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CELEBRATING RESILIENCE

May is a special month for UF Health Jacksonville, because we celebrated UF Health Week May 10 – 14.

Historically, we celebrated this time period as National Hospital Week, but beginning in 2020, we decided to call it UF Health Week to fully encompass and include all of the entities in our enterprise.

When we launched the inaugural UF Health Week last year, it was at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and, unfortunately, we weren't able to do everything we initially planned. This year, however, we were ready for the virtual approach to the events and planned a week full of celebrations with COVID-19 precautions in place.

I hope you were able to join in on the fun. Some of the featured events included daily wellness workouts, such as yoga, Zumba and tai chi, and special leadership presentations focused on each of our entities and their plans for the future.

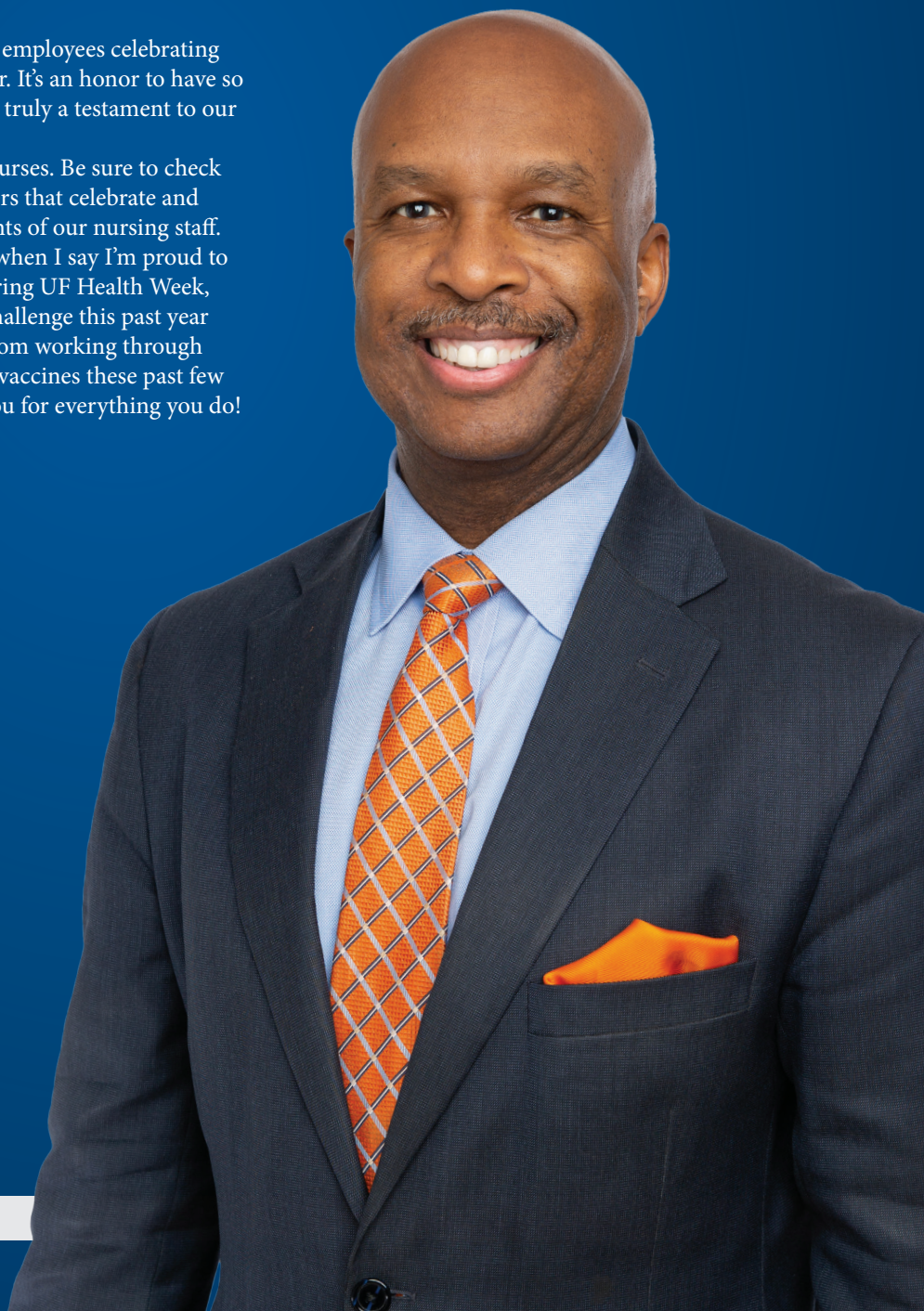
I'd also like to say congratulations to all of the employees celebrating milestone anniversaries with UF Health this year. It's an honor to have so many long-tenured employees working here. It's truly a testament to our strong workforce.

We also celebrated the amazing work of our nurses. Be sure to check out a special video on the Bridge and screensavers that celebrate and acknowledge many of the recent accomplishments of our nursing staff.

I speak on behalf of all UF Health leadership when I say I'm proud to celebrate each and every one of you, not just during UF Health Week, but every day of the year. I saw you rise to the challenge this past year and witnessed incredible resilience firsthand. From working through the initial onset of COVID-19 to administering vaccines these past few months, you are all health care heroes. Thank you for everything you do!

Sincerely,

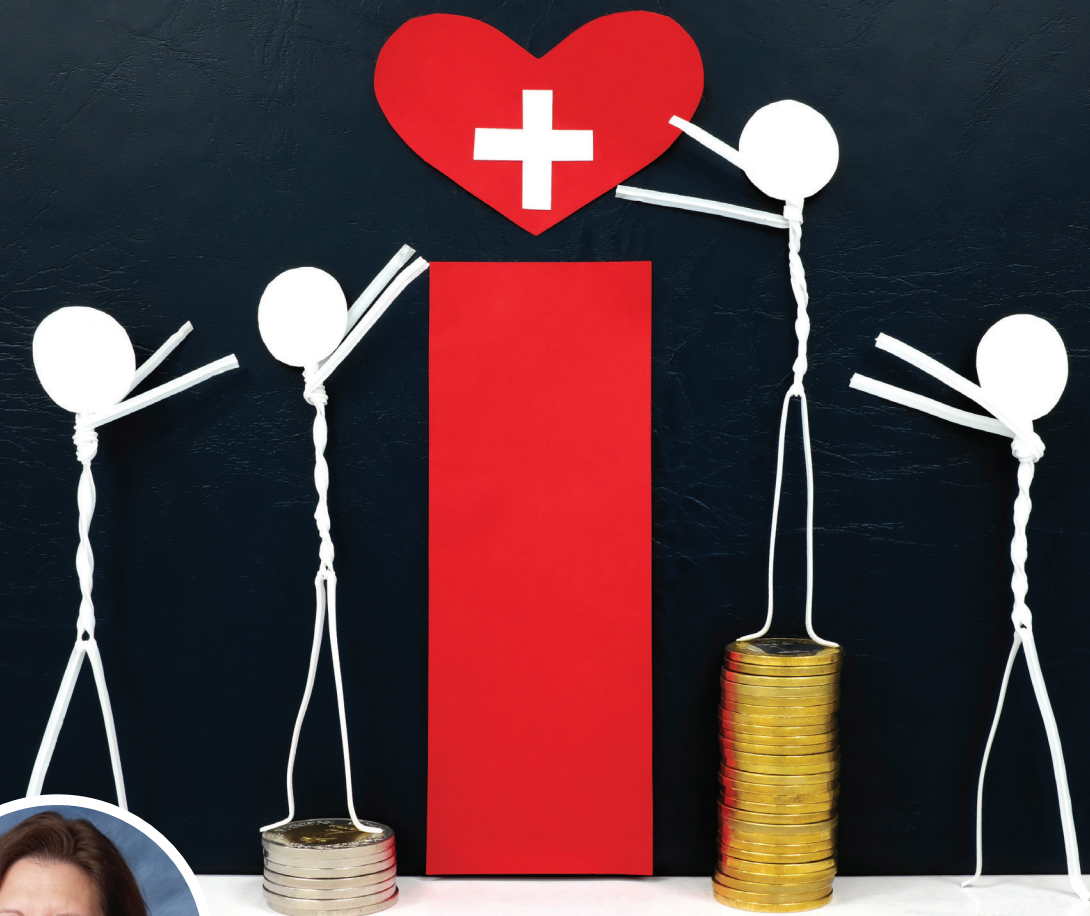
Leon L. Haley Jr., MD, MHSA
CEO, UF Health Jacksonville
Dean, UF College of Medicine – Jacksonville



LEVERAGING RESEARCH TO ADDRESS HEALTH INEQUITIES



L-R: Ross Jones, MD, MPH, is an assistant professor of community health and family medicine and medical director of community health; Lori Bilello, PhD, MBA, MHS, is a research assistant professor and associate director of the UF Health Urban Health Alliance.



UF faculty members use a PCORI award to drive patient participation in health disparities research.

Faculty members from the University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville are using a highly coveted research award to help address health inequities in Duval County.

The college received a \$248,000 award through the Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Awards program, an initiative of the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, which is an independent, nonprofit organization authorized by Congress in 2010 to fund comparative effectiveness research that provides patients, their caregivers and clinicians with the evidence needed to make better-informed health and health care decisions.

The funding is going toward developing measures to foster greater patient involvement in health disparities research and participation in the UF Health Urban Health Alliance, a comprehensive resource and community health innovation hub. Read more about the Urban Health Alliance and their mission on page 4 of this issue.

"We are honored to have received this PCORI award, which will aid greatly as we take a multifaceted approach to addressing health disparities in our local community. We seek to have an expansive group of providers, patients and other stakeholders on board and in regular communication with each other about ways to creatively and effectively foster greater health equity," said Lori Bilello, PhD, MBA, MHS, a research assistant professor and associate director of the Urban Health Alliance.

The PCORI award spans two years. Bilello is leading the project alongside Ross Jones, MD, MPH, an assistant professor of community health and family medicine and medical director of community health.

Project activities include:

- Conducting listening sessions with patients, community members, providers and other stakeholders to identify key barriers to health equity
- Soliciting solutions to improve health equity
- Developing a patient-centered research collaborative
- Recruiting and training community members to serve as citizen scientists
- Creating a health disparities data center to collect and house data and reports generated by UF Health staff and other community members

To participate in a listening session or for more information about the project, contact Bilello at 904.244.9202 or Lori.Bilello@jax.ufl.edu.

Ross Jones, MD, MPH, medical director of the Total Care Clinic and Urban Health Alliance, with Ann-Marie Knight, vice president of Community Engagement and chief diversity officer at UF Health Jacksonville.



The UF Health Urban Health Alliance works to create access and opportunities for better community health.

UF Health Jacksonville continually works to support the local community and improve the health of its residents. Part of that mission is to better understand and work toward eliminating disparities that stand in the way of achieving health equity.

In 2019, leaders from UF Health Jacksonville and the University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville established the UF Health Urban Health Alliance, or UHA, which seeks to bring organizations and individuals together to help create community-initiated, self-sustainable strategies and solutions.

The committee who manage UHA initiatives include:

- Ross Jones, MD, MPH, medical director of the Total Care Clinic and Urban Health Alliance
- Lori Bilello, PhD, MBA, MHS, associate director of the Urban Health Alliance
- Fern Webb, PhD, director of research of the department of community health and family medicine
- William Livingood, PhD, adjunct associate professor of the office of research affairs
- Ann-Marie Knight, vice president of Community Engagement and chief diversity officer at UF Health Jacksonville

Improving Health Outcomes with Four Pillars

Health equity means ensuring everyone is able to achieve their best health. With this approach, support is tailored to individual needs and accounts for health disparities that may cause certain groups to be more disadvantaged than others.

Achieving health equity involves educating and empowering residents, leveraging the right combination of research-supported resources and programs, and, in some cases, changing dated policies that are rooted in structural racism.

This is why UHA aligns its work with four main pillars: service, education, research and policy. Combining these four areas creates a well-rounded approach to improving health outcomes.

- Through **service**, UHA can identify and implement programs that help address social service needs.
- With **education** and training, UHA can empower residents to proactively improve their own health outcomes.
- By conducting and supporting innovative **research**, UHA can better understand the needs of the community and offer a more tailored approach.
- And with that research, UHA can provide empirical evidence to create and modify **policies** affecting population health.

"Oftentimes, a person may be clouded by life's challenges and barriers and may have difficulty knowing where to turn," Jones said. "Our goal is to not only provide resources, but to also support those needs through encouragement and dignity."

Creating Access and Opportunity

UHA has developed innovative programs to bolster community awareness and, ultimately, foster greater health equity.

Its Food Pharmacy offers UF Health Total Care Clinic – Jacksonville patients, who meet certain requirements, access to foods tailored to their health needs. Additionally, patients will have the opportunity to attend cooking and nutrition classes.

However, other factors in addition to nutrition can affect health, including unstable living conditions, finances and transportation. UHA is launching a Social Services Hub to address these factors.

The hub is a one-stop shop for patients who need support locating housing, finding jobs, earning a GED and much more. The space is designed to host patient/provider interactions through virtual or in-person meetings. The providers are agencies that offer resources specifically aligned with a patient's needs. On-site staff will serve in concierge-type roles to ensure each patient is guided toward their own success.

The Food Pharmacy and Social Services Hub will open June 4 with a special ribbon-cutting event.

"Both initiatives have game-changing potential. We can't simply hand off our patients and hope they make it through the maze of resources and jargon," Knight said. "If we are going to eliminate health disparities, we must be intimately involved in understanding and facilitating success."

Outside of these programs, UHA participates in special events and collaborates with other agencies that align with its mission. One such event helped residents of the Brentwood community understand their resources and responsibilities to ensure continued stable housing. Another event was the fall food drive in late 2020 that invited employees to donate food items that were given to residents in need.

Last year, UHA provided COVID-19 testing for nearly 2,000 underserved residents. For those efforts, the Jacksonville Business Journal recognized UF Health Jacksonville with its inaugural Community Impact Award.

While all of this work is novel, the Total Care Clinic has provided stellar care for a complex population of patients for many years. This long-standing work was recently awarded the Florida Blue Foundation Sapphire Award for health equity.

"We look forward to continuing to support our patients and taking that support to the next level through a focus on social determinants that influence health and health outcomes," Jones said.

As UHA works toward its mission to improve the health of the community, support is always welcome. UHA is looking for ambassadors to spread the news about available programs. "Citizen scientists" will be trained to help develop research questions and further support the various initiatives.

Email UHA@jax.ufl.edu for more information.

The UF Health Urban Health Alliance:

ELIMINATING HEALTH DISPARITIES

WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT **HEART** HEALTH

UF Health cardiologist urges women to stay educated about heart health.

Women's Health Week was observed May 9 – 15, providing a great opportunity to discuss women's heart health.

Cardiovascular disease, or CVD, refers to a number of conditions, including heart attacks, strokes and peripheral arterial disease, remains the leading cause of death in the U.S. and worldwide. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one out of three women die from CVD every year.

Gladys Velarde, MD, medical director of the UF Health Women's Cardiovascular Program, encourages all women to stay on top of their heart health, not just during awareness weeks and months, but year-round.

"Heart disease takes no time off," said Velarde. "COVID-19 has also caused many to delay their regular health care visits, but it's time to get back on track and meet with your provider regularly."

Women can start by understanding the different heart conditions, knowing risk factors and following preventive guidelines.

Understand heart conditions

These are the common heart conditions that can affect women.

- 1. Coronary artery disease, or CAD.** When coronary arteries are blocked, blood flow to the heart muscle is impaired. This can cause chest discomfort or pain. If the heart muscle is deprived of blood supply for an extended period, a heart attack may ensue, which could be fatal.
- 2. Atherosclerosis.** This occurs when bloodflow is blocked, not only to the heart, but also to other organs like the brain or kidneys. This can worsen when risk factors go unchecked and untreated.
- 3. Valvular heart disease.** This occurs when any valve in the heart is damaged or diseased. This can be caused by a condition present since birth, an infection, radiation, degenerative changes associated with aging or conditions linked to other types of heart disease. Ultimately, if untreated, heart failure may ensue.
- 4. Heart failure.** When the heart muscle does not pump blood as well as it should, heart failure may follow. CAD, high blood pressure and valvular problems can lead to heart failure. They can weaken the heart, causing it to stiffen and pump inefficiently.
- 5. Arrhythmias.** An arrhythmia is an irregular heart rhythm. This is caused by changes in heart tissue and electrical signals controlling the heartbeat. Damage from disease, injury or genetics can cause those changes.

Know and discuss your risks

Many women have one or more risk factors for heart disease, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or being a smoker or overweight. Having multiple risk factors can increase your risk for heart disease. Other key risk factors to keep in mind include:

- Pregnancy complications, such as eclampsia, a history of premature births or a history of frequent miscarriages.
- Certain autoimmune conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis or lupus, can increase the risk of heart disease and require extra attention.
- Excessive fat around the waist can cause damage to the heart and blood vessels.
- Smoking and using oral contraceptives increase the risk of heart disease. Postmenopausal and diabetic women who smoke are at a particularly high risk of developing heart disease.
- Family history of CVD, especially in immediate relatives under age 65, increases your risk.

Many risk factors are modifiable or preventable, so it's important to discuss your risks with your doctor and follow their heart-healthy lifestyle recommendations.

"Our group of outstanding female cardiologists and nurse practitioners can develop strategies and treatment methods to help patients maximize the care of their hearts," said Velarde.



UF Health Women's Cardiovascular Program cardiologists and nurse practitioners are dedicated to connecting with patients and cultivating heart care options that specifically fit the needs of women.

For more information or to schedule a consultation with our women's cardiology experts, visit UFHealthJax.org/womens-cardiovascular or call 904.383.1011.

Researchers at the University of Florida College of Medicine in Jacksonville and Gainesville are conducting a clinical trial surrounding women's heart health.

Visit clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT03417388 to learn more and see if you qualify.

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NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

September – June 20

October – July 20

November – Aug. 20

December – Sept. 20

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

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