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# Integrus launches innovative care model



Integrus Health nurses, doctors, and other therapies are teaming to provide patient care at home through a unique program model. Photo provided.

by Bobby Anderson, RN - staff writer

With hospitals nationwide struggling with bed availability, Integrus Health has embarked on a new healthcare model that could revolutionize the way patients receive care, all in the comfort of their own homes.

"Really what opened up the need for this is clearly the surge we've had with the Covid pandemic," said Lisa Rother, RN, director of Integrus Health@Home. "It's opened up payor's

eyes to actually reimburse hospitals for innovative care models that allow us to extend access to care within other creative environments such as the home environments."

With the onslaught of COVID-19, health systems everywhere have turned to technology to find better solutions for patients. Virtual doctor visits once

thought impossible are now considered routine. In the pursuit of constant innovation, Integrus Health partnered with Medically Home Group, Inc. to provide hospital-level care to patients in the comfort and convenience of their own homes.

"We have to demonstrate all of the care we could provide in a brick and mortar hospital

See MODEL Page 2



## MODEL

Continued from Page 1

that we would be able to support and provide that same level of care in the home environment," Rother said. "Now that we have a payor model that will allow us to bill for patient care it really allowed us to seek partners in helping us to provide a model of care we can deliver in that home environment."

The command center that receives all the data is monitored 24/7 by a team of Integris Health physicians and nurses who will respond to a patient's medical needs via video or telephone.

Daily in-home visits by a nurse practitioner and other health care professionals are also part of the treatment plan. IV therapies, oxygen treatments, lab tests, mobile imaging like x-rays, and ultrasound are all performed in the home. Other services include skilled nursing, medications, infusions, behavioral health, and rehabilitation.

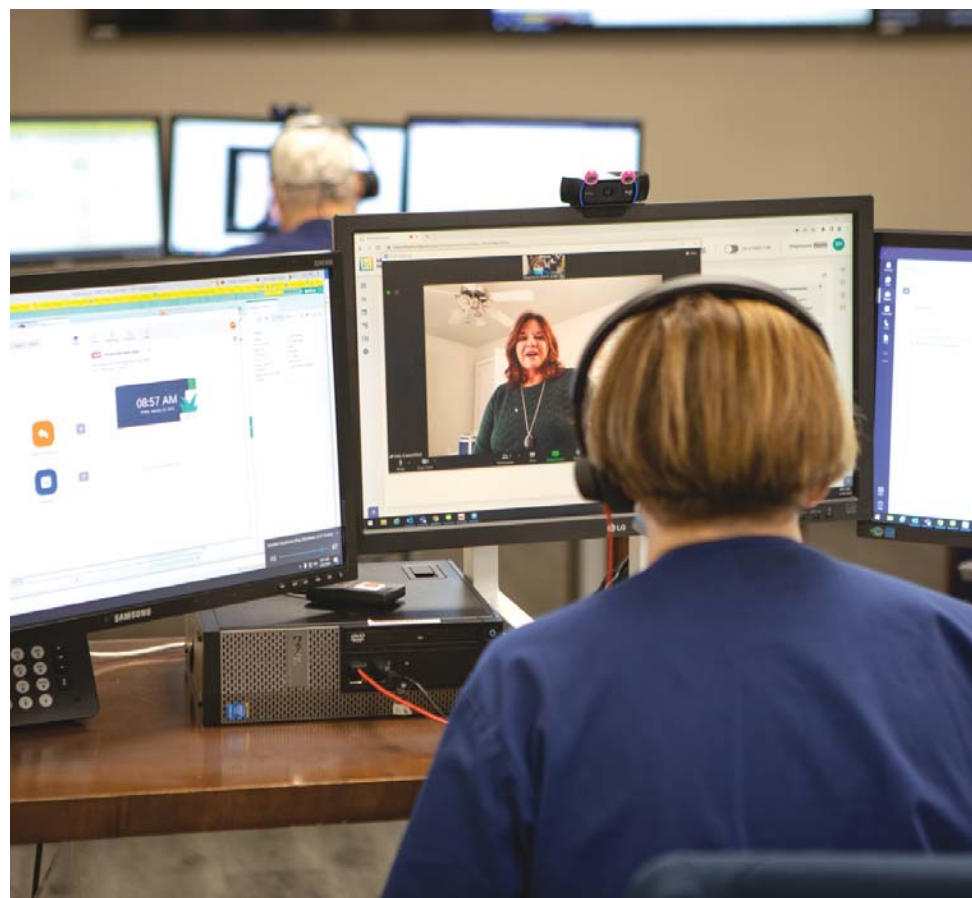
IntegrisHealth@Home at

Integris Baptist and Southwest Medical Centers are now seeking qualifying patients to receive acute hospital-level care in the comfort and convenience of their own homes.

Patients consenting to admission into this model of care must meet inpatient admission criteria, live within a 30-mile radius of the admitting hospital, and have the clinical and social stability to receive care at home.

Common conditions for patients receiving acute care in the home include congestive heart failure, respiratory ailments, diabetes complications, infections like pneumonia, as well as COVID-19.

"We began researching innovative ways to provide this type of care to eligible patients before the pandemic began, but the COVID crisis prompted us to accelerate our timeline," said Timothy Pehrson, president, and chief executive officer of INTEGRIS Health. "We see the benefit as twofold. The program allows our patients to heal in a



familiar environment surrounded by loved ones while improving access by opening up beds for other high acute issues."

Qualifying patients will receive a remote patient monitoring kit and other home health equipment as needed for their particular diagnoses. Standard equipment includes a blood pressure monitor, pulse oximeter, cellular-enabled digital tablet, and a digital scale. Based on need, additional equipment such as a continuous heart rate and oxygen sensor will be added. All the devices connect to a tablet through Bluetooth and transmit vital signs to a remote monitoring center. Patients are also given an emergency call bracelet.

The Integris Health@Home Command Center hospitalists and nurses connect with the patient through telehealth visits scheduled regularly throughout the day coupled with caregiver visits to the home to administer medications, deliver equipment and supplies, and perform clinical procedures.

The Integris Health @ Home Command Center is located at Integris Baptist Medical Center Portland Avenue

Rother said patients will also have the ability to contact their

nurses directly as needed through the push of a button.

"Technology is enabling us to provide the right care to patients in a way that is safe and helps them recover where they are most comfortable," Pehrson said. "As the Hospital at Home model continues to expand across the country, we expect more and more patients will choose to receive this high-quality care at home."

Research backing the clinical benefits of remote patient monitoring has been available for well over a decade, with a study published back in 2005 showing that hospital-at-home care resulted in patients having a shorter length of stay — 3.2 days versus 4.9 days — and fewer complications.

A Kaiser Permanente study revealed that of 13,055 patients enrolled in its COVID-19 Home Monitoring program between April 2020 and February 2021, 95.5 percent recovered and completed the program, 10.6 percent were admitted to the hospital, and 0.2 percent died.

The model will be offered at Integris Canadian Valley and Integris Health Edmond in late spring.

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# OU Health invests \$25 million in nursing workforce, leading the market in frontline nurse compensation

OU Health announced today that it is investing \$25 million in its nursing workforce, including pay increases across the healthcare system for frontline nurses and nurse supervisors. This investment positions OU Health as the regional leader in nursing compensation.

This is one of many investments in the OU Health workforce, coming on the heels of a \$50 million investment in 2021 that brought new benefits like paid parental leave and \$20,000 in fertility services per employee. OU Health is transforming its nursing workforce through data-driven scheduling and enhanced benefits. The organization previously launched several initiatives to create a better work-life balance for nurses and to grow the future nursing

workforce.

By investing in nurses, OU Health is also investing in quality patient care, said Harold Burkhart, M.D., acting CEO of OU Health.

"Nursing is the absolute cornerstone of direct patient care," Burkhart said. "After the surgery, through rehab or recovery, or throughout an extended illness, the connections that nurses make with patients and families are the foundation of a positive patient experience. At OU Health, we intend to revolutionize key components of the nursing career experience, from compensation that is meaningful and appropriate to staffing models that are rational and flexible."

The academic nursing component of OU Health, the Fran and Earl

Ziegler College of Nursing at the OU Health Sciences Center, also is playing a major role in nursing recruitment and retention.

OU Health nurses wanting to continue their education can participate in the OU College of Nursing degree accelerator program. The OU College of Nursing also is expanding its Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program by creating new program locations at the Norman Regional Hospital Health System in Norman and at Duncan Regional Hospital in Duncan. The OU College of Nursing is the largest nursing program in Oklahoma.

OU Health Interim Chief Nursing Executive Julie Hoff, Ph.D., MPH, RN, said the \$25 million investment is



an important step for rewarding and supporting current nurses, attracting nurses to be a part of the core nursing staff at OU Health and in transforming the future of nursing in Oklahoma.

OU Health, like most healthcare systems across Oklahoma and the nation, faces a shortage of nurses and a nursing workforce fatigued by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, the nursing profession will continue to face demands associated

See INVESTS Page 5

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# INVESTS

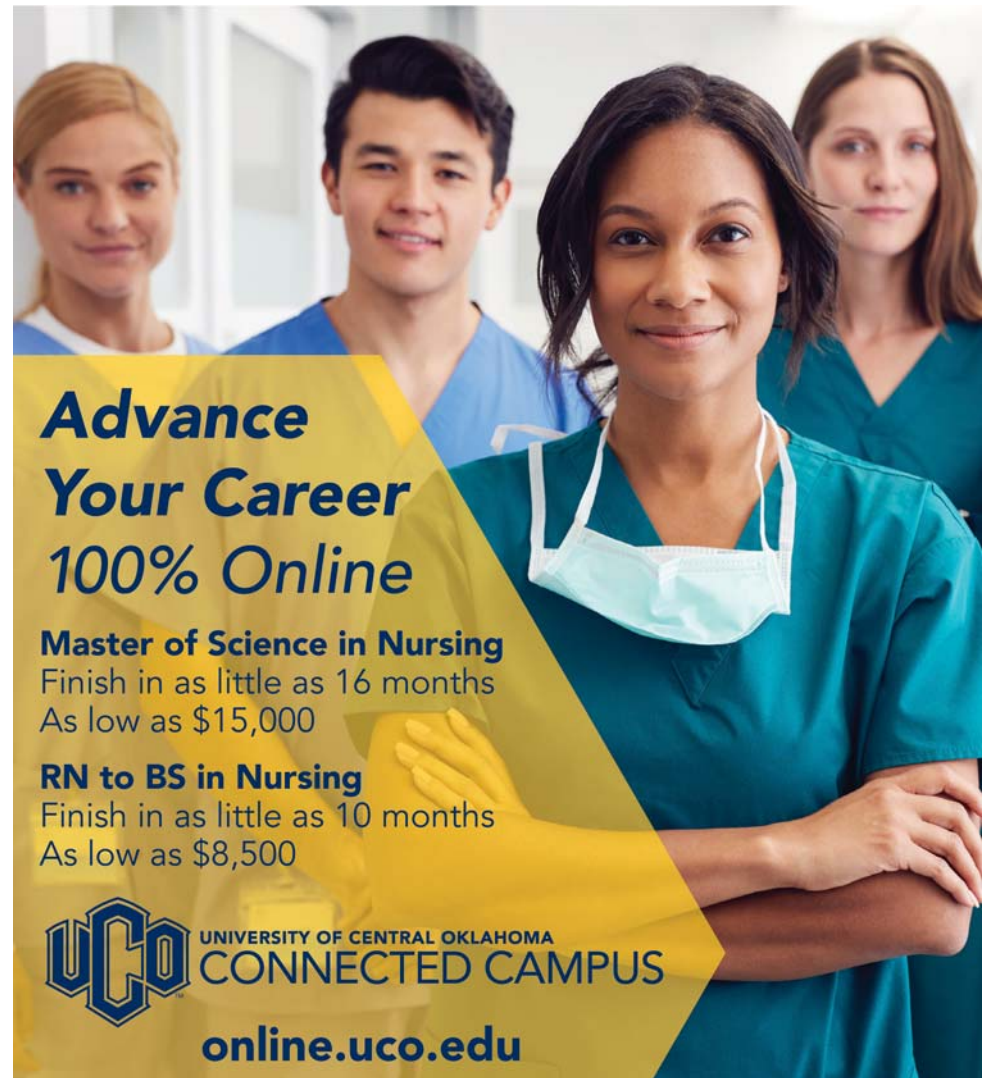
Continued from Page 4

with an aging population, a retiring workforce and capacity limits of nursing education programs. As the state's comprehensive academic health system, OU Health cares for a higher proportion of patients with complex conditions, requiring an increased bedside presence and specialized knowledge and skills.

"OU Health provides nurses with the opportunity to work in an environment where education and research are combined to provide the best possible clinical care. They gain unmatched experience in breadth and depth due to constant exposure to cutting-edge treatments

and interventions not available at other hospitals and health systems in Oklahoma," Hoff said. "By continually investing in our nurses, we create the opportunity for them to thrive and drive the change needed to improve health outcomes in Oklahoma. Nurses are dedicated and compassionate, and they truly make a difference in each patient's well-being. Our mission is to make OU Health the best place to be and grow as a professional nurse and to inspire those who are considering a career in nursing."

To learn more about nursing careers at OU Health, visit [www.ouhealth.com/nursing](http://www.ouhealth.com/nursing). To have a recruiter reach out to you directly, visit [www.ouhealth.com/nurseinterest](http://www.ouhealth.com/nurseinterest).



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**Respiratory Care Practitioners have the potential to earn up to \$20,000 in a graduated sign-on bonus!**

OU Health is the state's only Level 1 Trauma Center and serves as a comprehensive regional hub for trauma-related care available to people of all ages. We are an academic facility and promote a fast-paced environment that will allow your career to really take off. We have six clinical affiliate programs for Respiratory care and we welcome new graduates to our team, no experience necessary. Our graduated orientation process, from floor care to Trauma ED, will help ensure that you will find your confidence through a combination of developing critical thinking skills and peer support.

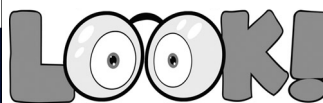
At OU Health you can expect to gain a host of specialized skills by rotating through our service line critical care areas, which include Trauma, ortho/surgical, cardiovascular, Neurosciences, transplant and medicine ICU's. We encourage and support our RTs to perform in specialty roles such as the COPD navigator, Daily assessor, Smoking cessation advocate, Diagnostic Bronchoscopy and we have staff that are part of the ECMO specialist team as well.

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# Mercy Awarded \$2.2 Million to Expand Virtual Care for Patients

As the COVID-19 pandemic surges, so does the need for more virtual care options for patients everywhere. Thanks to a \$2.2 million grant from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Mercy will expand and upgrade telehealth services for patients across Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

"This grant will help us extend our telehealth care to more people in the communities we serve," said David Hinkle, executive director of business operations for Mercy's Virtual Care Center. "When we applied for the grant as part of our response to COVID, we looked at what we did during the first few months of the pandemic and how technology enabled our initial COVID response. We were able to limit bedside exposure because patients could connect to our caregivers from home. We were also able to provide invaluable communication between hospitalized COVID patients and their families.

Additional funding will provide more telehealth opportunities across Mercy's footprint, especially in our rural facilities."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Mercy has provided more than 800,000 virtual visits between patients and Mercy Clinic medical providers, a stark increase from the 10,000 Mercy virtual visits in 2019.

Benefits of telehealth also include allowing specialists to connect remotely to support patient care, preserving personal protective equipment for in-patient care and promoting social distancing by serving high-risk and vul

"We had to move very quickly when the pandemic hit," said Dr. Gavin Helton, president of Mercy Virtual. "Because we had done so much foundational work in the virtual care space, we were able to quickly ramp up and provide care to our communities without the need for patients to leave home. Mercy's newest virtual offering, COVID Care



Since the beginning of the pandemic, Mercy has provided more than 800,000 virtual visits between patients and Mercy Clinic medical providers.

@ Home, has kept thousands of people out of the hospital and at home where they could be monitored 24/7."

The \$2.2 million grant will provide telemedicine carts and monitors that allow Mercy co-workers

to contact offsite caregivers via video conferencing and allow for specialized, remote treatment, especially inside Mercy's COVID and critical care units.

See STUDY page 9

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## FROM OUR FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK

**From: Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health Happy Heart Week**



Happy Heart Week from our Oklahoma Children's Hospital Heart Center team! From clinic check-ups to hospital stays in the pediatric cardiac intensive care unit (CICU), our team supports patients and families along their entire journey. Learn more about our team and programs at <https://www.ouhealth.com/.../chil.../heart-care-for-children>

## STUDY

Continued from Page 8

Mercy's award totals \$2,217,562, and funds will be earmarked for each location based on need. Rural facilities, as well as larger Mercy locations, will also benefit from the funding, which will be distributed to states as follows:

**\$793,788 for Mercy in Missouri**  
**\$776,620 for Mercy in Oklahoma**  
**\$647,154 for Mercy in Arkansas**

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Mercy's COVID Care @ Home program has enrolled more than 65,000 patients. In addition, virtual care services have allowed Mercy caregivers to recommend the most appropriate level of care for clinically triaged patients. Of those in the program, approximately 800 were referred to a Mercy emergency department for a higher level of care. The remainder of patients

were managed either at home or at one of several outpatient settings.

"We're seeing the future of health care during every virtual visit between patients and providers," said Dr. David Hunton, president of Mercy Clinic Fort Smith. "Telehealth has proven to be an invaluable tool as we continue to work to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our facilities and communities. It's also convenient for our patients, allowing them an option to get medical care from the safety of their home. With the push of a button, we're connecting patients with an expert medical team. This represents part of the future for health care delivery and means more access for more people."

Previous grants awarded to Mercy (most recently in 2019) include funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help bring virtual care to rural areas served by Mercy.

## FROM OUR FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK

**From: Hillcrest Medical Center Happy PeriAnesthesia Nurse Awareness Week**



**Happy PeriAnesthesia Nurse Awareness Week to all our amazing PeriAnesthesia nurses here at Hillcrest!**

These nurses care for and monitor patients preparing to undergo and coming out of anesthesia and sedation. However, our professionals' jobs extend much further than that, as they have transformed patient care with their compassion and dedication to their profession. Thank you!





(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2021 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

# LPN to RN: Evening or online at WOSC



Opportunities for nurses to advance abound at Western Oklahoma State College in Altus.

Working full-time, the struggle is real for LPNs trying to get their RN.

Throw in family and the rest that life has to offer and it gets easier and easier to postpone your dreams.

Leaders at Western Oklahoma State College recognized that reality and answered the call to bring quality, affordable and convenient nursing education to those that needed it.

And as an added bonus, it's helped Southwest Oklahoma facilities find the trained staff they need.

"We really feel that our nursing program has a strong tie to workforce," said Chrystal Overton, M.S., R.N. and Vice President for Academic Affairs at WOSC. "I feel in our state Gov. Stitt is really pushing workforce development with colleges and universities and we feel like nursing is one of those programs that has that tie."

Located in Altus, Western Oklahoma State College was originally established as Altus Junior College in 1926, and is the oldest original municipal two-year college in Oklahoma. On August 16, 1974, Altus Junior College became Western Oklahoma State College by an act of the state legislatures.

The school's nursing program began in 1981 and graduated its first class in 1983.

Two other locations are also offered: one in Lawton, housed at

Cameron University and the other in Elk City, housed on the campus of Great Plains Regional Medical Center.

Accredited by the National League of Nursing Nursing Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation, the school offers a traditional program for general students and advanced standing placement for LPNs. A full-time day program is offered at each campus along with the LPN to RN online track offering an online didactic with face-to-face clinicals.

The evening track at the Lawton campus began last year through a partnership with Comanche County Memorial Hospital.

The fall of 2018 was the first online offering for LPNs to advance their education. No driving around after work and no classroom to sit in.

"This was very successful," said Stacey Machado, DNP, RN, and the Director of Nursing Education at Western Oklahoma State College.

The first cohort of 28 students graduated in May 2019 from the LPN-RN online program that included a clinical component.

In the fall of 2019, WOSC brought in its first cohort of students in the evening track at Lawton.

Now 18 more are on track to graduate in the spring of 2021.

This evening program is a

great option for many students. Having this additional option for students will increase the capacity at Western and as well as help provide southwest Oklahoma with the Registered Nurses needed to maintain healthcare in the rural parts of the state.

The program also had a goal of collaborating with clinical affiliates so students would have immediate options for work.

"It absolutely made sense," said Machado. "Our goal when our students graduate is they are immediately ready to go after passing boards. Also we wanted them to have an opportunity to work at their clinical sites."

The plan has been a win for everyone. Students are getting the hands-on experience they need and are able to scope out where they feel like they will fit in.

The clinical sites get on-the-job feedback to make offers before graduation. Machado knows facilities appreciate her students.

"A lot of feedback we get from area hospital nurses, managers and directors is that our students come out as great critical thinkers," Machado said. "They're self-reliant and able to get on the floor

and show they've come out of a program that has rigor in the training process."

The application window for the next spring period will begin November 1 for any returning or transfer students coming into nursing.

Applications for the following fall will open in December.

"To obtain an associate degree that leads to a high wage, high skill career and career is phenomenal," Overton said of the opportunity. "They can decrease the amount of student loan debt they have and be able to go out into the workforce after passing boards.

"That's pretty critical. A large number of students do go on for their bachelor's and some their master's. When you look at the economy and concern with high student loan debt, our program really makes sense."

Machado said the school's curriculum is aligned with most bachelor's programs meaning students won't be slowed down by having to take more prerequisites later on down the road.

For more information go to: <https://www.wosc.edu/index.php?page=nursing-admission>



# RSU Health Sciences Department Hires State Director Madeline Haralson



Rogers State University's department of health sciences announced the hiring of Madeline Haralson as an adjunct instructor for the allied health program.

"We are so pleased to bring Maddie onboard as one of our allied health

instructors. She brings several years of experience as a certified athletic trainer in area high schools and in higher education settings. Her energy for teaching is contagious," Dr. Carla Lynch, department head and professor for the department of health sciences,

said.

Haralson, from Washington, IA, was appointed as the State Director for the National High School Strength and Conditioning Association last month. This association appoints a state director to represent all the coaches within each state in the United States. The state director is the voice for all coaches in the state, hosts state-wide clinics and family days, presents coach of the year awards, assembles an advisory board, and assists with the building of a state-wide network.

Additionally, Haralson is the strength and conditioning specialist at Owasso High School. She earned a bachelor's in exercise science and

a master's in health sciences from Lindenwood University.

"Throughout my education, I was blessed with meeting some of the best mentors. I am eager to give back and be a mentor to young and upcoming professionals in the allied health field," Haralson said.

RSU's Bachelor of Science in Allied Health Sciences degree prepares highly effective allied health care professionals for employment or acceptance to professional programs such as athletic training, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

For more information about health sciences programs at RSU, visit [www.rsu.edu/hs](http://www.rsu.edu/hs).

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# Antihistamines show promise in treating long COVID-19 symptoms

Antihistamines may provide relief for the millions of people suffering from the painful, debilitating symptoms of long COVID-19 that impair daily functioning. That's the conclusion of a case report on the experiences of two such patients co-authored by nursing scholars at the University of California, Irvine.

The effects of COVID-19 on individuals range from mild symptoms to several weeks of illness to ailments including brain fog, joint pain, exercise intolerance and fatigue that last for months after the initial infection. The clinical term for these lingering long COVID-19 effects is post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2, for which there is no standard treatment.

"Patients tell us they wish more than anything that they could work

and do the most basic activities they used to before they got sick with long COVID. They are desperately searching for something to help them get back on their feet," said the report's corresponding author, Melissa Pinto, UCI associate professor of nursing. "Currently, there is no cure for PASC, only symptom management. A number of options are being tried, with antihistamines being one of them. The possibility that an easy-to-access, over-the-counter medication could ease some of the PASC symptoms should offer hope to the estimated 54 million people worldwide who have been in distress for months or even years."

The case report, recently published in *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners* - <https://jim.bmj.com/content/70/1/61>, describes two healthy, active middle-

aged women with PASC who found, by chance, that antihistamines led to greatly enhanced daily function, now sustained for almost a year. Both took over-the-counter antihistamines to treat other conditions - the first one had triggered her dairy allergy by eating cheese, -and the other had run out of the allergy medication she usually took - and experienced improved cognition and much less fatigue the next morning. The first woman's long COVID-19 symptoms also included exercise intolerance, chest pain, headaches, a rash and bruising, while the second coped with joint and abdominal pain, as well as the rashes and lesions known as "COVID toes."

In the first case, the woman didn't take another antihistamine for 72 hours; when her symptoms reappeared, she took the medication and again found relief. With guidance from her primary healthcare provider, who prescribed her an antihistamine, she began a daily dosage that has significantly decreased her other long COVID-19 symptoms. She reported that she has regained 90 percent of her pre-COVID-19 daily function.

In the second case, the woman took a different over-the-counter antihistamine as a substitute for what she had taken for years to manage her seasonal allergies. After noting that her long COVID-19 fatigue and cognition had improved, she continued to take it daily along with other allergy medicine. Her course of treatment, which now includes both over-the-counter medications, has also significantly reduced her additional long COVID-19 symptoms. She reported that she has regained 95 percent of her pre-illness functioning.

Previous studies, including those in the *Journal of Investigative Medicine* - <https://jim.bmj.com/content/70/1/61> and *Pulmonary Pharmacology & Therapeutics* - <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1094553920301462>, have similarly shown the potential benefit of antihistamines as treatment for PASC.

"Most patients tell us that providers have not recommended anything that has helped. If patients wish to try OTC antihistamines,



Amir Rahmani is a co-authors on the report and UCI associate professor of nursing.

I urge them to do so under medical supervision. And because providers may not know about new potential treatments, I would encourage patients to be active in their care and consider taking research and case reports like ours to appointments with providers so they can help create a regimen that will work," Pinto said. "The next steps for this research into antihistamine treatment are to conduct broad-based trials in order to evaluate efficacy and to develop dosage schedules for clinical practice guidelines."

Additional co-authors on the report are Amir Rahmani and Candace Burton, UCI associate professors of nursing; Thomas Hughes and Heather Abraham, UCI nursing science graduate students; Natalie Lambert, associate research professor of biostatistics & health data science at the Indiana University School of Medicine; Dr. Rana Chakraborty, pediatric infectious disease specialist at the Mayo Clinic; and Charles Downs, associate professor at the University of Miami School of Nursing & Health Studies.

## Meeting Health Care Workforce Needs in Central Oklahoma



"Moore Norman's PN program is intense, but I was prepared and passed every exam. I know I'll be successful as a practical nurse and beyond."  
— JaLisa Shaw  
MNTC Practical Nursing Graduate

### PRACTICAL NURSING

MNTC's clinical site partnerships are strong throughout the metro area, and are another reason why our students are a first choice when health care providers and hospitals in Oklahoma look for qualified employees.



# UCO Ranked Among Top Universities for Occupational Health and Safety Degree



The University of Central Oklahoma is ranked as a top institution for its Bachelor of Science in occupational safety according to a recent national ranking by Best Health Degrees. Central ranked 12 out of 25 and is one of only two institutions in Oklahoma on the list.

Programs were assessed on affordability, accreditation, reputation and salary potential. Data sources include the National Center for Education Statistics and the U.S. News and World Report, among other higher education rating publications.

"We are honored and humbled to be mentioned alongside the other fine universities on the list," said Dean Findley, Ph.D., associate professor of adult education and safety sciences at UCO.

"This recognition reinforces the hard work of our occupational safety students, faculty and staff. It also speaks well for the university as a whole. Our students and those that hire our graduates have long recognized the value of the education received at UCO."

In addition to the Bachelor of Science in occupational safety, Central offers a minor in occupational safety that can be completed 100% online or in person.

The occupational safety program is accredited as a Graduate Safety Practitioner (GSP) Qualified Academic Program (QAP) from the National Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP). This allows safety graduates to apply for the GSP designation upon graduation, by passing the Associate Safety Professional exam on their path toward the Certified Safety Professional certification (CSP).

To view a complete list of rankings, visit [www.besthealthdegrees.com/best-occupational-health-bachelors](http://www.besthealthdegrees.com/best-occupational-health-bachelors).

For more information about the occupational safety degree program at Central, visit [www.uco.edu/programs/ceps/program-occupational-safety-major](http://www.uco.edu/programs/ceps/program-occupational-safety-major).

## Situation Update: COVID-19

<b>COVID-19 Cases</b>	<b>1,005,388</b>
<b>New Cases</b>	<b>2,230</b>
<b>New Cases 7 day Average</b>	<b>1,779</b>
<b>Active Cases</b>	<b>29,565</b>
<b>CDC/NCHS Provisional Deaths (As of 02/10/22)</b>	<b>13,830</b>
<b>Acute Care OSDH Licensed Facilities/Location**</b>	<b>Recent 3 day Ave. Hospitalizations</b>
	<b>Cases (ICU)</b>
Region 1 (NW)	48 (11)
Region 2 (NE)	96 (20)
Region 3 (SW)	194 (34)
Region 4 (EC)	88 (21)
Region 5 (SE)	49 (6)
Region 6 (Central)	113 (27)
Region 7 (Tulsa)	422 (105)
Region 8 (OKC)	500 (103)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1510* (327)</b>
<b>Other Types of Facilities</b>	
Focus Facilities	92 (20)
Rehabilitation Facilities	6 (0)
Tribal Facilities	47 (10)
<b>Other Facilities Total</b>	<b>145 (30)</b>

\*Includes 68 hospitalizations in pediatric beds.

\*\*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 2022-02-11 at 7:00 a.m.





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