NURSING
ANNUAL REPORT 2019
MESSAGE FROM MARK

STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY
is at the Heart of TMH

It’s easy to look at a group of people and notice the differences between the individuals. It’s crucial to understand that differences are not weaknesses; they are our strengths. At Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH), we have one of the most diverse nursing teams in our organization’s 70-year history. It spans five generations and contains individuals from many different backgrounds, including some as far away as the Philippines. Our differences allow us to learn, grow and improve as an organization, all while having a unified focus on providing the best patient- and family-centered care possible.

This year’s Nursing Annual Report is a celebration of diversity here at TMH and the individual perspectives that make each of us unique. It also highlights a transition in leadership as Barbara Alford, Vice President & Chief Nursing/Clinical Officer, retires from TMH to enjoy the next chapter of her life – quality time with her husband, Gary, their daughters and their grandchildren.
Barbara’s entire professional life has centered around being a nurse. There are very few facets of nursing in which Barbara has not directly worked over her career. Her commitment to strengthening the practice of nursing and improving the resources available to nurses is unparalleled. I have witnessed her fight time and time again, in her “Jersey Girl” way, for what is best for HER nurses and the patients under their care. And I know that she personally cares for every nurse, nursing assistant and every other member of the TMH clinical team as if they were her own family. No one has been a bigger champion of nursing than Barbara, and I have always appreciated that.

TMH may be embarking on a new era of nursing leadership, but our focus on having a diverse nursing team and providing high-quality patient care remains the same. Thank you to Barbara, our entire nursing team and the many colleagues who make TMH your hospital for life.

— Mark O’Bryant  
President & CEO
I WALKED THROUGH THE DOOR
A Nursing Story

In my bones, I always knew I would be a wife, mother, teacher and Nana. However, even in my wildest dreams, it never occurred to me that I would be a nurse.

As a child, I would gather the neighborhood kids into our garage, fashion desks out of cardboard boxes, and play school. Of course, I was the teacher. I loved to read Nancy Drew, Agatha Christie, Arthur Conan Doyle, Edgar Allen Poe, and Shakespeare. It was the mystery, the puzzle, the conundrum that fascinated me. One of my favorite books was The Miracle Worker about a blind and deaf girl named Helen Keller, her teacher, Anne Sullivan, and their relationship that opened the door to the world for Helen. As a result of reading this book, I enrolled as a speech therapy major at Radford College for Women in 1971.

During spring break of my sophomore year, my brother Billy came to visit. I thought he was coming for Easter, but he actually came to take me home because my father had lost his job and I was needed at home. I took a job in the New York Telephone Company working split shifts, 8 am - 12 pm and then 6 pm - 10 pm. I met Gary that summer and he became my friend, my anchor and, lucky for me, the love of my life.

When my father went back to work, he said it was time for me to get a real job and go back to school. I was standing in an unemployment line when I saw a sign that said, “Licensed Practical Nursing school, apply within.” And so, I walked through the door.

I have walked through many doors, been given amazing opportunities, had mentors who recognized I could do more, and worked alongside nurses who taught me everything about being a nurse.
A nurse

is the one who opens the eyes of a newborn and gently closes the eyes of a dying man.
It is indeed a privilege to be the first and the last to witness the beginning and the end of life.

-Anonymous

MARY  My first nurse manager on a 30-bed oncology unit, she knew every patient’s name, diagnosis, blood work results and, without a piece of paper, could recite all of it on rounds with the oncologist.

SHARON  A radiation oncology nurse who taught me how to treat skin irritation associated with treatment.

DEDE  A hospice nurse who taught me the difference between neuropathic pain, acute versus chronic pain, bone pain, and visceral pain, as well as how to treat each of them.

SUSAN  Who advised me that when I didn’t know what to say or have the answer, to say, “I will be happy to get that answer to you,” and then follow up.

TRUDY  Who told me to go back to school because no one could ever take my education away and there was so much more I needed to do.

BERINICE  Who shared her philosophy with me about nurses who own, nurses who rent, and how each impacted patient care.

KATHY  Who is frequently heard asking for the evidence to support a practice change.

These individuals, along with many patients and their families, have taught me to be a better nurse.
Thank you to each and every one, as you have all had a vital impact on my career as a nurse.

—Barbara Alford, MSN, RN
Vice President & Chief Nursing Officer

A nurse

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It is indeed a privilege to be the first and the last to witness the beginning and the end of life.

-Anonymous
ICARE VALUES

INTEGRITY
KELLY CHASON, RN
Cardiovascular, Medical & Surgical Intensive Care Unit
Kelly exemplifies integrity in every task and interaction, whether it be with a colleague, patient, physician or family member. The sincere empathy and consistency she brings to work every day have allowed her to develop meaningful relationships built on trust. Her positive, glass-half-full demeanor helps support her patients and their loved ones through some of the most difficult times of their lives.

Meanwhile, her solution-oriented, go-getter attitude empowers her team to provide nothing less than the very best care.

COMPASSION
ELEONORE MENSAH-MAMFO, RN
Diabetes Medical Care Unit
Eleonore truly values the humanity in healthcare, as demonstrated by her innate compassion for every single person she encounters. She is keenly in tune with the needs of others and always available to provide support and comfort, even when patients and colleagues aren’t sure how to ask for it. Eleonore never shies away from difficult situations, always helping others carry the weight of their grief and hardship. Patients consistently credit Eleonore as the much-needed source of solace and support that got them and their family through trying times. Eleonore doesn’t do these things to be seen or praised, she does them because caring for others is her calling.

ACCOUNTABILITY
AMY HOLLAND, RN
Vogter Neuro Intensive Care Unit
Both in her unit and beyond, Amy is known as someone you can count on. In the past year, she’s taken on tremendous responsibility, onboarding fellow nurses and playing a key role in the stroke program, all while maintaining her primary role as a bedside nurse. She is an exceptional leader and champion for quality stroke care, as demonstrated by her readiness to do whatever is necessary to advance the program and ensure its quality and consistency. Amy is always the first one to step up, not only for her unit, but for TMH, the stroke program and every one of her patients.
At Tallahassee Memorial,

we salute our nurses for providing compassionate patient- and family-centered care. We recognize the following five nurses who embody our ICARE values of Integrity, Compassion, Accountability, Respect and Excellence.

**RESPECT**

**TESS ROBERTS, RN**

Intermediate Care Unit

Tess is a kind-hearted colleague and leader in her unit. She treats everyone she meets with the utmost respect and generosity, extending her positive attitude and profound appreciation to every member of her team. She’s a constant inspiration and cheerleader for other colleagues, especially in the most stressful of times, continually reminding them that their work is valued and appreciated. Such respect and gratitude makes an immeasurable impact.

**EXCELLENCE**

**KENNY MARESCO, RN**

Bixler Trauma & Emergency Center

Kenny is the personification of excellence in his initiative, leadership, attention to detail and commitment to providing patients, no matter their circumstances, the highest quality of care. In the midst of the high-stress emergency department atmosphere, Kenny is always the first to jump into a resuscitation, care for a critical patient or help a colleague. His dedicated and detail-oriented nature yields tremendous improvements in patient outcomes. Kenny is also constantly extending his excellence to others, advocating for his team and empowering others to elevate their own skills.
iGEnErAtIoN (GeneRATIoN z Born 1997- PreSENt)

Austin McKenzie, RN

iGeneration nurses are those who have never known life without computers or cellphones. They grew up with the technology of the iPhone, iTunes and iPad. Throughout their lives, they have been exposed to unprecedented amounts of information from the Internet and hand-held devices. This new generation encompasses those born in the new millennium and is defined by their technology and media use, their love of electronic communication, and their ability to multitask.

Q What are two concepts you have learned from working alongside nurses of other generations?

A I have been very fortunate to work with so many nurses from different generations. Each of them has taught me more than I could have ever imagined. I like to think that I have become a great nurse because of this. There’s always room for improvement, but I wouldn’t be half the nurse I am today without the support and knowledge of the generations before me. First, they have taught me how to be poised and conduct myself professionally, even when facing distressing situations. Second, they have taught me that my patient will tell me more about themselves than any vital sign machine or monitor ever will. It seems like this would be common sense, but it isn’t always common practice.

FIVE GENERATIONS in the TMH Nursing Workforce

Nurses from numerous generations are integral in shaping the culture of nursing at Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH). Although there are challenges, a generationally diverse workforce provides a variety of essential skills and talents. TMH has nurses from the “Silent Generation” all the way to the newest “iGeneration” (Generation Z). At TMH, Austin McKenzie, RN in the Outpatient Surgical Unit, represents this newest generation. He joins Millennials (Generation Y) like Nhi Ton, RN and Generation X (Latch-key) nurses, such as Leyla Meghji, RN, who both work on the Postoperative Care Unit. Then there are Baby Boomers (Boomers), such as May Rose Luis, RN, from the Diabetes Medical Care Unit, whose childhood dream was to become a nurse in a white uniform and help others. Finally, there are those from the Silent Generation (Traditionalists or Veterans) such as nurse Marilyn Capps, RN in the Bixler Trauma & Emergency Center. She is TMH’s true Florence Nightingale.

Five amazing TMH nurses were asked to reflect on what has changed since they attended nursing school, what they have learned working alongside nurses of other generations, and what their generation offers to the profession of nursing that may be unique from other generations.

What does your generation of nurses offer to the profession that may be unique from the other generations?

We are innovators of technology. While generations before mine have used technology and some have even embraced it, I don’t think any generation of nursing has been as involved in its creation and advancement as mine. You often hear, “You know a nurse didn’t make this,” when referring to nonintuitive clinical technology, but that’s changing. New nurses are coming into the field with the experience of growing up with technology and the passion to push it further.

MiLLENNIALS (GEnERATIoN y Born 1981-1996) Nhi Ton, RN

The Millennials at TMH are more racially and ethnically diverse, educated and technologically savvy than previous generations of nurses. They are described as optimistic, confident, cooperative and motivated. Collectively the words that describe Millennials are group-oriented and civic-minded.

What does your generation of nurses offer to the profession that may be unique from the other generations?

Energy and creativity. We are eager to look at things from different angles, to not only find problems but possible solutions to improve things. We want to help in many ways.
The Generation X nurses at TMH represent the independent problem solvers. Also known as the “latch-key” generation, many were raised by single-parent or dual-income families. Since they were largely left on their own, the Gen Xers learned to be cautious and self-sufficient.

What is the one thing that has changed the most in nursing since you graduated from nursing school?

In my opinion, the application of the knowledge nurses apply to the patient is different. The way you think and how you use it, even though the concept is the same. It is more challenging when you are dealing directly with patients. Critical thinking is the key.

BABY BOOMERS (BOOMERS BORN 1946-1964) MAY ROSE LUIS, RN
Baby Boomers represent a large portion of the nursing workforce, with many occupying leadership positions. They were generally raised in a more optimistic, secure and prosperous time and are known for idealism and having a sense of both purpose and privilege. This generation is also known for their sense of fulfillment from their work.

What does your generation of nurses offer to the profession that may be unique from the other generations?

As we age, we learn a lot from our life experiences. Thus, the more experiences we have in life, the greater our wisdom, resilience and patience. While the younger generations are more energetic, aggressive and probably more ambitious, our generation offers the basic human skills – wisdom, resilience and patience. Wisdom is the product of knowledge and experience. Without these two, it is difficult to make good decisions and judgments.

Resilience is knowing how to cope despite setbacks or barriers or limited resources. It is a measure of how much you are willing and able to overcome obstacles and it has something to do with emotional strength. As I mentioned earlier, my experiences have taught me a lot of things. Not every road in my life’s journey was a straight one that was easy and free of struggles. Some roads had many twists and turns, some were rough. But here’s the thing: I have learned so much from the roads that I have travelled (in life), and what I’ve learned has made me a better, stronger and more resilient person.

My experiences have also taught me the virtue of patience. Patience is simply waiting without complaining. It is probably the one virtue that those from younger generations find it difficult to practice. With the advent of advanced technology, life has become easier and it’s easier to do things faster. But doing things faster means patience is ALMOST ALWAYS put to the test. Fortunately, for baby boomers like me, I believe we strongly possess that virtue.

SILENT GENERATION (TRADITIONALISTS OR VETERANS BORN 1928-1945) MARILYN CAPPS, RN
The Silent Generation are the nurses who came of age during World War II, in families experiencing the Great Depression. Due to the political and economic uncertainty, this is the generation that is generally considered to be financially conservative, hard-working and cautious. They value loyalty, have a strong work ethic, and value the hierarchies that shape the nurse workforce culture.

What does your generation of nurses offer to the profession that may be unique from the other generations?

Knowledge and experience in our profession, along with life in general. Our generation has such an ability to care for the whole patient – to meet their physical, mental, cultural and spiritual needs. I hope to instill this to the generations below me.

Positive patient outcomes rely on effective communication and teamwork in nursing amongst all generations. We are fortunate to have five generations of nurses working side-by-side here at TMH to accomplish just that.
Ryan Smith, the new Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer at Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH), has always approached his nursing career with the perspective that you can learn something from everyone you work with, both older and younger, and you’ll be a better nurse leader for it.

Even as a young emergency care tech in 2008, Ryan was eager to learn about providing the best patient care he possibly could. While working in the Bixler Trauma & Emergency Center, Ryan approached nurse Marilyn Capps to be his RN preceptor. We interviewed Ryan and Ms. Capps to learn how the older generation can truly shape the younger generation of nurses, and vice versa.

Ms. Capps graduated nursing school in 1962, and she has precepted many nurses. At first, she declined Ryan’s preceptor request, thinking This new generation just wants to get things done. But as she got to know Ryan, she could tell he really wanted to learn. She asked him, “What do you really want to learn?” and his reply was, “I really want to know how to be a good nurse in the ER, not just work in the ER.” From that moment she knew he had, “...the right attitude, a good mind and the right intentions.”

As one of the most experienced members of the nursing workforce at TMH, Ms. Capps states she is all about the “how” and the “why.” Why this lab test? Why this diagnostic study or this medication? She said, “What is the worst that can happen to your patient with this diagnosis and what is the best? You need to be prepared for both. Without standards, policies and procedures, it is like having Jell-O without a bowl, especially in trauma.”

Ms. Capps was past the typical retirement age when she met Ryan, and the Bixler Trauma & Emergency Center was beginning to embark on computerized provider order entry. She admitted that her generation is not necessarily the first to embrace change, although they’ve experienced a lot of it firsthand. Ryan was the one who helped her with the computer, and even though she was used to writing in longhand, he encouraged her to keep working with the system and learn the new documentation protocol.

She said, “We were a great team; I helped him learn how to assess the patient and carry out the orders and he would navigate the chart and orient me on how to document in it.” “He taught me a lot,” she said. With Ryan’s help, she realized she could still practice the traditional method of nursing – look, listen, feel and evaluate labs – but just document in a different way.
For younger nurses looking to older colleagues for advice, respecting their level of expertise and cutting them some slack for their lagging tech skills can go a long way. Older nurses can appreciate their younger peers’ passion to help others and their ability to get the answers they need through digital resources. Ryan stated that even after his orientation was finished and he was working as an ER nurse, he would go back to her with questions on clinical care. In turn, she would often go back to him with questions related to the new computerized world of the ER.

Ryan said, “She taught me to take ownership of my patients, including making sure their sheets were clean, the patient was clean, and their needs were taken care of.” He recalled her teaching him the art of turning patients and making sure they had a pillow behind their back - “the fluff and puff” she called it. She taught him about the importance of building relationships with his patients while critically assessing and treating them as well.

The greatest piece of advice he recalled learning from Ms. Capps was to, “Go into the room like you know what you are doing, while also having a demeanor that exhibits compassion.” Ms. Capps recalled telling Ryan at their initial meeting, “You need depth to work here and I can help you with that.”

Her final words in this interview were, “I have great hopes for Ryan and believe he will make a great nursing leader because he has a critical mind and a true heart.”
DEMOGRAPHICS

2018

- 85% Female
- 15% Male
- 68.1% Caucasian
- 7.1% Asian
- 10% African American
- 2.9% Hispanic
- 19.8% Age <= 30
- 50.5% Age > 30
EDUCATION

2018

- Bachelor's Degree: 55%
- Associate's Degree: 37%
- Master's Degree or Doctoral Degree: 6%
- Diploma: 2%
Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH) has implemented the Fall TIPS Program to help reduce our patient falls. Eleven adult medical-surgical units implemented the program in March and April after 500 RNs, LPNs, PCAs and CNAs received training on the program.

TIPS stands for Tailoring Interventions for Patient Safety and integrates a three-step process into a person’s work flow. The RN completes a fall risk assessment which helps identify the fall prevention plan most likely to prevent a fall. The RN uses the Fall TIPS collateral to educate the patient and family on fall risk. Based on the fall risk assessment, a personalized plan is then created and displayed on a poster as a visual reminder for the patient, family and care team. Fall TIPS was designed by Dr. Patricia Dykes and piloted on more than 10,000 patients. To date, 29 hospitals have implemented the program and all have seen a decline in their fall rates.

Implementation at TMH has gone well and feedback from bedside colleagues has been very positive. Patients and families report understanding the risk for a fall in the hospital and are happy to participate in the safety measures implemented to keep them safe. TMH is already seeing an improvement in the organization’s fall rates.
Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH) has become one of six hospitals in the state of Florida, and the first in the Big Bend region, to be recognized as an Asthma-Friendly Hospital by the Florida Asthma Coalition. Asthma-Friendly Hospitals are recognized for creating a safe and healthy environment for patients with asthma.

“This year, our teams began the Asthma-Friendly application process, and we are proud to announce its successful completion,” said Suhey Tuckler, Director, Respiratory Care, Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare. “Asthma is largely controllable with proper primary care. However, differences in rates of hospitalization for asthma suggest there is significant room for improvement in caring for the condition. With our Asthma-Friendly certification, we look forward to improving the health of our community.”

Colleagues at TMH completed all five criteria for the Asthma-Friendly Hospital certification:

1 – Professional Development for Hospital Nurses and Respiratory Therapists on Asthma Management;
2 – Professional Development for Hospital Physicians on Asthma Management;
3 – Asthma Action Plan;
4 – Self-Management Education;
5 – Multi-Component Home-Based Asthma Education to be recognized as Asthma-Friendly.

Today, approximately one in ten children and one in twelve adults in Florida have asthma. Taking these steps helps TMH create a healthy community for patients, visitors, staff and residents of the Big Bend area.

“At Tallahassee Memorial, we have identified asthma as a growing issue throughout the Big Bend area,” said Mark O’Bryant, President & CEO, Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare. “With our focus on improving the health of our community, our teams have implemented new processes and procedures surrounding asthma, and have provided valuable education to medical professionals, school systems and the general public.”

**TODAY, APPROXIMATELY:**

1 in 10 children and 1 in 12 adults in Florida have ASTHMA

TALLAHASSEE MEMORIAL HEALTHCARE IS 1 of 6 hospitals in the state of Florida to be recognized as an ASTHMA-FRIENDLY HOSPITAL by the Florida Asthma Coalition.

WITH OUR ASTHMA-FRIENDLY CERTIFICATION, WE LOOK FORWARD TO IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF OUR COMMUNITY.
Last fall, Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH) received a patient who had recently been diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). The patient’s time at TMH turned into several weeks in the Cardiopulmonary Intensive Care Unit (CICU). As time went on, his desire to go outside increased.

With quick thinking and caring hearts, Suzanne Assad, RN and Kari Nelson, OT put their heads together, along with Lacey Randolph, RT, and Mary Green, RN, to find a solution. Eventually, they were able to wheel the patient in his bed down to the ground level of the Main Hospital, all the way outside, allowing him to breathe the fresh air.

Forty-four days of caring for a young man that was once independent and is the guardian of an 11-year-old boy resulted in the entire unit becoming quite attached to the young man.

However, for Suzanne and Kari, who have been caring for him every shift they have worked, their creativity and compassion went much deeper.

The patient loves Dr Pepper but hadn’t had one in months (he has a trach and is not able to eat). Suzanne realized he could have Dr Pepper in small amounts by using a mouth swab that had been soaked in Dr Pepper. He was so happy, simply because she thought outside of the box about how to make him smile.

TMH is lucky to have colleagues like this who make real connections from the heart.
TMH Nurses celebrated a wonderful Nurses Week, May 6-12, 2019. This year’s theme was “4 Million Reasons to Celebrate” and TMH had a host of fun events.

As part of the celebration, Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH) hosted a Celebrate History and Heritage Day, during which the organization honored the cultures of its very diverse nursing staff. Nurses created and displayed posters of countries from around the world, including Canada, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Philippines, Cuba, Columbia and the British Virgin Islands. They also showcased wonderful food and traditional garments from each country.

The nursing leadership team hosted a lunch presentation entitled “Nurse Indicted: Consequences of Human Errors, At Risk Behaviors in a Just Culture,” which was a very well-attended event.

Keeping with the theme, TMH celebrated the nursing team’s well-being with a “Well-Being Day,” which included massage therapy and therapeutic touch. TMH’s chaplains administered a Blessing of the Hands, which is always a sacred event on the nursing units. Additionally, TMH’s Music and Animal Therapy programs were on hand to provide stress relief.

The week concluded with an appreciation breakfast and waffle bar for all of TMH’s amazing day and night shift nurses. The weekend nurses and those from outlying area, enjoyed a special cookie delivery by the Nursing Administration staff.
For the past 17 years, Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH) has fostered a wonderful working relationship with Filipino nurses through a strategic partnership with Professionals to USA, a world-renowned medical recruitment agency. Professionals to USA focuses on providing hospitals in the United States with qualified, licensed and experienced nurses. These men and women have provided the highest-level of compassion and patient- and family-centered care across TMH.

Filipino nurses at TMH exemplify excellence in nursing and fulfill the organization’s mission to deliver transformative care, advance health and improve lives every day. Time and time again, Filipino nurses have demonstrated loyalty to TMH and the community. After completing their three-year contract, Filipino nurses at TMH have a retention rate of 85 percent – well above the national industry average.

With the opening of the M.T. Mustian Center, qualified, dedicated and experienced registered nurses were identified as a key ingredient needed to help bring the 340,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility to life. With this in mind, Nursing Administration and the leadership team devised a strategy to target experienced nurses and planned a recruitment trip with Professionals to USA to the Philippines.

"I am so thankful to work for Tallahassee Memorial, an organization which understands the value and importance of initiatives like this one," said Steve.

“As a result of recruitment in the Philippines, we will have the pleasure of welcoming our new cohort between August 2019 and October 2020,” he said. “Through the interview experience, we met so many Filipino nurses who are smart, strong, innovative, unbelievably hardworking and determined; absolutely perfect for the type of quality and compassionate patient care we provide every day at TMH.”

Following the trip to the Philippines, nursing recruitment efforts continued with trips across the Southeast, including a successful visit to Panama City, Florida. International recruitment also continued with a recent trip across the pond to London, England where Steve and Sharon extended offers for employment to experienced RNs to join the TMH team.

JOIN OUR TEAM

At Tallahassee Memorial, nurses have the opportunity to become more – a leader, a teacher, an expert. If you know someone is who is called to care for others, encourage them to visit TMH.ORG/JoinOurTeam to begin their future today.
ENHANCED PATIENT CARE
from technology

Tallahassee Memorial nurses are utilizing telemedicine to elevate patient- and family-centered care for pediatric and newborn patients.

One of the most buzzed-about innovations in modern healthcare, telemedicine is paving the way for enhanced patient care at Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH). Nurses are at the forefront of its integration into TMH.

At its core, telemedicine is the use of telecommunication and technology to provide healthcare from a distance. It’s a means of bridging gaps between healthcare systems and more rural populations, expanding access by bringing the physician to the patient, rather than the opposite. The result is truly patient-centered care. Within TMH, telemedicine has also become a tool for nurses to consult specialized physicians both within and beyond TMH, as well as a method for enhancing relationships with patients and their families.

Two groups already benefiting from this use of telemedicine are parents of children in TMH’s pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) and newborn intensive care unit (NICU).

“Nurses are key to implementing telehealth throughout our organization,” commented Lauren Faison, Administrator, Population Health, Regional Development and Telemedicine. “They’re the ones using the technology to consult physicians, engage parents and prepare patients for transfer. They’re the foundation upon which our telemedicine program is being built.”
TELEMEDICINE IN THE NICU

Telemedicine in TMH’s NICU, while new, has extraordinary potential. From allowing parents to see their babies when they’re unable to visit in person to remotely incorporating them into rounding. Telehealth in the NICU is making a positive impact on patient- and family-centered care.

“Many moms of babies in our NICU have to return to work before getting to bring their new babies home. That can be an incredibly emotional experience,” shared Laura Hance, RN, BSN, Assistant Nurse Manager, NICU.

“Telemedicine allows us to give those moms a window into their babies’ rooms when they can’t physically be there. We’ll even eventually have the ability to connect breastfeeding moms with their babies virtually while they pump.”

Another tremendous area of opportunity involves incorporating telemedicine into NICU transports. TMH has a team of nurses and respiratory therapists who transfer sick and premature babies from outlying facilities to TMH’s NICU – the only one in the region – where they receive the life-saving care they need. For this team, communication with physicians is crucial.

“Telemedicine will allow our transport team to not only verbalize a baby’s conditions to our neonatologists during transport, it’ll let them show them,” Laura noted. “This will allow the neonatologists to advise remotely on the baby’s condition and care during transport, as well as prepare our nurses back in the NICU for the baby’s arrival.”

In these transport scenarios, moms must wait until they’re discharged following birth to come see their new baby in our NICU. With telemedicine, nurses are able to help mothers cope during this often uncertain time. It allows them to see their new baby and meet the nurses caring for him or her.

While TMH still in the beginning phases of incorporating telemedicine into clinical practices and culture, it’s clear the technology is not going away anytime soon. It’s already enabling enhanced care and relationship building for patients and families throughout the organization. With nurses driving telemedicine’s integration into patient care and identifying new ways to use it every day, the opportunities are endless.
Telemedicine has been an integral part of Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare’s (TMH) affiliation with Wolfson Children’s Hospital in Jacksonville since the partnership’s inception in 2016. Nurses in the Tallahassee Memorial Children’s Emergency Center utilize the technology to offer pediatric patients 24/7 access to Wolfson Children’s double-boarded pediatric emergency physicians. As the partnership has grown and the uses of telemedicine have expanded, TMH identified more and more opportunities to utilize it to enhance patient care.

Currently, nurses use telemedicine to prepare patients and families, as well as other nurses, for patient transfers between TMH’s pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) and the Wolfson Children’s PICU. Any time we have a patient that requires more specialized critical care at Wolfson Children’s, the nurses in TMH’s PICU utilize the technology to give reports to the nurses in the receiving PICU. Not only is this key to preparing for the patient’s arrival medically, it also allows the nurses at Wolfson Children’s to see the patient, meet the family and establish a relationship early.

“The use of telemedicine within our PICU has strengthened the relationship between the nurses in our PICU and those in Wolfson Children’s PICU,” shared Matt Ritter, RN, CPN, Assistant Nurse Manager in the Children’s Center. “This cooperation makes for a more seamless transition and overall better experience for our patients and their families.”

TMH also implemented telemedicine to introduce patients being transported from the Children’s Emergency Center at the Emergency Center – Northeast, located by I-10 and Thomasville Road, to their inpatient care providers at the Main Hospital. Giving families the opportunity to prepare for these transitions adds a much-needed level of comfort and familiarity to a very stressful experience.

Nurses also utilize telemedicine to consult TMH’s pediatric intensivists whenever they have a concern or a question about a patient, no matter the time.

“Both of our pediatric intensivists are able to utilize telemedicine technology to check in on patients at any hour of the day,” shared Matt. “When a nurse is worried about a patient’s condition, it’s very comforting to know you have the option of having an intensivist actually look at the patient, regardless of whether they’re physically present. It can be much more effective than trying to verbalize over the phone.”

Additionally, opportunities exist for nurses to integrate telemedicine during patient rounding, both to involve remote physicians and parents in patient care. Physicians and surgeons can also use it to follow-up with patients in between procedures, as well as to provide consultations to outlying facilities.

“Every time we identify a new way to utilize telemedicine, it opens ten new doors to even more opportunities,” commented Lauren. “Telehealth is not a fad, it is an integral tool that improves care delivery.”
EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PEDIATRIC PATIENTS

Across the organization, TMH continues to identify new opportunities to implement telemedicine to improve patients’ access to care. For instance, the Children’s Center has officially begun using the technology in conjunction with the Tallahassee Memorial Metabolic Health Center, helping diabetic pediatric patients manage their condition. The nurses in the Children’s Center have begun connecting diabetic patients and their families with diabetes educators in the Metabolic Health Center via telemedicine.

“Using telemedicine, we’re able to connect patients and their parents with diabetes educators while they’re still in the Children’s Center, allowing them access to the information they need without having to make multiple trips,” shared Kim Outlaw, RN, Nurse Manager, Children’s Center.

“This is especially beneficial to our large patient population from outlying counties. Saving them even one trip helps reduce unnecessary stress and makes the entire process more seamless.”

Eventually, the Children’s Center team anticipates even being able to utilize telemedicine with certain new-onset diabetic patients. This would provide the patients and their parents the tools they need to return home and manage their condition while waiting for an appointment, rather than having to remain in the inpatient setting in the interim.

“Amanda Baxley, RN