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OPEN LINES

from Co-worker to Lifesaver



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Being Proud of Our Work

We pride ourselves on delivering high-quality patient care. Recently, we've been recognized for it from national organizations. We were named as a High Performing Hospital in three specialties in U.S. News & World Report's 2019-2020 "Best Hospitals" report, including two Top 50 national rankings. We were also recognized for patient care in two other key areas. Specifically, the oral and maxillofacial surgery program was ranked 41st nationally and the nephrology program was ranked 45th. We were also singled out for high performance in neurology and neurosurgery and in the care of patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and heart failure.

In addition, we increased our overall ranking among local and state hospitals, jumping from 22nd to 16th in Florida and from fourth to third in Jacksonville. Our No. 1 goal as an organization is to keep getting better in patient care, and these latest rankings show we continue to move in the right direction.

We were also recognized as an LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation in its 2019 Healthcare Equality Index report. The HEI evaluates and scores health care facilities' policies and practices related to equity and inclusion of their LGBTQ patients, visitors and employees across the nation. We received a total score of 100 points, earning HRC's prestigious LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader designation. This is the first year UF Health Jacksonville has applied to be evaluated by the HRC Foundation, so it was very encouraging to receive this recognition.

To further expand on our diversity efforts, we welcome Ann-Marie Knight as our new vice president of community engagement and chief diversity officer. In this dual role, she will partner with local and state officials, community and physician leaders and agencies to strategize on improving the long-term health of the community and reducing health disparities. She will also provide vision and leadership for the diversity, inclusion and equity efforts across our enterprise.



These recognitions exemplify our dedication to this community, our patients and staff. I could not be prouder of the hard work and dedication from every one of our employees. Serving every person who comes through our doors with expert care and compassion is what makes this enterprise special.

Sincerely,

Leon L. Haley Jr., MD, MHSA, CPE, FACEP
CEO, UF Health Jacksonville
Dean, UF College of Medicine – Jacksonville

MARK YOUR CALENDERS FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT

UF Health Jacksonville's annual open enrollment period is Oct. 16 – 31. Changes made during open enrollment become effective Jan. 1, 2020. Selections can be made on the Bridge by clicking the "Peoplesoft HR Self Service" link under the Employee Services drop-down menu.



IMPORTANT DATES

October 16 – 18

The vendor fair is Oct. 16 – 18 in the Learning Resource Center Atrium. The hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Oct. 16, and 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Oct. 17 – 18.

October 16 – 31

On-site enrollers will be available at UF Health Jacksonville in the LRC Atrium 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 16, and from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays from Oct. 17 – Oct. 31.

October 21 – 25

On-site enrollers will be at UF Health North in the Administrative Conference Room (first floor, bed tower) 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 21 – Oct. 25.

Open enrollment is the only time of year employees can make changes to benefits without a qualifying event. Please print and/or save your confirmation of enrollment when you complete your selections to ensure enrollment is correct.

Information about the 2020 benefits plan is available on the Bridge. To view plans, click "Benefits" under the Employee Services drop-down menu.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- ▶ Documentation will be required for dependents you add to any benefits plan. Specific requirements are available on the Bridge. Dependents will not be added if documentation is not provided.
- ▶ To continue coverage for your spouse or domestic partner, supporting documentation will need to be provided before the end of the enrollment period. Submit either the front page of your 2018 tax form, a joint household bill, joint bank account or credit account statement or joint mortgage statement dated after Aug. 1, 2019. The document must list both your name and your spouse's name or domestic partner's name, date and mailing address.
- ▶ Flexible spending account, or FSA, funds must be used for services provided on or before Dec. 31, 2019, and you have until March 31, 2020, to turn in receipts for 2018 FSA expenses. Unused balances up to \$500 automatically rollover in 2020 as long as you enroll in a FSA account for the 2020 plan year. Please note that during open enrollment, the default election is "waived" for FSA accounts. You must manually elect and enter an amount in order to (re)enroll into a FSA account for the 2020 plan year.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about your benefits, email mybenefits@jax.ufl.edu or call the UF Health Jacksonville benefits line at 244.9651.



Kandis Scott and Siena Garcia's relationship extends way beyond the office walls.

from Co-worker to Lifesaver

THE average American adult spends more than 1,800 hours at work every year. That's a lot of time spent with co-workers, which is why becoming friends with colleagues is common nature. This is especially true of Kandis Scott, RT, and Siena Garcia, RT, radiologic technologists at UF Health Jacksonville.

But they never expected their 11-year friendship to turn into a lifesaving situation.

In April 2000, while still in radiologic technology school, Garcia was diagnosed with a condition that would likely result in kidney failure. After being on a donor list for two years, her aunt volunteered to donate her kidney, which turned out to be a match. Garcia felt happy, healthy and supported by family. She got married in 2006 and had a son in 2011. Life was good.

Scott started at UF Health Jacksonville in 2008 in the same department as Garcia. After working side by side each day, the two became close friends. Scott found out about Garcia's condition and always kept a close watch on her, even suggesting in a joking tone, "I hope you're ready for my kidney because I don't need two!"

Flash forward to December 2014, when Garcia's bloodwork indicated she was going into kidney failure. She couldn't believe she had to go back onto a donor list.

Four years went by and she was still waiting for a match. Scott grew more worried about her friend and became serious about donating her own kidney to Garcia. She stopped joking and began researching the kidney donation process.

By July 2018, Scott was ready to discover if her kidney was a match for Garcia, which included four months of paperwork, tests and evaluations. Though it might seem nerve-wracking and stressful to the donor and recipient, this extensive process is meant to fully ensure a donor is physically and mentally prepared for surgery.

The moment of truth came in November 2018, when they found out Scott was a match. The day was filled with tears, smiles, hugs and a bit of anxiety. With the winter holidays approaching, the surgery could not be scheduled

immediately, and Garcia's creatinine levels were starting to rise, which was not a good sign.

Once the surgery date was confirmed for Jan. 8, Garcia's levels suddenly dropped. It was almost as if her body announced that everything would be OK.

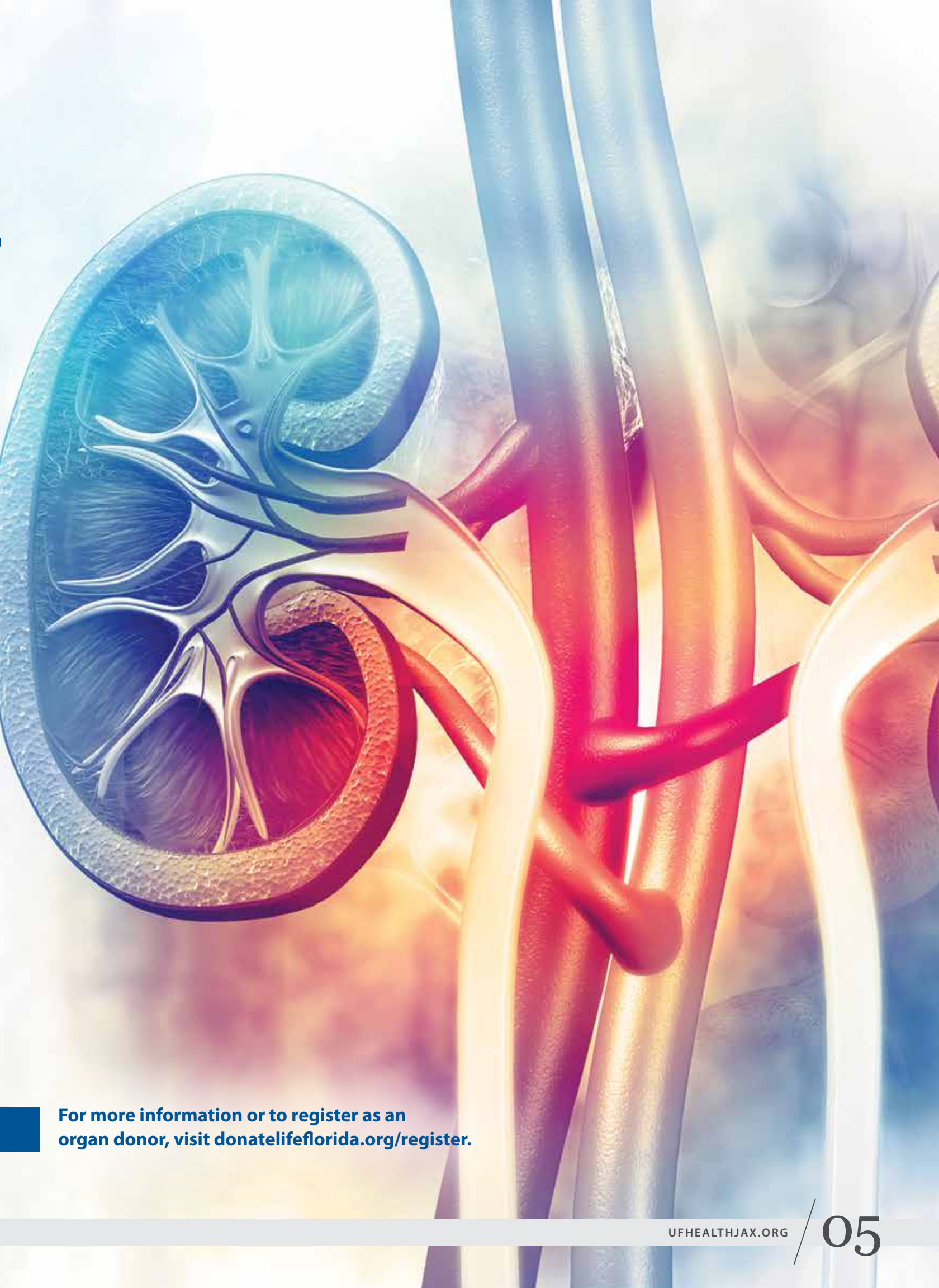
The day of the surgery could not arrive soon enough. Scott and Garcia underwent surgery at UF Health Shands Hospital in Gainesville and were extremely pleased with the support they received at the facility. All nurses, physicians and staff members were cheering them on throughout the entire journey. The quality of care from the team at UF Health led Garcia and Scott to a smooth recovery.

After a few months of rest, Garcia and Scott were excited to return to work in early April. Garcia's labs have remained stable since the surgery and Scott continues to feel great functioning with one kidney. On the outside, you would never realize the bond shared by the pair. They are both as healthy and happy as ever. They sometimes even joke with each other that they forget they had the surgery altogether.

Organ donation is crucial in saving so many lives. According to the United Network for Organ Sharing, more than 100,000 people are in need of organ transplants. Kidney transplants are the most commonly performed organ transplant, with more than 20,000 performed since 1988. One person can save up to eight lives as an organ donor.

Scott admits that she was initially scared to become an organ donor, as she associated it with death. She did not realize that being a living organ donor could also save a life. Her decision allowed her to save her friend, which was one of the most rewarding choices she's ever made. Most people say they would do anything for a friend in need. Scott gifted an actual part of herself to hers — something most people cannot claim.

This entire experience is exactly why Scott encourages others to research organ donation and register as a donor. According to Donate Life Florida, there are more than 10 million registered donors in the state. Being a donor can make the difference for thousands of patients awaiting a suitable transplant match.



For more information or to register as an organ donor, visit donatelife.florida.org/register.

THE MARY POPPINS EFFECT



If you've ever had to take a child to the doctor, you know just how challenging it can be for even routine medical care. For children who receive emergency care or face chronic illness that brings them to the hospital, it can be even harder. They are typically scared or uncooperative, which can make treatment difficult. That's where child life specialists like Kathleen Plymel come in.

Plymel has been a child life specialist with UF Health Jacksonville for more than 30 years. She knows a thing or two about working with children to reduce their fear of medical equipment, doctors and the hospital. In addition to her years of service, she's guided more than 100 interns to become certified child life specialists through the hospital's child life internship. For her, it's a calling she's had since second grade.

During each visit, Plymel's most recent interns, Cameron and Katelyn, worked with her side-by-side in rotations in the emergency room and various pediatric intensive care units. The child life specialist assesses, treats, intervenes and evaluates patients using a family-centered care model. Their

mission is to empower children and their families to cope and adapt through play.

"We're here to provide developmental support to children and their families to help them overcome any fear or skepticism of medical equipment or treatment," said Plymel. "We allow kids to be kids and participate in their own healing."

One tool at their disposal is the "Bravery Boost" menu created as an internship project of a former student. The menu includes developmental activities and therapeutic tools to provide each child with a choice in their care journey, with the goal of making them feel more comfortable. Some of the activities include creating a worry wand or a superhero mask to help them face their fear of medical treatment.

"We'll often allow a child to play with various medical objects ahead of their



▲ Stacy Collins' son plays with the teddy bear that the child life specialists gave him before surgery.



◀ Kathleen Plymel and her 2019 summer interns, Cameron and Katelyn, rotated in the emergency room and pediatric intensive care units based on patient needs and referrals.

procedure to help desensitize them to the equipment,” said Katelyn. “We explain how items work and they can learn about things like an IV or splint, which at first can seem foreign and intimidating.”

Stacy Collins, RN, a nurse in the Pediatric Emergency Room at UF Health Jacksonville, not only experiences the incredible impact of child life specialists while at work every day, but her family was recently on the receiving end of their care. Her son was having severe stomach pains and she brought him in for treatment. When it was discovered his pain was a larger issue that required surgery, the team of child life specialists came for a visit to help prepare him for surgery.

“My son was given a heart-shaped pillow and a teddy bear to comfort and accompany him during his stay in the hospital. The simple gestures that will be a lasting memory of the excellent care he received during his time here,” said Collins.

Collins says her son thinks the world of his bear and the way he was treated by the entire care team.

Her son stated, “My bear kept me calm whenever I was nervous, like when I was in the operating room waiting for surgery. I hugged him tight.”

The staff even allowed the teddy bear to go back to the operating room with her son, but made sure that the bear was properly equipped with a mask and hat. When he was in post-op, the teddy bear was still at his side with a bandage on his belly.

“It is always a valuable asset when the child life specialists are available to assist during procedures. They prepare children in age appropriate ways and create useful distractions,” said Collins.

Plymel takes pride in her job and enjoys helping to humanize health care. As a team of one, and at times, with interns by her side, she stays busy floating around the hospital to provide services. She places special value on the mutual respect she and the pediatric staff have for each other.

“Our entire team supports what we do and we’ve learned to adapt together to provide the highest quality of care to the children and families we work with,” said Plymel. “It is so rewarding to hear a child tell their family member they conquered a fear and got through what could have been a truly terrible day for them otherwise.”

Visit UFHealthJax.org/child-life to learn more about the Child Life Program at UF Health Jacksonville.

A REMARKABLE RECOVERY

The journey of a brain tumor patient marked with support and hope



◀ When asked what the future holds, Melvin Turner gets choked up talking about his wife, Joan. "I want to do something really, really special for my wife." They celebrate 54 years of marriage this year.

Aaron “Melvin” Turner knew of the battle raging in his head between his brain and a growing tumor. He and his wife, Joan, had been working toward surgery for more than a year. Neither one of them was thrilled about it.

“The doctor we were seeing at another hospital only focused on risk,” Joan said while counting on her fingers all the ways they were told Melvin’s surgery could take a turn for the worse.

Their lives changed on Aug. 29, 2017, when emergency medical technicians rushed Melvin to UF Health Jacksonville and, ultimately, to neurosurgeon Daryoush Tavanaiepour, MD.

Two years earlier, the Turners were enjoying retirement and celebrating 50 years of marriage with four children and two dozen grand and great-grandchildren when Melvin began displaying a series of questionable medical symptoms.

“My husband started experiencing a loss of bladder control,” Joan said. “The first time was at a family picnic in 2015.”

Her Master of Science and Health degree and certifications in geriatric studies told her he was relatively young for the condition. He was 70 at the time. Other warning signs developed quickly in the following months.

“By 2016, I started falling out of bed,” Melvin said. “Every night, my wife would have to call our son to pick me up and put me back.”

“There were days she would come home and I was in the same spot from when she left,” Melvin said. Leg weakness set in, preventing him from getting up without aid. Melvin seemed to be deteriorating in front of Joan’s eyes. She feared he may have dementia.

“I requested an MRI of his brain,” she said, exhaling heavily. “That’s when they found a tumor.”

Coming to UF Health

The couple started the laborious process of moving toward surgery. She carried a notebook to doctor appointments. She kept detailed notes on every question asked. Her files filled up with Melvin’s office visit print-outs, pictures of his brain and countless test results.

During the same year, unbeknownst to the Turners, Tavanaiepour guided the opening of the first Skull Base Surgery Center in Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia.

The stellar medical team conducts leading-edge research and clinical trials. Their diverse knowledge collectively extends into neurosurgery, head and neck surgery, proton therapy, neuroradiology, neuropathology, endocrinology, otolaryngology, neuro-ophthalmology, radiation and medical oncology.

Once a week, the cast of specialists sit down at a conference table and review patient records to consider best options from every angle.

“This is a game changer,” Tavanaiepour said. “We put all the doctors at one table, interact live and come up with solutions. Mr. Turner is one specific beneficiary of that.”

The facility’s opening and Melvin’s tumor discovery were each about a year old when Joan came home from the store and found her husband on his knees. Like many times before, she tried helping him up. This time, however, he toppled over.

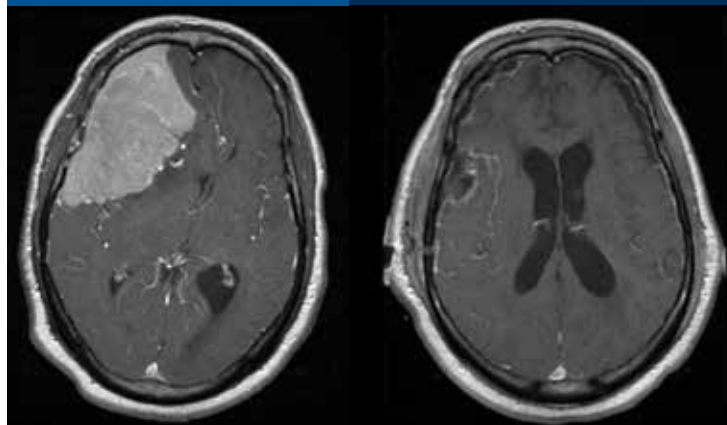
“A voice in my head said, ‘Call 911. He’s stroking. Call 911.’”

An ambulance rushed Melvin to UF Health North. Imaging revealed worrisome tumor results. Staff whisked Melvin off to UF Health Jacksonville. He flatlined on the way, but made it.

“Mrs. Turner was very caring of her husband,” Tavanaiepour said, crediting Joan’s quick action with saving Melvin that day. “She’s thorough, intelligent and very insightful with her questions.”

While Tavanaiepour consulted his team, Joan consulted the internet to analyze neurosurgeons. “I even looked into doctors in other parts of the country. Dr. Tavanaiepour was the best. Trust me. I did my research.”

Tavanaiepour said one of the major arteries that supplies blood to the brain was embedded in the tumor. He acknowledged the risk of a devastating stroke, but says he never assumes every patient wants to rush to surgery.



“We have to respect people’s diversity — their religious and cultural background, as well as their wishes. Some people don’t want surgery,” Tavanaiepour said. “We want to provide the family with enough information and options to make an informed decision.”

Allowing the Turners to take ownership of the decision provided a sense of comfort Joan had not felt previously. The choices included observation, radiation and surgery.

“He drew out a sketch, and he explained it in a language I could understand,” Joan said. The plan was to piecemeal the tumor and dissect it carefully away from the artery, using extreme magnification and very fine tools. His attention to detail gave her comfort.

“You never want to exaggerate the potential for recovery,” Tavanaiepour said. “But you don’t want to be so pessimistic that you don’t provide hope.”

During the procedure, their large family gathered in the waiting room. Joan felt at peace.

“Dr. Tavanaiepour showed me diagrams of a brain on his cell phone before surgery,” Joan said. “I had a visual. I knew exactly what was happening and how long it would take.”

Between her praying and receiving regular updates from a member of the surgical team throughout the 10-and-a-half-hour procedure, Joan never wavered in believing the love of her life would be ok.

Melvin later awoke, with no idea of what transpired.

“The last thing I remember is being at UF Health North,” he said. “I didn’t know what was going on. They told me I had surgery. And do you know what? Not one bit of pain. Nothing. Dr. Tavanaiepour is the best doctor in America.”

Tavanaiepour throws his head back in a hearty chuckle upon hearing this, then leans forward in his chair and gives credit to the team.

“This isn’t a surgeon and patient story. It really is an institutional approach. It’s about our community, this hospital, the region,” Tavanaiepour said, listing personnel who deserve credit, including operating room staff, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, post-op staff and intensive care unit staff.

‘His recovery is remarkable’

The Skull Base Surgery Center’s peer review board doesn’t close the file when surgery is over. They assess results and discuss treatment moving forward. In Melvin’s case, results could not have been better.

“His recovery is remarkable,” Tavanaiepour said. “Cases like this are important for hope, for surgeons to have in the back of their minds for the next case.”

Since the surgery, Melvin renewed his Transportation Worker Identification Credential and returned to work — not because he had to, but because he wanted to. He no longer suffers from any of the symptoms that worried his wife when the road to recovery started. Joan says he is also a lot more engaged at family functions and with life in general.

In January, UF Health Jacksonville received the distinct recognition as one of America’s 250 Best Hospitals by Healthgrades, a national organization that analyzes the performance of hospitals across the country. In addition, the hospital’s Skull Base Surgery Center was among the top 5% nationwide in overall clinical excellence.

THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who worked to keep our facilities, faculty, staff, residents, patients and communities safe during Hurricane Dorian. Everyone truly came together as a team and worked as a unit. Meals were provided to over 3,800 staff and 1,600 patients and we slept more than 700 staff between the Downton and North campuses. It was a strong hurricane at a slow pace, but we were prepared and worked together to implement our plan.

As a reminder, hurricane season occurs until Nov. 30, but the height of the season in North Florida typically starts in September, extending through the end of October. Please be familiar with our hurricane policy and talk to your supervisor about department-specific plans.

Again, thank you for your hard work and dedication in keeping our patients safe and providing high-quality care.



Preventing the FLU begins with you.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH WILL OFFER FLU SHOTS

Oct. 1 – 31

The flu vaccine is mandatory for all employees — clinical and non-clinical staff, volunteers, UFJP, University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville and UF Health Proton Therapy Institute. Flu shots will be administered at UF Health Jacksonville and UF Health North.

All nursing and clinic areas that administer their own vaccinations may contact Ledia Moore at Ledia.Moore@jax.ufl.edu for supplies.

Visit the Bridge for a complete list of dates, times and locations.



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OPENLINES

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

January – Oct. 15
February – Nov. 15

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

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UFHealthJax.org

PHOTO SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

We welcome photos that are taken or submitted by employees. Photos should be at least 3 megabytes (3MB) in image size to be published. Please try to take or submit photos that are clear (camera is held very still); not backlit (flash is used and/or light source is not behind the subject); and framed correctly (feet are not cut off and/or subject is not shown too far away). Employees are encouraged to arrange photography with the Media Center before an event to ensure quality. **Direct questions to openlines@jax.ufl.edu or call 244.9750.**

Visit OpenLines.UFHealthJax.org to find current and past issues of Open Lines.