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UF Health experts treat a patient diagnosed with a rare neurological condition.

HIGHLIGHTING RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Your hard work and dedication have led to several recent accomplishments that further showcase how we are overcoming challenges and focusing on being the region's most valued health care asset.

Notably, the first cohort of three veterans graduated from the UF Health Jacksonville Leon L. Haley, MD, Brain Wellness Program in December 2021, and a second class of four veterans graduated in February 2022. The program currently focuses on interdisciplinary treatment for veterans, but there are plans to expand efforts for other adults suffering from traumatic brain injuries or post-traumatic stress, including athletes and first responders. I know Dr. Haley would be very proud of how well the program is doing today.

We also had a successful visit from The Joint Commission. The survey team visited UF Health Jacksonville and our hospital-based clinics and completed the triennial accreditation survey. The survey metrics ensure hospitals are meeting strict safety standards for patients, staff and visitors, as set by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. We were surveyed for 284 standards, 1,544 elements of performance and 3,598 CMS conditions of participation. We received a 97% compliance score, which is one of the highest compliance percentiles the surveyors have seen since before the pandemic.

Additionally, we received a \$34,000 grant from the Florida Department of Health to support the UF Health Jacksonville Adult Cancer Survivorship Program. The program aims to expand survivorship services, provide training and increase awareness of the importance of survivorship services in maintaining and improving the quality of life for cancer patients.

These are a few of the many accomplishments we've seen recently, and I look forward to what else we will achieve together. Thank you for all of your efforts and the work you do every day — it truly makes a difference.

Sincerely,



Russell E. Armistead, MBA
CEO, UF Health Jacksonville



New Policy: Employee Discrimination by Patients and Visitors

UF Health Jacksonville prohibits discrimination and harassment of employees based on race, color, creed, religion, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, national origin, age, disability, political opinions or affiliations, genetic information and veteran status.

Patient, family or visitor requests, actions, comments or behaviors that conflict with UF Health Jacksonville values will not be tolerated and may result in termination of care.

Visit the Bridge to review the new policy (A-01-077).

UFHealth
JACKSONVILLE

The Tree of Life

Join us for the **Tree of Life Ceremony** honoring organ, tissue and cornea donors during National Donate Life Month.

Tuesday, March 29 at 2 p.m.
LRC Auditorium



22 PATIENTS BECAME ORGAN DONORS AT UF HEALTH JACKSONVILLE LAST YEAR

THOSE DONORS' GIFTS
SAVED AN INCREDIBLE

66
PEOPLE'S LIVES

25 TISSUE DONORS IMPACTED THE LIVES OF **3,750** PEOPLE

38 EYE DONORS GAVE SIGHT TO **76** PEOPLE

NEVER LOSING HEART

A patient with peripheral artery disease seeks care for a decade before finding a solution at UF Health.

Patients should consider seeking a second opinion if they want clarification on a diagnosis or recommendation for treatment options. Jane Seaman experienced this firsthand. After years of no improvement, Seaman went looking for better options. It took several visits to doctors and a few opinions before she finally found the right diagnosis and solution.

"I couldn't walk more than five minutes without terrible pain in my legs. I was losing hope, but I kept researching," Seaman said.

A winding road

More than a decade ago, Seaman suffered a heart attack. At that time, the general public was only beginning to understand that men and women experience different symptoms when it comes to cardiac events. For men, the symptoms are more dramatic and harder to ignore — nausea; shortness of breath; tightness in the jaw, neck and back; and sudden, extreme pain in the chest. For women, the symptoms can be much subtler.

Seaman first experienced heartburn. Within a week, she had mild throbbing in her arm, followed by a feeling of weight on her chest that made breathing difficult. Physicians at a local Ormond Beach hospital concluded there was nothing to be concerned about and sent Seaman home. When symptoms reappeared, findings showed a blockage due to plaque buildup in her arteries and Seaman received a stent to improve blood flow. Subsequent monitoring by cardiologists led to a second stent, but Seaman's instincts told her she needed additional care. She was later diagnosed with peripheral artery disease, or PAD. PAD is a condition that affects blood circulation in places outside of the heart, such as in the arms, legs or kidneys.

By 2017, Seaman's condition was still deteriorating. She saw a vascular surgeon, and ultrasounds revealed blockages in her legs. She was told she needed bypass surgery and may need dialysis because the blockages were affecting her kidneys.

"I felt defeated," Seaman said. "When I got home, I started to research options out of my local area."

Never giving up

Seaman sought treatment in Jacksonville, where she was monitored by another hospital for almost a year. As the pain in her legs worsened, she pursued another opinion. Seaman met



Jane Seaman was relentless in searching for the right solution to her pain.



Daniel Soffer, MD, is an endovascular cardiologist at UF Health Jacksonville who specializes in peripheral artery disease.

with Daniel Soffer, MD, an endovascular cardiologist at UF Health Jacksonville who specializes in PAD. Soffer and his team are experts in PAD and focus on individualized treatment plans while looking for minimally invasive procedures whenever possible.

"Most people assume that blockages in the veins and arteries are located around the chest," Soffer said. "The truth is, the lower half of our body requires just as much blood flow, so blockages in those arteries are just as dangerous."

Soffer explained to Seaman how the blocked arteries in her lower abdomen were restricting blood flow to her gluteal area and legs. Her symptoms were not as noticeable when she was still, but the simple act of walking requires blood to circulate through the body at a greater rate. The blockages restricted that flow, causing pain in her legs that increased the longer she walked.

"In Ms. Seaman's case, a bypass was not necessary," Soffer said. "Although it may be needed for some patients, a large number only need a minimally invasive approach, accompanied by lifestyle and medication changes."

Finding a solution

With a better understanding of her diagnosis and confidence in her new provider, Seaman scheduled her procedure immediately. A total of five stents were placed in her legs, and the entire surgery took 45 minutes to complete in an outpatient setting.

Since the procedure, Seaman has made the changes needed to focus on living life to the fullest. She has adopted a healthier lifestyle and is now able to walk several miles a day. Although her journey has been long and filled with obstacles and setbacks, she is grateful to be in a good place with the support of her cardiovascular team.

"I feel so much better," Seaman said. "Not only am I on the road to recovery, but I finally feel like I'm with the right doctor who fully understands my condition. It took a long time, but I'm so glad I listened to my gut and didn't give up."



Mary Lou Preski with her husband, Don.

WALKING WITH CONFIDENCE

UF Health experts treat a patient diagnosed with a rare neurological condition.

Mary Lou Preski was diagnosed with a rare condition called normal pressure hydrocephalus, or NPH, the year she turned 76. NPH is a condition in which there is an excessive volume of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain, dilating the ventricular system, which then causes pressure on some of the vital nerve pathways. She faced a future of continued limited mobility, loss of muscle control and a progressive decline in memory.

With early diagnosis and treatment, patients with NPH may improve significantly. A team of physical therapists, neuroradiologists, neurologists and neurosurgeons work together to slow the disease progression and restore as much body control and mobility as possible.

Preski underwent shunt surgery in May 2021 at UF Health Jacksonville to help treat her NPH. A catheter diverted the spinal fluid in her brain down to the abdomen. Diverting extra fluid from her brain allowed her to regain an active lifestyle after suffering severe symptoms for several years.

"If you had known me before the surgery, you wouldn't believe I'm the same person. My friends can't believe it," Preski said.

Diagnosis and treatment

For 15 years, Preski's local primary care provider in Tampa treated her for chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy, or CIDP, a disorder that involves nerve inflammation and can lead to a loss of muscle control. As Preski's symptoms worsened, including difficulty walking and bladder leakage, she sought a second opinion.

Preski's husband, Don, found Alan Berger, MD, a neurologist at UF Health Jacksonville who specializes in neuromuscular conditions. After the initial consult and start of treatment, Berger believed Preski's difficulty walking was not consistent with CIDP, and instead pointed toward Parkinson's disease. Berger had Preski meet with fellow UF Health Jacksonville neurologist Natalya Shneyder, MD, a movement disorder specialist.

Shneyder began treating Preski in April 2020 with a medication in trial for Parkinson's disease. The medication helped for several months, but not as much as expected. Shneyder ordered a DaTscan, a test used to confirm the diagnosis of Parkinson's disease in unclear cases. The scan returned normal, meaning there was a low possibility of Parkinson's disease. Shneyder then turned to the possibility of NPH, a rare condition that can mimic other disorders, such as Parkinson's disease.

Shneyder says people who move slower and have difficulty getting up may sometimes accept it as a sign of aging. Once the condition worsens, patients usually end up needing a walker or wheelchair.

"Normal pressure hydrocephalus is usually a condition of older adults, age 65 and older," Shneyder said. "I would encourage people who are having progressive problems with their mobility to get an evaluation from a neurologist. A timely evaluation is essential, as there is a point in this condition where surgery cannot improve prognosis."

Successful shunt surgery

Preski underwent a spinal tap, where a small sample of cerebrospinal fluid is removed and the patient is assessed by physical therapy to see if symptoms improve temporarily. Preski responded well to the spinal tap and was deemed a good candidate for shunt surgery.

Shneyder referred Preski to Dunbar Alcindor, MD, a neurosurgeon with UF Health Jacksonville, who specializes in functional and stereotactic neurosurgery.

"In Mrs. Preski's case, the fluid within the ventricles was compressing different parts of the brain that were helping to control her bladder function and ability to walk," Alcindor said. "By diverting that fluid with a shunt, it relieved pressure on those areas and improved symptoms."

Katherine Singh, APRN, a nurse practitioner with UF Health Jacksonville, performed the initial evaluation and imaging for Preski. About six weeks after the surgery, Singh conducted a virtual visit with Preski.

"She was so thankful that she could walk again," Singh said. "What matters most to me is seeing a patient have such an improvement in quality of life, even at 76 years old. I saw her in person in December, and she's back to doing her normal activities."

Life after surgery

Preski worked with physical therapists after surgery until she was walking normally and no longer considered a fall risk.

"It's like a miracle. I'm walking normal. The shaking in my hands has stopped a lot, and I can control my bladder all day," Preski said. "I was so impressed with the care from the hospital and staff. I'll never go anywhere else."

Visit UFHealthJax.org/neurology for more information and to schedule a visit with a neurologist at UF Health Jacksonville.

**From L – R:**

Dunbar Alcindor, MD, is a neurosurgeon with UF Health Jacksonville who specializes in functional and stereotactic neurosurgery; Natalya Shneyder, MD, is a movement disorder specialist.

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NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

July – April 15
August – May 15
September – June 15
October – July 15

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

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