Working Together

We are continuing to come together, finding more and more natural opportunities where the work of National Jewish Health and Saint Joseph Hospital intersect. Nowhere is this more evident than in the great work that has been happening within our cardiovascular programs. In August, the cardiac catheterization labs of both our organizations joined forces and consolidated on the Saint Joseph campus. We are seeing gains for all involved, from increased cases to the introduction of research protocols—and all of it is highly positive for our patients. You can read more about how the labs came together and their goals going forward in the story that follows.

We’re excited to see many of our other key service lines gaining traction through collaboration, not only between our two organizations, but also more broadly within the entire SCL Health system. We have work in progress within our oncology program, general surgery and respiratory care programs to name but a few.

We are also seeing positive signs in our financial outlook with a favorable payor mix, stronger volume and good, solid expense controls. Our competitors are not standing still, so continuing to perform well financially in addition to our intense focus on the quality of our service are both key.

On another front, we all know this is a very active political season. We want to call your attention to Amendment 72, a Colorado initiative that will be on the November ballot and proposes an increase in the state sales tax on tobacco products. Several of our physicians have been active in speaking in support of this initiative because they personally work with patients who suffer from tobacco-related illnesses, including emphysema, cancer and heart disease. You can read an editorial recently run in the Denver Post and authored by Debra Dyer, MD, FACR, chair of the Department of Radiology and director of the Lung Cancer Screening CT Program at National Jewish Health, and James J. Fenton, MD, pulmonologist and associate professor of medicine at National Jewish Health. They serve as Co-Chairs of the Lung Cancer Task Force of the Colorado Cancer Coalition.

Please take a moment and scroll through the rest of the stories to read more about the great work happening within our organizations. You can also click here for the internal news hub, including a place to ask questions and offer your feedback.

As always, thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

Michael Salem, MD
President & CEO, National Jewish Health
Chair, Board of Directors, National Jewish Health | Saint Joseph Hospital

Jamie Smith
President, Saint Joseph Hospital
CEO, National Jewish Health | Saint Joseph Hospital

The Right and Left Heart Come Together in the

Saint Joseph Hospital Cardiac Cath Lab

It started with a simple idea: bring two expert cardiac teams – one specializing in right-heart catheterization and care and the other in structural and advanced interventions – together in one place to provide comprehensive cardiac procedures to more patients.
On Aug. 1, that idea became a reality when National Jewish Health and Saint Joseph Hospital combined their cardiac catheterization labs on the Saint Joseph Hospital campus. The combined lab saw its first patients from National Jewish Health on Aug. 3.

Since 2011, physicians at the cardiac cath lab at National Jewish Health have conducted a full range of diagnostic procedures, including complex studies of the right heart, which are less commonly performed than left-heart procedures. By inserting a long, thin tube into a patient's arm, groin, or neck and guiding it through the blood vessels and into the heart, doctors can explore heart-lung interactions as well as cardiac manifestations of lung disease, including pulmonary hypertension.

Saint Joseph Hospital’s interventional cardiologists also have expertise in performing cath procedures on the left side of the heart, which can be used to diagnose such conditions as enlargement of the heart, coronary artery disease and valvular heart disease. In addition, they are able to perform advanced interventional procedures, including placing stents in coronary arteries to keep them open and replacing heart valves which are dysfunctional.

The combined lab is “advantageous to the patient,” said Kern Buckner, MD, chief of the Division of Cardiology at National Jewish Health. “If more services are needed, more are available.”

‘A Perfect Match’: Working Together to Build a Better Lab

Providing right- and left-heart expertise and interventional procedures in one lab “just made sense,” said Jon Hoomes, MHA, director of cardiac and vascular services at Saint Joseph Hospital. “It’s a perfect match.”

Combining the labs required a tremendous amount of teamwork and collaboration between the two hospitals. A team from National Jewish Health, including Dr. Buckner; Stephen Frankel, MD, FCCP, FCCM and chief medical officer; Jean Glock, supervisor of the National Jewish Health cath lab and current supervisor of the non-invasive testing and cardiology clinic at the combined lab; and George Zeman, director of Pulmonary Physiology Services; worked together with a team from Saint Joseph Hospital made up of Hoomes; Will Anderson, MD, medical director for SCL Health cardiovascular services; and Mary Shepler, RN, BSN, MA, vice president and chief nursing officer.

“The biggest piece of this was the behind-the-scenes work by Saint Joseph Hospital and National Jewish Health,” said Hoomes. “There was no bureaucracy. It was very much a decision-making group.”

And there were plenty of decisions to be made and processes to be defined, including registration, scheduling and transferring research protocols.

“We’re committed to protecting and maintaining the research mission of the National Jewish Health cath lab,” said Dr. Anderson.

Bringing Specialized Research and Advanced Interventions to More Patients

“The research National Jewish Health physicians are able to generate and the results are amazing,” said Hoomes. Joining the labs together brings that research and expertise to a larger patient population, he added.

As a Healthgrades America’s Top 100 Hospitals for Cardiac Care and one of Colorado’s busiest and most recognized heart centers, Saint Joseph Hospital’s cath lab sees about 300 patients per month. National Jewish Health physicians expect to perform more than 350 procedures a year at the new facility.

“It’s an exciting time for both campuses and our patients,” said Hoomes.

Providing patients of both National Jewish Health and Saint Joseph Hospital with the best possible care is at the very heart of why and how we are working together.

Mammography Van Delivers Potentially Life-Saving Care to Denver Women

In just a few days, we’ll be seeing signs of Breast Cancer Awareness Month as stores offer all manner of pink items, restaurants and shops post the recognizable ribbon on their doors, and even members of the Denver Broncos deliver bone-crushing hits and catch high-flying balls while wearing bright pink gloves.

You may even see a 32-foot van with pink sides and bows. “It’s hard to miss a 26,000-pound pink truck,” said Josue Miranda, who drives the Saint Joseph Hospital Breast Care Center mobile mammography van.

The van may be pink, but it’s also powerful. It runs on a 6.7-liter diesel turbo-charged engine and contains a 12-kilowatt generator that powers the lights and outlets, and a 20-kilowatt unit that fuels the 3D mammography machine on board.

An advanced and relatively new technology approved by the FDA, 3D mammography takes multiple thin images of the breast. These “slices” allow radiologists to see tumors and other lesions more clearly. While 3D mammography has been shown to significantly increase the detection of breast cancer, many patients find it unnecessarily uncomfortable.

Mammography van, image from Saint Joseph Hospital.

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mammography is especially beneficial to women with dense breast tissue, which typically appears white on a mammogram and can obscure abnormalities, it is an effective screening method for all women.

Whether women opt for a 3D or conventional 2D mammogram, the important thing is that they receive one, explained Jerome Schroeder, MD, a fellowship-trained breast radiologist who reads mammograms at the Breast Care Center at Saint Joseph Hospital. 

“There’s a lot of misinformation out there,” he said. Recent recommendations advising women to start screening mammograms at age 50, rather than 40, are “not based on sound science,” he said. Since screening mammography became widespread in the 1990s, mortality from breast cancer has decreased by roughly 30 percent. “And the effectiveness of mammography increases the longer and more consistently a woman participates,” said Dr. Schroeder.

The mobile mammography van is a convenient way for busy women to receive this essential exam explained Miranda. “Many women say this is the only place they can get their mammogram,” he said.

The van is out four to five days a week at health fairs and private businesses that offer the service to their employees, primarily in the Denver Metro area.

The mobile screening unit can hold six patients at a time, with the mammographer typically seeing 15 to 25 patients per day. The exam images are loaded onto a laptop that is brought back to the breast center, where Dr. Schroeder interprets them.

“It’s rewarding seeing people come in looking frightened and then they leave with a smile like ‘that wasn’t so bad,’” said Miranda. “We get a lot of hugs, a lot of thank-yous.”

He also gets a lot of looks, waves and thumbs-ups while driving his distinctive rig. “It’s amazing driving something around that means so much to the community,” he said. “Just driving it around raises awareness.”

To schedule a mammogram at the Breast Care Center at Saint Joseph Hospital, call 303-318-3400.

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**You Can't Judge a Book by Its Cover: Getting to Know Our Librarians**

**Amy Six-Means, MLIS**  
Consumer Health Librarian  
Saint Joseph Hospital

**Shandra Knight, MS**  
Director, Library and Knowledge Services  
National Jewish Health

**What do you enjoy most about your job?**  
Connecting health literacy to the art of being a consumer health librarian. Being as active as I am in reading new research about health literacy continually helps me grow in my skills as a consumer health librarian. Being increasingly aware of how a situation (be it news of a new condition, stress, medication, responsibilities, etc.) may impact a person’s health literacy gives me more compassion when interacting with patrons, more deliberation when searching for and with them, and more thoughtful review when I work on the collection of library materials available for patrons. This has had the greatest impact on my work and reminds me of why I love being a consumer health librarian.

**As the way we read and research continues to change, how do you see libraries adapting to meet the needs of the communities they serve?**  
For many, like myself, books are often listened to, as well as read, these days. Within the past three years, we have added audiobooks in spirituality, mental health, meditation and personal growth to our physical collection. Recognizing the trend toward e-books, two years ago we started our OverDrive collection, which has an assortment of both e-books and e-audiobooks that can be borrowed and read or listened to online or downloaded to a smart device.

A few years ago, I began a vast wiki with links to hundreds of credible websites to research health information. We also have links on our Gervasini Health Library and the National Library of Medicine’s MedlinePlus, so we can offer suggestions for resources that will give patrons reliable, accurate and unbiased health information.

**What do you most enjoy about your job?**  
The information explosion has reached a critical mass. Library staff have never been so important for helping make sense of the staggering advances in knowledge management practices. Besides working with the talented and compassionate community at National Jewish Health, I most enjoy collaborating on local and international practice guideline development. Our librarians have been able to publish and promote National Jewish Health with important contributions to clinical practice. I love working with my staff on complex search projects and providing critical workflow management to large review teams.

**As the way we read and research continues to change, how do you see libraries adapting to meet the needs of the communities they serve?**  
Librarians are the natural intermediaries between research, education and service functions. We provide approaches to link people, process and technology, reducing barriers to information-enhanced health care.

While the principles of collection development and management remain, the practice has been turned on its head. Unprecedented possibilities for scholarly communication allow clinicians and scientists extensive access to each other’s data, ideas and discussions. Librarians must help lead innovative electronic-centered knowledge management and adopt workflow solutions to match user needs.
What's the most challenging request a patron has ever asked you to fulfill?
One of the most fulfilling challenges was helping a patient find affordable short-term housing for a couple of months while seeing their doctor here for cancer treatment. Another was the patron who wanted information on treatment options for chronic lymphocytic leukemia complicated by having both Type 2 diabetes and chronic a-fib.

What's your favorite book?
You're kidding, right? One of my favorite books is called The Practice of the Presence of God: The Best Rule of a Holy Life by Brother Lawrence.

What's the best concert you've ever attended?
This is an easy one. Bruce Springsteen at the Meadowlands sometime in the mid-1990s. It looked like a thunderstorm was coming, so we waited for about two hours. Then he came out and rocked it for a solid three hours. I was exhausted at the end, but he looked like he could have gone on.

What's the most challenging request a patron has ever asked you to fulfill?
Being on the cutting edge of science and medicine, we often get asked to help explore questions for which there are not yet clear answers. The process of exploring the edges of medicine with leading experts is a welcome challenge.

Beyond that, we once worked on a health literacy project with fifth-graders at Morgridge Academy, the school located on the National Jewish Health campus, which serves children diagnosed with a chronic illness. The students were asked to research a health condition. I remember one boy had a very serious rare condition. He knew a lot about it, including that it was incurable. It was personally difficult doing research with him, learning that the solutions he and his family and his doctors desperately hoped for were simply not yet available.

What's your favorite book?
Crimes in Southern Indiana by Frank Bill. Bill's short stories of the American heartland are an unrelenting assault on the senses served with a side of rattlesnake stew. It's not for the faint of heart.

What's the best concert you've ever attended?
I got to see the Black Keys at Coachella a few years ago. It was a friendly crowd and a great show.

Thank you for reading this newsletter. We hope it helps you stay more informed about our accomplishments and our challenges as we all strive to deliver our very best toward patient care, research and education. Feedback and story suggestions are always appreciated. You may share your thoughts by emailing feedback@njhealth.org.