

OL

OPEN LINES



ABSOLUTE ALTITUDE

03

Improving the Patient Experience

Patient and Family Partnership Council for Quality and Safety is looking for new members.

04

COVER STORY

Harvey Doliner's journey to fly again.

06

Quality Programs for Patients

Helping disabled patients gain knowledge and skills for independence.

ENDING THE YEAR STRONG

When I reflect on 2023, I see many benchmarks of success. We continue to advance our mission by providing compassionate, high-quality care across the organization. I'm inspired by the commitment that our associates demonstrate every day, and our faculty and colleagues at the UF College of Medicine – Jacksonville have continued to share their expertise by educating the next generation of health care professionals.

Witnessing these accomplishments unfold has filled my heart with gratitude and pride. Your dedication and your commitment to quality and patient safety continue to be a hallmark of the care you provide. Our success is now also being noticed outside the organization. Congratulations for achieving the top grades from the Leapfrog Fall Safety report. In November, UF Health Jacksonville's downtown campus earned its first-ever A grade — an incredible milestone. UF Health North also achieved an impressive increase in its overall numerical score.

There is no doubt that achievements like this require an absolute team approach to everything we do.

I know this to be true because I have had the privilege of meeting so many of you during more than 100 listening sessions. I heard your thoughts, ideas and feedback. You told me about our successes and challenges. I also learned more about the incredible work you do on a daily basis and gained insight on ways we can better support you.

Over the next few months, I hope to share some of the major take-aways from our listening sessions. And because timely communication with you is important to me, we will be using our new digital newsletter, which will replace Open Lines. With the new digital format, you will have the opportunity to submit your valuable input and ideas through a link in the newsletter. We will of course continue to communicate through updates on the Bridge, and in regular emails and announcements.

As a successful 2023 ends, I look forward to a better 2024 as we prepare to have an even greater impact on the communities we are called to serve. Thank you for representing UF Health Jacksonville with excellence. I'm grateful that you bring your talent and gifts to UF Health as we strive to be the most trusted health partners in the region.

Sincerely,

Patrick

Patrick L. Green, FACHE
CEO, UF Health Jacksonville



Improving the Patient Experience

by Sarah Le

Patient and Family Partnership Council for Quality and Safety

Are you passionate about improving the patient experience and making a difference at UF Health Jacksonville? Are you a good communicator who enjoys being part of a team? If so, the Patient and Family Partnership Council for Quality and Safety is currently looking for additional employee and patient/family members.

Council members play an important role at UF Health Jacksonville. They not only provide valuable insight to various hospital committees that solicit their input, but also participate in projects to improve quality, safety and the patient experience. As of November 2023, six employees and seven patient/family members volunteer their time on the council.

A recent project demonstrated the contribution these volunteers make to the organization. To better understand the patient experience, the council used monthly scores from the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers

and Systems, or HCAHPS, which is a national, publicly reported survey of how patients perceive hospital care. The scores indicated that nurse communication is a key driver of the patient experience, as these frontline workers interact most with our patients.

With that information, in 2023, the council focused on improving nurse communication by implementing quarterly awards to recognize units that met or exceeded the hospital's goal for HCAHPS scores in communication.

In addition, members helped a nursing unit to improve communication by attending their staff huddles and speaking about the patient experience surveys and how nurses impact the scores. They also recorded a video that included information about nurse communication and patient stories that demonstrated how nurses made a difference in the patient experience.



Members of the council at a recent holiday dinner.

Apply to Join the Council

Patients and their family members may learn more and apply at UFHJax.org/PartnershipCouncil. Employees can find information and apply on the Bridge under the Collaboration tab. Once applications have been reviewed, candidates will complete an interview process before being selected. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month, 5:30-7 p.m.

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



By Kristian Thomas

Harvey Doliner's journey to fly again

Harvey and Amy Doliner believe they have witnessed a real-life miracle. They can find no other words that better describe the way UF Health Jacksonville gave Harvey his life back after a terrifying, life-threatening accident.

The story began on a typical November day for Harvey. The retired businessman from New Jersey and small planes pilot started the morning by enjoying Florida's blue skies while flying his jet — with his wife of more than 40 years at his side. Flying has been Harvey's passion since 1995 when he began piloting small planes.

After landing at Fernandina Beach Municipal Airport, Harvey noticed the aircraft tug, a small device used to pull the plane back into the hangar, was not working correctly, causing his plane to block the taxiway at the airport. Harvey says another aircraft was waiting to pass, and after walking over to speak to that pilot, he walked away toward the front of that plane — right into the propeller.

"I walked through the edge of the plane's propeller, which was spinning at a couple thousand RPMs," Harvey said. "Propellers on airplanes are invisible from the back. I walked through it, and it opened up my arm from the top of my shoulder all the way down."

The damage from the propeller happened in an instant. Harvey immediately called out to his wife.

Never losing consciousness, Harvey told Amy to call 911. When the emergency response teams arrived, it was clear to them that Harvey needed to be airlifted to a trauma hospital immediately. Fortunately, the UF Health TraumaOne North medevac helicopter in Nassau County was minutes away, and the helicopter arrived on the scene shortly after.

EXEMPLARY TRAUMA CARE

The flight to UF Health Jacksonville took 12 minutes, and the trauma team sprang into action with multiple specialists working together to evaluate and stabilize Harvey.

"Every step of the way was so well choreographed," Harvey said. "Most of the professionals I encountered were with me for only a few minutes, but they did their part and moved on."

Adam Gitlin, MD, a University of Florida assistant professor and board-certified orthopaedic surgeon at UF Health Jacksonville, was called in to address Harvey's significant orthopaedic injuries.

Marc Kaye, MD, a University of Florida assistant professor of orthopaedic surgery and a board-certified orthopaedic and hand surgeon, treated Harvey's hand injuries.

"I hadn't seen an injury like that in quite a while," Gitlin said. "When Harvey came in, he had multiple fractures to his arm, soft tissue and tendon injuries, along with multiple lacerations. There was concern about the ultimate viability of his arm."

Sliced open by the propeller, Harvey's arm and hand were nearly severed from his body.

"He was at great risk of losing his arm below the elbow. At some other centers they may have amputated initially," Kaye said. "We felt that in our hands we would be able to save and reconstruct the limb to give him a functional arm and hand."

It was one of the most catastrophic injuries surgeons at UF Health had ever dealt with. After evaluating him, Gitlin knew he had to act fast.

"Once we knew he was able to move his fingers, and had sensation and blood flow to his hand, we knew how important it was for us to get to work immediately; not only so Harvey could keep his hand, but also so he could get as much function back as possible."

To do that, the trauma team had to operate on Harvey immediately.

When Amy arrived at UF Health Jacksonville, Harvey was already in the operating room undergoing what would ultimately be close to an eight-hour surgery. Despite her obvious concern, she was hopeful that the length of the surgery meant amputation was not necessary and Harvey would keep his arm.

"On my way to meet Harvey, friends assured me that he was in the best hands with UF Health Jacksonville's Level I Trauma Center," Amy said. "They raved that UF Health is the best, and we experienced that firsthand."

Harvey underwent three operations during the next eight days, and thanks to the team of expert surgeons, he was able to keep his arm and hand. Once he was released, physicians made it clear that the road ahead would require "not months but years" of intense and prolonged therapy.

RECOVERY THROUGH REHAB

Harvey's rehab journey started at UF Health Rehabilitation — Wildlight, in Yulee. Three times a week, he worked with an occupational therapist who specifically focused on his hand. Later, a physical therapist began working on his shoulder and upper arm. Additional therapists were consulted when needed.

The Doliners, who split their time between New Jersey and Fernandina Beach, Florida, have been so impressed with the care they received at UF Health that they willingly travel to Jacksonville to receive therapy. In addition to working with a therapist, Harvey has been given exercises he is able to do at home. Amy said she was particularly excited to get the news that Harvey could wash dishes again.

Gitlin described Harvey's progress as tremendous and said he always looks forward to his patient's follow-up appointments. "Every time I see Harvey, I'm nearly speechless with how well he's doing and how great his function is," Gitlin said.

COCKPIT VIEW

Harvey still has a long road ahead in his recovery but appreciates morning walks with Amy and quality time with his family and friends, two of the many things he believes make life enjoyable. However, he still has his sights set on returning to the cockpit.

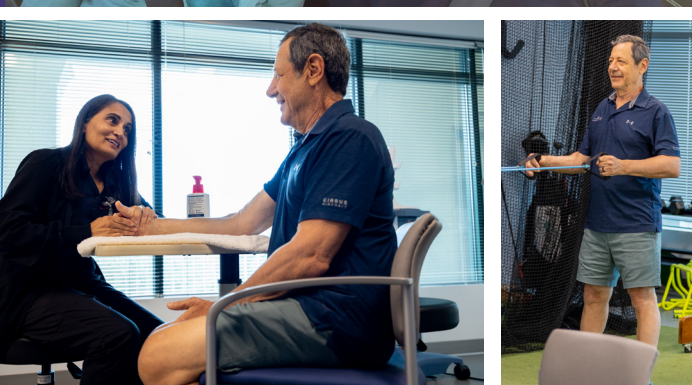
"Dr. Gitlin said right away he would get me back to flying, and I think that will happen," Harvey said. Each day, he continues to work toward that goal. After seeing Harvey's positive attitude and work ethic, Gitlin remains confident that Harvey will put in the effort needed.

GRATITUDE

The Doliners have a deep appreciation for everyone who cared for Harvey. They remember a specific interaction with Gitlin. "We asked, 'How can we possibly thank you?'" Amy said. "He looked at me and said, 'This is what we do.'"

"They really care. It's so unbelievable — the dedication and the care," Harvey said.

Harvey is being honored at the 17th annual A Night for Heroes Gala on Feb. 3, 2024, which raises critical support for UF Health TraumaOne, our region's only adult and pediatric Level I trauma center, and the critical care units at UF Health Jacksonville. Sponsorships and donations have helped raise more than \$2.2 million to provide lifesaving care to patients at UF Health Jacksonville. Learn more and purchase tickets to attend the gala at UFHealthJax.org/heroes.



Harvey attends therapy sessions at UF Health Emerson in Jacksonville.



Project SEARCH students pictured with instructor, Tonya Hickey. The unique nine-month internship helps young adults with disabilities prepare for the workforce.

Quality programs for patients with disabilities

by Alex Linton

To help teens and young adults with disabilities transition to adult care, UF Health Jacksonville offers three programs: Jacksonville Health and Transition Services, or JaxHATS; the Program for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, or PAIDD; and Project SEARCH. These programs help patients gain the knowledge and skills they need to gain independence and self-sufficiency.

JAXHATS

JaxHATS is a practice that accepts young adults with disabilities, ages 13 – 23. The transition from pediatric to adult health care can be challenging, and JaxHATS helps individuals navigate that adjustment.

The program educates them on medication management, health insurance, vocational rehabilitation opportunities and more. The goal is to equip participants for the next phase of their health care experience with the full support of the clinic and their family members, and to ensure that participants receive fair and adequate health care services.

“We try to serve the whole person and their needs,” said Chanda Jones, senior case coordinator for JaxHATS. “The program looks at all aspects of medical, social and academic needs to assist in a successful transition. Participants are taught how to advocate for themselves by communicating their needs and learning what works best for them.”

For more information on the JaxHATS program, contact Chanda Jones at Chanda.Jones@jax.ufl.edu.

PAIDD

PAIDD provides ongoing primary medical care for adults 19 and up with disabilities in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties. Many adults in the program are referrals from JaxHATS.

Patients are provided with monthly clinic visits, where they receive a team-based approach to health care. PAIDD can also assist with any medical equipment, medication or special supply needs.

Melinda Morrison, RN, BSN, is a nurse care coordinator who assists patients with follow-ups once they have been seen for their clinic visit. This can include anything from helping with a referral, checking on medication refills and coordinating the next steps for labs.

Patients in the program are not only able to see primary care

doctors but also specialists as needed within the UF Health Jacksonville network, which accepts Medicaid.

Morrison said the doctors and staff work to provide the best care possible, something she believes offers caregivers peace of mind, knowing their loved one is being given quality care. “We always try to be welcoming because they deserve the same care as everyone else,” Morrison said.

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is a unique nine-month internship that helps young adults with disabilities prepare for the workforce. Through total immersion in the workplace facilities of UF Health Jacksonville, students explore careers, receive classroom instruction and develop job skills through hands-on training in worksite rotations.

The goal of Project SEARCH is to maximize employment outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Interns participate in three internship rotations to explore a variety of career paths. During the program, they work with skill trainers and employment specialists provided by Progressive Abilities Support Services.

Tanya Hickey, Project SEARCH instructor at UF Health Jacksonville, enjoys working with the students each year and seeing their growth throughout the time spent together. “We see an increase in their confidence, and it translates to home and everyday life as well,” she said.

Once the program is over, instructors believe that interns leave with a new level of assurance in their skills that will help prepare them for future success in pursuing a job or other leadership opportunities.

For more information on Project SEARCH, contact Tanya Hickey at hickeyt@duvalschools.org.

Psychiatry’s Medication Lock Bag Program

by Wesley Taff



A unique offering designed for families and caregivers to help reduce youth overdose deaths.

A suicide attempt can be secretly planned or done impulsively, with thoughts appearing suddenly and quickly evolving into action. In either case, prevention is nearly impossible. Instead, experts have found that a more reliable strategy to prevent deaths is to eliminate access to the means for a suicide.

UF Health Jacksonville’s Lock Bag Program does just that by supplying durable canvas bags equipped with a lock and key for parents and caregivers to secure medications and monitor use. The need for the program is great, as suicide is the second leading cause of death in people ages 10-24. In addition, the rates of youth suicide attempts in Duval County are double the national average, according to Duval County Public Schools’ 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Overdosing on medications in the home is the most common method of attempted suicide.

The Lock Bag Program began in 2023 with the support of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Overdose Data to Action grant, and through the Duval County Department of Health and the Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida. Program participation and the branded bag are offered at no cost to parents and caregivers.

Before receiving the lock bag, recipients register and participate in training. The program provides a key piece to suicide prevention and gives health care providers the opportunity to educate families about the risks of medications in the home and the reality of youth suicide.

Program mission and leadership

Community health workers started distributing medication lock bags at community events in Duval County under the leadership of Ann-Marie Knight, MHA, FACHE, UF Health Jacksonville’s vice president of community engagement. Three departments collaborate in the program: pediatrics, child and adolescent psychiatry, and pediatric emergency. Clinical Research Coordinator Brandi Wells, MPH, CCRC, is a key facilitator for the team effort.

Program results

Combining community outreach with clinical education allowed the UF Health Jacksonville Lock Bag Program to distribute more than 2,200 bags to date. About 85% of the now-participating families were not locking up medications at home before signing up and receiving the bags, and 43% of families indicated they were in possession of opiate-level medications at home.

Approximately 84% of caregivers remarked they would feel safer if medications at home were stored locked. One week after receiving their lock bag, 75% of registered homes were storing medications locked.

The program was warmly received by caregivers who were grateful to have an easy way to store medications securely at home and even while they were traveling for vacation. Some program participants shared experiences with a family member’s suicide attempt by overdosing, expressing they wished they had received a lock bag sooner.

Visit UFHealthJax.org/lockbag for more information.

Fighting blindness with research and exceptional ophthalmology care

by Kristian Thomas

No patient wants to hear “There is no treatment available.” When a patient hears “no treatment available,” it can be devastating. To provide options for care, doctors at UF Health Jacksonville and the University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville are searching for solutions that can turn a negative diagnosis into a positive result.

Sandeep Grover, MD, a professor and associate chair of the department of ophthalmology, is one of those physicians. An ophthalmologist and retina specialist, Grover has a focus on inherited (genetic) retinal diseases, or IRDs. He has dedicated more than 30 years of his career to providing excellent clinical care and discovering groundbreaking research for IRD patients, to create a positive outcome for those struggling with visual impairment and blindness.

“These are exciting times for me and my patients,” said Grover, with an enthusiastic smile. “There used to be no treatments for these conditions, but in the past few years, we have witnessed the emergence of several treatment trials, including one FDA-approved therapy.”

In 2005, when Grover joined UF Health Jacksonville, he started a specialty clinic in the department of ophthalmology dedicated to IRD patients. Fast-forward to 2023, and the clinic is now open one full day each week, giving patients access to new trials and clinical research. Patients travel from all over Florida, Georgia and adjoining states to receive treatment from Grover and his team.

Research that makes a difference

Grover’s highly specialized clinical research program is one of the select few in the country conducting trials for patients with IRDs. “When I first came to Jacksonville, I envisioned this center would one day offer treatment trials for retinal diseases,” Grover said. “Over the years, our center has participated in, and continues to conduct, numerous treatment trials in patients with diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration and IRDs.”

Currently, there are five ongoing National Institutes of Health and industry-sponsored clinical trials in the department of ophthalmology for these conditions, with five more slated to start in the next few months for retinitis pigmentosa, Stargardt disease, Leber congenital amaurosis, diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration. Some trials are in the field of gene therapy.

“We are committed to try to prevent our patients from



Sandeep Grover, MD, has dedicated more than 30 years of his career to providing clinical care and discovering groundbreaking research for IRD patients.



going blind and help slow the progression of deteriorating eye diseases,” said Grover, emphasizing the mission of his research. “These trials enable us to gain crucial clinical insights toward achieving that goal.”

Helping the community

Since 1993, Grover has been actively involved with the Foundation Fighting Blindness, an international nonprofit organization that funds research for IRDs. His collaboration with the foundation played a pivotal role in the establishment of the IRD clinic. He was also named the recipient of the Career Development Award in 2005.

Grover explained that IRDs like Stargardt disease, Leber congenital amaurosis and others are conditions that no one has heard of until someone close to them gets diagnosed. He has at times had to deliver the “heart-wrenching” diagnosis of blindness in infants and explain to other patients the progressive nature of these diseases that largely have no known treatment.

For this reason, Grover helped initiate a local chapter with some patients and their family members to serve as a platform to provide social support to patients newly diagnosed with these conditions. He volunteers as the education chair for that chapter.

The IRD clinic is also part of a Foundation Fighting Blindness Consortium, consisting of centers around the world dedicated to accelerating the development of treatments for IRDs.

Increasing awareness

Grover and his dedicated team have coined the slogan “No IRD family left behind.” A large part of the work they do is to raise awareness among individuals diagnosed with these conditions as well as among ophthalmologists and optometrists in the community. He also explained that genetic testing has taken a prominent role in care. “With the mushrooming of clinical treatment trials in the area of gene therapy for untreatable IRDs, it has become very important for these individuals to undergo genetic testing — and we offer that in collaboration with the Foundation Fighting Blindness,” he said.

Grover’s hope is that the treatments offered in Jacksonville will not only benefit patients but also establish the UF College of Medicine – Jacksonville as a hub for cutting-edge research and compassionate patient care in the field of ophthalmology.

“Our exceptional clinical and research teams want to get out the message to the community that patients don’t have to travel to different parts of the state or country for treatment,” Grover said. “They can receive world-class care right here in Jacksonville. We are working on expanding our patient database to prepare them for ongoing and forthcoming clinical trials.”

Visit ophthalmology.med.jax.ufl.edu to learn more.



Award-Winning Patient Care

by Alex Linton

In survey responses, patients gave top marks to the Cardiac Rehabilitation program and the Inpatient Psychiatric Unit at UF Health Jacksonville. As a result, these departments have received the 2022 Human Experience Guardian of Excellence Award® from Press Ganey, a patient experience survey vendor.

As winners of the award, the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program, based on its outpatient rehabilitation survey, and the Inpatient Psychiatric Unit performed in the top 5% of health care providers around the country for patient experience in the last year.

This recognition is part of Press Ganey's annual ranking of top hospitals and health systems in the country according to their performance in patient experience. Patients provide feedback through surveys administered and compiled by Press Ganey, and these results are compared to the national

Press Ganey database. The results are analyzed and ranked as indicators of patient experience success.

Performance on these survey questions is an important measure of success and a key driver for optimal patient experience outcomes. The survey questions help provide insight into the patient care experience, and can be an indication of excellent patient experience and care delivery. Having patient feedback is valuable in developing the desired skills and behaviors in employees to ensure patients are provided with a positive experience at UF Health Jacksonville.

"This positive feedback helps us know we are exceeding patients' expectations and providing the best possible experience for our patients," said Melodie Logue, patient experience improvement specialist.



Yazan Radaideh, MD, MS, is an interventional neurologist with specialties in endovascular neurosurgery, neurocritical care and neurology.

Providing Comprehensive Neuroendovascular Care

by Kristian Thomas

With the addition of faculty and the start of new research, opportunities to move medicine forward and provide high-quality patient care continue to expand at the University of Florida Department of Neurology – Jacksonville and the University of Florida Department of Neurosurgery – Jacksonville.

Assistant professor Yazan Radaideh, MD, MS, is the most recent faculty addition. He is an interventional neurologist with specialties in endovascular neurosurgery, neurocritical care and neurology.

"As interventional neurologists, we use minimally invasive precision techniques to access to blood vessels in the brain and the spinal cord," he said. "Our state-of-the-art technologies allows us to provide necessary and lifesaving treatments."

Radaideh completed a Neurocritical Care Fellowship and Endovascular Neurosurgery Fellowship at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. While at Rush University, he also received a master's of science in clinical research. He earned his medical degree from the University of Jordan and completed residency training at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York.

Although Radaideh comes from a family of physicians, specifically cardiologists, he initially did not see health care as his career path. When he did decide to enter medicine, he was drawn to neurology and the neurosciences.

As part of the team in Jacksonville, he is focused on building the neuroendovascular services to provide solutions for patients with complex neurological and neurosurgical conditions. Common advantages to these services would be more effective and timely therapies with shorter recovery times.

"I am thrilled to be part of the amazing neurosciences department here at the UF College of Medicine – Jacksonville," Radaideh said. "This is an established academic program that values its faculty and fosters a collaborative environment. I am glad to meet a need with the services that we provide."

Ramon Bautista, MD, MBA, a professor and chair of the department of neurology, is confident Radaideh's skillset will not only strengthen the program but also will be a valuable resource for the patient population in Jacksonville and surrounding areas.

"We are excited to have Dr. Radaideh join UF Health Jacksonville as head of neuroendovascular services," Bautista said. "He will bring a level of expertise to our organization that will help us achieve our goal of becoming the premier provider of neurovascular care in Northeast Florida."

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