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## INTEGRIS Health Partners with SWOSU in Degree Program



INTEGRIS Health Chief Nurse Executive, Kerri Bayer, MSN, left, and Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) President, Dr. Diana Lovell, met Aug. 22, to celebrate a partnership between the two entities establishing tuition support opportunities for first-semester enrollees in a SWOSU nursing program.

story by Van Mitchell, Contributing Writer

INTEGRIS Health and Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford recently announced a partnership between the two entities establishing tuition support opportunities for first-semester enrollees in a SWOSU nursing program.

The three-year partnership is intended for INTEGRIS Health caregivers who are seeking

degrees in the LPN - RN / BSN program, RN-to-BSN program, traditional BSN program and the MSN program at SWOSU.

"We have been partnered with all of our different academic institutions across the state, and they have a new dean at

See SWOSU Page 2

## Team Receives Funding to Improve Maternal Mortality of Indigenous Mothers



Governor Kevin Stitt proclaimed August "Oklahoma Breastfeeding Month," culminating the Coalition of Oklahoma Breastfeeding Advocates' (COBA) month-long celebration of National Breastfeeding Month. "We know that breast milk provides the essential nutrition and immune protection an infant needs that first year of life. We thank Governor Stitt for joining our efforts as we applaud the thousands of Oklahoma families who make the daily commitment to give their child the best foundation for growth and development," says Heidi Russell, COBA's executive director.

See FUNDING Page 3



## SWOSU

Continued from Page 1

SWOSU, and she wanted to connect with INTEGRIS Health to see what we could further do to advance our pipeline for nursing," INTEGRIS Health Chief Nurse Executive, Kerri Bayer, MSN. "They were pursuing some different avenues like virtual offerings, and trying to invest and open up the pathway for nurses, and they reached out to us to see if we could partner, and how we wanted to support it."

As the state's largest not-for-profit health system complete with hospitals, rehabilitation centers, physician clinics, virtual care, mental health facilities and home health agencies, INTEGRIS Health is always welcoming caregivers with a passion for people.

"My career began 24 years ago as a bedside nurse, so I'm extremely passionate about providing opportunities to support those wanting a nursing career. I'm excited at what this partnership will do for INTEGRIS Health, SWOSU and future nursing students," Bayer said.

According to a press release, Southwestern Oklahoma State University is one of the leading regional universities in the country. The SWOSU Nursing program was established in 1976 and was the first rural baccalaureate nursing program

in Oklahoma welcoming more than 400 nursing students per year.

"INTEGRIS Health is excited to partner with SWOSU," Bayer said. "We are offering scholarship opportunities for anyone who is interested in a health career path. If a student contacts INTEGRIS Health, and we know they have an interest (in nursing), and they live in the community around Weatherford, we can connect them to what works for them. All you need to do is reach out to us and we will get you connected with the appropriate resources."

Echoing Bayer, SWOSU President, Dr. Diana Lovell said, "SWOSU's partnership with INTEGRIS Health allows us to double down on our commitment to helping Oklahoma meet its critical workforce needs. The tuition assistance offered by INTEGRIS Health will make a lifelong impact in the lives of our students."

Dr. Angela Gore, DPN, RN, Director of Nursing Programs/MSN Program Coordinator Department of Nursing at SWOSU, said she was excited about the partnership with INTEGRIS Health.

"Our partnership, along with the tuition assistance from INTEGRIS Health should have a huge impact on Oklahoma nurses," she said.

Gore said SWOSU has taken the "thinking outside the box," approach

to dealing with Oklahoma's nursing shortage.

"The nursing shortage weighs heavily on our minds, and we have tried to think outside the box to find ways to educate more nurses," she said. "One of these ways was the creation of our mostly online LPN-to-BSN program. This program accepts students who are currently licensed as practical nurses and provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform at the baccalaureate level of nursing."

Gore said with INTEGRIS Health's tuition assistance, students should be able to attend the LPN-to-BSN program without incurring much personal debt.

"A lack of resources for pursuing higher education is often a limiting factor for nurses considering career advancement, and the tuition assistance provided by Integrus can alleviate that burden," she said.

Gore said the INTERGIS Health-SWOSU partnership helps secure employment opportunities for students.

"With our partnership, a student can begin working at INTEGRIS Health as a Licensed Practical Nurse, continue working while taking classes, and continue to work at INTEGRIS Health following graduation as a Registered Nurse," she said. "Studies show that patients cared for by baccalaureate-



prepared Registered Nurses have fewer incidences of morbidity and mortality than patients cared for by nurses without that level of education. All of our nursing programs educate nurses to provide care at this level or higher."

Gore said SWOSU's online RN-to-BSN program welcomes students that have an Associate degree in nursing.

"These students may also be able to benefit from the tuition assistance provided by INTEGRIS Health," she said. "Our traditional nursing program accepted all qualified students into the program this year, and we encourage these students to explore the tuition assistance options that INTEGRIS provides. We believe increasing collaboration with our hospital partners will ultimately lead to a narrowing of the gap between the supply and demand for nurses in the state of Oklahoma."

For INTEGRIS Health job opportunities, please visit [www.integrisk.com/careers](http://www.integrisk.com/careers). For more information on the SWOSU Nursing Degree Program, please visit [www.swosu.edu/academics/nursing](http://www.swosu.edu/academics/nursing).

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## FUNDING

Continued from Page 1

COBA joined other breastfeeding coalitions throughout the country with activities that focused on this year's theme "Together We Do Great Things" and for the third consecutive year hosted its Breastfeeding Conversations Series releasing a new video each week featuring local mothers, health experts and lactation leaders. Videos demonstrated the unique yet encompassing month-long celebration highlighting World Breastfeeding Week, Indigenous Milk Medicine Week, Asian American Native Hawaii Pacific Islander Week, and Black Breastfeeding Week.

The World Health Organization and UNICEF recommend women begin breastfeeding their children within one hour of birth and continue exclusively for the first six months of a child's life. Becky Mannel, COBA's chair and an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant, says the significant benefits breastfeeding offers for both mom and baby are numerous. "According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), breastfeeding lowers an

infant's risk of acute and chronic diseases including obesity, diabetes, childhood cancers, SIDS and GI and respiratory infections. Mothers experience a reduced risk of reproductive cancers, heart disease, diabetes, not to mention the special bonding time mothers enjoy with their babies," says Mannel.

Although most infants receive some breast milk, most are not exclusively breastfed or continue to breastfeed as long as recommended. In Oklahoma, 1 in 5 women who choose not to breastfeed cite returning to work and/or school as the reason. Oklahoma workplaces and employers have an opportunity to change these statistics by adopting policies that make it easier for women to continue breastfeeding after they return to work. The Oklahoma State Department of Health's "Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite Recognition" program currently acknowledges 380 workplaces throughout the state that proudly support breastfeeding employees.

Families with questions about breastfeeding may contact the free Oklahoma Breastfeeding Hotline at 1-877-271-6455 (MILK) or Text OK2BF to 61222



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**Christina Sibley, EMT/RMA**  
Medicare Specialist  
405-655-6098  
[csibleyinsures@gmail.com](mailto:csibleyinsures@gmail.com)  
BS Health Studies-Gerontology

**Steven Sibley, RET/DAV**  
Life, Health, LTC, & Disability  
405-850-1569  
[ssibleyinsures@gmail.com](mailto:ssibleyinsures@gmail.com)  
MBA - Healthcare Administration



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# CAREERS IN NURSING:

## VALIR PACE COMES TO CHOCTAW - PARTICIPANTS MEND THEIR WAYS

by James Coburn - staff writer

Annie Wildes feels privileged to help people facing acute emergencies in life.

A soft opening is set for the new Valir PACE Choctaw Alternative Care Setting on Thursday, September 1, at the new center located at 2411 Main Street. Participants are welcome.

"If they need any nursing care that day, I can triage it immediately to their providers," said Wildes, RN, alternative care setting center manager at Choctaw Alternative Care Setting, an extension of Valir PACE. "We can arrange transportation and get them downtown to their clinics. We'll also have a physical restorative aide here that works with participants with any kind of physical needs they have — exercising, stretching, and activities of daily living."

The official grand opening is planned for September 30. A food truck with refreshments will be provided. The tentative time is

from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Valir Pace reaches participants across all levels of care and across all environments. It targets the lower socioeconomic patient, age 55 and older. Most of the patients have been without health care or health insurance for years, and so they arrive with multiple co-morbidities.

"This is an opportunity for us to reach out to them and say we have a brand-new facility here. Come check it out. It's a place you can come during the day," Wildes said.

The program provides social work and an adult day center for socialization and activities. PACE provides their medicine with the involvement of a primary care provider, mental health specialist, social worker, physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and two warm meals a day.

A resident of Choctaw, Wildes

was recently recruited by Valir PACE to lead the center's program. She loves that the center is bringing much needed services close to home for residents in the Choctaw area. So far, 19 Valir PACE participants will be redirected to the Choctaw location. The City of Choctaw has 12,390 residents, based on the latest US Census estimates. The Valir PACE organization has more than 300 participants in Oklahoma City, Wildes said.

Valir PACE discovered this summer that several participants lacked air conditioning. They were extremely hot during record breaking heat and had issues. So, they were invited to come to the day center five days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to have a place that was safe and cool for them.

"This place is a benefit for the Choctaw area because I know our senior population is growing every day," Wildes said. "Our goal is to keep them safe and in their home

for as long as possible."

Each morning, the care team will discuss the special needs of participants needing to be addressed. There is a continuity of care that Wildes has not seen in her previous experiences before coming to PACE, she said.

Wildes became a nurse out of her love of anatomy and physiology that grew at a tender age. Her nature is to help people, especially those who are less fortunate. She considers her career as a calling.

"In my role here, I'm put here to help those who are most in need," she continued.

Valir PACE works with Medicare and Medicaid to serve underprivileged Oklahomans during a vulnerable period of their life. Many of them depend on food stamps. They don't have many possessions or perhaps family members.

"Sometimes we are the only

See WATSON Page 5



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## WATSON

Continued from Page 4

people they are seeing," she said. "For me as a nurse — that is where my calling is. We have participants that come to the center — sometimes they come in the same clothes that we put them in when we gave them showers the day before or two days before if they're not coming. And so, I'm able to give them that comfort and that care."

Nursing for Wildes is more than government regulations.

"For me, it's going in there and seeing the humanity in them, and also treating them with the dignity and respect that they need."

Her nursing career has involved seeing patients in hospital beds or at home. Originally from Dallas, Wildes moved to Oklahoma City when her husband was stationed at Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City. Six years ago, the couple

built a house on six acres in Choctaw. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at the Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. And she earned a Master's of Higher Education degree at Texas A&M University.

Her career has introduced her to families who have had hard lives. Some have been homeless on the streets due to drugs. They've made difficult decisions while their bodies failed them.

"I'm that person who is able to be there for them and say, 'That was what happened yesterday. This is today, and you're in need. You need a warm meal. You need a shower. You need health care.' They need basic things to make them feel loved and respected, and that there's still purpose and meaning for them."

For more information about Valir PACE VISIT: <http://www.valirpace.org/>



Nursing is about connecting with people, said Annie Wildes, RN, alternative care setting center manager at the Choctaw Alternative Care Setting, an extension of Valir PACE.

## FEMA Funeral Assistance Remains Available for COVID-19 Related Deaths

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on everyone, especially those who suffered loss due to the virus. Nothing can replace loved ones, but FEMA may be able to help ease the financial burden that comes with that loss.

Those who had funeral COVID-19 related funeral expenses can apply for FEMA Funeral Assistance by calling 844-684-6333. Phone lines are open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. CDT, Monday through Friday with Multilingual services available. Applicants requiring relay services, such as a videophone, Innocaption or CapTel, must provide FEMA a specific number assigned to that service. It is important that FEMA is able to contact applicants.

There is currently no deadline to apply for aid.

The criteria to qualify for assistance includes:

- The person died of COVID-19.
- The death occurred in the U.S.
- The applicant paid for funeral, burial or cremation costs after Jan. 20, 2020.
- The applicant is a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, lawful permanent resident or qualified refugee. The deceased does not need to meet these qualifications.

When applicants call for assistance,

they need to provide the following information:

- Social security number
- Date of birth
- Current mailing address and phone number
- The deceased date of birth
- Location of deceased death
- Information about any funeral or burial insurance policies
- Information about other funeral assistance received, such as donations or CARES Act grants

Eligibility determinations are based on the submission of all required documents. Additional information and answers to frequently asked questions about the application process can be found on FEMA's Funeral Assistance FAQ page.



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# OU helps nurses take next step

When Hannah Rames, RN, decided to go back to school for her BSN she knew it would require some sacrifices.

But going back to school through the Fran and Earl Ziegler University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center College of Nursing's RN to BSN track, she had no idea how flexible it was going to be.

"I think we really just work to try to meet the students where they are," said Dr. Lori McElroy, DNP, RN, CNE, and RN to BSN track coordinator. "We know these are working students, often a little older than the traditional student who sometimes have families, children, elderly parents - just all kinds of life circumstances they are working through. "We realize that in the beginning and I think our focus is to be as student-centric and self-directed as possible."

Rames earned her associate's degree from Oklahoma City Community College in the winter of 2015. She began working as a labor and delivery nurse at OU Health Children's Hospital in March of the following year.

She spent three years there before moving to the Prenatal Diagnostic Center for another three years. "I grew up in Norman and started my college career at OU and really wanted to finish with my BSN from OU," said Rames, who now works in the nursery at Lakeside. "I chose this program because there was a part-time track and it was all online, which made it much easier to continue working full-time while also taking care of my son." Tuition assistance while working for OU was also a big draw that helped her complete her next degree.

One-hundred percent online course offerings helped Rames fit everything into her schedule. And



OU helps students advance their careers.

another big draw was the ability to complete practicum hours at her own job site.

"It helps them feel very comfortable in an atmosphere they know and they can find someone in their leadership like their charge nurse or someone in administration to actually supervise their clinical experience," McElroy said.

The program can be completed within a year, or longer if a student needs more time. "We don't require any brick and mortar, face-to-face type of interactions but we really try to communicate frequently with these students and offer encouragement and support along the way because we do realize this second degree is sometimes difficult and challenging even though it is a flexible pace. More and more,

McElroy said she's finding nurses coming back to advance their degree as a way of opening up more opportunities both at the bedside and away from it.

"This is just a stepping stone that often these students once they get back into the academic setting they do take their BSN further and get an advanced degree, either a nurse practitioner or even their Ph.D.," McElroy said.

OU's nursing programs have earned high honors in nationwide rankings. In its 2022 rankings, U.S. News & World Report placed OU No. 29 in its list of best online master's in nursing programs, and No. 58 for best bachelor of science in nursing programs.

OU's RN to BSN online program is ranked No. 2 in the nation by

**OU's nursing programs have earned high honors in nationwide rankings. In its 2022 rankings, U.S. News & World Report placed OU No. 29 in its list of best online master's in nursing programs, and No. 58 for best bachelor of science in nursing programs.**

percentage of graduates who pass

<https://nurse.org/>.

A nurse for more than 30 years, McElroy said each time she advanced her degree it opened up more possibilities she never thought possible.

"I don't feel like I realized the opportunity at the time and I think the students now have a much more realistic perspective of healthcare, of technology, of informatics and I think nursing programs have had to shift to keep up with the healthcare community," she said. "The opportunities are just endless now." Rames has realized it too as she moves closer to her BSN. "I have appreciated that all of my professors have been very flexible and made themselves accessible throughout the semester," she said. "After I finish this program I'm going to continue my career as a bedside nurse and focus on my family. When my child is older I might consider getting my Master's or Doctorate."

For more information on the Fran and Earl Ziegler University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center College of Nursing's RN to BSN program visit: <https://nursing.ouhsc.edu/>





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OU Health Schedules  
Virtual Presentation  
on Insomnia

OU Health Schedules  
Virtual Presentation  
on Vasectomy and



OU Health is hosting a virtual doc talk to provide information and strategies to manage insomnia. "When Counting Sheep Won't Cut It," will be held at noon, Wednesday, Sept. 28.

OU Health sleep medicine physician Shannon Foster, D.O., and OU Health clinical social worker Michael Brand, Ph.D., LCSW, will discuss the symptoms, diagnostics and treatment options for people experiencing insomnia.

Insomnia is the inability to fall asleep or stay asleep and it affects up to 70 million people in the U.S. every year, which represents between 30-50% of the adult population. About 75% percent of those affected recover from short-term insomnia at some point, but chronic insomnia affects 10-30% with distressing symptoms and impairments. Long-term lack of sleep can lead to health problems including obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

Register at the link below for the webinar to receive the ZOOM link. The virtual doc talk is available at no cost to participants interested in learning more about insomnia.

Click Here To Register

OU Health is hosting a virtual doc talk to provide information for all people and their partners about vasectomy and vasectomy reversals at noon, Thursday, Sept. 29. The informative talk by OU Health male reproductive health and fertility specialist Johnathan Doolittle, M.D., will address vasectomy and reversals, recovery time and fertility related questions.

More than half a million vasectomies are performed every year in the U.S. but many men who undergo the procedure know little about it, and are unsure where to find the answers to their questions. The virtual presentation by Doolittle will provide much-needed information.

Click the link below to register for the virtual presentation to receive an email containing the ZOOM link. The doc talk is available at no cost to all participants.

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U	O	R	B	F	H	Z	D	E	R	A	C	A	P	D	F	T
N	R	H	T	L	A	E	H	C	R	I	T	I	C	A	L	M
I	Z	Z	J	W	C	Y	T	E	F	A	S	G	K	E	H	U
T	G	Y	D	U	T	S	W	B	N	I	V	K	B	T	B	L

(\*LOCATE FIVE HIDDEN WORDS AND EMAIL BONUS WORDS TO: [NEWS@OKCNURSINGTIMES.COM](mailto:NEWS@OKCNURSINGTIMES.COM) FOR CHANCE TO WIN \$100 PRIZE)

Get FREE Materials for Your Office

Talk to your patients about quitting tobacco and recommend the Helpline.

The Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline has FREE materials such as pens, brochures and badge reels to help start the conversation with your patients.

To order materials, visit [OKhelpline.com/Order](http://OKhelpline.com/Order).

Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline

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1-800-784-8669

OKhelpline.com

No judgments. Just Help.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Patien \_\_\_\_\_ Helpline

Prescription \_\_\_\_\_

Notes • Sign up for FREE \_\_\_\_\_ on what you need:

- Quit Coach with phone call
- Web Coach with online-only support

• All registrants will receive a Quit Guide• If ordered, NRT should arrive within 10-14 business days

Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline

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1-800-784-8669

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A Program of TSET

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# 45TH ANNUAL SENIOR DAY

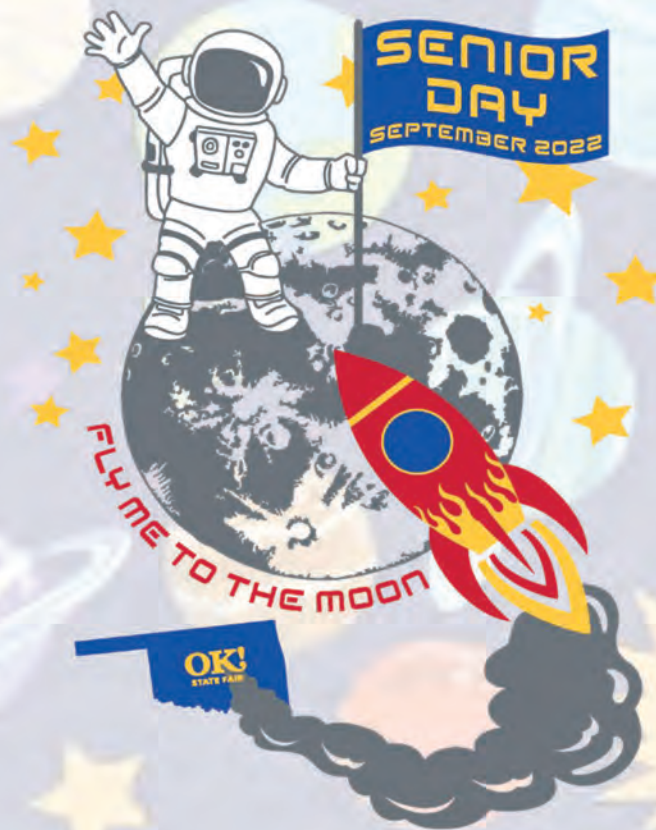
## Wednesday September 21

*Free admission for Seniors 55+ (proof of age required)*

### SCHEDULE OF ACTI

EXHIBITORS, PHOTO BOOTH & FREE HEALTH SCREENINGS. ....	10 a.m. - 7 p.m.
DOOR PRIZES .....	Session 1: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Session 2: 1 - 3:30 p.m. Session 3: 3:30 - 6 p.m.
OUT & ABOUT: SPACE WALK .....	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
TAI CHI .....	10:05 a.m. & 4:10 p.m.
JUMPIN JUPITER .....	10:25 a.m.
THE OKIE STOMPERS .....	10:40 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.
STARDUST .....	11:10 a.m.
PUPPIES OF PENZANCE .....	11:40 a.m.
YMCA COMMUNITY LINE DANCERS .....	12:05 p.m.
LOVE YOU TO THE MOON AND BACK COUPLES CHALLENGE ...	12:35 p.m.
TO INFINITY AND BEYOND .....	1:05 p.m.
IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE .....	1:35 p.m.
REACH FOR THE STARS GAME SHOW .....	2:30 p.m.
TWINKLE TOES .....	4:40 p.m.
PROFESSOR PULSAR'S TRIVIA .....	4:55 p.m.
ELVIS VISITS THE MOON .....	5:30 p.m.
OH MY STARS! .....	6 p.m.
ASTRONAUT'S LINE DANCE LESSONS .....	6:10 p.m.
SHAWN KLUSH - TRIBUTE TO ELVIS .....	7:30 p.m.
Chickasaw Country Entertainment Stage	

**For more detailed information visit the Senior Day page  
on the Oklahoma State Fair website**





# Situation Update: COVID-19

New Cases 7 Day Average	811
New Cases Week of 9/4/22 - 9/10/22	5,676
Active Cases	13,985
Total Cases	1,186,764
CDC/NCHS Provisional Deaths	16,798
Acute Care OSDH Licensed Facilities/Location**	Recent 3 day Ave. Hospitalizations
	Cases (ICU)
Region 1 (NW)	10 (1)
Region 2 (NE)	9 (2)
Region 3 (SW)	42 (5)
Region 4 (EC)	12 (3)
Region 5 (SE)	10 (1)
Region 6 (Central)	29 (7)
Region 7 (Tulsa)	62 (23)
Region 8 (OKC)	109 (16)
Total	283* (58)
Other Types of Facilities	
Focus Facilities	7 (1)
Rehabilitation Facilities	0 (0)
Tribal Facilities	2 (0)
Other Facilities Total	9 (1)

\*Includes 27 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 2022-09-15 at 7:00 a.m.

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Medical News:

405-422-9518



Nerve Renewal  
NEUROPATHY CLINIC

# Do You Suffer With Neuropathy?

## Welcome To A New Medical Therapy Covered By Medicare

Do you have any of these Neuropathy effects?

- Burning pain
- Leg cramps and spasms
- Pain with walking
- Muscle weakness
- Sensitivity to touch
- Loss of balance or coordination
- Numbness, prickling, or tingling
- Sleep loss from leg pain
- Post surgical pain
- Chronic intractable pain

Call to learn even more

Neuropathy has many different causes. The most common metabolic cause are patients with diabetes. Nearly 60% of all patients with diabetes develop neuropathy. This can commonly present as pain, numbness, swelling, burning, tingling, sleepless nights, balance issues.

Other causes of Neuropathy include:

- Chemotherapy
- Alcoholism
- Drugs/prescription medications
- Battlefield toxins, industrial toxins
- Vitamin deficiencies
- Acute physical Trauma
- Post-surgical pain

## Electroanalgesia Benefits



Over 80% of patients report a significant reduction in pain.

Treatments are covered by most insurance plans, including Medicare and VA programs.

No opioid drowsiness, addiction concerns, or side effects.

Enjoy better sleep due to reduced pain and recover more quickly from knee and hip surgery.

Patients reduce chemotherapy side effects and are better able to complete the entire treatment cycle.

Patients don't feel trapped by pain. They are able to move and get exercise, leading to healthier outcomes for all other medical treatments.

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