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The local community gives back to health care heroes.

Navigating Challenging Times Together

The last couple of months have been challenging for health care, UF Health and the world as COVID-19 took the stage. In March, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, and travel between countries was restricted or limited, meetings and events were postponed and businesses across America transitioned to virtual environments, including many of the departments within our enterprise.

As always, the safety and well-being of our patients, visitors, faculty, staff and volunteers remains a top priority. Many of our efforts were focused on preparing our hospital for the inevitable peak, as well as flattening the curve of the virus's spread. We're continuing to monitor the number of COVID-19 cases at UF Health, the state and across the country and stay up-to-date on the constantly evolving information surrounding the pandemic.

Despite these challenges, our enterprise has adapted to the ever-changing situation. I'm grateful to all of you who are working on the front lines. I admire your commitment and dedication in the face of an unprecedented event. Your understanding and flexibility has made all the difference.

Our enterprise has also seen incredible support from the community, with more than 50 companies and individuals donating food, supplies and cash gifts to our hospitals. From businesses and churches donating meals and personal protective equipment to our employees and community groups making masks for employees as we waited for PPE orders to arrive, the outpouring of support gives us hope. You'll read more about their generosity in this issue.

Another win I'm happy to report is that we received \$100,000 from the First Coast Relief Fund through the United Way of Northeast Florida. This money is funding equipment for telemedicine appointments, among other things, which are even more vital in the current climate. Thank you to Kimberly Jones, chief development officer at UF Health Jacksonville, and Nipa Shah, MD, chair of community health and family medicine at the UF College of Medicine – Jacksonville, for their efforts, as well as the efforts of many others who have been instrumental in helping secure donations that are supporting our enterprise during this time.

The United Way of Northeast Florida is one of the organizations we support in our annual spring employee



giving campaign "Give Where You Live," which offers the chance for employees at the downtown and north campuses, as well as outpatient practices, to donate to the Children's Miracle Network, United Way or both. The campaign is happening this month, and although it will look slightly different this year due to social distancing, I invite you to participate and give back to the community, who has been so faithful in showing their support to UF Health.

In May, we celebrate UF Health Week, as well as Nurses Week, and I want to express my gratitude to all of the nurses, faculty and staff, who continue to provide excellent patient care in the midst of a pandemic. I'm impressed by the commitment and dedication all of you show daily. Thank you for everything you do, every day, on behalf of each other and our patients.

As we get past the "initial" phase of this pandemic, we are slowly restarting the organization's elective surgeries and procedures and well as our outpatient clinics, while being mindful of COVID-19's possible return in the fall and winter. We will also chart our work with the city of Jacksonville and our partnership with UF Health as we look forward to our future.

Sincerely,

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

Residency and Fellowship Programs Continue as UF COMJ Copes with COVID-19



Some trainees have been reassigned to other rotations due to reduced clinical activities.

Most of the nearly 400 resident physicians and fellows at the University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville continue to train on campus as the college copes with the threat and effects of COVID-19.

UF Health Jacksonville's cancellation of elective surgeries in March caused corresponding clinical training rotations to be put on hold. Residents and fellows were reassigned to other clinical and educational experiences within their respective programs, said Linda Edwards, MD, senior associate dean for educational affairs at the College of Medicine – Jacksonville.

"Clinical volume in general is down, which also impacts consultation services," Edwards said. "Just as faculty members are learning how to manage patients virtually through telehealth, so are the residents and fellows."

She says another major shift has been in the didactic structure of the training programs.

"All in-person conferences have been changed to virtual meetings and programs are hosting innovative educational conferences," Edwards said. "The residents and fellows have been great in adjusting to the 'new normal' of graduate medical education."

Communication and contingency planning

David Caro, MD, associate chair of educational affairs and director of the emergency medicine residency program, created an institutional plan that details how faculty members and trainees at the college would be reassigned to address increased clinical care demands. However, no residents or fellows have had to be moved.

Caro and Edwards conduct weekly Zoom meetings with residency and fellowship program directors and associate directors to ensure communication remains strong during the pandemic. Those two — along with Leon L. Haley Jr., MD, MHSA, dean of the college — also host weekly virtual town hall-style meetings with residents and fellows, giving them a chance to ask questions and hear directly from senior leadership.

"We know this is a challenging time for residents and fellows," Haley said. "Our greatest concern is their safety and well-being. We want to help alleviate anxieties and attempt to maintain some semblance of normalcy while they continue in their training programs."

Meanwhile, Edwards takes part in weekly Zoom meetings for designated institutional officials, held by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, or ACGME. Its members discuss a host of key issues, such as fulfilling program requirements and helping ensure trainees remain adequately supervised and have access to personal protective equipment and other essential items.

Despite elective surgery cancellations, clinic closures and social distancing requirements, the College of Medicine – Jacksonville remains in Stage 1 for graduate medical education operations during a pandemic, as defined by the ACGME. Stage 1 indicates things are "Business as Usual."

"But we recognize we are far from business as usual right now," Edwards said. The second and third stages are "Increased Clinical Demands Guidance" and "Pandemic Emergency Status Guidance," respectively.

Visit acgme.org/covid-19 for detailed information about COVID-19's impact on residency and fellowship training.

A SACRIFICE FOR SAFETY

UF Health North nurse chooses to isolate herself from her family during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nurses are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting patients and each other. They're doing everything they can to keep everyone at the hospital safe. But what about those who have families at home?

Knowing how serious the pandemic had become and the nature of her job, Catherine Miller, a medical-surgical registered nurse at UF Health North, realized she would be putting her husband and three children at risk by coming home to them every day.

Because of that, Miller made one of the toughest decisions of her life — to isolate herself from her family to keep them safe.

For several weeks and counting, Miller has physically been away from her loved ones. They are staying with her mother-in-law, who lives nearby, while she is staying at home.

PHYSICALLY DISTANT, BUT NOT SOCIALLY

Miller makes a point to call or connect via FaceTime with her family once or twice a day. She's thankful to work a day shift, allowing her ample time to talk with them when she's off work.

Along with regular phone calls, one of the things that helped Miller cope with the distancing was a sweet gesture from her middle child, Daniel. He placed all of his favorite stuffed toys on her bed the last night the family spent together. He told his mom the toys would keep her safe. Miller hasn't moved the stuffed toys since Daniel placed them there.

"Every time I get home from work, they serve as a reminder that my family loves and supports me," she said.

Miller keeps in touch with her eldest son, Jacob, by emailing him as much as she can. Jacob is on the autism spectrum, and this change in their family dynamics has been the hardest on him. Although

Miller worries about Jacob, she is extremely proud of him for staying strong and following through with his schoolwork.

Though it's easy to assume it's only Miller making adjustments, she emphasizes how grateful she is to her entire family for their sacrifices. Her mother-in-law took the family in, with no questions asked, and helps the kids stay engaged with schoolwork and crafty activities. Her husband, who serves in the military, has an evolving schedule that can change at any time. Despite this, he stays dedicated to his work and is also thankful for his mother's help and his wife's sacrifice to keep the family safe.

A CULTURE OF EMPATHY

Although Miller has only been with UF Health North since November 2019, she feels her co-workers are her second family.

"The team here has been very supportive, finding ways to take my mind off things," Miller said. "My manager, Genevieve Lanouette, constantly checks on me to see if I'm OK. Work is close to my home in Yulee, and I'm so happy here."

Although it's been tough for Catherine to be away from her family, she is "proud to be a nurse and able to help during this situation."

A CAUTIOUS FUTURE

Pondering her family's future, Miller said the pandemic has taught her how she can better protect them, such as taking off her work shoes in the car or changing clothes before coming in contact with her kids. She is already doing this while being away from her family and plans to continue the same routine as an extra layer of protection.

On the bright side, she can't wait to physically embrace her family again. "It's the little things, like hugs, that mean so much," Miller said. "When this is over, I will be even more thankful to do little things like that."

“IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS, LIKE HUGS, THAT MEAN SO MUCH. WHEN THIS IS OVER, I WILL BE EVEN MORE THANKFUL TO DO LITTLE THINGS LIKE THAT.”

Miller can't wait to hug and travel with her family again once it's safe to do so. She's pictured here with her husband, Chris, and two sons, Daniel and Jacob



Miller enjoys the beach with her three children, Jacob, Hannah and Daniel. The family hopes to eventually resume oceanside activities together.

Bringing Home to the Hospital

UF Health staff support patients in various ways during the COVID-19 pandemic.

America's "new normal" during the coronavirus pandemic is affecting common practices in and outside the home.

Patients in particular are experiencing a change in routine, namely those used to having hospital visitors before or after a surgery or treatment. The current, but necessary, limited visitation policy is putting a strain on them, reducing their support system and even lowering their confidence in their ability to heal.

While visitation is restricted, the Patient Relations department at UF Health Jacksonville and nurses and other staff at UF Health North decided to control the uncontrollable, crafting simple yet meaningful ways to support patients while keeping them safe.

VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS

Technology today allows everyone to connect easily, no matter where they are. Video calls can serve as the next best thing to in-person communication. After the visitation policy changed, nurses and staff knew patients would still desire some sort of contact with loved ones.

On April 1, Patient Relations at UF Health Jacksonville began offering an alternative way for families to rekindle connections amid social distancing requirements — televisits through the Zoom application. This way, patients could see and talk with their family members online. These televisits have instilled a sense of peace for families, as they've given all participants opportunities to express their chosen words and emotions in a more meaningful way than a simple phone call or text.

Nurses at UF Health North have spent extra time with patients, teaching them how to video chat with their family and friends before surgery or treatment. Once patients saw a familiar face on their screen, it eased fears and built trust with the nurses.

Although it seems like a simple step to take before a procedure, patients have been extremely appreciative of these gestures. Connecting virtually yet visually has been a noteworthy method of communication for all during these trying times.

"The comments and experiences from this innovative approach have been astounding," said Erta Livingston, PhD, director of patient relations at UF Health Jacksonville. "These televisits trigger many emotions for patients and their loved ones in this time of the 'new normal.' Many of them have told us how thankful they are."

FROM ONE FAMILY TO ANOTHER

Staff members on the north campus are also supporting patients by using their children's talents and creativity. Because patients in the hospital can't have visitors during their stay, this eliminates the typical get well gifts and cards brought to them. The staff was determined to find another way to help patients recover.

Most staff members' children have been staying home during the pandemic, allowing them ample time for fun crafts and creative expression. It was a win-win to add card-making to their kids' routine, extending their creative time with a project that benefits others.

One particular patient was extremely emotional upon receiving a card, as the message was more personal. The patient, a military veteran, opened the card and read, "Thank you for your service." This hit home for him, as the sentiment was even more meaningful than a simple "get well" note.

All patients have been deeply thankful for these extra efforts. Much of the COVID-19 pandemic involves a lot of uncertainty, but one thing remains constant - the UF Health staff's compassion for patients.



Let Destiny Design's floral arrangements add a touch of beauty to the UF Health Jacksonville campus.



Several UF Health employees make masks for support personnel.



The Rehabilitation Services team at UF Health North expresses excitement after the Girl Scouts of Gateway Council donate boxes of cookies.

Community giving supports health care heroes

Local businesses have donated generously to UF Health Jacksonville during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As health care professionals worldwide risk their lives to protect and heal patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, the community is showing its support in any way possible.

UF Health Jacksonville and UF Health North are experiencing this kindness firsthand from local business owners. Since the COVID-19 outbreak began, more than 50 community supporters and companies have reached out to donate various items, including cash, food, masks and other personal protective equipment, hand sanitizer and more.

Restaurants around Jacksonville have donated hundreds of meals, making employees feel appreciated and fueling them for long shifts in high-stress, high-risk environments. In addition to food, UF Health has received essential supplies that have helped offset shortages nationwide, including N95 masks, respirators, gloves, surgical masks, gowns and other items critical to employee and patient safety.

The giving hasn't ended there. A local florist sent beautiful arrangements to display at UF Health Jacksonville to help brighten the mood and boost morale. The hospital also received cash gifts to fund new equipment and technology. These uncertain times are encouraging innovation and creativity. Many distilleries, local and national, are adapting by making hand sanitizer and donating it to hospitals, including UF Health North and UF Health Jacksonville.

"It's inspiring to see the community rally around our

team of health care heroes," said Kimberly Jones, chief development officer at UF Health Jacksonville and assistant vice president of development for the University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville. "These partners have answered the call and are making a real difference during this difficult time."

UF Health employees have even stepped up to support each other in unique ways, such as helping to make masks, using a 3D printer to build mask clips and drawing inspirational sidewalk chalk art to encourage colleagues.

"The outpouring of support is beyond anything we could have imagined or hoped for," said Ann-Marie Knight, vice president of community engagement and chief diversity officer at UF Health Jacksonville. "The community is finding creative ways to show support for our teams on the front line of this pandemic. It's not only inspiring, but there are incidental benefits to this generosity. Our neighbors are finding purpose in this sea of uncertainty and concern. Whether they are making masks or coordinating a meal donation, all of it is uplifting for them. In that way, I believe we are truly helping each other."

These acts of kindness, which are part of a global effort, allow health care workers to focus on caring for patients and bringing joy back into the workplace. Consider supporting UF Health. Any donations are welcome and appreciated.

**Visit UFHealthJax.org/covid-19/how-can-i-help-to-learn-more.
Every donation, no matter the size, makes a difference.**

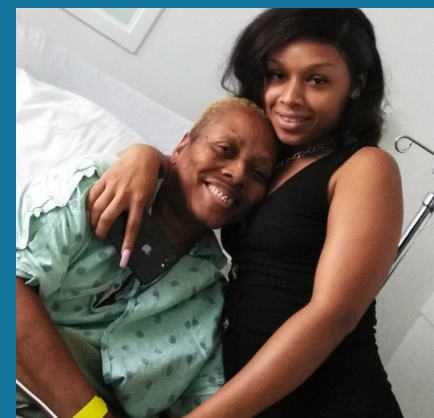
**A multidisciplinary team
at the UF Health Skull
Base Center – Jacksonville save
a life in procedure performed
for the first time in the U.S.**

Lauren Fells vividly recalls the angst from April 27, 2019, the date a life-threatening tumor started its wrath. She was sick at work that day and had been battling migraine headaches for weeks. A month or so later, Fells learned from specialists at the UF Health Skull Base Center that she had a brain tumor, requiring expert removal to help her survive.

Carol Milton, Fells' niece, winced at the memory of seeing her aunt in pain. Milton and Fells are close in age. They are more like sisters, often finishing each other's sentences and laughing at inside jokes. It was early June when Fells told her family she couldn't take the pain any longer.

"My head was swollen and the pain was unbearable," Fells said.

Fells put off going to the hospital due to the concern of paying for a potentially mystery diagnosis. What if one visit meant multiple visits? Expensive medications? Surgery? How would she pay for it without insurance?



Lauren Fells' granddaughter, DeVeisha Wesley, visits her in the hospital.



Lauren Fells' niece, Carol Milton, recommended she go to UF Health Jacksonville.

The decision to seek treatment

Milton and DeVeisha Wesley, Fells' granddaughter, talked to her about why UF Health Jacksonville was the best place, and Fells agreed to go to the emergency room. At the time, she had no idea how pivotal this decision would be.

At the emergency room, Fells waited as staff tried to help find answers. She was admitted, and an MRI revealed a large tumor fighting for space inside her head. This is when specialists at the UF Health Skull Base Center got involved.

The center provides state-of-the-art care for the treatment of skull base and brain tumors and related conditions. Part of the largest neurosurgery practice in Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia, the highly trained multidisciplinary team is led by neurosurgeon, Daryoush Tavanaiepour, MD. It is the only center of its kind in the region.

"The tumor was pushing against her brainstem, which caused issues with her balance," Tavanaiepour said. "She had trouble walking when she arrived. And pressure was building because brain fluid could not circulate properly, resulting in headaches."

The complex, groundbreaking procedure

A team of professionals with the UF Health Skull Base Center worked diligently to review Fells' files, discussing test results and using their decadeslong combined neurological expertise to consider potential treatment options.

It became clear to the team that Fells' case was both incredibly unique and complicated due to the location of the tumor. It was surrounded by critical structures of the brain, particularly the brainstem and arteries and vessels, making it more challenging than usual. Surgery on this location of the brain had only been performed once before, in Europe.

It's common for patients with brain tumors to be given three potential options: monitor the tumor, perform surgery or receive radiation treatment. Due to the size and location of the tumor and the debilitating effect it was having on Fells' life, Tavanaiepour recommended

surgery. However, this complex procedure came with high risks, including the possibility of stroke, which Tavanaiepour explained carefully to Fells. His comforting bedside manner put her at ease.

"The way he spoke was very transparent," Fells said with gratitude. "I was confident about the surgery. I trusted God, and I trusted the doctors."

The case was discussed at tumor board, which comprised neuroradiology, proton therapy and other experts. It was unanimously agreed upon to proceed with surgical intervention.

The final decision to operate required all hands on deck. Working alongside Tavanaiepour were two accomplished UF Health neurosurgeons: Grzegorz Brzezicki, MD, PhD, and Gazanfar Rahmathulla, MD, as well as Dinesh Rao, MD, chief of neuroradiology.

"Dr. Brzezicki specializes in arteries and veins, so he came up with a plan for the venous channel that was blocking access to the tumor," Tavanaiepour said. "Dr. Rahmathulla and I discussed how to take the tumor component out. At the same time, Dr. Rao examined MRI images to make sure we didn't come across additional obstacles."

A life saved

The surgery, which was performed in segments, was a success. First, Brzezicki and Tavanaiepour removed the vein, followed by Tavanaiepour and Rahmathulla resecting the tumor.

Tavanaiepour recalled with pride everyone who played a role in saving Fells' life. He credits the entire team as being instrumental in the outcome, including the operating room staff, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and the recovery team. The successful removal of the tumor makes the UF Health Skull Base Center team the second group in the world to perform this complex procedure.

Several months after, Fells said she feels wonderful and has rededicated her life to serving the Lord. She still gets occasional headaches, which is normal, according to Tavanaiepour. Fells said she wants to encourage others to go to the hospital sooner rather than later when they're in pain. She is glad she did.

**A COMPLICATED
PROCEDURE
GONE RIGHT**

Elevating Access to HIV Care Through Telemedicine



Dr. Reetu Grewal is the medical director of UF Health Family Medicine and Pediatrics – Baymeadows and lead researcher for the grant.

Technology helps patients connect with providers for fast, convenient care.

Telemedicine has improved access to health care by offering patients the option of completing appointments from the comfort of their home. In 2017, UF Health Jacksonville received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support telemedicine efforts for patients living with HIV. By using the hospital's UF Health Virtual Visit program, patients of the UF Center for HIV/AIDS Research, Education and Service (UF CARES) have been able to complete appointments with their providers in a more convenient way.

Reetu Grewal, MD, medical director of UF Health Family Medicine and Pediatrics – Baymeadows and the grant's lead researcher, has made significant progress with the program since 2017. Grewal and her team have increased the number of participating health care providers, increased usage among patients and expanded the number of presenting site locations where patients can easily access the technology required.

"We know access to technology or a strong Wi-Fi connection can be a barrier for patients seeking to use telemedicine," Grewal said. "Almost all of our primary care practices are set up as presenting sites, and we have five community-based organizations that help us to reach more potential patients."

All presenting sites have a tablet to help patients conveniently connect with a UF CARES provider. Staff on site are trained to help with appointments. The locations help patients reduce time spent commuting to and from their doctor's office if they do not have the capability to connect at home. Patients can also choose to visit organizations they're comfortable with, such as the Jacksonville Area Sexual Minority Youth Network, to use the tablets and complete an appointment.

Grewal has made progress in her collaboration with UF CARES providers to increase the number of appointments the team completes. She eases concerns by sharing how virtual care has been successful for her and other colleagues to efficiently manage clinic days and reach more patients.

Nizar Maraqa, MD, medical director of UF CARES and a pediatric infectious disease specialist, says the team has embraced the concept and with initial technical hurdles cleared, they are more comfortable recommending and completing virtual visits.

"Overall, it's been a positive experience for our patients and providers," Maraqa said. "Providers and case managers are able to identify clients who benefit from this technology and ensure they can securely access it."

Maraqa's team values the flexibility telemedicine provides patients who are medically stable and do not require significant additional services. Dee Williams, a UF CARES patient, started virtual appointments in early 2019.

"I enjoy the privacy and I recommend it to anybody to try," Williams said.

Williams said other than being unable to take vitals, her provider personalizes the appointment just like an in-office visit. She can connect securely with her phone and continue on with her day.

"There is a lot to be gained by providing this type of appointment option," Grewal said. "It is another tool to better serve our patients, especially to ensure those living with HIV can access the care they need to maintain a healthy and full life."

UF Health Virtual Visit has been successful for Grewal's patients in chronic care management. Most three-month, follow-up office appointments can be replaced with virtual visits. Those using this service have become more compliant with their treatment plans because of the increased monitoring telemedicine provides. For both client groups, telemedicine eliminates the travel and time barriers of coming into the office.

"I see telemedicine as a tool to improve access to care, especially for patients who would normally travel far distances," Maraqa said. "As it becomes more streamlined to provide the multidisciplinary care that people living with HIV require, I can see how it will improve our ability to reach patients and keep them connected to care."

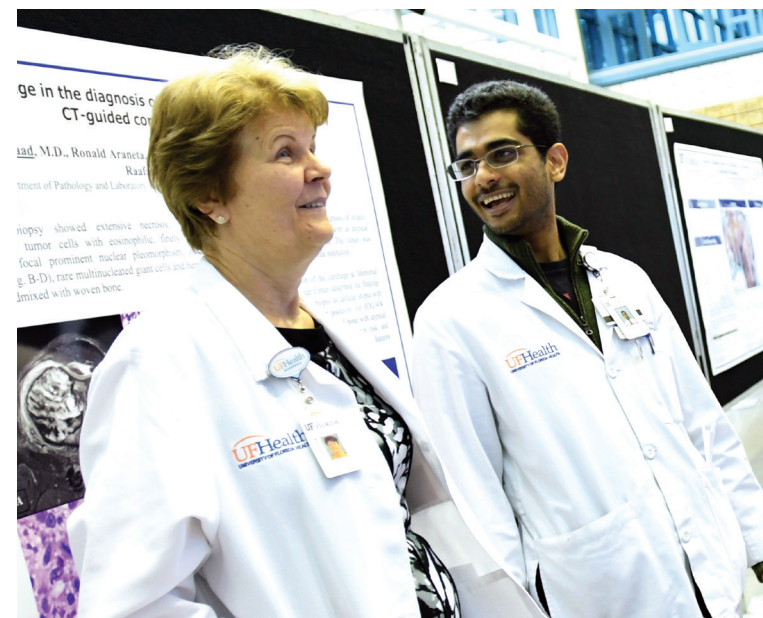
Celebrating

EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE



During UF Health Week and throughout the entire month of May, we are celebrating all of the health care heroes at UF Health.

Thank you for everything you do and for providing excellent patient care.



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OPENLINES

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

September – June 15

October – July 15

November – August 15

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

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