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ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

As we near the end of 2021 and reflect back, we realize that it was undoubtedly a difficult year for many reasons. While we battled one of the worst COVID-19 surges and grieved the unexpected passing of Dr. Haley, you showed up, and you persevered. You showed up for our patients, our community and one another. Even in the midst of challenging times, our organization achieved great successes. These accomplishments are a testament to your unmatched dedication, hard work and pursuit of excellence to make us the region's most valued health care asset.

UF Health Jacksonville was recognized as a high-performing hospital in nine specialties, procedures and conditions in U.S. News & World Report's Best Hospitals rankings for 2021-22, including being ranked 39th in the country in the ear, nose and throat specialty due to the outstanding work of the UF College of Medicine – Jacksonville department of oral and maxillofacial surgery.

Another major accomplishment for UF Health Jacksonville was being awarded a three-year accreditation from the Commission on Cancer, a quality program of the American College of Surgeons. To earn the accreditation, our cancer program met 34 quality care standards that focus on excellence in the delivery of comprehensive patient-centered care. The Commission on Cancer singled out UF Health Jacksonville for taking a multidisciplinary approach to treating cancer as a complex group of diseases that requires consultation among surgeons, radiation and diagnostic oncologists, pathologists and other cancer specialists — a collaboration that leads to better outcomes for the patient.

Additionally, the organization achieved its third-consecutive Magnet designation this year. The Magnet designation is the nursing profession's most prestigious recognition for nursing excellence, quality patient outcomes and innovations in professional nursing practice. We earned our first Magnet designation in 2011, followed by a redesignation in 2016. The Magnet Recognition Program uses a rigorous process to designate the best health care organizations throughout the world. Only 9% of hospitals in the U.S. are designated as Magnet organizations, and WE are one of them, thanks to the exceptional work of our nursing teams and those who support the great work they do every day.

And lastly, we're part of the academic health center of the University of Florida, which is now ranked as the No. 5 public university in the nation, according to the 2022 U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings.

These recognitions are only a glimpse at what you have accomplished in 2021. It was under Dr. Haley's leadership that all of these awards were achieved, and with your help, we will continue to carry his vision forward to see great success in 2022.

I'm honored to be your CEO. Thank you for your dedication to our enterprise.

Sincerely,



Russell E. Armistead, MBA
CEO, UF Health Jacksonville



The dual-source CT scanner, complete with Stellar Detector, allows faster acquisition of images at minimal radiation dose without compromising image quality.



The 3T Vida MRI scanner accommodates patients who are claustrophobic or have difficulty holding their breath.

New imaging equipment helps enhance the patient experience

New imaging technology at UF Health Jacksonville offers an enhanced patient experience with more accurate and higher-quality imaging. With the addition of the Definition Flash dual-source CT scanner and the 3T Vida MRI scanner patients have access to a full range of high-quality diagnostic imaging services.

The dual-source CT scanner, complete with Stellar Detector, captures faster images, resulting in a lower dose of radiation with improved image quality. With flash speed, whole body scans can be completed in just five seconds. This is especially helpful for patients who have difficulty holding their breath during scans. The lower radiation dose is also much safer for patients, especially cancer patients who may need multiple scans during their treatment, or for pediatric patients, who sometimes need to be sedated for a scan. Thanks to our new equipment, these scans can now be completed without the extra preparation, time and strain on the patient. Other benefits include advanced cardiac and neuro imagery with higher resolution.

The 3T Vida MRI scanner is equipped with BioMatrix sensors, which capture head and respiratory motion. Breathing patterns are automatically detected by respiratory sensors that allow the automatic triggering of scans without further interaction. The new technology simplifies image acquisition and shortens patient preparation. As a result, overall scan time is reduced. This benefits patients who are claustrophobic or have difficulty holding their breath.

In addition to the BioMatrix technology, the Vida MRI scanner has various revolutionary features, including liver lab for fat and iron quantification and free-breathing, high-resolution cardiac MRI with compressed sensing. Similarly, with Definition Flash, cardiac/coronary imaging is taken to new heights with the ability to cover the entire chest in less than a second, at all heart rates and, if necessary, without a breath hold. The new equipment helps improve patient care and provides new opportunities for cardiac, vascular and body imaging research. [Visit **UFHealthJax.org/radiology** to learn more.](https://ufhealthjax.org/radiology)

CARING FOR THE INVISIBLE WOUNDS OF WAR

UF Health Jacksonville program aimed at helping military veterans opens in November 2021.



Thousands of U.S. service members are affected by post-traumatic stress, or PTSD, as a result of their time in combat. Many veterans also sustain traumatic brain injuries, or TBIs. When they return home, they may struggle with health conditions, such as anxiety, depression and substance use disorder.

Mild to moderate TBIs, PTSD, anxiety, depression and substance use disorder are all invisible wounds of war. These conditions contribute to a suicide rate of more than 20 veterans per day, a figure that increases every year. Treating these veterans requires a comprehensive approach to care — one that gives our service members the expertise they deserve.

Thanks to a generous \$12.5 million grant from the Gary Sinise Foundation Avalon Network, the UF Health Jacksonville Leon L. Haley, M.D., Brain Wellness Program opened Nov. 19, and is dedicated to helping veterans and their families.

The Haley Brain Wellness Program also received generous donations from the Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation and VyStar Credit Union to help start this transformative effort in Northeast Florida — a region that is home to one of the largest military populations in the country, including Naval Station Mayport and Naval Air Station Jacksonville. Services are provided at no cost to military veterans.

Interdisciplinary treatment program

The interdisciplinary treatment program was established for military veterans experiencing persistent health issues associated with mild to moderate TBIs, along with associated behavioral health issues, such as PTSD. In addition to serving veterans, UF Health Jacksonville plans to expand efforts for all patients affected by these conditions in the community, including athletes.

The program uses intensive outpatient treatment led by a comprehensive team of psychiatrists, neurologists, neuropsychologists, physical therapists, speech therapists, pharmacists, case managers, integrative therapists and a veteran's coordinator. Services include acupuncture, animal therapy, behavioral health, healing arts, somatic movement therapies and more.

Three-day assessment for applicants

Prospective patients first complete a thorough application before being scheduled for an assessment.

The next step involves an intense three-day assessment in which applicants meet with the providers in a group setting and individually. On the first day of the assessment, the applicant meets with the team to tell their story.

On the second day, the applicant completes individual assessments with each provider. The third day focuses on a virtual group meeting, where the team meets for an hour to discuss their findings and recommendations, and then the applicant joins the meeting and receives a brief summary from the team. Afterward, the applicant attends individual 30-minute virtual sessions with each provider to discuss recommendations.

Retired Col. Michael Sorna, MD, the program's medical director, served in the U.S. Navy and the Army Reserves for more than 30 years.

"What makes this program particularly effective is the collaborative, multidisciplinary approach," Sorna said. "Starting with the three-day assessment, patients meet with all of the providers in one room at the beginning and end of the assessment. This allows patients to tell their story to all their providers at one time and for the providers to ask questions as a group, making the individual assessments more effective. Truly, more eyes on the problem, sharing information in real time, improves the quality of care."

Outpatient treatment model

Patients receive intensive outpatient treatment to integrate conventional medicine with complementary and alternative therapies. The outpatient model customizes treatment for patients to meet their cognitive, emotional, physical and spiritual needs.

The goal of the program is to aid in healing and provide treatment and recovery options for individuals using a holistic approach. It is also important the veterans are set up for success upon completion of the program. Each patient will connect to a network of community resources as part of the long-term treatment plan.

Ron Hasty, veteran outreach coordinator for the Haley Brain Wellness Program, served 22 years in the U.S. Air Force, stationed in England, Germany, Japan and Korea.

"Upon program completion, I assist veterans with finding services they need within the community, such as employment and housing, as well as acting as a liaison between the Department of Veterans Affairs and veterans," Hasty said.

The UF Health Jacksonville Leon L. Haley, M.D., Brain Wellness Program is located on the downtown campus. Visit UFHealthJax.org/brain-wellness or call 904.244.3289 for more information.

UF Health psychologist provides suggestions for those struggling during the winter holidays.

After more than a year and a half living in a pandemic, people are tired and uncertain about the future. Health care workers in particular are experiencing burnout as the pandemic persists. For many, the winter holidays can be a bright light in the darkness, but for others, that may not be the case.

For those experiencing the holiday blues, know that you are not alone. Celebrating the holidays doesn't need to be done in a traditional way, especially if it affects your mental health negatively. There is no "right way" to celebrate, after all.

David Chesire, PhD, psychologist and director of the Center for Healthy Minds and Practice, or CHaMP, answers common questions and makes suggestions for supporting overall wellness this holiday season.

Question: What causes the "winter blues?"

Answer: People can experience increased sadness or have depressing thoughts during the winter months for a variety of reasons. Shorter days and cooler temperatures can make it difficult to spend time outdoors. The holiday season also carries a lot of potential sources of stress, such as making travel plans and spending more on food and gifts. Also, people who have experienced loss over the past year may be especially sensitive during the holidays when a loved one's absence is especially missed.

Q: I'm not feeling the joys of the holiday season. Is it OK to opt out of family or friend gatherings? What can I do to support myself and stay positive?

A: It is always permissible to take time off for yourself, and the holidays are no exception. We all need time to decompress and be alone with our thoughts. However, staying connected with others is especially important to ward off feelings of anxiety and depression. It is important to have a strong social support system. Even though it is acceptable to say "no" to group festivities from time to time, it should not become a habit.

Q: My family has different views than I about the pandemic and vaccinations. How can I talk with them calmly and not let it affect me negatively?

A: It is important to make a point of listening without interruption. If you find yourself being interrupted, it is fair to ask for the opportunity to speak without disruption. If conversations get heated, agree to take space from the discussion and focus on something else. It is rare for anyone to change his or her opinion during a heated exchange. In fact, the reverse is often true: People become even more defensive when emotions run high.

Above all else, remember to breathe. Talk slow, keep your tone even, and remember that just because you disagree with someone does not make that person foolish or wrong. Try to understand the opposing point of view, even if you do not change your way of thinking.

Q: How do I know when I need a break from work, family or friends?

A: Some of us are very good at reading our own internal cues. Maybe that includes tightness or breathlessness, headaches, muscle tension, etc. However, many of us may not be good at realizing our body is trying to tell us to slow down and take a break.

The best way to know when it is time to take a break is when the people in our lives express concern. If someone says you look frustrated, or that you seem to be losing your temper more easily, you should trust they are sensing something could be wrong. This is a good sign that a day or two off is in order. It is important to look out for ourselves, and for one another.

Q: I want to talk to someone outside of my circle, but I don't know where to start and don't have much free time. What should I do?

A: There are many people to turn to for help. Talking with family and friends is a great way to start, but they may not have all the necessary tools to help. Consider the following resources that can help provide direction during challenging times:

- **Employee Assistance Program, or EAP** — Our UF Health EAP provides a wide array of services, including access to free community mental health therapists. Call 1-844-216-8397 or visit guidanceresources.com/groWeb/login/login.xhtml to set up an account.
- **CHaMP** — This is a free, unlimited, confidential service that provides mental health counseling and coaching for UF Health Jacksonville, University of Florida Jacksonville Physicians, Inc. and the University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville. Sessions can be in person or held virtually. Services include individual, couples and group sessions for any employee or department. For questions or to schedule an appointment, call 904-244-8332 or email CHAMP@jax.ufl.edu.
- **Community resources** — Many local and national resources offer mental health and spiritual support as well as other public services. Refer to the city of Jacksonville website for local mental health centers or the National Alliance on Mental Illness for education programs and support groups.



PRIORITIZING MENTAL HEALTH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

REACH OUT AND READ

UF Health physicians promote early literacy with a national nonprofit, Reach Out and Read.



Books are often donated or purchased by providers for the children.



The reading room at UF Health Pediatrics – San Jose.

Reading books can open up a new world for children, allowing them to develop and expand their knowledge, use their imagination and be creative. Parents who read to their children are nurturing relationships and preparing them to be successful in school.

UF Health recognizes the important link between literacy and child development. Three practices are currently participating in book giveaways for their patients. Primary care providers at UF Health Family Medicine and Pediatrics – Elizabeth G. Means Center, UF Health Family Medicine – Lem Turner and UF Health Pediatrics – San Jose integrate books into their well-child visits through the national nonprofit Reach Out and Read.

EARLY READING BENEFITS

According to Reach Out and Read, reading together promotes healthy brain development, furthers language acquisition and helps families build meaningful bonds. Children 6 months to 5 years old receive free, age-appropriate books at each well-child visit. The books are educational, multicultural and available in English or Spanish. Providers model book interaction by showing parents how to hold books so children can follow along and establish reading routines.

Ross Jones, MD, MPH, medical director at the E.G. Means Center, learned about Reach Out and Read during his residency. The location has offered the program since 2016, and Jones and his team have witnessed the impact reading makes in healthy child development. They have given away more than 1,500 books and, through community donations, have also given books to older children.

“The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with both parents and children looking forward to receiving the books,” Jones said.

“We ask questions about the book to see if the child understands colors, letters and numbers. It’s a great resource for helping us determine whether a child is meeting developmental milestones.”

SET UP FOR SUCCESS

Health care providers set up their practices to be literacy friendly by hanging colorful posters and pictures, and may create reading rooms for children to enjoy while waiting to see their provider. Books are paid for through grants, clinic funds and donations, as well as providers purchasing books with their own funds.

A 2014 American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement recommended pediatric providers advise parents of young children that reading aloud and talking about pictures and words in age-appropriate books can strengthen language skills, literacy development and patient-child relationships.

In 2018, Pamela Lindor, MD, medical director, implemented the program at her practice, UF Health Pediatrics – San Jose. She and her team help parents determine what books are developmentally appropriate for their child.

“We’ll give a 6-month-old a thick, sturdy, paperboard book. It’s normal for them to chew on the edges, and we advise parents that this is to be expected,” Lindor said.

For older children, Lindor asks questions before giving them a book to read. Lindor asks each child if they like books. Some say yes, but if there is hesitation, she shares suggestions with parents on how they can use the books most effectively.

Daidre Azueta, MD, MPH, medical director at UF Health Family Medicine – Lem Turner, and her team have offered Reach Out and Read for a year and have given away 300 books.

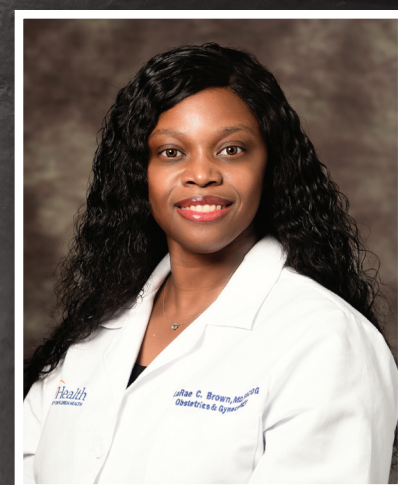
“A lot of patients have not been exposed to books at home. It’s an important way to incorporate literacy promotion into well-child care,” Azueta said.

Learn more at ReachOutAndRead.org and visit UFJaxPrimaryCare.org to make an appointment at a UF Health family medicine and pediatric practice near you.



What expectant mothers can expect at UF Health North

UF Health North women's services and fetal diagnostic center serve women with low-risk pregnancies.



When it comes to having a baby, selecting a provider and delivery location is an important choice for families. UF Health Women's Specialists – North provides excellent care for expectant mothers from the start of pregnancy to delivery. The beautiful facility, located in the UF Health North hospital, has private, spacious suites on the labor and delivery floor designed to maximize comfort. A team of providers — who are more like a family — offer expert care and knowledge during the birth experience.

LaRae C. Brown, MD, is the medical director at UF Health Women's Specialist – North and specializes in obstetrics and gynecology. According to Brown, the process for expectant mothers begins at the UF Health Women's Specialists Fetal Diagnostic Center – North.

Since UF Health North is equipped to accommodate low-risk pregnancies, patients are initially screened to ensure there are no high-risk factors associated with the pregnancy. Patients

are then connected with the nursing team to schedule their first ultrasound at the center. During this appointment, an ultrasonographer ensures the baby is healthy and growing with a strong heartbeat and determines a due date.

The center also supports women later in pregnancy with fetal testing. Often performed in the third trimester, the fetal testing includes an ultrasound, known as a biophysical profile, and a non-stress test that monitors patient heart rate and contraction pattern — both of which are used to determine fetal well-being. Depending on the patient, these tests may be performed weekly or twice weekly.

The majority of patients who need fetal testing have hypertensive diseases of pregnancy, including chronic hypertension, gestational hypertension and gestational diabetes, and patients carrying past their due date. Although these comorbidities appear to be high-risk, Brown says they actually fall under the low-risk category for UF Health North.

"Well-controlled high blood pressure, hypertension or other diseases of pregnancy are all manageable, and most of those babies are born healthy at full term," Brown said.

When a patient is determined to be high-risk, she will be referred to a high-risk care facility, such as UF Health Jacksonville. High-risk pregnancies may include, but are not limited to, the following issues:

- The baby has an anomaly, such as a heart defect or another structural problem that might require pediatric surgery after delivery.
- The patient is at risk for a preterm delivery (35 weeks or less) and needs a NICU.
- Patients diagnosed with HIV or other serious diseases, pregestational diabetes or epilepsy.
- The patient has a history of a kidney, liver or other type of transplant.
- The patient has a BMI of 45 or higher before pregnancy.

The UF Health North experience

Once a patient is determined to be low-risk and completes her initial ultrasound, she meets with her provider, nurse practitioner or midwife. During this appointment, providers perform a physical exam and lab testing, review health history and provide guidance on what to expect in the coming months. Patients can be seen at either UF Health Women's Specialists – North or at UF Health Women's Specialists – Wildlight for their regular appointments moving forward. They also have the opportunity to meet the labor and delivery provider team.

"We introduce patients to each member of the team so they feel comfortable in the event they have another provider during labor," Brown said.

Supporting mothers' unique needs

Staff want to make expectant mothers feel as comfortable as possible during labor and delivery. Patients are checked in to a labor and delivery, postpartum recovery suite, where they remain throughout labor, delivery and recovery.

Patients also have access to holistic pain management, such as hydrotherapy tubs, and epidurals are available if requested. Wireless monitoring allows patients the freedom to move around during labor or sit on the birthing ball or in the hydrotherapy tub.

"One of the great things about UF Health North being a low-risk facility is that it allows us to focus on the patient experience," Brown said.

The nurses and midwives support and encourage natural, spontaneous birth if that's what the patient prefers, but are fully trained and prepared in the event that intervention is needed. Their philosophy is to support the patient in any way she wishes to be supported.

"Our services offer a holistic approach to care with the safeguard of having a board-certified OB-GYN on-site," Brown said.

Visit [North.UFHealthJax.org/babies](https://www.UFHealthJax.org/babies) to learn more about UF Health Women's Specialists – North and the Labor and Delivery Unit at UF Health North.

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NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

March 2022 – Dec. 15

April 2022 – Jan. 15

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

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