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February 6, 2023 Vol. 24 Issue 6

Information for the Oklahoma Nursing & Health Care Professional

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Jennifer Hopfer senses the deeper needs of patient care as a nurse at Mercy Hospital Logan County.

Jennifer Hopfer blends well in her career at going to work with my life better." Mercy Hospital Logan County where she is an outpatient IV nurse.

it go," said Hopfer, a registered nurse. "I've got a room depending on what is needed. She grand baby now and I didn't want to work two looks forward to the continued growth of the jobs anymore and had to figure out which one is program.

Story and photo by James Coburn, Staff Writer

Mercy introduced the Outpatient IV program at the hospital. In order to achieve her hours "When you find that, you don't want to let Hopfer will occasionally serve in the emergency

While raising three children, Hopfer became an LPN in 2008 before graduating from RN school by attending Rose State College at night in 2009. Her first placement as a nurse was at the Guthrie hospital before it was purchased by Mercy. She previously worked at a large Oklahoma City hospital for 11 See HOPFER Page 2

HOPFER Continued from Page 1

years before rejoining the hospital as part of Mercy.

"It was a hard decision to come up here, but this got me closer to home. I've been a PRN nurse (as the need arises) for three years and I just love the people I work with," Hopfer said. "They work well together and the nurse manager here, Giulia Frattinger, is amazing. It's people my age and there's not a lot of competition. We just come to work, and we all work well together."

Hopfer provides rehydration to outpatient patients, infusions and antibiotics. It was Frattinger, RN, who recruited Hopfer to come to Mercy. Hopfer's compassion is ingrained in her soul.

"I've always wanted to care for people," she said. "And, I have that deep burning passion to make sure everyone is treated like my mom, or my dad would be."

Mercy shines as a community when walking through the door, she said. It provides an engaging environment of friendly hometown conversation. Every nurse she has met in Guthrie or when training in the Coletta building at Mercy Hospital in Oklahoma City has been very welcoming, she said.

She enjoys getting to know people and about their families when meeting them at Mercy Hospital Logan County. It is quite different than previous experiences of listening to ventilators and beeping machines.

"I enjoy that. I like knowing about people. I like knowing about their kids and their families, their backgrounds and what they have going on for the future," she continued. "It's what keeps me going."

Nursing has evolved a lot since the COVID pandemic. She suggests that anyone interested in the career would do well by first becoming a certified nurse aide. Being a CNA allows a person to understand what nursing is about, said Hopfer, a former CNA. A certified nurse aide does not serve just 1-4 patients. They often have 12, she said. She recommends that nurses who sit and carry on a conversation should get up and help the CNA. The CNAs are some of the hardest working, underpaid people she has ever been around, Hopfer said.

"In my previous role (as a nurse) I saw a lot of young nurses come in who had no idea of what nursing is all about. And, when you come in and you don't have a clue, it is eye opening," she said. "Some of them didn't think we actually clean patients up and I said, 'No, we do total care. That's our responsibility. Yes, there are techs that will help you but they're not going to do your job.' It's been a real eye opener for me seeing students coming out of the classroom with simulations versus being in the hospital doing clinicals."

Reality touched her heart as a nurse when COVID would isolate patients from their families outside of the hospital. This was a typical site in the healthcare industry.

Hopfer sensed that an older woman would soon die if she was unable to see her husband. The woman recently returned to see Hopfer, walking freely without oxygen. The woman and her husband have become like grandparents for Hopfer.

"I text them and they text me. We talk. I didn't know them before, but they're very special to me," she said. Recently, there was a woman entering the ER with excessive blood pressure readings. The woman was very nervous when asking about her blood pressure.

Hopfer was candid and direct, telling her that her blood pressure will be high partly because of her anxiety of being in an emergency room.

She informed her what is expected, what she is being given and educated her about what to do when leaving the hospital.

"She told me, 'This is the best experience I've had in a long time," Hopfer said. "They come in and they're informed. She said, 'I never expected this out of this little ER. But it's fantastic."

For more information about Mercy Hospital Logan County visit: https://www.mercy.net/practice/mercyhospital-logan-county/



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SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital, OCU sign nursing partnership

Saints & Stars Program intended to address industry-wide nursing shortage

Leaders from SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital and Oklahoma City University today announced a nursing partnership aimed at helping stem the critical shortage of nursing professionals in the state.

The Saints & Stars Program is a five-year agreement between SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital and Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing. The partnership allows OCU students to work parttime with SSM Health while they complete their nursing degree, while also receiving a \$3,500 annual scholarship from SSM Health and a \$5,000 annual discount from OCU.

"As one of the nation's leading nursing education programs, we are invested in helping address the nursing shortage," OCU President Kenneth Evans said. "Training and supporting the next generation of nurses while at the same time strengthening the workforce at SSM Health is truly a win-win endeavor."



Tammy Powell, president, SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital and SSM Health Bone & Joint Hospital at St. Anthony.

Tammy Powell, president, SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital and SSM Health Bone & Joint Hospital at St. Anthony said initiatives like Saints & Stars are vital in ensuring an effective health care landscape in the



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state and nation.

"SSM Health St. Anthony is dedicated to providing high-quality health care to Oklahomans across the state," Powell said. "That begins with training and employing a new generation of health care professionals. We see Saints & Stars as a key component in doing just that."

In addition to employment and financial benefits, the partnership will allow OCU nursing students the opportunity to take part in clinical rotations at SSM Health; to engage in paid leadership clinical hours; to participate in a summer nurse extern program; to complete service learning hours at SSM Health; and to be assigned a nurse mentor.

The first cohort of Saints & Stars began with junior nursing students in January. Twenty additional junior students will be selected to participate in the program each year for the next four years.

In addition, up to two SSM Health employees may enroll in OCU's Master of Science in Nursing Education program. OCU will reciprocate by emphasizing the hiring of the program's SSM Health graduates to serve as clinical adjuncts to supervise Stars & Saints students completing their rotations at SSM Health. These nurses will be essential in supporting the ongoing clinical education of students participating in the Saints & Stars program.

Elain Richardson, regional chief nursing officer at SSM Health St. Anthony, said health system officials are familiar with the caliber of nursing students OCU produces and look forward to increasing the ranks of OCU Stars in their workforce.

"The nursing shortage has grown more dire for several years," Richardson said. "Alongside health care systems across our state and nation, we have felt the impacts at SSM Health, and we are excited to be able to lean on our friends at the Kramer School of Nursing to help fill the gap."

This is not the first partnership between SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital and OCU. In fact, the two entities have a long tradition of partnerships to address health care needs in the community. In 1981, the St. Anthony Hospital School of Nursing, established as the first nursing school in Oklahoma in 1908, merged with OCU's academic program to offer a four-year bachelor's degree in nursing, the first venture of its kind in the state. In 1959, the hospital and university forged an agreement that would allow students to earn 30 hours of credit toward their degree with a two-year X-ray technician course taught at the hospital.

"We are proud to continue the tradition of collaboration between OCU and SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital," said Gina Crawford, dean of OCU's Kramer School of Nursing, "We are very excited to be able to offer additional support to our students and to continue to build on the high-quality education at Kramer School of Nursing. This partnership will assist in building a more robust nursing workforce in Oklahoma."

To learn more about the Saints & Stars Program, or about nursing programs at OCU, go to okcu.edu/ nursing.

CAREERS IN NURSING: DYNAMIC TREATMENT PLANS - CANCER CARE NURSE ADVOCATES AGAINST CANCER

by James Coburn - staff writer

time.

Cancer care is evolving with specific treatments for different types of cancer. Every person and malignancy are different.

Biomedical research and the therapies targeting cancer cells are light years ahead of when Robin Dabney, RN, became a nurse in 2017.

Being a cancer care nurse can be challenging. But Dabney has an empathetic nature that is needed when providing infusion services to patients at SSM Health Cancer Care, located on the campus of SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital-Midwest.

Though nurses are vulnerable to relating to the emotional pain of their patients, Dabney is built to endure. She realizes the need to push her own response of sadness to the side when at the clinic.

"Sometimes you're just not going to be able to be cheered up, but you have to be able to make them feel as comfortable as possible, as cared for as possible, and remember why you are doing it," Dabney said. Patients may be understandably fearful. But Dabney said nurses can help comfort patients by figuring out what is causing points of distress. She finds opportunities to help patients feel better instead of thinking they're just grumpy.

The Cancer Care Clinic is a tightknit team of nurses who go over and above their line of duty to help other nurses provide exceptional care, Dabney said.

Cancer does not take a holiday, but it is not always a death sentence. Dabney has had patients that didn't make it.

"I've had patients I didn't think were going to, but have been in remission for years," she said. "The patients and their families are my entire reason for being here."

Becoming a nurse was a heartfelt journey for her. When Dabney was 27, her daughter provided her good reason to become a nurse after being diagnosed with type-1 diabetes at age 18. Dabney wasn't a nurse at the "The nurses taught me how to take care of her. They were the ones that helped me when I cried," she said.

Dabney wanted to be that instrument of health and healing for somebody else. Now she administers chemotherapy as well as non-cancer infusions and immunotherapy.

"The area we have is absolutely fantastic," she said. "It's a very conducive environment for patients."

The Cancer Care Clinic opened in December with state-of-the-art equipment, three exam rooms, nine treatment rooms, dedicated parking and a comfortable lobby.

"It feels like home to me," Dabney said.

Patients are allowed to have a family member or friend with them. There is a list of snacks and TV channels and more one-on-one time without 15 people in the same room.

"The chairs are super fancy. They're heated and massage, so we can make people as comfortable as possible in a tranquil environment," Dabney said.

She educates them about what their medicine does and the side effects to expect.

As an oncology certified nurse, she knows there is always reason for hope. New treatments are always on the horizon. She knows about every chemotherapy available, and how they work in each category because every type of cancer requires a different infusion-type battle plan.

"So that's actually one of the things that I like to do, dig into what we are going to do next, what's this going to look like in five years," she said.

Targeted therapies and immunotherapies are amazing, she continued. The more is revealed about cancer — why and how the body produces cancer by genes causing a malignancy, is essential for biomedical

See DABNEY Page 5



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Robin Dabney's interest in nursing includes the evolving course of treatment plans as the registered nurse provides infusion services at SSM Health Cancer Care, located on the campus of SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital-Midwest.

DABNEY Continued from Page 4

research scientists to target specific cancer producing genes.

Recently she has worked with newer types of phases 2 and 3 research drugs.

"You can have five patients with colon cancer, and they can all have colon cancer for different reasons," she said.

Many cancers do not immediately produce symptoms until it's late in the game. People will tell Dabney they "just felt off, but nothing was wrong with me."

Then they find out their cancer has metastasized to stage 4 ovarian cancer, colon cancer or pancreatic

cancer.

Catching cancer early enough saves lives. COVID made matters worse in that fewer people didn't have their mammograms or colonoscopies, putting it off for another year. People have said they knew people with cancer but didn't think it would happen to them.

"I think that is a big mistake — a big mistake," she said. "Cancer doesn't care if it's Christmas. Cancer doesn't care if you have a grandkid on the way. Cancer doesn't care about anything at all."

Cancer care nurses know they must take care of themselves in order to help others. Dabney centers herself by crocheting a lot and doing yoga and traveling with her husband.



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OSU'S RN to BSN program offers convenience, flexibility

Oklahoma State University RN to BSN student Sage Holder had long known she was interested in a healthcare career. When two of the most important people in her life – her grandfather and mother – received a cancer diagnosis in the same week during her first year of college, her career path came into focus.

"I knew I wanted to be in the healthcare system. I just didn't know exactly where or what that was going to look like when I started college. I knew I wanted to be successful, a person that others needed, and to care for the sick," Holder recalls.

Holder began taking pre-medicine classes but during the second semester of her freshman year, she had what she calls an "aha" moment.

"I was either in class or in the hospital, spending time with my family during my grandpa's chemo treatments or my mom's cancer appointments. I began to notice the nurses. I wanted to be the person that the patient could look to for a smile, a laugh, or a shoulder to cry on."

Confident in her decision to pursue nursing, Holder completed prerequisite courses and went on to earn an associate degree in May 2021 and become a Registered Nurse (RN). She landed a job at the Emergency Room at Stillwater Medical Center.

Ready to continue her education by pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Holder found the perfect fit in OSU's fully online RN to BSN program.

"I knew the program would offer flexibility with my lifestyle and allow me to continue working as an RN while taking classes," Holder said. "The faculty have been approachable and easy to reach and to communicate with. I feel like they want me to succeed."

OSU's RN to BSN program, which launched in Fall 2017 and is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), provides students with a convenient and flexible option to complete their bachelor's degree in as little as one year.

OSU students expand their professional nursing knowledge from practical, foundational skills they learned during their associate degree, learning the why behind past education.

"Our students are challenged with a wide array of topics that range from leadership and current trends in nursing to global, cultural and public health, as well as nursing theory," RN to BSN program director Dr. Alana Cluck said.

Ultimately, the mission of the RN to BSN program is to prepare nurses to practice professional nursing that meets the dynamic





health care needs of individuals, families, groups, communities and global populations. With this degree, graduates are qualified for leadership roles in a variety of healthcare environments.

OSU's RN to BSN program enjoys a 100 percent satisfaction rate among its graduates. Faculty offer personalized attention and are committed to student success.

"Faculty communicate extremely well, especially considering it's an online program. They offer a variety of ways to share information and foster relationships with our peers, which allows us to be successful. It's easy to have a positive experience when you feel your efforts are not only noticed, but also celebrated," RN to BSN graduate Lacy Smith said.

Kobey Trower, a 2019 graduate of the program, appreciated the experience of his peers and the collaborative nature of courses.

"All of the students were working full-time jobs," Trower said. "We had some people who worked in ICU, some in labor and delivery, others in clinic and research settings. The accessibility of the coursework helped us keep on the same page for group projects. It was super convenient for me to work full time and still have a life without being tieddown. That aspect of it helped keep my attention and keep me moving through the program."

Holder's experience as a student in the program has been first rate. She encourages any RN considering a four-year degree to explore OSU's program.

"Set up a meeting or a zoom call with a faculty or administrative member and give them the chance to provide information and answer questions that are of concern. That is what I did and it sold me. The faculty were so welcoming and flexible."

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- Kayce (Tuter) Brown, RN to BSN student



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What was your favorite subject in grade school?



SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital -Midwest



"English because you told stories and got to read and

write them."

Gary Dirickson, RN

"My favorite subject was reading because you could go anywhere with anybody that was in that book."

Brandi Williams, RN

"I think I really liked science. Health/science was always my favorite. I just liked learning about the processes of life."



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Across	_				1													
2. problem with one of the two	Down			2														
eft bundle fascicles	1. pumps blood to arteries																	4
5. valve between left atrium and	3. normal pacemaker of the		5										6					
left ventricle	heart																	
6. valve between right atrium	4. location of SA node		7															
and right ventricle	10. ability of muscle cells to															8		
7. st segment elevation MI	shorten															0		
8. filling phase of cardiac cycle	11. type of ventricular		_	0											10			
9. represents ventricular	tachycardia			9											10			
depolarization	13. commonly associated with																	
12. gets unoxygenated blood	inferior MI, abbr.				12		13											
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depolarization		22	2															
23. direction of depolarization of								23										
the ventricles	ANSWERS ON PAGE 13	By Fran Coffland																



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eklahoma's NursingTimes

Nurses feel unprepared for future pandemics, unsupported by employers, survey finds

by Ashleigh Hollowell (Twitter)

Forty-one percent of nurses nationwide do not feel prepared for a future variant, surge or pandemic, data from the American Nurses Foundation's survey revealed.

On top of that, of the 12,500 nurses who were surveyed, 53 percent said verbal abuse toward them has increased, but 43 percent say there is not a reporting structure in place to report this, or they are unaware of one existing.

Close to 30 percent of new nurses with fewer than 10 years of experience said their mental wellbeing is suffering. This is in stark contrast with nurses who have upward of 40 years of experience in their field, of whom only 8 percent felt the same way.

As the profession continues to face a national shortage, nearly one-third of younger nurses suffering emotional distress because of their jobs could be cause for additional concern related to attracting more individuals to the field.

"These data sets reveal nurses

need much more support than they are getting from their leadership and employers," Kate Judge, executive director of the American Nurses Foundation, said in a Jan. 25 press statement. She noted that the findings of the comprehensive survey "demonstrate that employers must dramatically shift their approach to supporting nurses, taking into account that different demographics of nursing have unique needs."

Despite growing challenges cited across the profession, the top five things that are helping nurses navigate burnout and emotional stress include: 1. Spending time with loved ones

2. Leisure or entertainment including

art, music, reading and movies

3. Going outdoors or spending time around animals

4. Regular exercise

5. Talking with their colleagues (This article was published by Becker's Hospital Review

https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/)

OU Health Begins Operating the Medical Oncology Clinic

On Monday, Jan. 23, 2023, OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center assumed operations and management of Norman Regional's medical oncology services at the Porter Campus Medical Oncology and Infusion Clinic. This transition is part of a newly announced partnership to expand cancer care in Oklahoma.

OU Health and Norman Regional will bring the highest level of cancer care to Norman by building a new cancer care facility on the Norman Regional HealthPlex campus, said Norman Regional President and CEO Richie Splitt.

This new building, slated to open in 2025, will provide the expertise and convenience of Oklahoma's only National Cancer Institute-Designated Cancer Center, OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center, to the residents of the south metro and south central Oklahoma.

Operating the Medical Oncology and Infusion Clinic is the first step in this plan.

"Norman Regional has a long history of excellence in cancer care. Partnering with Stephenson Cancer Center will elevate those services in a variety of ways and allow patients to receive convenient care closer to their homes," Splitt said.

The same expert team including physicians will provide care at this clinic but as part of OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center.

"Over the years since I did my training at OU College of Medicine, I have always maintained a good working relationship with the physicians at OU Health, and it is my pleasure to be able to formally announce this partnership, enabling our patients to have even more seamless access to highly specialized care," said Kristin Thorp, MD, oncologist.

Patients of the Medical Oncology Clinic and Infusion Center will see changes such as different naming on signs and the communication they receive.

"Thank you to our employees who we call healers and our patients as we work through this transition," Splitt said. "We're honored to begin a new journey that, as always, leads to exceptional patient care."

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The Nursing Shortage: 8 Ways Healthcare **Organizations Can Improve Retention**

for healthcare organizations. High turnover rates can lead to increased costs, decreased quality of care, and reduced morale among remaining staff.

Registered nurse (RN) turnover rates reached nearly 30% in 2021, with the cost of an RN turnover reaching up to \$58,300, according to a 2022 report from NSI Nursing Solutions. The cause? Many point to COVID-19 as the tipping point for many nurses, though staffing issues and nurse turnover predate the pandemic.

Nurse retention and patient safety are closely linked

High turnover rates among nurses can lead to decreased quality of care and increased risks for patients. On the other hand, when nurses are retained, patient safety outcomes are often improved. This is why nurse recruitment and retention are top of mind for practically every healthcare organization and healthcare leader in 2023.

One of the main ways in which nurse retention affects patient safety

Nurse retention is a critical issue is through continuity of care. When nurses are retained, they can establish relationships with patients and develop a deeper understanding of their unique needs. This leads to improved communication, more accurate assessments, and better care planning. Additionally, when nurses have been with an organization for a longer time, they are more likely to have a good understanding of the organization's policies and procedures, which can lead to improved adherence to standards of care and guidelines.

Another way in which nurse retention affects patient safety is through staffing levels. High turnover rates can lead to shortages in nursing staff, which can lead to nurses being overworked and fatigued, increasing the risk of errors and accidents. This was the case in the recent nursing strikes in New York. Additionally, when staffing levels are low, nurses may not have the time to provide the level of care that patients need, which can lead to delays in treatment and poorer outcomes.

How to stop the exodus

While many nurses once anticipated a lifelong career in the field, the effects of the pandemic, compounded with decades of systemic procedural problems, have forced many to leave the profession they once loved. About one in five healthcare workers have left medicine since the pandemic began, and 90% of nurses are considering leaving the profession in the near future.

Resulting staffing shortages have since led to unmanageable work schedules and workloads for those care providers who remain in healthcare, leading to unprecedented rates of burnout. By addressing nurse retention and creating a positive work environment, healthcare organizations can improve the quality of care, keep staffing costs in check, and ultimately improve patient safety. To address high turnover among nurses, healthcare organizations should focus on strategies that retain their nurses. Here are 10 strategies to improve nurse retention:

1. Emphasize professional development: Nurses want to feel valued and respected by their employer. One way to achieve this is by providing opportunities for professional development, including tuition reimbursement and continuing education courses.

2. Ensure adequate training: It's important that each department within a healthcare organization provide adequate equipment and training of safety protocols so that employees understand their responsibilities. And just as importantly, organizations should implement new procedures and workflows to ensure that adequate processes are in place for prioritizing safety and avoiding employee burnout.

3. Promote work-life balance: Nurses often work long and irregular hours, which can lead to healthcare worker burnout and fatigue. Healthcare organizations should consider flexible scheduling options and promote worklife balance among staff. This can include offering telecommuting options, providing paid time off, and promoting

Continued on next page

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Steven and Christina Sibley are licensed, independent Insurance Brokers. Their focus is finding the best products to insure their client's Life, Health, Long Term Care and Medicare insurance needs are fully and affordably met, both now and in retirement. With her 20 years of healthcare experience and his 20 years of financial services experience, they are ready to offer you the information and personalized service you expect and deserve. There's never any pressure, or any charge, just help.





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self-care and stress management.

4. Offer competitive compensation and benefits: Nurses are in high demand, and healthcare organizations that offer competitive salaries and benefits are more likely to retain their staff. Organizations should ensure that their compensation packages are competitive with other healthcare organizations. This can include offering sign-on bonuses, tuition reimbursement, and retirement benefits.

5. Create a safe work environment: Providing nurses with a platform to share their observations is one way to maintain a safe environment. By implementing an incident reporting platform, for example, organizations give voice to nurses by allowing them to (anonymously or not) share their observations around unsafe conditions and events. This information then becomes part of a larger data set so leaders can look at trends across the organization.

Encourage 6. employee engagement: When nurses feel engaged in their work and feel that their opinions are valued, they are more likely to perform better - and stay with their organization. An Advisory Board engagement study showed that engaged employees had a turnover rate of 9.8%. Even those workers who reported being "content" (or, satisfied in their roles but not necessarily engaged) had rates of 13.4%. Healthcare organizations should encourage employee engagement by creating opportunities for nurses to

voice their concerns, participate in decision-making, and take on leadership roles.

7. Provide supportive supervision: Healthcare organizations should provide supportive supervision by assigning nurses to managers who are knowledgeable about the nursing profession and can provide guidance, support, and mentorship.

8. Foster a "just culture": A just culture in nursing refers to a model of shared accountability that encourages transparency and open communication about potential safety issues so teams can better understand organizational gaps and root causes of harmful events. Establishing a just culture based on trust and taking proactive action to prevent harm enables nurses to feel heard, valued, and that they're making a positive difference in patient care.

Heidi Raines is the author of Shared Voices: A Framework for Patient and Employee Safety in Healthcare. She also is the founder and CEO of Performance Health Partners (www.performancehealthus.com), a software company providing patient safety, employee health and quality improvement solutions to healthcare organizations. In addition, Raines is the Board President of the American College of Healthcare Executives' Women Healthcare Executive Network and holds Preceptor Faculty positions at Tulane University's Master of Health Administration (MHA) and University of New Orleans's Bachelor of Healthcare Administration program. Raines has received awards for innovation and executive leadership, including City Business' Innovator of the Year and Woman of the Year awards.

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