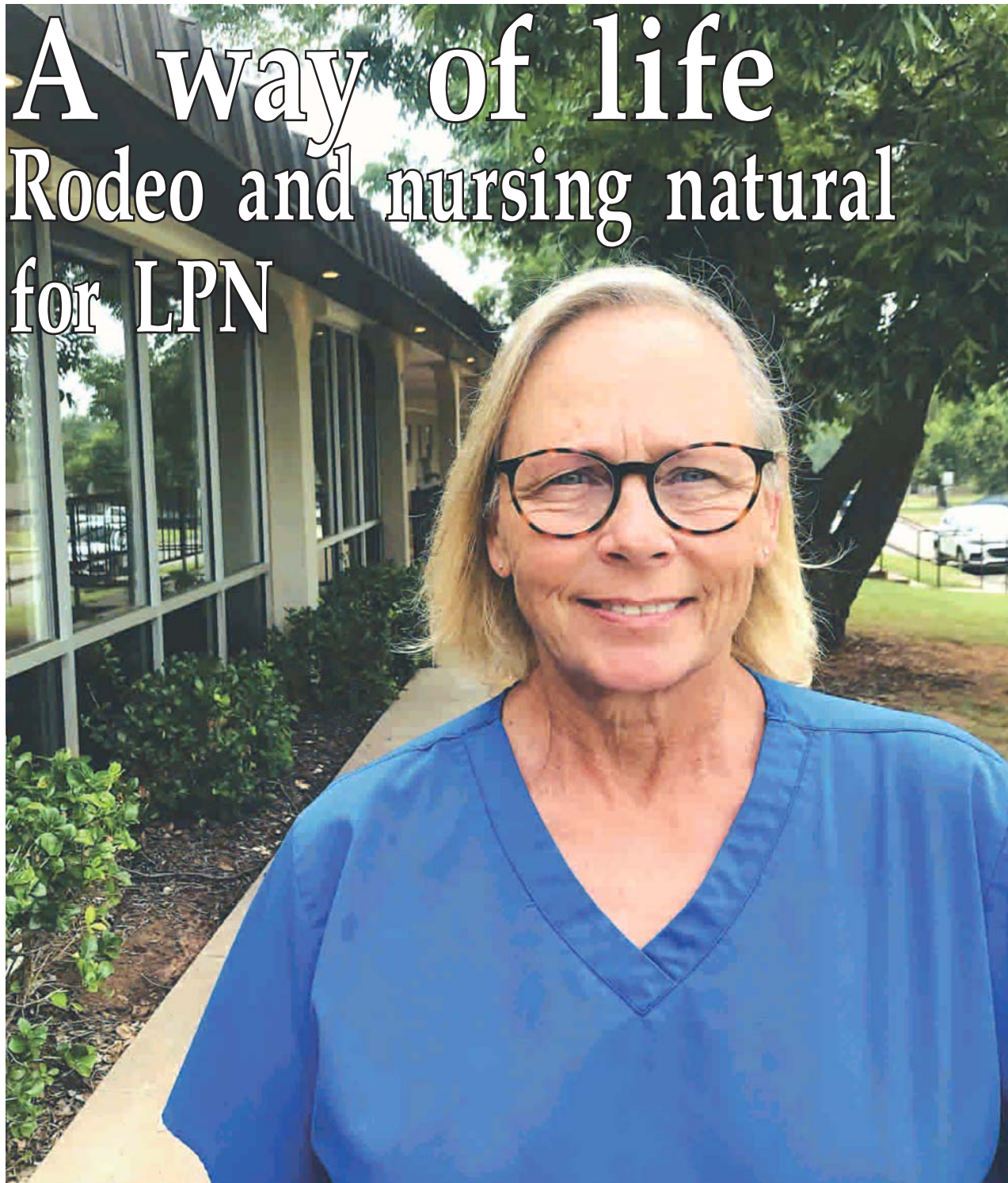


A way of life Rodeo and nursing natural for LPN



40 years of nursing and rodeo keeps Debbie Gordon, LPN, in a steady pace with life.

by James Coburn - staff writer

Debbie Gordon likes helping patients stay away from hospitals by being where they want to be — at home.

"Our goal is to keep our patient in their homes as long as we can, so that they can stay there safely," said Gordon, a licensed practical nurse at Companion Home Health in Guthrie. "They get to stay in their environment, their comfort zone."

It was providence that led her to a nursing career, said Gordon, who had never dreamed of being nurse. But it was God's will, she said.

She's lent a compassionate hand to patient care at Companion for four years. Gordon also serves as a Companion hospice nurse when needed. And, she re-energizes by doing barrel

See LIFE Page 2

Mercy Increases Starting Wage for All Co-workers



*More than 6,000
co-workers will have
their pay increased
to \$15 hourly, an
\$18 million annual
investment*

Mercy will increase the starting wage for all co-workers across its multistate footprint. The \$18 million additional annual commitment will raise more than 6,000 co-workers' pay to \$15 an hour and serve as the starting wage for all newly hired co-workers.

"This decision is rooted in our values and promotes the common good for our co-workers and the communities where they serve," said Lynn Britton, Mercy president and CEO.

The new minimum wage will be implemented across Mercy as of Sept. 19. Co-workers will see the increase in their paychecks as soon as Oct. 8. Some of the more than 6,000 co-workers who will receive an increase include housekeepers, food service,

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LIFE

Continued from Page 1

racing.

This seasoned professional entered the nursing field in 1980 after graduating from Meridian Technology Center, located in Stillwater. Gordon said she likes the hometown feeling of working for Companion that connects with nurses and families without a big corporate image.

"They definitely care about their patients and I feel like they care about their employees," said Gordon, who enjoys the one-on-one patient time that home health allows her to bond with patients. "You kind of get a closer relationship with your patients doing home health than in the hospitals."

Home health transcends the simple definition of a job because it centers on patient care. Nurses help them become stronger and educate them about their medications. The staff ensures patients use medications properly without dangerous complications caused by combining non-compatible drugs.

"The patients are important to the nursing staff," she said. "And they care what happens to the patients."

Nurses see all walks of life and give everyone the same loving care. They make sure therapy is provided,

that patients are dressed and bathed, and have nutrition on a regular basis.

"Every individual is different as far as what the need or might need," Gordon added.

Diabetes is prevalent, so she teaches patients to monitor their blood sugar every day in order to prevent complications and co-morbidities that are common with the disease.

"It's important to keep their sugars within normal range because if they don't it affects all kinds of different functions in their body, their eyes, their kidneys, circulation and everything," Gordon explained.

Patients can still go to church, get prescriptions and get their hair styled. However, they are not supposed to drive, shop for groceries or go to the mall.

"They don't have to be tied to home, but they can't be out running around," Gordon said. "It's a taxing effort for them to do that."

Patients have not mentioned a lot about COVID and the new Delta variant that is spreading across the state, Gordon said.

"Their biggest question is 'Have you been vaccinated?' Surprisingly, I have not had a lot of COVID questions. I've actually dealt with more anger from it than questions about it, because

they were isolated from their loved ones. I know the patients that we have in assisted living facilities — it was very difficult for them not to be able to see their family. And their big concern was 'Why can you come in and my family can't?' That was my biggest negative with it. That's kind of a hard question to answer."

The nurses always wear masks to help prevent the spreading COVID. But several patients have said to her, "I don't want you to wear that mask."

Gordon explains to them that she's required to wear a mask in order to protect them from contracting the disease.

Gordon is well seasoned as a nurse in her career of about 40 years. Experience brings wisdom.

She went to college on a rodeo scholarship. And she still performs at rodeos.

Family issues brought her back home from college. Her sister was a nurse. When she learned Debbie had quit school, she said, "Are you just going to be a bum?"

Those words crushed Gordon because she always wanted to make her sister happy.

"So, I just went home that night, and I was lying in bed crying. And

I said 'Lord, I'm lost, and I don't know what to do. And I need you to guide me.' And in six months I was in nursing school."

She never turned her back on nursing or rodeo. Rodeo was in her blood since she started riding a pony at age 5.

"I started competing when I was about 8, and I still do it," she said of barrel racing. "It's kind of like a second job for me. I train on my own."

She keeps five horses of her own and two from her sister that she rides north of Crescent.

Horses are large animals, and they can take advantage of that. But Gordon knows how to earn and keep their respect.

She learned when turning a horse loose, to never let them walk away from her. They stand their until she walks away from them.

They are creatures of habit, sort of like people, she said.

For more information visit:

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WAGE

Continued from Page 1

transportation and pharmacy, medical and lab technicians, all of whom are critical to providing compassionate care and exceptional health care service.

Mercy serves a geographical area that has a significant percentage of jobs under \$15 an hour, including Arkansas, which has the highest percentage of those jobs in the U.S.: Arkansas, 47.4%; Oklahoma 43.8%; Missouri, 41.6%.

"We decided to make the transition immediately, rather than in stages, because this critical decision can positively affect so many lives and families," said Britton. "It is our prayer and hope that this will ease the financial stress of many co-workers, regardless of where they work in our ministry, and let them know what they do matters greatly to the patients and families we serve every day."

In addition to raising wages of co-workers making less than \$15 an hour, Mercy will continue to review co-worker pay across all communities and job descriptions and adjust accordingly.

Educator Breastfeeding Support Bill Becomes Law

As Oklahoma schools prepare for the beginning of school, COBA kicked off National Breastfeeding Month with the passage of Senate Bill 121, which became law on July 1. The new legislation requires school districts to allow their employees time during the workday to express milk or breastfeed. School districts must also make a reasonable effort to provide lactating mothers with a private, secure, and sanitary room for pumping or nursing.

COBA worked diligently this year with SB 121 authors Senator Carri Hicks and Representative Toni Hasenbeck to champion the needs of Oklahoma's breastfeeding families, and recently joined Governor Kevin Stitt at the Oklahoma State Capitol for a bill signing. COBA is honored to partner with the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) and the American Federation of Teachers Oklahoma (AFT-Ok) to create a downloadable toolkit for districts as they work to implement breastfeeding-friendly policies.

COBA Board Chair Becky Mannel: "Our public school teachers care for our kids all day, and I'm so happy that we're now supporting them to care for their own babies by giving them pumping breaks during the school day. We commend Senator Hicks, Representative Hasenbeck and the other legislative authors of Senate Bill 121 for recognizing that workplaces play a crucial role in providing supportive and relevant policies for mothers, who are the fastest growing segment of our nation's labor force."

SB 121 Author Sen. Carri Hicks: "Being a new mother is stressful enough, and constantly worrying about maintaining one's milk supply makes it even worse. This new law ensures that, starting this school year, our teachers and school employees now have the same rights as government and public employees and can nurse and pump while at work. I'm extremely grateful for the bipartisan support this bill received and to COBA and all the mothers and families who advocated for this critical change and helped get this new law on the books."



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CAREERS IN NURSING

OUTSTANDING IN HER FIELD: OKLAHOMA/KANSAS REG. CARE SPECIALIST

By Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

Enlivant Senior Living is about living, fully and passionately. Being part of a welcoming, vibrant community. Enjoying a sense of fun at every age. Thriving in mind, body, and spirit. - Enlivant Senior Living- Here, your loved one will be taken care of with the utmost care. One particular nurse is Natasha Normand, RN, BSN. She is the Oklahoma/Kansas Regional Care Specialist for Enlivant Senior Care. She has been a nurse for almost seven years and has been with this facility for two year. "I have grown up with a fascination with science and the medical field. I always knew I wanted to pursue a career in healthcare. I am a very empathetic person and have always wanted to help take care of people, especially our vulnerable population of the disabled and elderly. I grew up in Hammon, Oklahoma, a small western Oklahoma town. My mother

was disabled with Epilepsy. That is when I took on a caregiver role. I believe the dynamics that I was raised in helped me become the nurse I am today," Natasha commented. "I work for Enlivant Senior Living because in our communities, we are able to offer our residents their independence as much as possible. Doing this helps our residents live full lives in the communities, offering our residents their independence as much as possible. Our company also offer Age in Place where we meet their care needs as they age and they are able to live out their lives and make the communities their forever home." Natasha is the Regional Care Specialist for nine Assisted Living/Memory Care Communities. She sees herself as a leader. "I have been Director of Nursing in skilled facilities before becoming a Regional

Care Specialist. My leadership style is to collaborate with my peers to come up with a solution. I am also a big advocate in continuing education with my employees," Natasha commented. Natasha attended school at Oklahoma City University Kramer School of Nursing. "It was an excellent BSN program. The program really prepared me for entering the healthcare field," Natasha said. "My days are usually pretty busy. I am in a different community almost every day," she said. "I offer any nursing support the community and residents need. I perform nursing assessments for our residents and communicate with their physicians. I assist in the admission process with any potential of new residents and their families. The admission team tries to make the transition of moving into one of our communities as smooth as possible." Asking Natasha what advice she

would give to someone going into the medical field, she replied, "I would tell anyone, being a nurse is the most rewarding job you will even have. But, I can also say that it is the most difficult and thankless jobs you will ever have. I would make sure to tell them to have an open mind and an open heart. Also, be sure to wear comfortable shoes," she said with a smile. I asked Natasha to describe herself. "I am passionate about being a nurse. I feel like it is a privilege to be a nurse and be trusted to take care of their loved ones. I enjoy what I do for the communities' residents. Knowing what I do for each one of them really motivates me when times get rough especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. I am a very empathetic person and I always strive to be an advocate for all of our residents. I also do

See NORMAND Page 5



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NORMAND

Continued from Page 4

my best to be a support for my fellow nurses," Natasha said. "I am naturally a workaholic and I want to help everyone. My biggest challenge is work/personal life balance; that is something I am trying to improve on." There were several people that influenced Natasha to go into the medical field. "My maternal grandfather always supported me to pursue a career that I would always be able to be employed and a career that I could grow in. Also, my mother taught me hard work, independence and to be ambitious. I do feel her teaching made me stronger as a person. I have always strived to do my best in anything I did, which lead me to nursing and the career path that I have taken," Natasha explained.

When not working, Natasha enjoys watching movies, makeup, and participating in animal rescues. She has three cats, Sassy, Bruce and Loki.

Summing up Natasha's life in three words, she said it would be, "Fulfilling, busy and grateful."



Doing a little work related traveling is Natasha Normand RN, BSN who is the Oklahoma/Kansas Regional Care Specialist at Enlivant Senior Living.



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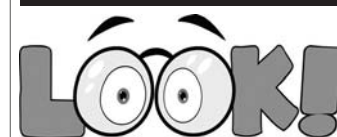
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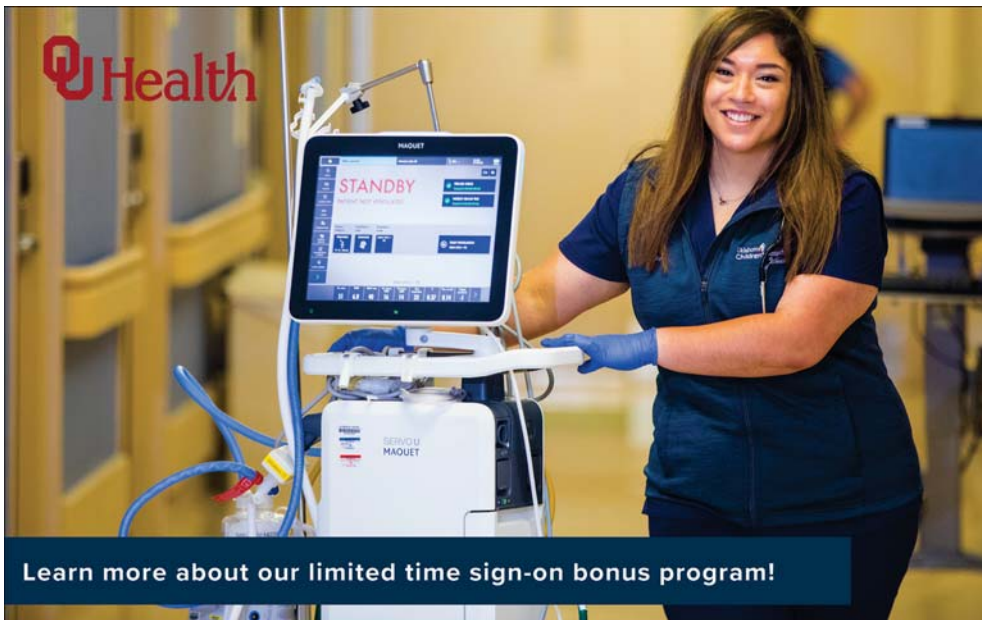
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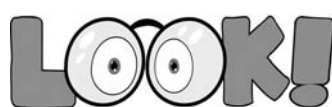
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Organ, eye and tissue donation saves lives. Please make your decision to donate life and tell your family. Register to be an organ, eye and tissue donor on your Oklahoma driver's license or state ID card or register online at www.LifeShareRegistry.org. You may also call 800-826-LIFE (5433) and request a donor registration card.

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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2021 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

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The traditional **Bachelor of Science in Nursing** program is the fastest-growing program at SNU! Since 1982, Southern Nazarene University's Liberal Arts-based program has been preparing well-rounded graduates to work as professional nurses in today's fast-paced, technologically advanced healthcare environment.

Given the increasing complexity of patients in a rapidly transforming healthcare system, preparing nurses to enter the profession and be successful in the field is vital. A goal of the university and the SNU School of Nursing (SON) is to prepare nurses to be servant leaders, focusing on the growth and well-being of the people and the communities where they live and work. Feedback from employers about SNU graduates

include that they are well prepared, compassionate, caring, and have a drive to learn how to best take care of their patients. SNU graduates embody the philosophy of the School of Nursing, which can be summarized in the words **"THINK. DO. LOVE!"**

"To be a part of the SNU School of Nursing is to be part of a family. There are many great characteristics that the SNU SON encompasses. The faculty advocate for students and make us feel valued. We are fortunate enough to attend a nursing program that not only helps us become great nurses, but also well-rounded people.

"I feel confident that my education at SNU has equipped me to serve others and lead in love. There is so much compassion that is felt while attending the SNU School of Nursing." ~ Student Nurses' Association President and Senior Nursing Student, Ciara Lackey.

SNU welcomes all inquiries about the program!

To learn more, please visit our website at snu.edu/nursing, or schedule a campus visit at snu.edu/campus-visit.



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SITUATION UPDATE: COVID-19

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| COVID-19 Cases | 524,376 |
| New Cases | 2,851 |
| New Cases 7 day Average | 2,220 |
| Active Cases | 20,483 |
| CDC/NCHS Provisional Deaths | 8,957 |

| Acute Care OSDH Licensed Facilities/Location** | Recent 3 day Ave. Hospitalizations |
|--|------------------------------------|
| | Cases (ICU) |
| Region 1 (NW) | 35 (11) |
| Region 2 (NE) | 129 (31) |
| Region 3 (SW) | 149 (33) |
| Region 4 (EC) | 80 (20) |
| Region 5 (SE) | 58 (11) |
| Region 6 (Central) | 91 (24) |
| Region 7 (Tulsa) | 493 (144) |
| Region 8 (OKC) | 345 (94) |
| Total | 1,380* (368) |
| Other Types of Facilities | |
| Focus Facilities | 64 (19) |
| Rehabilitation Facilities | 1 (0) |
| Tribal Facilities | 42 (11) |
| Other Facilities Total | 107 (30) |

*Includes 56 pediatric hospitalizations

**Focus, Rehabilitation and Tribal Facilities numbers are not assigned to a specific region as their patient populations reside across the state. Information provided through survey of Oklahoma hospitals as reported to HHS as of the time of this report. Response rate affects data. Facilities may update previously reported information as necessary.

Data Source: Acute Disease Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health. *As of 2021-08-20 at 7:00 a.m.



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OU College of Medicine Researcher Sheds Light on Discovery of Genes Related to COVID-19

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, several questions have persisted: Why do some people become infected while others with the same exposure remain unaffected? And why do some people become critically ill or die because of the virus while others have mild or no symptoms?

The answers may lie in genetics. A large international study published recently in the journal *Nature* shows that 13 genes are associated with susceptibility to COVID-19 infection or severity of the disease once a person is infected.

Dharambir Sanghera, Ph.D., Professor of Pediatric Genetics at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine, said the study is a major step toward understanding who is most at risk from COVID-19 or future viral infections. Sanghera, whose own research focuses on how a person's genetic makeup interacts with lifestyle factors to lead to diabetes, has been carefully following the worldwide

studies of genetics and COVID-19.

"Human genetics can be used as an instrument to identify high-risk individuals," she said. "This study is only the first step, but the genetic information that was discovered provides very important clues."

Factors like older age and obesity are known to create a higher risk for severe disease with COVID-19, but those risk factors alone do not explain why people have had vastly different experiences with the virus. Sanghera said that's why genetics studies are so important — for their ability to pinpoint genes that may predispose people to infection or severe disease, whether or not they are older or overweight. It is similar to her diabetes genetics research — people who are obese or overweight in general face a higher risk for diabetes; however, some people who are average weight and physically active get diabetes because of their genetic predisposition. When these genes interact with environmental



Dharambir Sanghera, Ph.D., Professor of Pediatric Genetics at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine.

stressors, they cause people to have high insulin resistance and high sugar in their bodies.

The COVID-19 genetics project was large — it spanned 46 different studies in 19 countries and nearly 50,000 COVID-19 patients whose genetic data was already known. Of the 13 genes identified as being involved in COVID-19 infection or disease severity, several were already known for their association with respiratory conditions, lung diseases and autoimmune diseases.

Interestingly, the study used genetics to link both smoking and body mass index to susceptibility to COVID-19 and more severe disease and death after infection. Smoking and obesity make it more difficult for the body to fight the virus, but a genetic predisposition toward smoking and obesity also plays a role. Researchers continue the work of untangling the cause and effect, but the increased risk due to genetic predisposition remains,

and that predisposition was likely involved in worsening symptoms, even death, Sanghera said.

Although it is too early for the study's findings to guide patient care, the discovery of the 13 genes associated with COVID-19 is an important starting point, Sanghera said. She expects many other genetic signatures will be identified in the near future.

Understanding a person's genetic makeup is the future of medicine, Sanghera said. As researchers and physicians learn more about genetic influences on disease, they will be better able to target genes to prevent or treat infections like COVID-19. Until then, vaccination remains the most important step a person can take to avoid COVID-19 infection and serious disease.

"Because of Oklahoma's poor health status and low vaccination rate, the risks remain high, particularly with the more contagious delta variant," she said.




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OU Health Updates Visitation Policy

As conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic continue to change, OU Health has revised its visitation policy.

OU Health understands the emotional support and comfort patients gain when friends and family members visit contribute greatly to the process of healing that restores health. However, it is essential to balance these important needs with the imperative to safeguard the well-being of all patients, their guests as well as staff members.

Effective August 23, all adult patients admitted to OU Health University of Oklahoma Medical Center or OU Health Edmond Medical Center may be visited by one guest at a time, with a maximum of two guests in any 24-hour period. Adult patients of an OU Health clinic are allowed one guest to accompany them to appointments. This includes clinics on the Oklahoma Health Center campus, OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center, OU Health Harold Hamm Diabetes Center, community and offsite clinics and

University of Oklahoma Medical Center clinics. Guests must be over 18 years of age.

Patients who have COVID-19 may not receive visitors. However, patients under 18 years of age who have COVID-19 may have one guest. In addition, the highly vulnerable patients in the Autumn Life geriatric behavioral health unit at OU Health Edmond Medical Center may not have visitors.

At Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health, two designated guests for pediatric or perinatal patients will be allowed during the patient's hospital stay. Pediatric patients of an OU Health clinic are allowed two guests to accompany them to appointments. This includes clinics on the Oklahoma Health Center campus, community and offsite clinics such as Southwest Pediatrics, Super Ninos, Kids' First, Oklahoma Children's Hospital clinics and the OU Health Prenatal Diagnostic Center.

OU Health continues to observe precautions deemed necessary to

decrease the potential spread of COVID-19 to staff and patients, therefore, guests of hospital and clinic patients must:

- Be screened for COVID-19 at an entrance or point of service. If screen results are positive, or if guests feel unwell and/or show any symptoms of COVID-19, they will not be allowed to stay.
- Sign to acknowledge acceptance of terms contained in the Guest Expectations form.
- Wear an approved mask at all times while in the facility, including the patient's room. Acceptable masks include:

-Cloth mask

-Procedural/surgical-type masks

-Neck gaiters, buffs, bandanas, scarves or masks with vents or exhalation valves are not allowed.

- Stay in the patient's room at all times, unless asked to leave by hospital staff for reasons related to safety or patient care. If asked to leave a patient's room temporarily, guests will use a designated waiting area until notified by a care team member to return to the patient's room.

- Understand that failure to comply will require immediate departure; visitor may not return as the guest of a patient.

Waiting rooms and cafeterias are monitored, and appropriate physical distancing measures will be observed. Hospital guests are discouraged from coming and going throughout the day. If guests leave the hospital, they should discuss a planned return with department leadership.

End-of-life events are uniquely sensitive. Requests for family in-person attendance for a patient care conference require approval from the administrator on call at the University of Oklahoma Medical Center and Oklahoma Children's Hospital or hospital administration at Edmond Medical Center.

- For all OU Health hospital locations, the department director may approve up to three visitor exceptions for patients nearing end of life.

Requests outside of these guidelines require approval from the administrator on call at University of Oklahoma Medical Center and Oklahoma Children's Hospital or hospital administration at Edmond Medical Center.

- Visitors for COVID-19 patients must receive Just-In-Time Fit Testing from clinical coordinators for an N-95 mask and must wear appropriate PPE to include eye protection, gloves and gown while with the patient.

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