

Page 4: LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Get to know more about four of our UF Health leaders who continue to see patients

Page 12: EDUCATION LEADS TO LIFE-CHANGING DECISIONS

April is National Donate Life Month

Page 16: ALL IN THE FAMILY

How football helped save his life



LEADING by EXAMPLE

David R. Nelson, M.D., and other physician leaders stay connected to patients and health care staff



Q&A: CELEBRATING DOCTORS' DAY

Pair of leaders share insights about physicians

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FSC LOGO

National Doctors' Day is March 30 and UF Health Shands is proud of the many physicians rounding the halls of our hospital system. UF Health Shands CEO Ed Jimenez asked us to turn to a pair of our leaders who are able to provide a unique understanding into the importance of our doctors and the contributions they provide.

Jimenez singled out **Michele Lossius, M.D., FAAP**, UF Health Shands chief quality officer; and **Irene Alexaitis, D.N.P., R.N., NEA-BC**, UF Health Shands chief nursing officer and Nursing and Patient Services vice president, for this issue's Q&A.

What do you enjoy most about the medical staff at UF Health Shands?

ML: Over the years, I have felt very confident and comfortable in the clinical acumen and the knowledge of my colleagues. As a physician, you really want to trust the colleagues with whom you are consulting and handing off care. I really see them as resources of information. For me, I want to work with colleagues who are approachable and wanting to share their expertise. I've really appreciated that here.

IA: We work as a team to ensure our patients and their families have the best care possible. We know our partnership will result in excellent care!

What's beneficial about being a doctor with a leadership role?

ML: As the quality officer, I am able to identify where there are opportunities for solutions because I am encountering said issue. I think working clinically helps you be acutely impacted by whatever might

need to be fixed. For most doctors, we need patient interaction because it is why we went into medicine; it brings joy and happiness at work.

What do you value most about physicians?

IA: The physicians are focused on providing excellent care, like I am. I value their ideas and contributions to operations and clinical care.

Did you ever think you would have a role as a quality officer in a hospital?

ML: No. During the first half of my career, I did pediatric advocacy, which has a lot of the same skill set needed for quality and safety. I think it was a natural fit for my personality. I also really like connecting with people and part of my job is doing just that. I don't necessarily need to try and fix every problem, just bring people together who can.

If you weren't a doctor, what would you be doing now?

ML: I would either be a track coach or a florist. I worked in a floral shop and as a track coach in between undergrad and medical school. I helped coach girls' distance runners at Buchholz High School here in Gainesville. I love flowers and designing — it is one of my creative outlets.

Why did you pursue a career in the medical profession?

ML: I always knew I wanted to go into pediatrics. I loved the NICU. Being with families during those really critical times when a child is in the hospital is incredibly humbling and special.



Irene Alexaitis, D.N.P., R.N., NEA-BC, UF Health Shands chief nursing officer and Nursing and Patient Services vice president with UF Health Shands CEO Ed Jimenez



(right) Michele Lossius, M.D., FAAP, UF Health Shands chief quality officer

IA: I went into nursing to contribute, not just to help individuals, but to care for people as a whole. This profession struck me as one where you could make a difference.

Why is it important to celebrate Doctors' Day?

ML: I think it's important to celebrate everybody. At the end of the day, even if you love what you're doing, it's still nice to feel valued and appreciated — to have a day where people say, "We see you. We're thankful for you." That's motivating and encouraging.

IA: We need to take the time to recognize the things our doctors do on a daily basis. Their dedication to our patients, the hospital and their profession make UF Health a great place to work. It's important to say, "Thank you" for all the doctors do!

What would you tell young medical students are the most important characteristics for a doctor to have?

ML: Listen. Listen to the patient. Listen to the nurses, the RTs, the social workers ... the team. Listen.

IA: A sense of humor, humility, patience, compassion and respect for others. +

HAVE A QUESTION FOR CEO ED JIMENEZ?

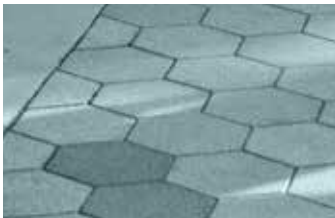
Email Michelle Moore, director of strategic communications for UF Health Communications, at moormm@shands.ufl.edu, and she'll share your question for a future column.




UF HEALTH | AWARDS+KUDOS

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Get to know a little more about some of our physician leaders.



 ur physicians at UF Health are transforming the lives of our patients and influencing the health care industry with their expertise and insights. From performing research to providing inpatient care and conducting surgeries, our physicians impact the lives of patients and their families locally and across the world.

We have a unique setting in that a number of our leaders continue to see patients after they have been appointed to a new role within the hospital. Those working double-duty, if you will, begin at the top with **David R. Nelson, M.D.**, UF senior vice president for health affairs and UF Health president, who still runs clinics, sees patients and is an acclaimed physician-researcher.



DAVID R. NELSON, M.D.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS AT UF AND PRESIDENT OF UF HEALTH



Q: What is your area of expertise and why did you select this area of medicine?

A: Hepatology is the study and treatment of people with liver disease, and I enjoy the blend of science, research and patient care/procedures.

Q: If you weren't a physician in your current area of expertise, which other area of medicine would you have selected to specialize in and why?

A: Neurology, because I like the diagnostic challenges and ability to link a treatment plan.

Q: If you weren't a doctor, what other profession would you have pursued?

A: Soccer. My original dream was to play for the U.S. Men's National Team in the Olympics.

Q: What do you enjoy most about being a physician?

A: Every day provides a new opportunity to make an impact. It's the best job in the world!

Q: Did you always want to be a doctor?

A: No. It was a late decision in college after I had a sports injury.

Q: What's the best advice you've ever been given and by whom?

A: My dad. He said, "Stay true to yourself and be humble."

Q: What's the most common question you receive from your patients?

A: How can I keep my liver healthy, especially regarding safe amounts of alcohol?

Did you know ...

I went to medical school at: The State University of New York, or SUNY, Upstate Medical University in Syracuse

The most interesting medical school course I remember taking: Anatomy cadaver dissection

What I enjoy most about working at UF Health: The people are like family and the talent here is truly amazing!

When I need to relax: I golf or bike.

People would be surprised to know that: I am an identical twin.

National Doctors' Day is March 30

On Doctors' Day, we celebrate our UF Health College of Medicine physicians who provide exemplary quality care and attentive, compassionate service to the patients who come to our hospitals and outpatient programs.

Q **MARVIN A. DEWAR, M.D., J.D.**
A UF HEALTH PHYSICIANS CEO AND CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER AND UF COLLEGE OF MEDICINE SENIOR ASSOCIATE DEAN

Q: What is your area of expertise and why did you select this area of medicine?

A: My background has been primarily in primary care — family medicine and emergency medicine. I was the first one in my family to embark on a medical career, and I enjoyed almost all of the clinical areas I was exposed to. I think I would have been happy if I had been assigned to any of a number of medical specialties.

Q: If you weren't a physician in your current area of expertise, which other area of medicine would you have selected to specialize in and why?

A: If I had not gone the primary care route, I probably would have become a general surgeon for some of the same reasons I entered primary care. Surgeons deal with a broad range of medical conditions that go beyond any one area.

Q: What do you enjoy most about being a physician?

A: I feel privileged to be able to engage in such a respected and scientifically changing field that requires us to constantly problem-solve to serve others in a way that is so personally important to them. I can't think of a more honorable thing to do.

Q: Did you always want to be a doctor?

A: The idea of becoming a physician settled in early in my college years as a way to combine a love for science and problem-solving with service to others. I am also trained in law and a member of the Florida Bar Association. If I wasn't practicing as a physician, I would be practicing as a lawyer, likely in the appellate arena.

Q: What's the best advice you've ever been given and by whom?

From my father, who said, "Always be true to your True North," and my mother, who said, "Don't ever go to bed at night mad."

Q: What's the most common question you receive from your patients?

A: They say it in different ways, but I very commonly hear patients express the need to know that their health care team is completely dedicated to their best interests.



Did you know ...

I went to medical school at: The University of South Florida and law school at UF

The most interesting medical school course I remember taking: Physiology and pathophysiology. One was about how our body systems were supposed to work and the other was about how things can go awry. Everything else seemed to flow from that!

What I enjoy most about working at UF Health: Honorable mission, great people and a wide variety of opportunities. What more could you want?

When I need to relax: I read, exercise and do errands/projects.

People would be surprised to know that: I grew up on a family farm and still propagate plants for fun.



Each year, UF Health attracts patients from all **67** Florida counties and **50** U.S. states, plus several other countries.

Q **C. PARKER GIBBS JR., M.D.**

A UF HEALTH SHANDS CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER, UF COLLEGE OF MEDICINE ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY DIVISION CHIEF AND SENIOR ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR CLINICAL AFFAIRS IN THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Q: What is your area of expertise and why did you select this area of medicine?

A: I am an orthopaedic oncologist and orthopaedic surgeon who treats benign and malignant tumors of the extremities and pelvis.

I chose this specialty because of amazing mentors, and it allows me to make a real difference in people's lives both in the short and long term. I get to know not only the patients but also their families, and I have the good fortune of following them for years.

Q: If you weren't a physician in your current area of expertise, which other area of medicine would you have selected to specialize in and why?

A: Immunology is fascinating in its complexity and its potential applications.

Q: If you weren't a doctor, what other profession would you have pursued?

A: I think I'd have been a lawyer or a marine biologist.

Q: What do you enjoy most about being a physician?

A: Too many things to count! But in the end, I come home tired every day knowing I made a difference to someone.

Q: What's the best advice you've ever been given and by whom?

A: Paraphrased from George Bernard Shaw via my dad — "Be used for a purpose, be a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

Q: What's the most common question you receive from your patients?

A: Why and how did my cancer start?

Q: When you perform surgery, what is your preferred OR music?

A: Classic rock and reggae



Did you know ...

I went to medical school at: UF

The most interesting medical school course I remember taking: It wasn't a course, but the most interesting lecture I ever heard was on forensic pathology. Fascinating.

What I enjoy most about working at UF Health is: The "place" really cares. It is a big, complex, unwieldy academic medical center — and yet every day I see wonderful examples of caring by our staff, our nurses and our docs.

When I need to relax: I get outside, as nature lets me recharge.

People would be surprised to know that: I'm dumb enough to try to learn to surf in my 50s.



On Oct. 30, 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed a resolution that became a law designating **March 30** as National Doctors' Day. The date chosen was the anniversary of the first use of general anesthesia in surgery.

Q **JOSEPH A. TYNDALL, M.D., M.P.H.**

A UF COLLEGE OF MEDICINE INTERIM DEAN AND PROFESSOR
& CHAIR OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Q: What is your area of expertise and why did you select this area of medicine?

A: My clinical discipline is in emergency medicine. I became interested in the specialty from my first experiences in the hospital as a nursing assistant in an emergency department in Washington, D.C. Back then, I worked in the department where some of the founding fathers of emergency medicine built an academic practice. I was drawn to their clinical expertise in handling almost any emergent situation. It was clear that they were content experts in acute care management of any illness or injury and that their expertise in the golden hour of care was critical in ensuring patient survival to the next level of care.

I was also drawn to the social context of their practice — the physicians had a phenomenal ability to communicate with anyone from any walk of life. Every day, they devoted themselves to making each patient comfortable, speaking their language, gaining their trust and providing outstanding expert and compassionate care. Most of all, I was drawn to a commitment to be a safety net for the health care system and to be able to provide care 24/7/365 — any time, any place and anywhere.

Q: If you weren't a physician in your current area of expertise, which other area of medicine would you have selected to specialize in and why?

A: I was drawn to trauma surgery and critical care and even considered pursuing it after my original training.

Q: If you weren't a doctor, what other profession would you have pursued?

A: Art/Music. I trained as a musician as part of my education in college and I was in love with the idea of composing for film.

Q: What do you enjoy most about being a physician?

A: Without a doubt, being a physician is about being able to impact lives. It is not only an opportunity to care for others but an opportunity to become a better physician and, in the end, become a better human being.

Q: What's the best advice you've ever been given and by whom?

A: The late Dr. Elizabeth Tso, a professor emeritus of emergency medicine at the University of Maryland, was my most significant mentor in medicine. Her last words of advice to me before she passed were, "Follow your heart."



Did you know ...

I went to medical school at: The University of Maryland School of Medicine

The most interesting medical school course I remember taking was: Neurobiology

What I enjoy most about working at UF Health: Working at UF Health is truly like working as part of an extended family. It is always about people — it was what first attracted me to UF and why I choose to stay.

When I need to relax: I ride a bicycle or play the piano.

People would be surprised to know that: I still make time for an occasional piano lesson.

UF HEALTH | CARE+QUALITY

SAVING LIVES IN THE AIR

UF Health ShandsCair team performs the program's first in-flight prehospital blood transfusion

BY DEVIN NORI



(L to R) ShandsCair 1 team: Todd Brooks, B.S.N., R.N., EMT-P, chief flight nurse; Staccie Allen, D.N.P., APRN, EMT-P, CFRN, C.C.P., flight nurse; Jesse Blaire, EMT-P, C.C.P., flight paramedic; and Don Irving, pilot.

After over a year of preparation, the UF Health ShandsCair team performed its first in-flight prehospital blood transfusion in December.

UF Health's **Don Irving**, ShandsCair pilot, guided the flight, in which **Staccie Allen**, D.N.P., APRN, EMT-P, CFRN, C.C.P., ShandsCair flight nurse, and **Jesse Blaire**, EMT-P, C.C.P., flight paramedic, were able to give a patient one unit of blood to help stabilize their blood pressure and heart rate before landing.

"You see the benefits of providing blood quickly in tons of military literature, and much of what we do is derived from that," Allen said. "We realized how important access to blood is before getting to the hospital, and research shows how much of a difference it makes. It makes an incredible impact on patient outcome."

In early 2018, ShandsCair chief flight nurse **Todd Brooks**, B.S.N., R.N., EMT-P, began advocating for carrying blood in-flight. This

"It was a strong step forward for UF Health to allow and support the initiative to carry blood in-flight."

— TODD BROOKS, B.S.N., R.N., EMT-P

practice had been discussed within the program before, but it required the involvement of and assistance from multiple teams within UF Health before implementation. This included obtaining a grant for a blood refrigerator through the UF Health Shands Hospital Auxiliary and establishing new protocols with the UF Health Shands Clinical Laboratories and Operations.

Every nurse, paramedic, clinical educator, medical director, program director and manager of both ShandsCair and the Blood Bank was integral in this process. They established measures to ensure clinicians follow protocol and a quality assurance program, and assess how safely, effectively and efficiently things run.

Finally, everything fell into place.

"It was a strong step forward for UF Health to allow and support the initiative to carry blood in-flight," Brooks said.

UF Health is at the forefront of the movement locally as the practice becomes more common on medical helicopters around the country. ShandsCair's new service will benefit many types of patients, including those with low blood pressure and a high heart rate and/or suspicion of internal or external bleeding. Carrying blood gives the team a chance to provide a new level of care and buy patients more time before arriving at the hospital.

The ShandsCair 1 team now boards every flight with blood, plasma and medication to slow bleeding. The materials are stowed in a compact cooler kept in the blood refrigerator to monitor their temperatures and are easy to grab on the go.

Brooks added, "We want to have all five ShandsCair helicopters carrying blood and we hope to treat medical patients in addition to trauma patients." ■

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BRIDGE SITE DEBUTS FOR NEW LEGAL SERVICES DIVISION

Visit the newly integrated UF Health Legal Services division's Bridge intranet site, located at Bridge.UFHealth.org/legal-services and easily found in the "Employee Services" tab.

The information hub houses resources provided by our legal affairs teams across the academic health center, serving faculty and staff in multiple locations, including our hospitals and campuses in Gainesville, Jacksonville and Central Florida.

"We've aligned several established, expert teams who remain dedicated to serving our UF Health faculty and staff clients across the state," said **Randall C. Jenkins, Esq.**, UF Health senior vice president and general counsel. "Our staff will continue to provide the knowledgeable attention and service that you've always had. Our role is to advise and protect you with information rooted in Florida law. Now that we're aligned, we operate more seamlessly to provide you with responsive and efficient support."

The Bridge site is a tool accessible to all UF Health faculty and staff aimed to help you find the right contacts and understand the scope of legal services offered.



"Whether you need help with contracts, insurance questions or legal compliance support, or you're resolving a clinical risk issue – or if you just want to check in with us for advice – we are here for you as always."

RANDALL C. JENKINS, ESQ.,
UF HEALTH SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL COUNSEL

Call them toll-free at 1-844-UFH-1-LAW (1-844-834-1529).

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UF HEALTH | GROWTH+EXPANSION

UF HEALTH OPENS NEW CENTER FOR PATIENTS WITH AUTISM AND NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

UF Health opened on Feb. 21 its new Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment, a multidisciplinary, collaborative facility that will offer specialized care and resources to children and adults with neurodevelopmental disorders and their families.

"In and around the Gainesville community, parents have had barriers to obtaining diagnoses, assessments and appropriate treatments for their children," said **Carol Mathews, M.D.**, interim director of the new center. "This new center will break down those barriers. We will help increase access to appropriate diagnostic services and care."

Known as UF Health CAN, the 15,000-square-foot center located at 4101 NW 89th Blvd. in Gainesville, near the UF Health Springhill medical complex, will feature two full-time patient navigators who will help families coordinate multiple aspects of care on- and off-site with expert clinicians, including physicians, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, physical therapists and psychologists. The facility boasts a gym with a rock-climbing wall and state-of-the-art equipment for occupational, speech and physical therapy; rooms for clinical/behavioral intervention research; clinical space for telemedicine; and new offices for outreach, advocacy and support services.

Generous support from UF Health Shands, donors and UF's "moonshot" initiative – a bold endeavor announced in fall 2018 to tackle some of society's most urgent challenges – provided the resources to renovate the former location of the UF Health Shands Rehab Hospital.

UF HEALTH SHANDS | CARE & QUALITY

THERE'S ALWAYS A SOLUTION

The Operational Effectiveness team can quantify anything

BY KATHY CAFAZZO



(L to R) David Lucius, Cristina Galloway, LaKesha Fountain and Paige Dudziak

When it comes to quality medical care — consistent service, aiming for an ideal patient experience, measurable results and meeting exacting demands — there's a lot on the line in health care. If a complex problem needs to be broken down, processes analyzed, workflow investigated and results assessed, who do you call? The UF Health Shands Operational Effectiveness department.

Formerly known as Management Engineering, the team has always had a focus on industrial engineering, a profession that uses science, math and engineering approaches to improve and integrate complex processes, systems and organizations.

Meet the team

LaKesha Fountain, Operational Effectiveness Director, works with **Cristina Galloway** and **David Lucius**, process engineering consultants, as well as industrial engineering students from the UF Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering.

Galloway and the interns are industrial engineers, while Fountain and Lucius have backgrounds in business operations and project management. Fountain also served in the U.S. Army as a logistics platoon leader and company commander, among other titles.

Their approach to hardwiring positive change

"We have changed our mission since I've been here," explained Fountain, who recently celebrated her third anniversary at UF Health Shands. "We changed the department name and we

changed the focus. We used to give a lot of recommendations, but we couldn't always get people to implement them. Now, we sit right there and watch you implement."

How they work

"We go into different departments based off a multitude of things. It could be a focus on patient satisfaction scores or it could be about a new piece of equipment and the staff needs a process to help with implementation. We look at our customer's processes and find ways to help them work more efficiently and more effectively," Fountain said.

The team will sit with members of a department, shadow them and watch them do their work every day so they can understand their daily duties.

"We offer a variety of services. But in the end, it's all about helping people and departments become more effective operationally," Fountain said.

The Learning Leader Lab

In December, the team partnered with UF Health Shands Human Resources Development to offer a Learning Leader Lab class for representatives from many UF Health Shands and UF Health core departments. They addressed a holistic leadership approach and touched on cognitive and emotional elements of leading, as well as the operational and data-driven elements.

"A lot of what we do has to do with metrics, but it's also about process. Are you spinning your wheels and getting nowhere?" Fountain explained. "Do you have clear handoffs with the teams you work with? Some teams don't work well with others and we can help with that. Sometimes, managers don't think there is a solution to a problem and think they just have to deal with it. But we can help."

Fountain says that every problem can be measured and every measurement can be analyzed — which means there is a solution somewhere.

For assistance, find them on the Bridge intranet under Bridge.UFHealth.org/shands-operational-effectiveness and pull up the Services tab to request a project. 



UF HEALTH SHANDS HOSPITAL | CARE+QUALITY

EDUCATION LEADS TO LIFE-CHANGING DECISIONS

One organ donor can save eight lives

BY KATHY CAFAZZO

Death is a fact of life. Not every patient who enters a hospital will leave it.

“If we can give a family one silver lining when they have to leave the hospital without their loved one, it’s so worth it,” shared **Scott Mullen**, hospital services coordinator for LifeQuest Organ Recovery Services.

In 2019, 90 lives were given at UF Health Shands because of organ donation. Giving 90 people a second chance at life has not always been the case, even as recently as in 2018, when just 55 organs were donated. So Mullen set out to collaborate with key stakeholders to improve donor program processes, and, as a result, help the families of donors.

“The donor’s family comes first and foremost in everything,” Mullen said. “They are our focus.”

LifeQuest is an organ procurement organization, or OPO, which is a nonprofit responsible for the evaluation and procurement of deceased donor organs for organ transplantation. The agency also seeks to educate and increase awareness of and participating in the organ donation process.

“We didn’t have as many physicians as engaged in the process as we should have,” Mullen said. “Nurses are stellar — they are the primary driver when it comes to the OPO process.”

Through the ICU Improvement Committee, a physician-focused OPO task force was formed, chaired by **Sean Kiley, M.D.**, a

UF College of Medicine associate professor of anesthesiology and division chief of Critical Care Medicine, and **Charles Crescioni, B.S.N., R.N.**, senior quality improvement specialist with the UF Health Sebastian Ferrero Office of Clinical Quality and Patient Safety.

The first task force meeting was held at the end of February 2019, when some initiatives were defined, issues were identified and action plans devised. Mullen also shared metrics with the group about the hospital’s donation potential.

In 2018, UF Health Shands had 22 organ donors, and 55 organs were recovered. Families declined organ donation for their loved ones 22 times, and there were 18 missed referrals — patients who met the criteria for the OPO referral but were not referred. There were 35 extubation issues — or withdrawals of care — where patients were extubated prematurely without LifeQuest having had an opportunity to evaluate the patient for the possibility of donation or rule them out. The average organ donor will provide three organs for transplantation, which amounts to 105 potential lives that could have been saved.

“Once our data was presented that way, it really hit home,” Mullen said. “It has led to an unbelievable awareness for the donor program and process in this hospital.”

“We focused primarily on educating residents and physicians about the donation process and the important role they play. Earlier recognition of potential donors will lead to earlier engagement by the OPO process,” Mullen explained.

**OPO TASK FORCE
SUCCESSSES**

<i>Category</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>Yearly Change</i>
<i>Number of Donors</i>	22	34	55% increase
<i>Organs Recovered</i>	55	100	82% increase
<i>Family Declines</i>	22	11	50% decrease
<i>Missed Referrals</i>	18	10	45% decrease
<i>Extubations¹ Prior to Referral</i>	10	4	60% decrease
<i>Extubations¹ While Following</i>	7	0	100% decrease

¹Extubation is when a doctor takes out a tube that helps a patient breathe.

“One of the more important comments from residents and physicians was that they didn’t see us enough, so we piloted an improvement model called PDSA — Plan, Do, Study, Act,” Mullen shared. “We then did daily rounds in our three busiest units: Neuro Intensive Care Unit 47, Medical Intensive Care Unit 82 and 4 West Surgical Trauma Vascular Orthopaedic Intensive Care Unit.”

Having a daily presence was when things really started to click.

“After rounding, we would ask if there were any patients who met the clinical trigger for referrals and have the nurses refer them so we weren’t missing anyone,” Mullen said.

The number of missed referrals dropped from 18 in 2018 to 10 in 2019, a 45% decrease.


“Another issue that was identified was the delay in the process. When a physician receives an order that a patient is deceased, they would think, ‘Why rush?’” Mullen said.

“With education, we made them aware that every hour we delay is another hour that we’re putting a family through grief in not giving them closure,” Mullen explained. “That whole dynamic has changed. We used to have issues getting

an OR scheduled. **Kelly Aitken, CSSM, CNOR**, director of perioperative services for the UF Health Shands Cancer Hospital, took this by the horns, and it’s no longer an issue.”

If a donor after circulatory death, or DCD, is extubated and expires within an hour, lungs, kidneys, the heart and liver still can be recovered.

In 2018, there were 22 family declines — when a family declines consent for donation. In 2019, that number dropped to 11.

The task force was hugely successful, and its work has led to a seismic improvement in giving life to some while allowing others to take something positive from the experience. 

UF HEALTH | CARE+QUALITY

THE BEST, LAST GIFT YOU CAN GIVE

LifeQuest Organ Recovery Services, the UF Health-based organ procurement organization, serves all hospitals across a 36-county region of northern Florida, from Duval County in the east, to Escambia County in the west, and as far south as Marion County.

LifeQuest set a record in 2019 for its number of organ donors. Last year, there were 185 donors who provided lifesaving gifts to others in need. The highest number of donors in a given year prior to 2019 was in 2018, when 163 LifeQuest donors provided the gift of life.

In 2019, LifeQuest also recovered 540 organs that were used for transplants in 466 patients. Of those, 97 organs were recovered and transplanted for 84 patients at UF Health Shands.

"These are not just numbers to us," said **Danielle Balbis**, LifeQuest executive director. "Each donor is a precious individual who left a legacy of caring and compassion for others. His or her family may never know whose lives were saved by their loved one's generosity."

One organ donor can save the lives of up to eight people. One tissue donor can enhance the lives of more than 50 people.

The easiest way to document your decision is to register on Florida's donor registry at DonateLifeFlorida.org to become a lifesaving organ and tissue donor.



UF HEALTH SHANDS HOSPITAL | CARE+QUALITY

ORGAN DONATION: HONOR WALKS



In the story about the organ procurement task force that appears on page 14 of this magazine, **Scott Mullen**, the hospital services coordinator for LifeQuest Organ Recovery Services, shared, "If we can give a family one positive feeling to take away from a hospital when they have to leave without their loved one, it's so worth it."

He also said, "The family of the deceased comes first and foremost in everything we do."

One of the ways our deceased organ donors are celebrated is with an Honor Walk.

When a patient is being wheeled to the OR for organ recovery, the hospital staff line the hallway and pay tribute to them and their family.

"We also have Honor Walks for military veterans where we drape their hospital bed with an American flag," Mullen said.

The nurse who began this was **Cindy Halfacre, B.S.N., R.N.**, UF Health Shands Cancer Hospital Surgical/Trauma ICU/IMC 4 West, who received a 2019 DAISY Award for her work on behalf of patients and families.

There was a young veteran involved in a fatal all-terrain vehicle accident. He was an established organ donor and his mother asked if the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs could be informed. Halfacre took it from there.

In a very short time, Halfacre had hospital staff and 14 uniformed military members lining the hallway. They performed a ceremonial flag folding and gave it to the veteran's family as part of the Honor Walk. UF Health Shands now partners with the UF Reserve Officer Training Corps, or ROTC, which has members present at every Honor Walk for a veteran.

In appreciation, **Danielle Balbis**, LifeQuest executive director, reached out to the Southeast commander of the ROTC program. He was so impressed, every university-based ROTC with an affiliated university hospital is now instructed to partner the same way for Honor Walks.

Mullen added, "The commander said this is a great lesson for these college students to learn – that brotherhood, that sisterhood, the camaraderie, it's forever."

WHY organ donation?

113,000+

men, women and children awaiting transplants in the United States.

5,500

people awaiting transplants in Florida.

1

name added to the transplant waiting list every 10 minutes.

22

people die each day waiting for a transplant.

8

lives saved by just one organ donor.

50

people helped by just one tissue donor.



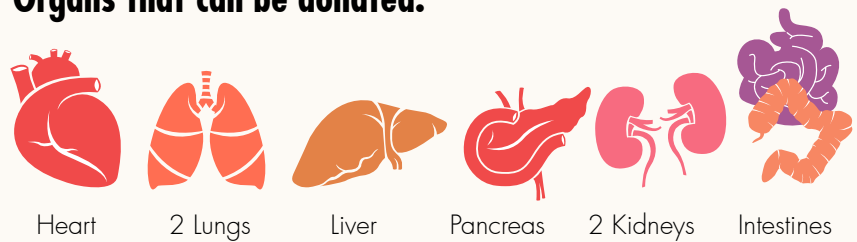
How can someone become a donor?

- Register online at donatelife.florida.org or when getting driver's license.
- Suffer a terminal traumatic brain injury, which requires mechanical ventilation.
- Meet medical criteria and be referred from the hospital to the Organ Procurement Organization.
- If not a registered donor, legal next of kin can authorize organ donation.

Tissues that can be donated:

- Corneas
- Bone/tendon
- Veins
- Heart valves
- Skin

Organs that can be donated:



UF HEALTH SHANDS | CARE+QUALITY

ALL IN THE FAMILY

How football helped save his life

BY KATHY CAFAZZO



Football brings a smile to **Matt Miller's** face — not just because he's a fan, but because it, in a sense, saved his life. He considers himself strong as steel.

The 56-year-old was born in Pittsburgh and like most NFL fans from that area is an ardent supporter of the Pittsburgh Steelers. On display in his office at UF Health Shands, he proudly displays his yellow "Terrible Towel" — the famous rally towel waved by Steelers' fans everywhere they travel.

Miller and his family moved from the Steel City to Gainesville when he was 10 years old. Thirty-five years ago, when he was just 20, he got his first job at UF Health Shands as a transport courier, delivering items to nursing staff. After a handful of other positions, he settled in as an Epic analyst with UF Health IT Services. His wife, **Lydia Torres-Miller**, is a transplant assistant with the UF Health Heart Transplant Program.

In early 2017, Miller was coaching a youth Pop Warner league football team when he slipped and fell, which resulted in a nasty bruise along the left side of his body. The bruise lingered

for a several months with dark, purple marks. He said he knew something "wasn't right."

"When I had my annual physical in May 2017, I asked Dr. McTiernan (**Michael J. McTiernan, M.D.**, medical director for UF Health Family Medicine at Haile Plantation) if he would do a CBC, something I knew about from working at the hospital," Miller explained.

The results showed Miller had a blood platelet count of 45,000. The normal range is 150,000-400,000.

Miller was referred immediately to **Anita Rajasekhar, M.D.**, a UF College of Medicine hematologist. She thought Miller's issue was liver-related and referred him to **Roniel Cabrera, M.D., M.S.**, a UF College of Medicine gastroenterologist. Cabrera ran more tests and ordered a CT scan, which showed Miller had an enlarged spleen and cirrhotic liver. The next step was an MRI.

"It was a bunch of waiting," he said, "and I was antsy not knowing what they would find."

On Oct. 30, his worst fear was confirmed.

"Dr. Cabrera told me I had hepatocellular carcinoma or liver cancer. There is no cure. The only effective treatment is a liver transplant," Miller recalled.

He met with transplant coordinators for a slew of testing, and in February 2018, he was officially added to the United Network for Organ Sharing liver transplant waiting list.

Miller underwent two procedures in which tiny radioactive beads are used to block the blood supply to the tumor, delivering targeted radiation to the cancerous tissue. The procedures were successful, but his type of liver cancer returns, with a five-year survival rate of 11% without a transplant. Miller remained on the waiting list.

Finally, in mid-November 2018, Miller received a call about an available liver. He checked into the hospital that night, but in the early morning, the transplant team shared the news that the liver wasn't viable for him.

"I was anxious and very scared," Miller shared. "I wondered how this was going to change my life. Then when you're told that you won't be having the surgery, it's a relief and a worry at the same time. I was so close."

In December, he got another call about an available organ, which ended up not being a match.



His waiting experience was fraught with challenges. In early January 2019, Miller started throwing up blood and was taken by ambulance to the UF Health Shands E.R. The liver cancer had caused increased internal blood pressure and large veins in his esophagus had burst. He received a lifesaving blood transfusion.

Once healed, Miller was added back to the transplant wait list.

A few weeks later, on Feb. 22, Miller was with his family moving his oldest daughter, Lexie, to Jacksonville when his phone rang with the good news of another available liver. The Millers said a quick goodbye, dashed home to Gainesville and checked into UF Health Shands Cancer Hospital that night. The next morning, his medical team confirmed the transplant and he was prepped for surgery.


“I remember that moment because it was very scary,” Miller shared. “You knew that this was going to be life or death. I was scared, but knew I had great doctors.”

Miller said his surgery was like an 80-yard touchdown drive in the Super Bowl.

“Post-transplant, the nursing staff was fantastic,” Miller said. “The doctors were fantastic, the ancillary staff, housekeeping — everybody was great and worked as a team. I was in the ICU for a few days and then 6East, and those folks were terrific. Physical therapy was great and their staff were always around. Every department I went to — interventional radiology, hepatology, hematology, endocrinology — it’s just amazing how nice and professional all of the people are who work here at Shands.”

Miller continued, “I’m happy I work at a place where people care about their patients.”

Miller still has some pain from scar tissue, but his face lights up with a mention of his Terrible Towel, as well as when he recalls all of the people who helped him through his transplant journey.

“They are my family now.” 



(L to R) Matt Miller's family: Matt, daughter Lexie, son Eli, Eli's wife Ashlynn, daughter Xylie and wife Lydia

Speaking of family...

You could say Matt Miller belongs to the “First Family” of UF Health. Many of his beloved relatives include:

- His wife, **Lydia Miller**, is with the UF Health Heart Transplant Program.
- His mother, **Betsy Miller**, worked many years with Shands HealthCare Marketing and Public Relations.
- His brother, **Brendan Miller**, is with UF Health IT Services.
- His sister, **Christine Cassisi**, led the Patient Experience team with the UF Health Sebastian Ferrero Office of Clinical Quality and Patient Safety. Her father-in-law is **Nicholas Cassisi, D.D.S., M.D.**, UF College of Medicine chair emeritus of head and neck oncologic surgery in the Department of Otolaryngology.
- His sister-in-law, **Nancy Dohn**, was with UF Health Science Center News and Communications.

Miller's biggest lessons and advice

1. Donate blood. “The person you save might just be sitting at the next desk.”
2. Consider becoming an organ donor. “You won’t need the organs when you are gone — you can save another person’s life.”

UF HEALTH | AWARDS+KUDOS

HARLE NEW CHIEF RESEARCH INFORMATION OFFICER FOR UF HEALTH



On Feb. 3, **Christopher A. Harle, Ph.D.**, was named chief research information officer for UF Health. In this role, Harle will provide leadership around operations and governance of information technology that support research activities across the UF Health campus, including UF Health Shands Hospital, UF Health Jacksonville and associated practices. He will play a leadership role

in strategy and operations around the UF Health Integrated Data Repository, part of the UF Clinical and Translational Science Institute, and in innovative uses of Epic to support clinical and translational research and the learning health system.

The health-focused chief research information officer role is new to UF and is emerging nationally as a way for academic health

centers to address the challenges and opportunities clinical researchers face in the increasingly digitalized, data-intensive health care system.

Harle, who joined the department of health outcomes and biomedical informatics as a full professor in January, has a research focus in the design, adoption, use and value of health information systems. Previously, Harle served as an associate professor with the department of health policy and management at the Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health at Indiana University in Indianapolis, and he remains an affiliated scientist with the Regenstrief Institute's Center for Biomedical Informatics in Indianapolis. Until 2015, he was an assistant professor with UF in the department of health services research, management and policy in the College of Public Health and Health Professions.

Harle holds a doctorate in information systems and management from Carnegie Mellon University's H. John Heinz III College, and a bachelor's degree and master's degree in decision and information sciences from UF's Warrington College of Business Administration.



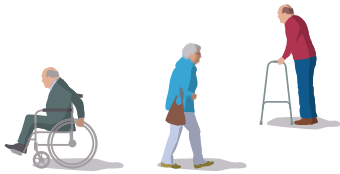
UF HEALTH SHANDS | CARE+QUALITY

PATIENT TURNS TRAGEDY INTO ART

In July 2019, staff wheeled Maurice (Moe) Ricks into surgery to prep him to receive a new heart and kidney, which were on a plane to Gainesville. The plane struck a flock of birds shortly after takeoff, rendering the left engine disabled. Pilots made an emergency landing at an airport near Atlanta.

Despite everyone's best efforts to quickly secure another flight to Gainesville, Moe's new heart and kidney never made it to him. But that's when a different kind of healing took place, one Moe describes as "healing for my soul." Art sprang from tragedy, providing Moe a unique perspective on what it means to hope and persevere in the face of tragedy.

Watch Moe's story titled "From Bird Strike to Hope: The Story of Moe Ricks's Optimism in the Face of Tragedy" on our UF Health YouTube channel and see what care can mean at UF Health.



TO DO 

UF HEALTH | CARE+QUALITY

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH SENIOR PATIENTS

Geriatric care requires attention to unique needs



BY SARAH STANLEY



All patients deserve the same caring respect. However, we must consider and adapt our approach based on patients' unique needs. Geriatric, or senior, patients are no exception. Here are some tips for offering older patients the best possible care:

Speak slowly and clearly

Speaking slowly versus quickly helps patients process information. Use simple words and sentences while avoiding unnecessary medical terminology or jargon. Ask questions to ensure understanding. Also take into consideration any hearing impairments.

Make eye contact

Although a caregiver or family member may accompany senior patients, respect each patient's right to autonomy. Make eye contact and talk to the patient directly, unless they cannot understand you.

Make extra time

This can mean allowing extra time for patients to respond to questions or fill out paperwork. Senior patients may have vision or hearing problems, and cognition naturally declines as people age. Be patient and helpful.

Avoid ageism and assumptions

Do not assume a patient cannot perform activities, such as driving or basic self-care. Meanwhile, avoid assumptions that

an older patient has age-related health problems. Instead, proactively ask about the patient's health condition, abilities and experiences. Subsequently adapt your inquiries about falls, balance issues, pain, and hearing and vision challenges.

Understand different care goals


Seek to understand the goals your patient has for their care. Respect their right to be an active participant and make choices about their care. A course of treatment you think is in their best interest may not be what they want or choose to follow at this stage of their lives.

Create a welcoming environment

Hospitals can be highly disorienting for anyone. For people of advanced age, unfamiliar surroundings can be confusing and trigger delirium. Senior inpatients may benefit from displaying family photos by the bedside to help orient and comfort them. Encourage patients to wear their glasses, hearing aids or other assistive devices that help them feel settled and capable.



Make small changes

Make gradual, small changes with your senior patients, giving them time to adjust while in your care. Clearly explain treatment steps, give them information and time to prepare and avoid sudden surprises in their care. Clearly explain take-home information and instructions before they leave. 



HOW WE ADAPT OUR COMMUNICATION AND CARE FOR EACH PATIENT MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR EXPERIENCE. THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM A LETTER UF HEALTH PHYSICIANS RECEIVED FROM THE DAUGHTER OF A SENIOR PATIENT.

"My mother started seeing the team at UF Health Senior Care at Springhill a little over a year ago and we have both been very impressed. Doctors take their time and treat her with patience and respect. She feels a part of the conversation (when in the past so many ignored her and spoke only to me). They take her concerns seriously and have always referred her out to specialists, if need be, and followed up promptly."



STEP IT UP – TAKE THE STAIRS!

Fitness activity trackers have been around for several years, but their popularity is not waning. Many employees continue to search for new ways to “get their steps in” during the day. The UF and UF Health Wellness Committee and GatorCare want to remind you about the Step it Up employee fitness initiative. It encourages faculty and staff to take the stairs, which reduces congestion in the elevators that our patients and families use, and promotes exercise.

In 2016, the pilot project launched in a stairwell located near the UF Health Shands Hospital Atrium elevators. The Step it Up signage has now made its way to the 1329 Building, reminding employees to take the stairs.

You’ll find a Step it Up decal outside each stairwell door. Inside, each stair landing features a colorful sign with encouraging messages such as “Taking the stairs is a healthy decision!”

Many employees exercise outside work, but using the stairs is a great way to get fit in between meetings or during breaks. And, it’s air-conditioned!

Visit GatorCare.org/wellness to learn more about Step it Up and other wellness initiatives.



UF HEALTH | CARE+QUALITY

TAKE THIS YEAR’S COMPLIANCE AWARENESS SURVEY!

It is officially time to take the Compliance and Privacy Awareness Survey! The survey, which runs March 1-31, will help UF Health Compliance Services measure the effectiveness of their program, identify strengths and opportunities for improvement, and provide all employees with an additional mechanism to learn about compliance and report concerns.

Your feedback is important to Compliance Services and helps the team further refine their educational resources and tools. Over 4,500 employees completed last year’s survey, setting a new record! Let’s try to break the record again this year.

In addition to that stat, 80% of participants were familiar with the following UF Health Shands Hospital compliance resources:

- Training modules
- Code of Conduct
- Compliance Connection newsletter
- Compliance and Privacy Bridge intranet site

Check out the Compliance and Privacy “FYI: Announcements” section on the Bridge homepage for a calendar of events to meet the compliance team, ask questions and participate in awareness activities. Prizes are available for those who stop by.