than any other robotic-assisted procedures at UF Health Jacksonville.

The pelvic floor is made up of the bladder, uterus, vagina, small bowel and rectum, as well as the tissues and muscles surrounding and connecting these organs. Pelvic organ prolapse occurs when an organ drops, or weakens, and needs repair. Prolapse repair surgery, called sacrocolpopexy, is a minimally invasive, elective procedure.

Patients who qualify for sacrocolpopexy are encouraged to try noninvasive treatments. Noninvasive recommendations depend on a patient's overall health and the condition and severity of her symptoms. Treatment options may include behavioral modification, medication, change in diet and exercises, such as Kegels.

"Pelvic floor exercises using proper technique are essential to overall health and can reduce or eliminate urine leakage," Good said.

Good also recommends using a medical-grade silicone pessary device. The device is fitted and inserted into the vagina by a medical professional to provide support. For some, this is a short-term solution leading to surgery. Other patients use them long term, as they may completely relieve symptoms. They are also an option for women who have other health conditions that prevent pelvic floor surgery.

"My goal is to help women feel good about themselves, so they can live the lifestyles they deserve," Good said. "They should be confident in their daily activities."

If you are a woman experiencing symptoms related to a pelvic floor disorder, visit UFHealthJax.org/female-pelvic-medicine for more information or call 633.0411 to schedule an appointment with a UF Health urogynecologist.

SOLUTIONS FOR WOMEN SUFFERING IN SILENCE



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OPENLINES

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

June – April 13

July – May 18

Submit your copy and photos via
email to **openlines@jax.ufl.edu**.

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EDITOR

Dee Russell

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Darcy Ladd

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Karel Danzie

Nelson Keefer

Carmela Nelson

CONTRIBUTORS

Crystal Holifield

Katie McPherson

Sarah Miller

Jecef Williams

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