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Read Delgado's story on page 2

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Dee Delgado, RN

Nurse navigator for head and neck patient population at the OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences.

story and photo by James Coburn, Staff Writer

Dee Delgado has served the head and neck population for her 35-year career as a registered nurse. She is the nurse navigator for head and neck patient population at the OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences.

She advocates for head and neck patients living with cancer by educating them through the course of their health care needs.

Most patients have been diagnosed with cancer before she meets them. She helps patients decrease barriers they might otherwise encounter without her help.

"It's an opportunity to meet with them and introduce myself and identify with them so they don't feel like they're lost and they're just a number," Delgado said.

During the 20-30 minutes she spends with a patient, Delgado sees them transition from being highly anxious to feeling more comfortable. Earning the confidence of each patient enriches her life.

"I feel like a cheerleader. I'm trying to encourage them, give them hope, and let them know they're in a very good place," Delgado said.

Oral cancer usually causes patients to lose a lot of weight. So, Delgado works closely with a dietician and makes referrals to speech pathology when the issue is throat cancer.

"I'm educating them on their surgeries or chemo and radiation, I'm educating them how the radiation and chemo process works," she continued.

Delgado explained the importance of making sure head and neck patients have been to

their dentist recently. Tooth decay could complicate issues for the jawbone. Patients may also have a compromised airway. Delgado understands the speech of her patients with cancer of the tongue.

"We have a lot of trachs and laryngectomy patients, so I've gotten good at reading lips. I can teach you anything about a trach," she said.

Cancer is not always a death sentence. Many times, her patients may have had a relative or a friend several years ago who had a bad experience.

"I try to educate them that things have really changed in 20 years," she explained.

For example, OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center is one of two cancer centers in Oklahoma offering proton therapy.

Warning signs of a head or neck malignancy may vary. Early detection is crucial. A lot of times patients will get a little sore in their mouth or on a lip. They sometimes mistake it for small ulcer or canker sore. Elderly patients will recall that their dentures started to not fit right.

She sees a lot of skin cancers, too. OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center will consult with the

Dean McGee Eye Institute plastic surgeons when the cancer is near the eye or orbit. They also work closely with endocrinologists when the issue is thyroid cancer.

Her range of observation, communication skills, and curious intellect came with hard work and a concern for the welfare of others. In 1989 Delgado earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing at the University of Central Oklahoma. She has worked at OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center for 10 years and served at OU Health University of Oklahoma Medical Center for 25 years.

"I used to take care of these patients post-op. I worked on a med/surg floor, and I really admired the doctors, and just fell in love with this patient population," Delgado said.

Experience has developed a network of close relationships among diagnostic professionals. She makes sure all the scans and biopsy slides are received from pathology and radiology so they may be presented at the Tumor Board.

Delgado informs patients of the results of every new scan

Seeg DELGADO Page 3

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Dee Delgado, RN, serves as the nurse navigator for the head and neck patient population at the OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences.

DELGADO

Continued from Page 2

after the Tumor Board — what the next steps are, and schedules appointments for either surgery, chemotherapy, or radiation. Not every patient lives in Oklahoma City, so at times she will refer patients all over the state.

She does this not by seeing persons living with cancer as objects. Delgado brings her empathetic nature with her to work each morning or when returning home.

“Whenever a stressor pops up in our life — whatever it may be

— if you start to feel sorry for yourself, all you have to do is come to work and you say, ‘No, I am blessed,’ because you see what these people are going through. And you’re like, ‘No, I’ve got this.’ It puts it in perspective. It humbles you. You’re just like, ‘Oh, my problems are nothing,’” she said.

Delgado might work a jigsaw puzzle at home after work. It has a calming effect, she said.

“You kind of disconnect and focus on that,” she said. “I like to meditate. I like to go walking or ride my bike. I enjoy being outside. I enjoy God’s creation — you know it’s beautiful.”

For more information about OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences visit

<https://www.ouhealth.com/find-a-location/ou-health-stephenson-cancer-center/>

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EDUCATION IN NURSING: NURSE SETS HIGH GOALS AT SOUTHWEST MEDICAL CENTER

story and photo by Vickie Jenkins, staff writer

Southwest Medical Center is known for their exceptional care, with focus on specialized care and lifesaving treatment. Recognizing a remarkable nurse, is Tahereh Ryland Neal, RN whose dedication shines brightly. "My journey began as a nurse tech at Integris and now, I am proud to be an RN and I am deeply convinced that nursing in my calling."

Tahereh's childhood was spent in California and Colorado before settling in Oklahoma. When she was little, she wanted to be Wonder Woman. Tahereh thought she had powerful, bullet-deflecting bracelets, wearing a cape, feeling like a superhero, doing anything she put her mind to.

Tahereh's first job in the medical field was a home health assistant for developmentally disabled clients. She enjoyed the client interaction and being able to assist the clients in their daily living tasks in addition to errands and outings with them. Later, she left that job to work for her parents in remodeling rent homes. She always remembered the interaction and friendships that were formed while she was in that role. Her next job in the medical field was when she started as a nurse tech for Integris, just finishing her first semester of nursing school. Having a job in the medical field, she gained a sense of confidence and paying close attention to the patient's care.

She began her nursing journey at OCCO, setting her goals high. "As a 46 year old mother and wife, I made a significant career change at 42. It was a lot of determination and perseverance but the rewards were worth the effort. My husband, family and friends supported me in every way. Through various roles and job opportunities in the medical field, I finally found the career that I was made for."

"During my time as a nurse tech, I had the privilege of rotating through various hospitals, exploring various roles and opportunities, discovering which field was best for me. Currently, I work on the

oncology floor. I consider myself a leader and a follower; I enjoy being part of a team, learning from others in a supportive role. However, I'm also comfortable taking the lead when I have the experience in a particular area. Having experienced both roles, I appreciate the unique perspectives and expectations each offers," Tahereh explained.

When asked about her favorite part of being a nurse, Tahereh responded, "The most rewarding part for me is the opportunity to make a positive impact on peoples' lives. I thrive connecting with others and knowing that I played a role in their journey to better health, whether through physical care or emotional support. It's gratifying to witness patients navigating their challenges with resilience, knowing I helped them in their journey."

During nursing school, Tahereh didn't have a designated mentor but she formed meaningful connections with her peers. "I am truly thankful for the guidance I received during those interactions. As a nurse tech, I was fortunate to have several nurses who shared their knowledge with me. It's remarkable how people in the workplace can mentor another, demonstrating not just professionalism but also wisdom gained through years of experience."

Tahereh holds herself to high standards as a nurse, expressing compassion for others. She feels privileged to work with incredible nurses and caregivers. Despite the occasional stress, she responds with composure and patience, finding grace in challenging situations.

When asked about her biggest reward as a nurse, Tahereh replied, "My greatest reward is a sense of accomplishment that I feel each day when I leave work, knowing I met with new experiences and challenges. I'm proud to be a nurse, making sure to work hard and do my best."

Tahereh cherishes spending time with her family, indulging in hobbies such as dancing, cooking, traveling, home remodeling, gardening, and music. She finds her favorite place is



At Integris Southwest Medical Center, you will find Tahereh Ryland Neal, RN. Full of love and compassion, as she cares for the patients. Tahereh feels like being a nurse is definitely her calling.

anything concerning water sports. bullet-deflecting bracelets to feel like a superhero. Nurses have boundless compassion and dedication, making them all true superheroes capable of anything they set their minds to.

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NURSE TALK



What do you love about serving older adults?

"I like being able to make the connection with older adults and be able to help them."



Gail Dudek, CNA, CMA

"I love them and love my job. I like to deal with them, talk to them and take care of them."



Amparo Zamora, CNA

"Just to be there in their general vicinity, and to hear the story they have about their lives."



Sarah Anderson Wise, CNA, CMA



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Easter Bunny at INTEGRIS Health Southwest Medical Center



The Easter Bunny paid a visit to INTEGRIS Health Southwest Medical Center. The happy hare took photos and handed out Easter eggs to adults and children alike. The thankful caregivers said seeing the fluffy bunny gave them a much-needed boost and put a spring in their step. Kiddos from the hospital's on-site childcare facility also enjoyed getting to see the bunny in advance of the holiday and receiving his yummy treats.

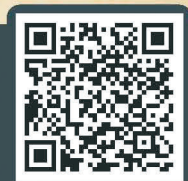


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Cowan Campus / Yukon

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Integrus Heart Hospital Nearing Completion

by Bobby Anderson, RN - staff writer

A new hospital is emerging on the Oklahoma City skyline.

The six-story Integrus Health Heart Hospital is moving towards its June completion date and hiring is continuing.

The 209,000-square-foot building will include 64 ICU beds, multiple cardiac catheterization labs, cardiovascular operating rooms, hybrid operating rooms, electrophysiology heart labs, and convenient cardiac diagnostic testing areas. It sits on the campus of Integrus Baptist.

An onsite coffee shop that features a full menu of breakfast, lunch and, craft coffee in partnership with locally owned Ends of the Earth (EOTE) Coffee Company will also be included.

"We have long been known as the only hospital in Oklahoma to offer a full spectrum of advanced cardiac care from diagnosis to heart transplantation, and the new heart hospital will allow us to continue to offer the best heart care available anywhere in the world," says Jeffrey

Sparling, M.D., an interventional cardiologist and president of Integrus Health Cardiovascular Physicians. "This tower is proof of our commitment to improve the heart health of Oklahomans now and for many generations to come."

Integrus Health is actively recruiting for a variety of positions.

Kelsey Behm, BSN, RN, CCRN, MBA is the director of nursing for the Integrus Heart Hospital.

She came to Integrus in 2012 and worked as a nurse tech before starting her nursing career in the transplant ICU. ECMO and cardiothoracic ICU roles followed.

"This has been a long time coming. We are so excited," she said. "We are very quickly approaching the opening date but this heart hospital and critical care tower will be part of Baptist Medical Center. What we are able to do is expand cardiac care and services that we offer.

"What's really awesome is we will be moving all of our cardiac diagnostics, procedural and,



The new six-story Integrus Health Heart Hospital is expected to be completed in June. Photo provided.

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surgery areas into this new state-of-the-art building as well as our cardiothoracic intensive care unit and have additional critical care beds and an abdominal transplant ICU."

If it sounds like a lot of moving parts, there are.

Behm said more than a year of planning has gone into the move.

"So many different teams of people, departments, different disciplines," Behm said. "It really is bringing a lot together. We have a team of people that on a weekly basis track progress and make sure the project is running on plan."

Even though construction is ongoing, frontline caregivers were able to tour the facility in early February.

"They've been excited but to actually see it, feel it and walk

through it they were all really proud and excited for the new building," Behm said. "What we have now, the infrastructure has its challenges. Walking into this new (building) with big rooms and windows ... they were just really excited. They have a lot of pride in it. It was really a great day."

A larger facility means more staff positions. Behm said positions are available up and down the service line.

"We are actively recruiting to grow our team. Anything from pre-op, surgical admitting, PACU that's all going to be dedicated to cardiac, we are building those teams from the ground up."

Cath lab, CVOR, cardiothoracic ICU, abdominal transplant and, critical care teams are also being built.



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"First Aid + CPR 4 Dummies"

Where can you learn CPR free of charge?

We get calls all the time asking where people can get a free CPR class, and I am tasked with telling people that they won't find a free class for those whose employment or educational facility requires certification. I usually explain that AHA materials are costly (and mandatory) for every participant, and the fee the instructor (or company) must pay for those materials account for about half of the fee charged for a given class. Since 99% of those asking must have the classes for certification, that's the end of the conversation.

Some agencies have received grants enabling them to purchase the necessary supplies to teach the most basic class, often called "CPR for Family & Friends", in communities; other groups have other revenue streams so this type of course keeps employees already on the payroll busy and their teaching skills sharp, maybe on a monthly or quarterly basis. These very basic classes have different requirements than certification classes and allows instructors to teach a far greater number of students at once, which also means less overhead cost. Even these very basic classes have become harder and harder to find without charge, probably due to fewer grants being awarded for community education opportunities. If you are one of the few that simply wants to learn CPR for your own peace of mind and don't need a certification card, we have just the ticket!

Heartland CPR has developed a short PowerPoint-based class covering basic First Aid and hands-only CPR. We offer what we call "First Aid 4 Dummies" (FA4D) to the public free of charge on a recurring basis. We rolled out this program initially to capitalize on "CPR Awareness Week" in June. Putting it on is costly for our business, so we can only offer it without charge once annually. We will make nothing by offering it and will utilize our facility, equipment, instructors, and expertise; it's just our way of giving back to a community that has allowed us to be successful since 2003.

Mark your calendars for Monday, June 3, at 9 am. The next of these classes will be offered at our new office location near NW 122nd & MacArthur. There is no catch...this is a free class offered to those who wish to learn simple steps they can take to respond in emergency situations and potentially save lives. Instead of charging for this valuable training, we will be accepting donations for the Regional Food Bank, so please bring a canned food or non-perishable food item with you. Since we have to know how many supplies to prepare, you must pre-register and can self-register online at <https://www.heartlandcpr.com/>, by contacting Heartland CPR via email "contact@HeartlandCPR.com" or calling by phone at 405-603-6666...simply let us know your name, email address, phone number, and the number planning to attend. That's it!

Remember, this is not for certification and targeted at those wishing to learn for their own peace of mind; if you are required to take a class for your employer or education requirements, this is not the class you need (although we can still help you there). Thanks for your interest in Heartland CPR!

Direct link: <https://www.heartlandcpr.com/freecprclass.html>



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A Humanities Pathway to Pre-Med

Pre-med students majoring in English, theatre, history, and other humanities fields find satisfaction in tapping into multiple interests—and see benefits for a career in medicine



Tova Tachau, Emily Monfort, Sutton Grossinger, and Max Brody are all Penn undergraduate students who have a major in the humanities and plan to go to medical school.

Now a second-year student in the College of Arts and Sciences, Max Brody entered the University of Pennsylvania knowing he wanted to go to medical school. Growing up in Bethany, Oklahoma, he saw the health impacts of tribes being forcibly displaced from their native lands—including vastly higher rates of diabetes among Native Americans.

Brody began college as a health and societies major, and he enjoyed the classes. He went into Rita Copeland's first-year seminar on emotions simply trying to get his English requirement out of the way, but Brody was wowed, and then

a gothic literature class solidified his interest in declaring an English major instead.

According to admission statistics from Career Services, the students applying to begin medical school in 2023 included 15 health and societies majors and zero English majors. Brody's family and classmates didn't quite understand his shift.

Brody wrote about the choice in a column for *The Daily Pennsylvanian* titled "In defense and in celebration of the humanities pre-med," which he says was intended to show that English is a valuable major, imbuing a sense of empathy

and ability to analyze a person. In it he touches on his frustration with the view that humanities requirements are a distraction for pre-med students.

"I want to take my knowledge of empathy, as well as the sciences that I'm learning through my pre-medical classes and combine them so I can clinically treat but also advocate for a person individually," Brody says. While sitting for an interview amid balancing organic chemistry midterms with a 7-page essay on the documentary "Paris is Burning," he continues, "Medicine is not disconnected from reality; it's always connected into the context

that we're living in."

While the most common majors for pre-med students at Penn are biology and neuroscience, there are other humanities majors on campus mapping out a career in medicine. Like Brody, they share a sense of satisfaction from the balance of courses engaging different parts of their brain.

Carol Hagan, has advised pre-health students at Penn for more than 15 years as senior associate director of graduate school advising. She says she reassures students "at the outset that they don't have

Continued on next page

PRE-MED

Continued from Page 12

to do pre-med in a very specific way, that their pre-med journey at Penn can look very different from other people's and be equally successful."

Last year, Penn's rate of applicants who matriculated into medical school was 79% compared to 44% nationwide, and Hagan says humanities majors do just as well as the others. She notes that regardless of major, all pre-medical students must take—and do well in—the same pre-medical classes, take the MCAT, and spend time around patients.

Hagan says when medical schools see students with humanities degrees applying, they know the applicants excel both in and outside the sciences. She says history majors, for example, have well-developed written and verbal communication skills, tend to be evidence-based thinkers, and are "very comfortable being in the gray areas of knowledge"—which are all assets in medicine.

Classically trained

When she had to take Latin in sixth grade, Sutton Grossinger hadn't expected to love it as much as she did. The third-year says she felt that translating was like a puzzle—with the elements of problem solving and critical thinking that also drew her to science. While hearing from clinicians in a comparative anatomy and neuroscience class in high school solidified her interest in pursuing a career in medicine, she wasn't ready to let go of Latin.

"I don't think that just because I'm interested in one thing, I should have to sacrifice all the other interests, which is great that I don't have to do that here," says Grossinger, who is from Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. Applying to colleges at the height of the pandemic, she reached out to a few Department of Classical Studies professors at Penn and joined a class Kim Bowes taught on Zoom. Grossinger recalls logging off and telling her parents all about it.

"There aren't as many schools that have amazing departments in both humanities and STEM," she says. "But I found that Penn—with

their amazing classics department and having all the opportunities of not only Penn Medicine but also all the hospitals in the surrounding Philadelphia area—made sense for me."

Grossinger says she tries to do half pre-med and half classics courses each semester, balancing large lecture hall classes and small discussion-based ones. Outside of the classroom, she has done clinical sleep research with Philip Gehrman in Penn's Perelman School of Medicine, and served as a student leader with CogWell, a nonprofit that empowers students to address mental health issues with their peers. Grossinger has also shadowed a plastic surgeon, orthopedic surgeon, and neurologists.

"When people ask me why I'm doing a classical studies major, I always say it teaches you how to think," Grossinger says.

The world's a stage

Like Brody, second-year student Emily Monfort wants to be a physician and entered Penn majoring in health and societies. She later decided to study music and neuroscience, thought about music and biology, and settled on theater and nutrition.

Monfort says theater was something she'd enjoyed childhood. She says, "I love that at Penn I can continue to study and continue to learn it more." After taking Introduction to Theatre Arts her first year, she served as stage manager for the coming-of-age play "Athena," which students performed at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe last summer. She is on the production team this semester, helping build sets, and sings in the Penn Glee Club.

"I saw a lot of transferrable skills between medicine and theater, in looking at character and analyzing character—what does this character do, what is this character interested in," Monfort says. Comparing surgery and theatre, she says the teamwork and mechanics that go into building a set mirror skills involved in running an operating room.

Culture and medicine

As a second-year, Tova Tachau shadowed a living-donor liver transplant surgery and "had that eureka moment of 'Wow, this is incredible, this is what I want to

do,'" she says. Tachau compares it to the "amazement and fascination" she felt seeing Cirque du Soleil at age 12.

She entered Penn with a plan to double-major in biochemistry and biophysics. But then she took a 20th-century Russian literature class to fulfill a prerequisite and says she "ended up falling in love with the subject." Now in her third-year, she has kept the biochemistry major and declared comparative literature and Russian and East European Studies majors.

"It provided a release from constant memorization and problem-set-oriented studies," says Tachau, from Wayne, Pennsylvania. Being in the MLS program, she got general chemistry, calculus, and physics out of the way her first year and says it's been relatively easy to fulfill pre-med requirements alongside humanities courses.

"There are definitely really interesting ways that culture and medicine interact," Tachau says, citing her interest in how the health care system struggled after the fall of the Soviet Union—and the response of physicians such as the British doctor Henry Marsh, who has worked with neurosurgeons in Ukraine since 1992. She hopes to professionally pursue her interests in tandem and is considering applying to MD/Ph.D. programs.

The view after undergrad

Alex Frumovitz graduated from the College of Arts and Sciences in 2023 with a bachelor's degree in history. He has since been working at Columbia University Irving Medical Center in an immunobiology lab focused on natural killer cells, and is in the process of applying to medical schools for the fall.

"I always enjoyed science, especially biology, and my dad's a doctor. He never really pushed me to go into that direction," says Frumovitz, who is from Houston, but says he saw the way his father interacted with patients and how much he enjoyed his work.

Knowing that he was going to be doing "a lot of science in medical school and for the rest of my life," he says he wanted to be able to pursue something different in undergrad. At Penn, he took courses as varied as Greek and Roman Medicine, East Asian Diplomacy, Witchcraft

& Possession, and The History of U.S. Baseball.

Frumovitz says his advice to current pre-med humanities majors is to lean into classes on reading and writing, and to balance their time and get in a headspace "that allows you not to over-exert yourself or run out of steam."

Zonía Moore, now a fourth-year student in the Perelman School of Medicine, wants to pursue a career in dermatology and was a humanities pre-med undergrad. She majored in Romance languages and literature and Hispanic studies at Dartmouth College, and says her knowledge of Spanish helped her as a clerkship student to translate the nuances of what patients are saying and understand how their suffering can be culturally dependent.

Being able to speak more than one language, Moore says, "you have more understanding of the human condition and you have more of an understanding of what your patients are going through." Knowing Spanish helped her in completing a Fulbright Scholarship with a dermatologist in Mexico City last year.

Moore says she entered Dartmouth with the mindset, "I'm probably going to study more science than I ever wanted to study in any case, so why should I start that now?" She encourages students interested in the pre-med humanities path to plan out what that will look like so they don't end up having to pay for postbaccalaureate classes, and to not be afraid to take time between college and medical school. Moore took three gap years, during which time she worked in consulting, studied for the MCAT, and took a postbaccalaureate course in physics.

One of the biggest benefits of studying the humanities, Moore says, is being a better writer, noting that she thinks her personal statement got her more medical school interviews. Moore further touts the benefit of being well-rounded and having broad interests. "At a cocktail party on a Friday night," she says, "no one wants to hear about the Krebs cycle."

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