

Faith of a caregiver *RN thankful for career*



As a registered nurse with All Faith Home Care, Michael Boensch blends compassion and technical skill to improve the lives of others.

story and photo by James Coburn, Staff Writer

Michael Boensch loves the fact that his nursing career is with a Christian organization where everybody lifts each other up as an employee. They also have a common philosophy toward patient care. He has the pleasure of watching patients improve in his career as a registered nurse at All Faith Home Care, located in Edmond.

"You get to develop quite a professional relationship with these patients," Boensch said. "They come to depend on you and that's quite a feeling."

Boensch had been an LPN since 2007

when he graduated from Southern Nazarene University in 2013 with his Master of Business Administration degree in Health Care. In April he became a registered nurse after earning a degree at Rose State College in December. He plans on earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree to broaden his horizons.

"In health care I've been with several different agencies, and they all had different

Norman Regional hires, prepares student nurses



Norman Regional Health System is helping student nurses transition from the classroom to the bedside with its Student Nurse Partner Program.

The Student Nurse Partner (SNP) Program employs nursing students in their last semester of nursing school. The students work in a dual role that not only compensates them for their clinical hours needed to graduate, but also requires them to work as nursing assistants. The program began in March 2021 after Gov. Kevin Stitt and the Oklahoma Board of Nursing recognized extreme staffing shortages that were exacerbated by COVID-19. The policy encouraged partnerships between health facilities and academic institutions to improve clinical education as well as support staff with patient care needs.

The idea for Norman Regional's program began when Student Coordinator Stephanie McGinnis witnessed staffing shortages. She also saw students' inability to complete their clinical education due to the restriction of visitors and students from entering Norman Regional to protect patients and staff.

Since the program's inception, Norman Regional has had five cohorts of student nurses working within the health system and considers the program to be a success, McGinnis said.

"Norman Regional has hired 19 nurses from the program with an 88% retention rate, compared to the national average of 72% retention for new nurses," she added.

The program is designed to build a nursing student's confidence with realistic, hands-on experience while also strengthening Norman Regional's recruitment pipeline of nurses to fill the staffing shortage. In addition, Norman Regional has seen increases in patient satisfaction and employee engagement, as well as decreased onboarding times for students who later graduate and become full-time employees.

"We're training not only nursing skills, but also

BOENSCH

Continued from Page 1

philosophies on how they take care of their patients and the motivations behind taking care of the patients," he said.

Some of the health care businesses were patient centered, but others were based more on monetary gain, he said. Boensch could tell the difference between the patients with the quality of care they received, he said.

"From my perspective, those that had more of a servant believer type mentality, actually did quite better with the patients and their patient satisfaction," he continued.

Some of his patients are recovering from surgeries and need therapeutic help. Some long-term care patients live with more serious conditions that need to be monitored and addressed. The goal is to help prevent patients from being hospitalized and stay in the comfort of home.

"It's been quite a challenge in the last couple of years with what has gone on with COVID. People with chronic conditions didn't fare as well," he said. "Fortunately, with our patients, we had some that came down with the COVID virus, but for the most part they've recovered and

have done quite well. We try to get the patients back to the best function for themselves, just their personal best."

The nursing staff is mentally equipped with the knowledge they need when going to patients' homes. As accomplished nurses, they are educated about handling situations that pop up at the spur of the moment.

"If they don't, they always call," he said.

The LPNs know to call a registered nurse to be dispatched when needed to perform a task designated for an RN. He loves the fact that the nursing staff pays close attention to listening to their patients.

"I admire that the nurses we have on staff are very loyal, dedicated to the company. And the nurse aides (Trena Anderson and Ky'shawndra Whiteside) are two amazing women. I love the fact that you're not going to find a single patient that we have that would speak ill of the two. It's quite refreshing to have such a great staff. We all work together as a team," he said.

Boensch's character began leaning toward the nursing profession when he was a child. Nursing may have been an abstraction in his mind, but

he had a caring persona to help people. He knew that laughter could improve the quality of life. Boensch never was the type of person who wanted to be the center of attention. He quietly supported people in the background. As he grew older, he ventured into phlebotomy and realized how the medical field helps people.

"I just kind of fell in love with the nursing profession even though I didn't go directly into that. I sidetracked and veered off from there," he said.

Boensch entered emergency medical services as a technician. He liked the fast-paced nature of providing care while riding in ambulances. It was only natural for him to become a nurse. His brother was already an LPN and helped guide him in that direction.

"It's been quite a fulfilling journey," he said. "I thoroughly enjoy this, and I can't see myself doing anything else."

Nurses have opportunities to comfort others by holding hands. Some nurses pray for their patients.

As a nurse, Boensch has prepared meals, provided personal care, and a variety of things including walking dogs because the patients are unable to do that.

"Our job is kind of a comfort giver along with a healer," he said. "So, we're just there to ensure we improve the quality of life for our patients in any way that we can. It's quite a rewarding field. I just love it."

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STUDENT

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"The Norman Way," McGinnis said.

The Norman Way is a term Norman Regional uses to define a standard of values and behaviors its employees are expected to uphold.

Kelia Crabbe, RN, MSN, is a transition to practice specialist who oversees the program at Norman Regional. She works with the schools and Norman Regional nursing staff to help make the program a success.

"For the health system, this is a recruitment opportunity that brings the student to the bedside with the mentoring of a seasoned nurse to deliver quality and safe patient care. The program process strengthens relationships, provides a better understanding of teamwork and solidifies the career path for students," Crabbe said. "Over the last 20 years,

there has been a gap identified between the practice readiness of nursing students and bedside nursing. I truly believe this is the best approach we have seen to improve the transition from academia to the professional world of bedside nursing."

The program has been such a success that Norman Regional has been awarded the opportunity to be a virtual presenter at the annual Vizient Connection Summit in September.

Norman Regional currently contracts with seven local nursing schools, and strategically partners with these nursing schools to have nursing graduates throughout the year.

Student nurses interested in applying to the program can visit: <https://careers-nrh-ok.icims.com/jobs/10757/student-nurse-partner---prn/job>.

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UCO's online nursing program continues to show growth

by Van Mitchell, OKNT writer

Students interested in earning a nursing degree from the University of Central Oklahoma now have multiple options for their education.

One of those options is students obtaining their B.S. degree through UCO's Online R.N. to B.S. track.

The RN to BS in nursing track at the University of Central Oklahoma is available online for registered nurses who are interested in furthering their nursing education. Upon successful completion, nurses will have earned a Bachelor of Science degree.

The R.N. to B.S. track at UCO is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.

"We have had an RN to BS

program since the 1980s, but in 2019, we tilted and fully online, because that is what students wanted," said Nancy Gwin, DNP, MSN, RN, Assistant Professor, RN to BS Coordinator at UCO. "They are working adults, and they want the flexibility and the access. Our enrollment went down during (COVID), but we are now seeing numbers back up to where they were when we started (online). I expect it to continue to grow. The program is very popular."

Gwin said students enroll in the RN to BS program for a variety of reasons.

"The number one reason is that they want to go on to graduate school,



Meredith Caballero lives in Byers, Texas, and is currently a student in UCO's RN to BS program.

and be a Nurse Practitioner, a Nurse Midwife, or a Nurse Anesthetist," she said. "We are seeing a real trend of nurses wanting to go back to school for those."

Lora French, director for Advanced Cardiac Care at INTEGRIS Health in Oklahoma City, is a graduate of the

RN to BSN program.

"As a Registered Nurse going on 30 years with an Associate's Degree," she said. "My intent was always to complete the BSN process."

French attended UCO completing

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ONLINE

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an accounting degree, and MBA.

"My experience with UCO was remarkably positive such that rounding out a nursing career and finishing the BSN degree was the next obvious continuing education step," she said.

French started her program in Fall of 2020 and completed it in May 2021.

"Successful completion of this program during a pandemic and employed full time is the direct result of Nancy Gwen's invested leadership of a well-designed adult learning program," she said. "There is clarity from beginning to end in expectations and consistency throughout the process. The coursework is seamless in its structure and supported with dedicated teams."

Meredith Caballero lives in Byers, Texas. She graduated from UCO with a BS in Secondary Science Education, and a MS degree in Microbiology and Immunology from the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center in 2000.

She taught eight years in Piedmont, and one year in Washington (Oklahoma), before returning to school and earning her ASN degree in nursing from Oklahoma City Community College.

Caballero decided to return to school for her BSN because she

wanted to pursue an advanced degree in nursing and a BSN is required to apply.

"I looked at a number of programs but as a UCO grad I decided that I would return there (online) because I liked the setup of their program and the way they have made it consistent between every class," she said.

Caballero said having been out of school for so many years she wasn't sure how it would be going back fully online.

"I have really enjoyed the program and the professors clearly want their students to succeed," she said. "I was even on the President's Honor Roll last semester. If everything goes as planned, I have been accepted for consideration for graduation in December 2022."

Caballero said she plans to apply to a number of different programs to pursue her Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner degree.

"Hopefully, I will be accepted to one of the BSN to DNP programs that are available and I can finally reach that goal that I missed out on when I didn't get to finish my Ph.D.," she said. My goal is to obtain my PMHNP and start a practice that helps people with their mental health using mindfulness-based practices along with traditional western medicine. I believe that we need to treat mental health as seriously as we do physical health and



Nancy Gwin, DNP, MSN, RN, Assistant Professor, serves as the RN to BS Coordinator at UCO.

want to help reduce the stigma that surrounds mental health issues."

Gwin said the UCO program is designed in a way to help keep nurses motivated about their career.

"I want people to like learning again," she said. "We try to be super

supportive. Part of my motivation is to keep them in nursing. I fear for the profession. There is a lot of nursing burnout out there."

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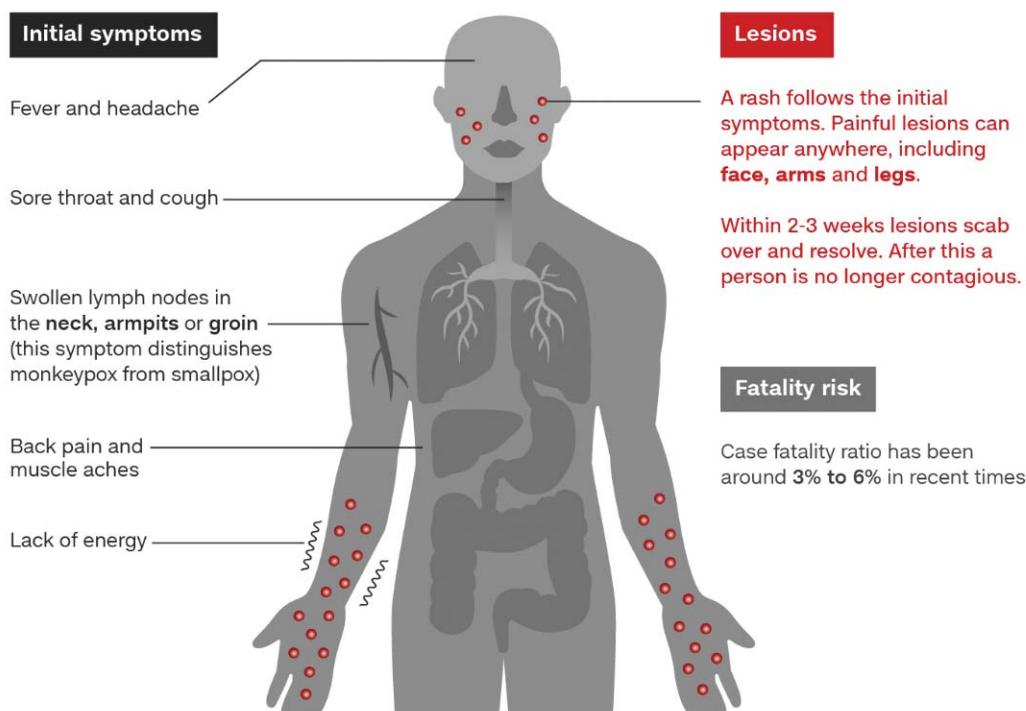
ANA Calls for a Swift and Coordinated Response to Contain the Monkeypox Outbreak



The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra has declared the monkeypox outbreak to be a public health emergency. The American Nurses Association (ANA) supports this declaration, which will help deploy focused attention and critical resources to contain the nationwide outbreak. ANA stands ready to help disseminate evidence-based information to both nurses and the public, and to counter misinformation and mitigate stigma about the virus.

Heeding the many lessons learned from COVID-19, ANA calls for swift action and effective collaboration among federal, state, and local officials to ensure nurses and all health care professionals have the highest level of protection and preparation to respond. This must include enough personal protective equipment and medical supplies, as well as clear guidance on case identification, screening, testing protocols, and equitable access to vaccines to provide nondiscriminatory and safe care to infected patients.

For more than two years, nurses have been responding to the relentless COVID-19 pandemic. The prolonged demands of COVID-19 have exacerbated the national nurse staffing crisis and had a negative impact on nurses' well-being. A widespread outbreak of monkeypox will be yet another stressor on many nurses who say that they continue



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization graphic.

to feel the strain of COVID-19 on their mental health and within their work environments.

professionals, and the public to follow the guidance of credible public health officials on the monkeypox outbreak in their community.

ANA urges nurses, all health care

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If you wish to attend the ONA House of Delegates please make sure to register separately.

Register today: <https://bit.ly/3aP1qLM>

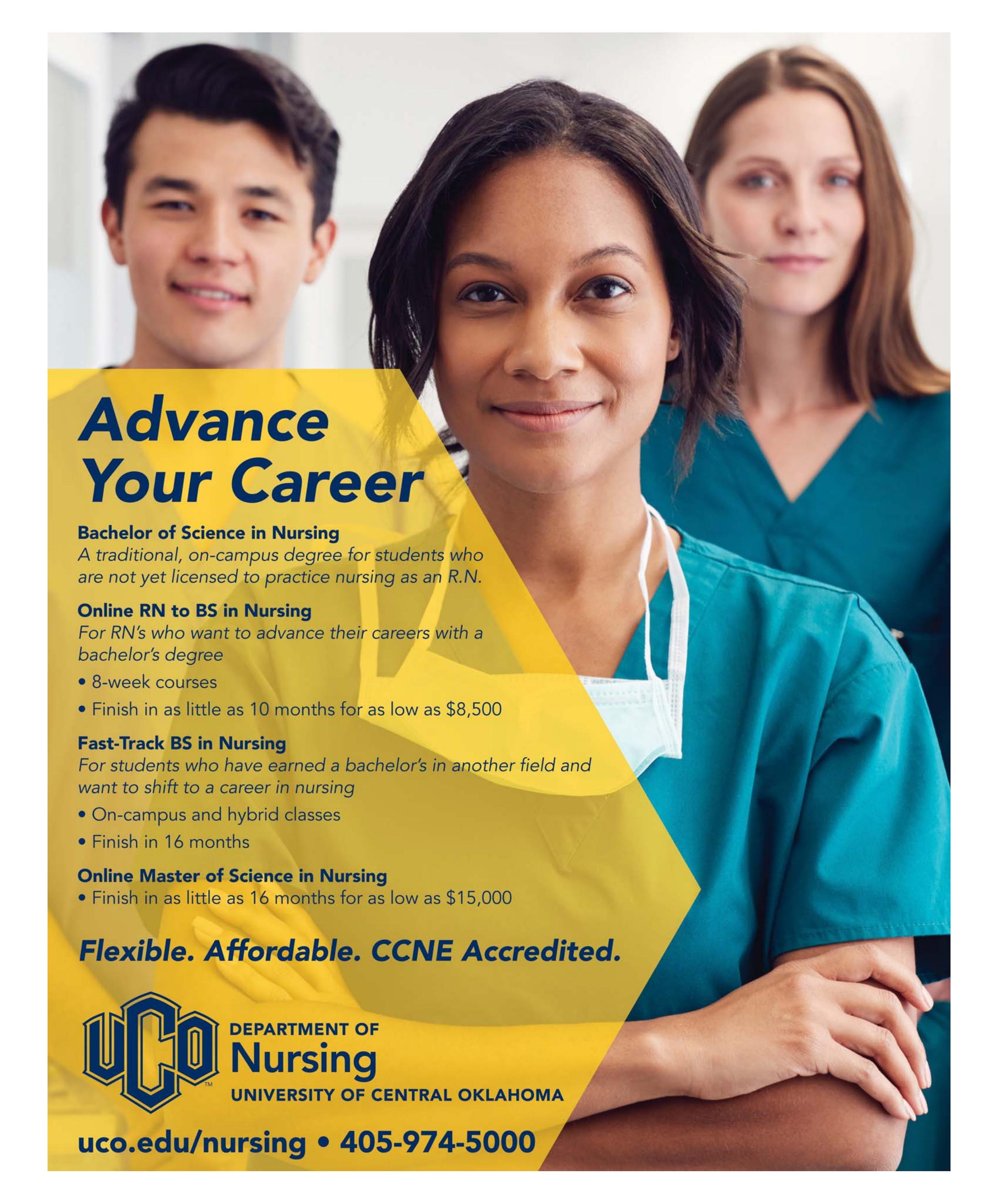
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Both are cornerstones of advancing your nursing career through the University of Central Oklahoma's graduate programs.

Leann Laubach, Ph.D., is an assistant professor and the baccalaureate program coordinator in the Department of Nursing at the University of Central Oklahoma.

She has been teaching at UCO since 2005 and has 22 years of experience as a nurse in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

"They set their own goals so it's a more personalized experience. It's not the goals I set for you as the instructor," Laubach said of the program's online offerings. "They are related to your ultimate goal for your degree. I think that's really where we pride ourselves both in our RN to BSN and our master's program is the personalization of the degree and maintaining that close contact with our students so we can help you be successful in our programs."

The master's degree directly addresses the University of Central Oklahoma's mission to contribute to the intellectual, cultural, economic, and social advancement of the communities and individuals it serves.

The inclusion of 100 practicum hours facilitates the participation of students in transformative educational experiences that directly benefit the Oklahoma City metro community.

Nursing graduate students can choose from two-course pathways: nursing leadership or nursing education. A master's degree in nursing education will prepare students for academic positions in nursing education or positions in clinical staff education. The leadership pathway allows students to meet individual goals in areas such as health care leadership or administration.

The program is offered at a \$15,000 flat fee, even if a student is out of state.

"It's protecting students against inflation," Laubach said.

Laubach noted the flexibility of the program benefits students in ways

that make it possible to advance their degrees.

"There's great value in that for someone who maybe is working full time and or has a family, they can carve those hours out in a time frame that works for them. I see that as very valuable for both programs. It makes it so students can do the work when they need to do the work and not at a time that works better for me."

The recent pandemic has created a divide for many nurses who enjoy their chosen careers but may feel burnt out in their current roles.

"I think now has challenged people to think outside of being at the bedside that whole time," Laubach said. "I think they are seeking education because they want that change. I think that's the future of where nursing is going that nurses are realizing they want to stay in nursing but they don't know if they want to stay at the bedside the whole time."

There is a definite opportunity for nurses to use their experiences to better the next generation of nursing through education or mentorship.

"I think for nurses who find they are passionate about teaching new nurses it's an advantage to come back and get an education or leadership degree," Laubach said. "A leadership degree would allow students to be the clinical leaders, the charge nurse and give them the skillset they need to be successful."

"The advantage of coming back to get your master's degree or even your bachelor's degree is expanding the way you think. The biggest thing is the growth mindset that occurs from the next degree to the next degree."

The first nursing class from the nursing department at the University of Central Oklahoma graduated in 1972. Since that time, more than 3,500 well-qualified graduate nurses have entered the workforce.

Graduates of this program are known for being some of the best nurses in the state of Oklahoma.

For more information visit: <https://www.uco.edu/cms/academics/nursing/>

OMRF scientists identify key components of tissue regeneration

This planarian flatworm, from the lab of Oklahoma Medical Research Scientist Dave Forsthoefel, Ph.D., is shown near completion of regrowing its head.

For more than a century, scientists have been puzzled by the ability of the planarian flatworm to regrow its entire body.

A recent discovery at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation addresses a key piece of this mystery. The revelation may ultimately lead to improved repair of human tissue, said OMRF scientist Dave Forsthoefel, Ph.D.

The tiny, sunflower seed-sized flatworms have many biological similarities to humans. They are especially interesting to researchers because their stem cells can regenerate any lost body part. "If you cut one into 10 pieces, within a few days, you will have 10 planarians," Forsthoefel said.

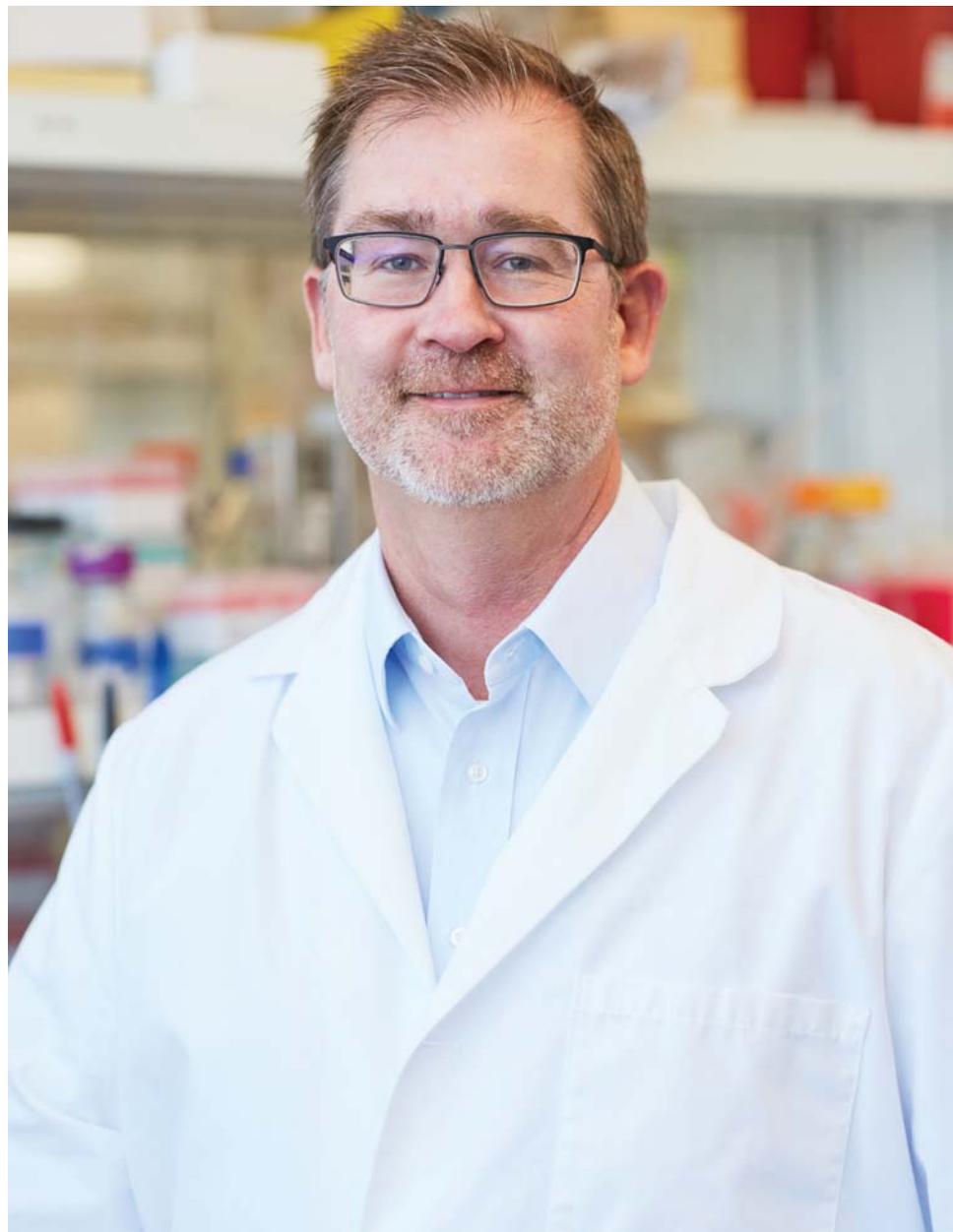
In a study published in *Nature Communications*, Forsthoefel's team



made two discoveries: that regeneration requires lipids and that a protein also present in humans called Apolipoprotein B, often called ApoB, plays a critical role.

"Lipid is just a fancy word for fat," Forsthoefel said. "'Fat' tends to have a negative connotation, and too much fat is unhealthy, but fats, or lipids, are one of nature's oldest and best forms of energy. They also help build new cells and control how genes are turned on and off."

Planarians' abundance of stem cells partially explains their ability to regenerate. ApoB transports lipids to adult stem cells, and in response to amputation, these cells divide and make new tissue. Forsthoefel theorized that without the presence of this protein, lipids



Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientist Dave Forsthoefel, Ph.D.

would accumulate in the intestine instead of reaching the stem cells.

His team inhibited ApoB in the planarian's intestine. Some lipids still made their way to adult stem cells, Forsthoefel said, but without the normal supply, stem cells could not complete their transformation into the many cell types that make up the flatworm's brain, muscles and other tissues.

As a result, regeneration slowed by about 50%.

Despite this discovery, Forsthoefel said, "We still have a million unanswered questions." The next steps are to understand the role of lipids during regeneration by planarians and whether the same molecular process occurs in other species, particularly those that can regrow body parts, like salamanders and zebrafish.

"Science has come a long way in understanding how to induce regeneration in damaged human tissue, and this work offers more important clues," said physician-scientist Patrick Gaffney, M.D., chair of OMRF's Genes and Human Disease Research Program. "If future research shows that humans need additional lipids to regenerate tissue, we might discover a way of supplying those lipids where they are needed to expedite healing from disease or injury."

Funding for the research was provided by the National Institutes of Health Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence grant GM103636. OMRF scientists Lily Wong, Ph.D., Christina Bruxvoort, Nic Cejda and Matthew Delaney contributed of the research.

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New Survey Findings:

Patients Lack Access to Appropriate Number of Nursing

Today, the American Nurses Foundation (the Foundation) released the findings of a new comprehensive survey of more than 11,800 nurses nationwide on workplace culture and safety as part of the Pulse on the Nation's Nurses Survey Series. This data reveals nurses are sounding the alarm that quality care is at risk and concerns are high over a healthy and safe work environment.

As the nursing shortage continues to worsen across the country, due in part to the prolonged demands of the pandemic, nurses are indicating the necessary number of registered nursing (RN) staff with the right knowledge and skills are often unavailable to meet patient needs. According to this newest survey, 55% of nurses in acute care hospitals indicate that 49% of the time or less their unit does not have the necessary number of RN staff with the right knowledge and skills. And half (50%) of respondents across

all care settings indicate that 49% of the time or less their unit does not have the necessary RN staff available. Furthermore, over half (66%) of respondents say they sometimes, seldom, or never have the necessary or appropriate ancillary staff, who are personnel that assist nurses in the care of patients, to provide support such as personal hygiene care and ambulatory assistance. In acute care, many (74%) of the nurses surveyed said that the appropriate number of ancillary staff were available sometimes, seldom, or never.

"The most worrisome aspect of this data is that nurses – who were called heroes for their extraordinary pandemic care – are still at risk and under supported," said the Foundation Executive Director Kate Judge. "Virtually nothing has changed in terms of nurses' burdens and personal suffering. We must break the negative cycle and prioritize the health and well-being of

our nurses who are already severely burned out and working overtime to care for patients and communities. Institutions must respond and change their work environments and culture. Healthy and safe work environments are critical to the success of nurses and the overall quality of health care provided. As we continue to see units and hospitals close due to lack of staff, these findings underscore the urgent

need to take action. The Nurse Staffing Think Tank, comprised of leading health care organizations including the American Nurses Association, published a list of recommendations to include building a flexible work environment with flexibility in shifts, policies, and roles to help mitigate nursing shortages. We must take heed. Our health care system will inevitably collapse if we don't act."

Oklahoma Healthy Aging Initiative to Host the 2022 Statewide Tai Chi-A-Thon

Oklahoma Health Aging Initiative (OHAI) will host its fourth annual Statewide Tai Chi-A-Thon on Friday, September 26, as part of National Falls Prevention Week.

Tai Chi is a series of gentle physical exercises and stretches. Generally safe for all ages and fitness levels, Tai Chi can help older adults reduce their risk of falling, while also increasing balance and flexibility. Health benefits include reduced blood pressure, better sleep, improved muscular strength and enhanced mental well-being. It does not matter how strong, flexible or active you are – Tai Chi is designed for people of all ages and levels of health.

The event will be held from 9 a.m. to noon at four locations across the state -- Catoosa, Durant, Enid and Norman. It is open to participants 18 years and older, at no cost. To register and find the event location near you, visit www.ohai.org. On-site registration will also be available at the event, but those who pre-register by August 19, will have the opportunity to purchase an event t-shirt.

For additional questions or accommodations, contact OHAI at ohai@ouhsc.edu or by phone at (855) 227-5928.



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TSET Health Promotion Research Center and OK Tobacco Helpline Partner



Dr. Jon Hart, Director of the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline

Dr. Darla Kendzor, Co-Director of the TSET Health Promotion Research Center (HPRC), and Dr. Jon Hart, Director of the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline (OTH), are leading a study to address exceptionally high rates of cancer and cancer mortality in areas of Oklahoma that experience persistent poverty.

In Oklahoma, 16 counties meet the criteria for persistent poverty, which means that at least 20% of residents have been living in poverty since 1980. Although the smoking prevalence rate has declined to 14% nationally, the prevalence of smoking remains elevated in these 16 counties with a range of 19% to 32%. Smoking is known to be a major cause of cancer and a contributing factor to high rates of cancer and cancer mortality in counties that experience persistent poverty. Kendzor and Hart have initiated a new study to evaluate the addition of incentives for completing tobacco cessation counseling sessions and quitting smoking for Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline callers.

The target counties in this study are Adair, Caddo, Cherokee, Choctaw, Greer, Harmon, Haskell, Hughes, Johnston, McCurtain, Okfuskee, Payne, Pushmataha, Seminole, Sequoyah and Tillman. The study will combine Kendzor's expertise in incentives-based interventions with the standard treatment offered through the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline, directed

by Hart. The study will enroll 160 adults seeking smoking cessation treatment through the OTH who live in any of the 16 counties. Participants will be randomly assigned to either the OTH or the OTH plus incentives program.

The goal is to evaluate whether the incentives-based OTH intervention will increase smoking cessation rates in comparison with standard OTH treatment which includes counseling and nicotine replacement therapy. If successful, Kendzor and Hart's goal is to sustain this innovative program for all callers from counties experiencing persistent poverty. For more information about this study, please call: 1-800-QUIT NOW or visit OKhelpline.com.

The HPRC is an integral component of the Cancer Prevention and Control Program of the NCI-Designated OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center. Over the past six years, the HPRC has become a nationally-recognized tobacco research center. Modifiable health risk factors that substantially impact the health of Oklahomans have increasingly become a research focus of center investigators (e.g., sedentary lifestyle, risky alcohol and other substance use).

The HPRC receives funding from OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center via an NCI Cancer Center Support Grant (P30CA225520) and the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust contract number R23-02.

Situation Update: COVID-19

New Cases 7 Day Average	1,372
New Cases Week of 7/24 - 7/30	9,602
Active Cases	20,663
Total Cases	1,128,298
CDC/NCHS Provisional Deaths	16,336
Acute Care OSDH Licensed Facilities/Location**	Recent 3 day Ave. Hospitalizations
	Cases (ICU)
Region 1 (NW)	9 (0)
Region 2 (NE)	21 (4)
Region 3 (SW)	48 (6)
Region 4 (EC)	28 (3)
Region 5 (SE)	16 (0)
Region 6 (Central)	30 (7)
Region 7 (Tulsa)	100 (35)
Region 8 (OKC)	115 (10)
Total	367* (65)
Other Types of Facilities	
Focus Facilities	7 (2)
Rehabilitation Facilities	2 (0)
Tribal Facilities	8 (1)
Other Facilities Total	17 (3)

*Includes 35 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 2022-08-04 at 7:00 a.m.

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