

Circle of life

Hospice nurse provides comfort



D'lena Swanner, RN, is where she wants to be in life as a hospice nurse at the INTEGRIS Hospice House, located in Oklahoma City.

by James Coburn, Staff Writer

D'lena Swanner's Christian faith drives her career as a hospice nurse. It's been important for her to get to know each patient and understand their needs, she said.

"My belief to provide overall compassionate care toward those who are transitioning towards heaven has really kept me here," said Swanner, RN, INTEGRIS Hospice House, located in Oklahoma City. "So, I keep that as my primary goal of giving peace and comfort that I know the Lord provides us."

Swanner became a registered nurse nearly 13 years ago. This came after she cared of her great aunt before her passing.

Swanner earned her Associate of Applied Science in Nursing degree at Rose State College, located in Midwest City. For most of her career, she has served in hospice care. Swanner is currently working to attain her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree through an online program offered by Capella University. She came

See D'LENA Page 2

OK Hospitals Recognized for Participation in Improvement Collaborative Activities

hillcrest Medical Center

The Oklahoma Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative (OPQIC) acknowledged participating hospitals that are creating a culture of excellence in perinatal care for Oklahoma mothers and newborns. The hospitals were recognized at the eighth annual summit of the collaborative in Oklahoma City. Approximately 100 providers of maternal and infant care were able to come together in person at the event to discuss continued efforts to improve outcomes for Oklahoma mothers and babies, and to celebrate success from their ongoing work.

Hospitals were recognized for participation in the areas of reduction of early elective deliveries (inducing labor or scheduling cesarean births before 39 weeks without a medical reason), certification by Cribs for Kids as a Safe Sleep Hospital, implementing best care practices for pregnant women and newborns affected by opioids, achieving Baby-Friendly designation, and implementing TeamBirth, a shared decision-making process for communication.

Two Oklahoma hospitals were recognized in all five areas mentioned above: Hillcrest Medical Center, Tulsa, and INTEGRIS Canadian Valley Hospital, Yukon. Also, Norman Regional Health System and Comanche County Memorial Hospital, Lawton, were recognized for recently achieving The Joint Commission's Perinatal Care Certification.

In addition, Barbara Koop, MS, RN, recently retired nurse program manager for OPQIC, received the Warren M. Crosby Champion for Maternal and Infant Health Award for going above and beyond to display exemplary effort to improve outcomes for mothers and babies in the local community and statewide.

See RECOGNITION Page 3

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D'LENA

Continued from Page 1

to the INTEGRIS Hospice House in 2020.

Hospice care is end of life care. INTEGRIS Hospice House has a low light environment to reduce too much stimulation. It provides peace and comfort by way of managing

what's wrong with them, letting go of this world and transitioning on. I think that has probably been the best thing that I've witnessed. It's so surreal when they are in there and can just easily and peacefully go."

To witness a peaceful passing means that she and the hospice team has helped to navigate a peaceful journey of transitioning.

"My grandparents were on hospice for months. You don't stop living when you're on hospice." D'lana Swanner, RN

symptoms of pain, anxiety, agitation, nausea and vomiting through palliative care, Swanner explained.

"Our overall goal is to maintain the comfort of our patients," Swanner said.

The INTEGRIS Hospice service area covers portions of nine counties and an approximate 50-mile radius around the Oklahoma City metro.

She commends the compassionate INTEGRIS staff of hard workers who love what they do. They not only care for the patients but also the families. INTEGRIS Hospice House offers counseling for families.

The hospice provides an interdisciplinary team that includes the nursing staff, physicians, social worker and chaplain. Each member helps patients live their remaining days at their personal best. Families and patients have their questions answered about the journey ahead of them.

It's not uncommon for the pastoral care team to attend the funerals. And chaplains may be called upon to officiate the funerals. They are the ones that are really on the front line of leading that spiritual journey.

INTEGRIS Hospice follows families for a year or more afterwards if needed. She believes the kindness shown by families to the hospice staff helps their own sorrow.

"We are showered with love and appreciation. We receive many thank you cards. We've had families return after three years later and still provide for the staff and other visitors and families here," she said.

It has been personally enriching for Swanner to help patients understand their disease progression and accept it.

"I think the final part that is a resolution for me is that they are comfortable with letting go," Swanner continued. "Letting go of

"As long as I've carried out all the interventions that I know either medically or spiritually — I've met my goal," she said.

A hospice nurse empowers the patient, said Chelsey Deakins, business development specialist.

"My grandparents were on hospice for months. You don't stop living when you're on hospice."

Swanner said being a hospice nurse strengthened her faith in forgiveness.

The reality of death has become easier to discuss and accept among her family and friends.

Outside of work, Swanner catches up on her sleep. She will go to the lake with her family and enjoy the peacefulness.

"Down time is turning everything off, being quiet. I can stare at water for days," she said.

She married her high school sweetheart and has three adult children in their early 20s.

Hospice has taught her how to love people where they are in life and to understand grace.

She is less apt to worry.

A nurse needs to be patient, trustworthy and comfortable with dying in order to be a hospice nurse, Swanner said.

"I feel that if there is a fear, it's going to hurt what they can provide for others in accepting the dying process. That's really the key," Swanner said.

"So, it's not really a difficult subject to talk about, so I think it's really a strength," she said.

For more information visit <https://integrisok.com> - Hospice House in OKC





RECOGNITION
Continued from Page 1

The Oklahoma Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative (OPQIC) works to create a culture of excellence, safety and equity in perinatal care in Oklahoma. With statewide reach through expansive resources, quality improvement initiatives, and educational offerings, OPQIC actively supports families, perinatal clinicians, partners and advocates to improve maternal and infant health outcomes.

Partners in the Oklahoma Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative include Ariadne Labs, March of Dimes,

Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Oklahoma Hospital Association, Oklahoma Health Care Authority, Oklahoma Hospital Association, Oklahoma State Department of Health and City and County Health Departments, other organizations, and Oklahoma birthing hospitals.





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CAREERS IN NURSING: A KIND HEART TO COMFORT - HOSPICE NURSE ADVOCATES FOR PATIENTS

by James Coburn - staff writer

Becky Stephenson always wanted to become a nurse when growing up. But it was her father's death of cancer at age 46 that sparked her journey.

"I wasn't a nurse then, but we went through a terrible time. It was hard for my family," Stephenson said. "And so right then I knew where I was going to belong and that was going to be hospice."

She was ready to join nursing and hasn't stopped since. Stephenson, RN, is a case manager at Russell-Murray Hospice, located in Kingfisher. Offices are also in El Reno and Oklahoma City. She is a 2001 nursing school graduate of Oklahoma City Community College and has been with Russell-Murray Hospice for three years. She came to the Kingfisher office in April.

"I get to help people go through the worst time in their life but it's also such a blessing to be part of that, prepare them to be at a good place and accept death

as part of living and be at peace with that," she said.

Hospice helps patients live their remaining days out of hospitals to be in the comfort of loved ones.

"It's a great gift to the patient because most patients don't want to pass away in the hospital," Stephenson said. "They want to be sitting by their puppy dog and their grandchildren, maybe have one last meal that tastes good to them or see the Christmas tree lights."

She loves caring for each patient holistically as well as their families. Hospice helps comfort the patient spiritually, mentally and physically. Most of the time it's the families that struggle with death more than the patient, Stephenson said. Most of the patients become accepting and can tell a nurse what's going to happen before it does, she added. So, it's a blessing to be with them and just support them, she said.

"We will just help that patient get their needs met and explain why they're feeling this way," Stephenson said.

Stephenson is gentle but direct in answering all of their questions. Every patient is different, but there are things the nursing staff sees repeatedly that indicate the impending process of transitioning beyond this life. Appetites change bringing weight loss as families may try to insist that they eat.

"Sometimes it's hard for families to accept that," Stephenson explained. "So, as we go along the steps, we use printed materials along with our nursing skills, and we just sit down with them and pretty much put our arms around them."

It's a momentous occasion to gain the trust of a family for Stephenson.

"They are putting their mama in our hands," she said. "So, we address that with love."

She is the patient's advocate to the family by speaking on the patient's behalf. She explains that loss of appetite is normal and helps prepare them for what to expect.

There are tools she can rely on as a nurse.

Stephenson has a pharmacist to consult with and reach out anytime day or night for palliative care. She can reach out to the physician, nurse practitioner and other staff members.

What I love about these people is we are a family," she said. "We feel like a family and when we take care of a patient, it's not one person that has this patient, our team has this patient."

The team meets together once a week to discuss the best practices for helping their hospice patients. It's all about alleviating pain and providing comfort.

See STEPHENSON Page 5



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Russell-Murray Hospice has taken patients as far as California for one last visit with their loved ones, says Becky Stephenson, RN.

STEPHENSON
Continued from Page 4

"We know we're not going to get our patients well and sometimes the family is not ready to hear that," she continued. "So, our goal is to help them accept that's going to be our goal — to keep them out of pain and provide them the tools that they need to live where they live in their house, assisted living or a nursing home. Wherever they reside, we will meet them there."

Russell-Murray Hospice will even take patients outside their community to visit with family or friends.

"We just put our arms around them and help them as a team," she

said.

Her patients are sometimes friends and acquaintances she has known for many years, even grade school.

"You can't help pouring your heart into that," she said.

Compassion is the No. 1 quality of an effective hospice nurse, she said. Patience and the ability to be autonomous are indispensable qualities, she added.

"Sometimes, you might be the only one in that home and they're looking to you to be that guide," she exclaimed. "You're a strong person, and you have to have the right words and the right tools to make them feel comfortable in you and trust you."

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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2022 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

Rose State leads the way

Connie Kuebeck, RN, MS, MBA is the associate dean for health sciences at Rose State University.

She'll celebrate 43 years in nursing this May.

And every day she gets to be a part of molding the next generation of nurses at one of the most student-centric programs in the metro.

Located in Midwest City, Rose State has long been home to one of the most popular nursing programs in Central Oklahoma.

Class sizes are small, offerings are flexible and the faculty invests in students.

Rose State prides itself on working with students.

"If a student is compelled to only come to classes in the afternoon or early evening we have a cohort we can put them in. If they prefer to come during the day we offer that, too, and at least once a year we have an online option," Kuebeck said. "It just makes it more available for those

students who already have family or work obligations or it just doesn't fit with their schedule to come during the day all the time."

Students pursuing their associate's degree in nursing have access to clinical sites throughout the metro during the four-semester program.

Nursing courses are centrally located in one of the newest buildings on campus.

"I think we're in a good location for students throughout the metro area and also the outlying areas" she said. "They don't have to come all the way close to downtown or even go through downtown if they live anywhere on the east side. We're also convenient for students living North and South because we have a great number of those.

"And we have smaller class sizes than some of the other programs that offer the same degree that we do."

Kuebeck said that for roughly every 13 students there is one faculty



member.

And, Rose State NCLEX pass rates are consistently above state and national averages.

Kuebeck shifted to education in 1998 and has seen educational offerings change with the times. The focus at Rose State has always been on the student and Kuebeck says that's why faculty focus on making those bonds.

She saw it daily during the early stages of the pandemic when hospitals kept students out of the hospital.

The encouragement was there on a daily basis, which helped students stay focused on their ultimate goal of becoming nurses.

"For the students who got to go back in and do clinicals I was amazed at their resilience," she said. "They were willing to get in there, pitch in and help. The students were watching from the sidelines at home and we all felt kind of helpless."

"When they eased up restrictions on students they were happy to get back in there and be part of the solution. It made them want to be more a part of nursing even more than before."

Kuebeck said the school welcomes applications from any and all prospective students.

"We have great advisors here with our health science division who are experts in helping people plot out their education path in the most efficient manner and to get them to their goal in the least amount of time," Kuebeck said.

"We welcome anyone to call the advisors, call the division office and get some information and start looking at the path to a new career."

For more information about the Rose State Nursing Program visit: <https://www.rose.edu/nursing>

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Jenifer Presley stresses the importance of on-the-job learning as an LPN and the assistant director of nurses at Golden Oaks Village, located in Stillwater.

Presley has served for three years at Golden Oaks Village and been a nurse for seven years. She graduated from nursing school at Meridian Technology Center in Stillwater and did undergraduate studies at Oklahoma State University.

"We learn something new every day," Presley said. "It's not just something where you go to school every day and learn everything. For years there is always something else to know."

Studying for a career in nursing gives you a good base of skills for an active career, she continued. Having performed clinical work in school proved to be a valuable resource to draw from early in a nursing career.

She understands how families feel when depending on competent health care workers to assist ailing loved ones. She was 19 when her father became ill, and her family called for

an ambulance.

"I think that's what sparked it. I love taking care of people," she said.

Presley would tell nursing school students to pay close attention to dedicated nurses in the field. Nurses who love their careers stand above the rest, she said.

"You can always point out who's a hard worker and wants to be there," she explained. "They are who you should follow and look up to. Watch the things that they do and how they deal with their patients."

Residents at Golden Oaks Village are individuals so it's good to take time to listen and learn from them, she continued.

"It makes it easier for them and for you during the process of their care," she said.

Being team oriented in a compassionate setting makes Golden Oaks Village the favorite place that Presley has ever worked, she said. As a charge nurse, Presley is a team leader offering her support to ensure care is being provided that the residents need. She said there is always help



Jenifer Presley, LPN, and the assisted director of nurses at Golden Oaks Village in Stillwater is always open to a new learning

when she needs assistance. She leads the team whenever there is a nearby emergency.

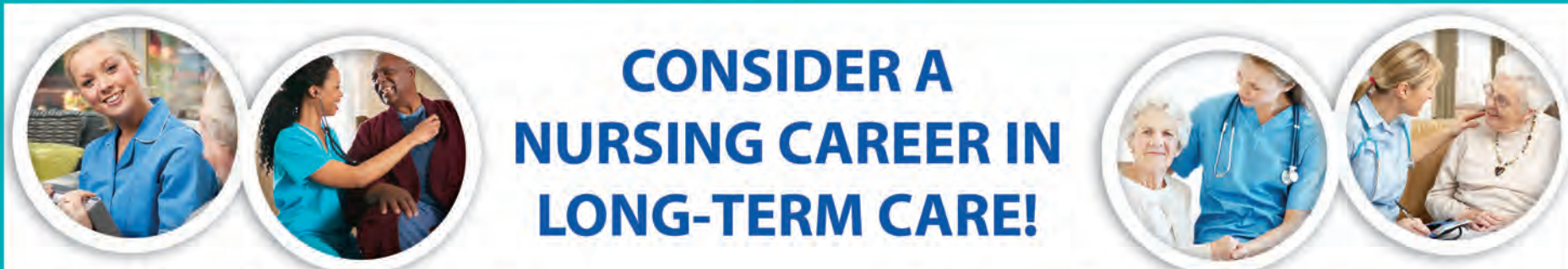
"We have a good group of girls here," Presley said. "And, if I ever need help or must do something in another room, I never have to worry about it. It feels good knowing you have support and knowledgeable people who want to be here to help."

Golden Oaks Village is located on 40 acres in Stillwater in a wooded country setting that is filled

with ponds and wildlife. A peaceful view accompanies a paved walking trail. Independent and assisted living facilities serve more than 100 seniors and the elderly every day.

"Take your time and get to know them," she said. "It can make as much difference in your life as you can in theirs. That makes for a meaningful job."

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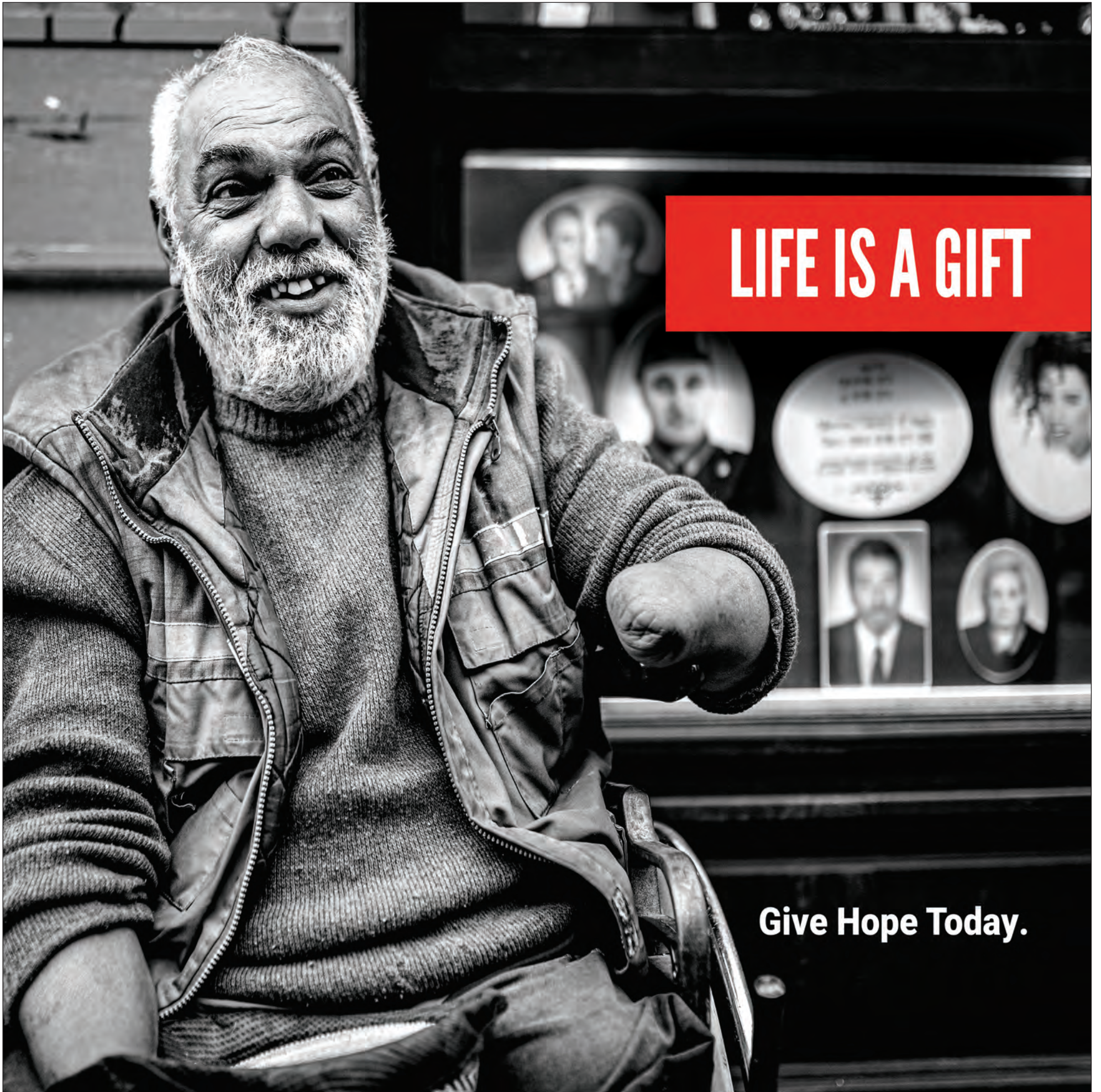
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OSDH, THD and OCCHD Awarded Dollars Aimed to Enhance the Public Health Infrastructure and Workforce

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), the Tulsa County Health Department (THD) and the Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD) are being awarded more than \$43 million dollars to invest in public health in Oklahoma, through a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) grant.

"Our public health infrastructure and workforce has been hit hard over the past few years and I have had a front row seat to it," said OSDH Commissioner of Health Keith Reed. "Being an award recipient brings new excitement to getting public health back to where it needs to be. We are actively working to determine where these funds are needed most. I see

these funds expanding public health efforts to accomplish our vision and to better serve and meet the needs of communities across Oklahoma."

The CDC awarded Oklahoma's public health organizations as follows:
 •OSDH - \$23,642,899 •THD - \$8,351,233
 •OCCHD - \$11,147,282

"We are thrilled to receive this grant which will provide critical funding and flexibility to recruit, retain and train our workforce," said THD Executive Director Dr. Bruce Dart. "We are especially appreciative to be among the over 100 grant recipients nationally, to receive direct funding. This highlights the value and trust the CDC has placed in local health departments to know best what our community needs, and gives us the

resources to elevate our ability to improve the quality of life for all Tulsa County residents."

Award amounts were calculated based on a funding formula that included population size and community resilience, which is how at-risk neighborhoods across the United States are to the impacts of disasters.

"Public Health in Oklahoma was fortunate to be awarded in all three categories. The OCCHD is honored to be one of the over 100 grant recipients nationally, to receive funds," said OCCHD CEO Dr. Patrick McGough. "These funds offer tremendous possibilities for services that can be provided to Oklahomans both now and in the future."

Strengthening the public health infrastructure and workforce will allow the health departments in Oklahoma to protect and promote the health of Oklahomans.

For more information on the grant, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/infrastructure/index.html>



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Congratulations to Jessica Seaton, RN, this year's recipient of the coveted Commodore Brixey Award. This award honors a caregiver who performs above and beyond their normal duties and maintains the highest level of professionalism and demonstration of Christian values.

Jessica's nomination read, in part, "She puts her staff and patients before herself by going above and beyond for others. Whether it's with patients, family members or fellow caregivers, she is always kind, caring and selfless."

Thank you, Jessica, for always going the extra mile!



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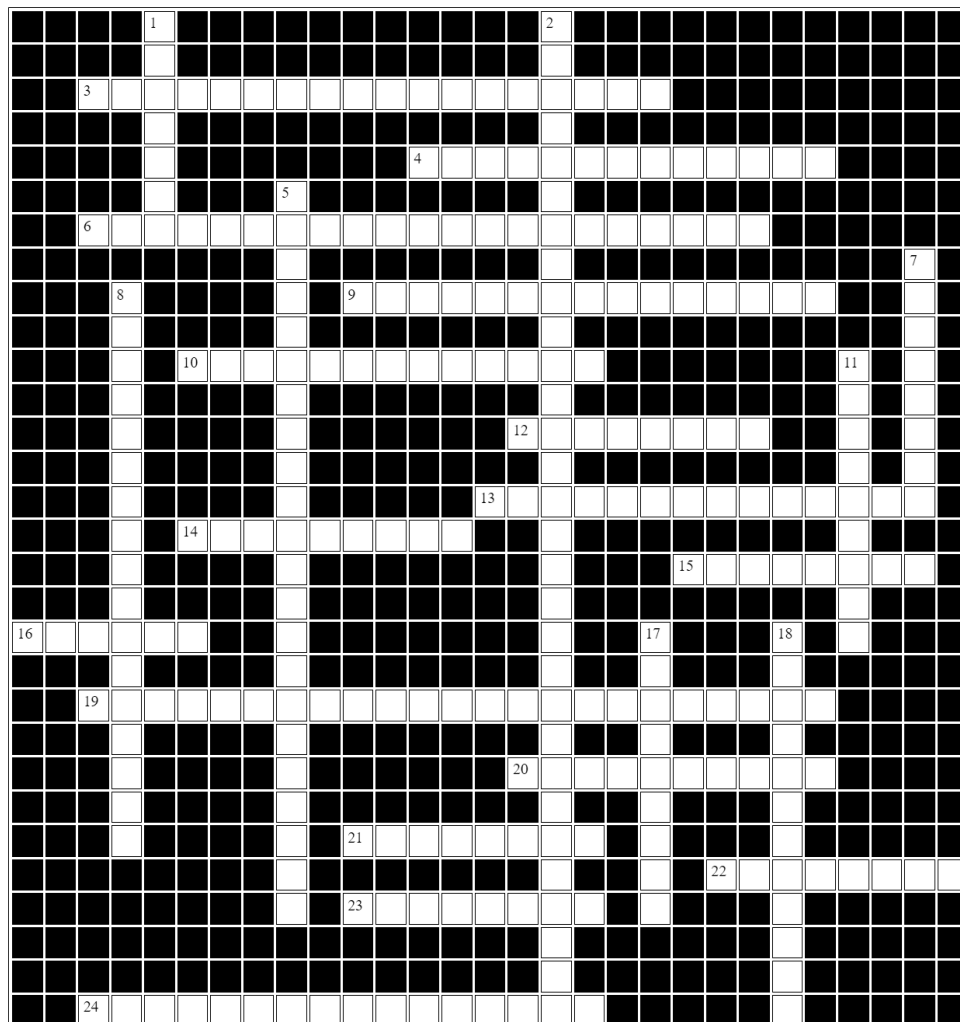
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OKNT CROSSWORD: Neuro Pharmacology

Across

- 3. Used for status epilepticus - a medical emergency
- 4. An excitatory neurotransmitter
- 6. Used to reduce the hyperstimulation that is caused by excessive acetylcholine.
- 9. Three types of medications used for inc. ICP are hyperosmolar diuretics, anticonvulsants and _____
- 10. These drugs act by increasing the seizure threshold and regulating neuronal firing by inhibiting excitatory processes or enhancing inhibitory processes
- 12. An antiepileptic, analgesic and antimanic agent. Related to the tricyclic antidepressants.
- 13. A dopamine antagonist that can cause drug induced Parkinson's.
- 14. This antiepileptic is associated with many drug interactions
- 15. Used for generalized tonic-clonic and myoclonic seizures. Causes sedation, behavior changes and hepatic failure
- 16. Used for seizure control and Fibromyalgia
- 19. Increasing systolic BP with decreasing diastolic BP- Increased ICP
- 20. Unequal pupils
- 21. Combination therapy with Levodopa

- and this drug is successful in controlling Parkinsonism.
 - 22. Used for the treatment of seizures. Toxic effect includes respiratory depression, ataxia, hypotension
 - 23. Toxic effects include nystagmus, fever, lymphadenopathy.
 - 24. Reduces the metabolism of dopamine in the brain- allowing for greater dopaminergic activity
- Down**
- 1. Used in patients with mild or severe dementia. Will dissolve on the tongue- helpful for patients with dysphagia
 - 2. A classification of drugs used to treat Alzheimer's
 - 5. Two objective signs of increased ICP
 - 7. An inhibitory neurotransmitter
 - 8. The slow jerky movements associated with Parkinson's
 - 11. An enzyme inhibitor that reduces the metabolism of levodopa.
 - 17. Used to identify lesions in the intradural or extradural compartments of the spinal cord
 - 18. Induced by an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the basal ganglia of the brain



By Eckermann

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A SHOT IN THE ARM — TO KEEP YOURSELF SAFE

Ironic? Or timely? Either way, a spike in cases of flu here and across the country coincides with the start of National Influenza Vaccination Week (December 4-10).

Locally, health clinics are busy caring for a growing number of patients with flu-like symptoms. It's a spike that is being seen across the state and country right now.

The CDC reports flu A is the dominant strain, making up 78% of current cases. There is good news, though. That's because this year's vaccine appears to be a good match for that strain, which is why health care providers are urging everyone, but especially seniors to get their annual flu vaccine as soon as possible.

"This the first year where, at least at our clinic, we are starting to see a lot more flu again and some of these other respiratory illnesses that we haven't in a while," said Nurse Practitioner Ashley Henson, who sees patients are Valir PACE in Oklahoma City.

Henson and other health care providers suspect that this year's spike coincides with what may be a false sense of security by some. Many are no longer masking or social distancing, which Henson said allows viruses, like flu and pneumonia, to spread.

The Oklahoma State Department of Health already reports more than 450 people have been hospitalized for complications from influenza. Four people have died.

The virus can be especially dangerous for seniors if they aren't vaccinated. Vanessa Boniface, 67, a Valir PACE participant, knows well the importance of getting her annual flu shot.

"At my age, I'm vulnerable to get sicker faster," Boniface said. "Nobody's going to tell you if they're sick or not, so if you have a vaccine to protect your own self then you shouldn't have to worry about if people are sick."

PACE stands for program of all-inclusive care for seniors. That

means for seniors like Vanessa, the vaccinations are included, right along with medications, transportation, therapy, meals and more. Many PACE participants have complicated health issues that put them at higher risk for complications from flu, pneumonia, and other winter-time illnesses. Henson and fellow health team members at PACE strive to keep their participants healthy by encouraging vaccination.

According to Henson, vaccination for flu is critical, but COVID-19 vaccines and boosters, and pneumonia vaccines are just as important. Fortunately, there is new help on the fighting pneumonia front. A relatively new pneumonia vaccine means patients can now get full protection with just one shot, instead of two.

"You get that one shot and you're done for life, as current guidelines stand," Henson remarked.

While Henson admits no vaccine is 100 percent effective, she says vaccination is still a senior's best defense.

"We do know that there's a much lower hospitalization admission rate for seniors, and lower rates of admission to hospital Intensive Care Units as well," Henson said.

Helping keep seniors out of the hospital and living independently is a top goal for Henson and the team at Valir PACE. She added that they do still occasionally see patients who are reluctant to be vaccinated and work to address their concerns. If you have concerns about the vaccines, Henson suggests talking to your health care provider to get your questions answered and hopefully clear up any confusion or misinformation you may have about vaccination.



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405-850-1569

ssibleyinsures@gmail.com

MBA - Healthcare Administration



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INTEGRIS Health Announces New INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Chief Hospital Executive

INTEGRIS Health is pleased to announce Keaton Francis as the new chief hospital executive (CHE) at INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center.

Francis will replace Kurt DeVaney, who accepted the chief hospital executive position at INTEGRIS Health Southwest Medical Center.

"My family and I are elated about the opportunity to serve not only the community of Enid, but the people of northwest Oklahoma," Francis said. "INTEGRIS Health has a proven track record of delivering safe, quality health care to the people of Oklahoma. I am pleased, excited, but most of all, grateful to be able to work with the board, medical staff and hospital staff at INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center to further carry out our organization's Mission of partnering with people to live

healthier lives."

Francis joins INTEGRIS Health from AllianceHealth Durant where he's held the assistant chief executive officer role since 2019. Francis was responsible for physician recruitment, radiology, laboratory, pharmacy, respiratory therapy, physical therapy, plant operations, dietary, environmental services, business development, bio med and security. In his time there, he successfully recruited eight physicians, improved the financial performance of the hospital and completed multiple facility projects.

Prior to that, Francis served as interim chief administrator officer at AllianceHealth Madill, assistant administrator at Comanche County Hospital Authority and multiple leadership roles at Southwestern Medical Center in Lawton.

He has a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in marketing



Keaton Francis, Chief Hospital Executive (CHE) at INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center in Enid.

from Cameron University and a master's degree in health care administration from Trinity University. His first day at INTEGRIS Health will be Jan. 9, 2023.

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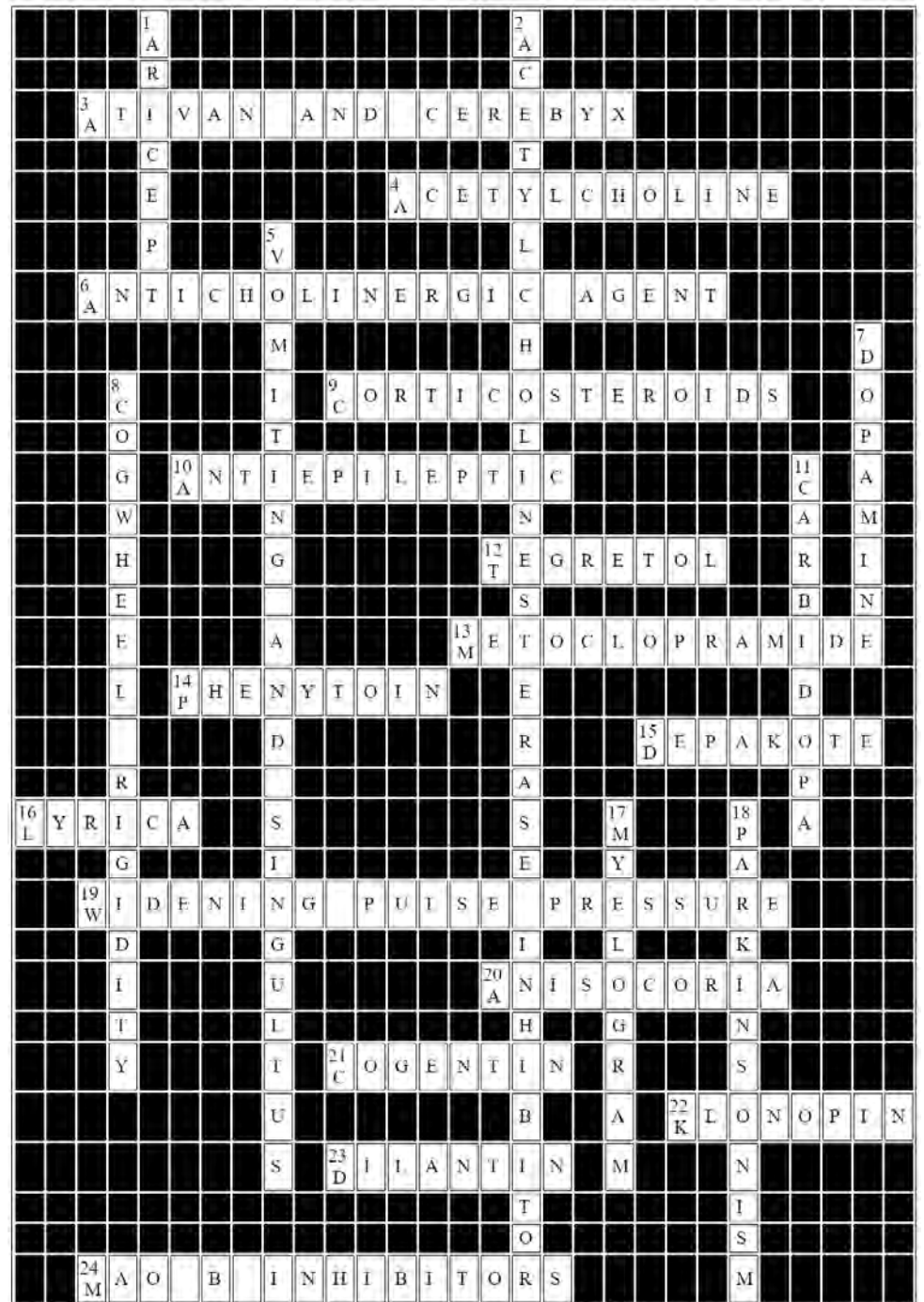
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