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When Time Matters ICU Nurse Sees Sickest of Sick

Read Omondi's story on page 2

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Read More on Page 8 in This Issue

Evelyn Omondi, RN, SSM St. Anthony Hospital

Earned an Associate of Science in Nursing Degree From OSU/OKC, and Bachelor of Science in Nursing at OU.

story and photo by James Coburn, Staff Writer

Evelyn Omondi, RN, knows the unexpected can happen anytime and anywhere. Omondi cares for the sickest of the sick in the ICU.

Omondi is a relief charge nurse at SSM St. Anthony Hospital - Oklahoma City where she also serves as a resource nurse.

"Sometimes we are blessed to have a few come back just to say thank you," Omondi said.

She recalled when a female patient experiencing a massive stroke entered the intensive care unit after being stabilized in the ER.

Seeing the woman reminded her about the goals and best practices of patient care.

The woman had been traveling to Oklahoma City when she became seriously ill. It was a year later that

she returned to the hospital to thank the nursing staff.

Whenever she came it was just a joy for everybody," Omondi said.

The woman whose life she helped to save asked for Evelyn.

"It just reminded me how important our job is. She was on a ventilator, but she remembered me talking to her. So that was really the highlight of my career," Omondi said.

She will always introduce herself to each patient and explain what she is doing, whether they are awake, alert, or on a ventilator.

"Sometimes the patients on the ventilator, you might not know that they can hear you," Omondi explained. "But we always treat them exactly the same way as the person who's awake and alert."

The patient's husband and daughter were at the bedside. Omondi asked her patient to squeeze her hand and wiggle her toes. With a stroke it may become more difficult for a patient to follow the commands. But it's important to treat all patients the same, Omondi continued.

"For me it was very heartwarming that although she wasn't following those commands for me, she would hear me and came back remembering exactly what was said," Omondi said. "She remembered me by name which I did not know this could happen."

Omondi felt a connection with the woman while she was on the ventilator. And regretted not being present when her patient was discharged.

"The family was the sweetest family you could ever meet," Omondi said. "Once I saw her, I remembered every little step I took while she was here. The husband and the daughter just impressed me. Everybody was in tears. It was a joy to see her walking, talking."

Stroke is a leading cause of death and disability in the U.S., and women make up nearly 60 percent of all stroke deaths, according to the American Heart

Association. Treatment is extremely time-sensitive, and delays can increase the risk of death or permanent brain damage.

The joy for a nurse it to see the person they have taken care of recover, Omondi said. The woman was able to resume her activities.

"To see them come back and they're walking, it's just a miracle," Omondi added.

There are two types of stroke - ischemic and a bleed. Patients with an ischemic stroke have a one-hour window to receive a clot-busting medication. Somebody needs to call 911 for an ambulance in time for the clot buster to be given in the ER.

"If you're outside the window, they don't give you the clot busting medication," said Omondi, who came from Nairobi, Kenya to work in Oklahoma. Her nursing career has been like a ladder to climb. She began as a CNA.

She earned an Associate of Science in Nursing degree from OSU/OKC, and received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at the University of Oklahoma. She had always wanted to work at Saints because of the power of prayer.

Continued next page

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Evelyn Omondi, RN, SSM St. Anthony Hospital, never forgets what's meaningful in life while working in the ICU.

OMONDI

Continued from Page 2

"I would see the doctor and the nurses praying," she said of a 2015 television commercial. "It drew me out to work Saints one day just because of the Christian based part of it."

She's learned a lot about wellness since becoming a nurse. Nutrition and exercise are advantageous for good health.

"We see people here with different illnesses. It just reminded me how life is precious," she said.

Now she knows what causes high blood pressure, stroke, how to perform CPR and other things she had no clue of before becoming a

nurse.

"I love to run. I always run the marathon memorial every year," she said.

Each year she tries to add something different for something to do.

"So last year I started playing tennis and this year I started playing pickle ball," Omondi said. "I do that, and I love hanging out with my family and friends."

She said SSM St. Anthony Hospital is the best place to work.

"I love it here," Omondi said.

For more information about SSM Health and St. Anthony Hospital: <https://www.ssmhealth.com/locations>.

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Nurse Practitioners: Bridging the Gap in Patient Care

By Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

Highlighting one of Edmond, Oklahoma's notable healthcare leaders is Kara De La Pena, APRN-CNP, founder of Np2Go, Inc. Here, you will find high quality healthcare solutions in the metro area. Kara is a local nurse practitioner, a licensed Family Nurse Practitioner, and is board-certified by the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. Kara is also certified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support, Basic Life Support, and Pediatric Advanced Life Support.

Kara was born and raised in Enid, Oklahoma. She earned her associate's degree in nursing from Oklahoma City Community College in 2012, and her bachelors of science in nursing from Northwestern Oklahoma State University in 2014. In 2019, she earned a master's degree in nursing while graduating as a family nurse practitioner from Maryville University in St. Louis.

Asking Kara why she became a nurse, she replied. "When I was 16, my grandmother had a stroke, causing her to be paralyzed on her left side. My mother, who was a nurse took care of her and I helped. I also remember the patients in the hospital thanking my mother and the other nurses for their care. This experience made me realize that I wanted to be a nurse to help people and provide a valuable service to others. I graduated from Enid High School in 2004 and decided to pursue a career in the medical field."

"I felt like I always had an entrepreneurial spirit and a love of helping others. I wanted to offer a unique service that could benefit a wide range of people. This led to the creation of my business Np2Go, Inc. which I envisioned as perfect for homebound patients, people on the go, parents, family and more," Kara explained.

As CEO, Kara has many roles. She oversees both clinical and business operations at Np2Go, which includes weight

loss programs, telemedicine, lab work, IV fluids and injections, mobile visits, office visits, laser hair removal, urgent care visits, IV hydration, IV vitamins and cosmetic treatments.

I asked Kara what qualities she thought a nurse should have. She replied, "I think a nurse should have integrity, empathy and a genuine care for others. Being a good person means having integrity and always doing the right thing."

Kara not only demonstrates her expertise in her everyday work but also shows her strength as a nurse through her ability to listen to her patients and relate to them. She earns their trust by being open and honest, creating a judgement-free environment, which is another important factor in her practice.

Kara's biggest challenge as a nurse is facing self-criticism. "It's difficult but sometimes, it is necessary, to evaluate oneself critically. I always strive for excellence, continually setting higher goals and working hard to achieve them," she commented. "On the other hand, my greatest reward is loving what I do, so it never feels like a job. I find fulfillment in solving problems, making new discoveries and embracing new beginnings," she added.

When asked what she is most proud of, Kara replied, "I love being a nurse, and a nurse practitioner, but my greatest joy is being a 'female CEO' in a world that often goes against the grain. While I care for everyone, I believe family is the most important thing and should always come before business. As a mom, I feel a special connection to other women, all of the moms, wives, partners, and I find myself striving to help them succeed. It's about balancing work and family, ensuring that moms and their children are well taken care of."

I am proud to be CEO of Np2Go, Inc. and know that I have achieved one of my dreams with plans to go even further," Kara said. "I often remind myself that I



One of Edmond, Oklahoma's leading healthcare providers is Kara De La Pena, APRN-CNP. Kara is proud to be CEO of Np2Go, Inc.

am the She E-O of the company, and I take pride in that," she said with a laugh. She was thrilled to share the news that Np2Go has been voted the Best of 405 Weight Loss Clinic for 2024! "The people of Oklahoma

put their trust in us and the recognition is truly an honor," Kara commented.

When Kara is not working, she likes to spend time with her husband and three daughters, 12, 9, and 2.



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NURSE TALK



If you were to name a crayon to describe yourself, what would the name be and why?



"I would be YOLO YELLOW. You only live once and I am bright as the sun. My nickname is also Sunshine."



Tonya Smith, RN

"My name would be MAYHAM MAGENTA. With a busy life of working full time, school full time, and being a wife and sports/cheer mom."



Sabrina Woody, RN, Manager

"I would be called EMPATHETIC EMERALD. This embodies empathy and understanding. I am drawn to others that I can care for."



Alysha Roberts, LPN



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CARL ALBERT STATE COLLEGE NURSING PROGRAM NAMED TOP NURSING SCHOOL IN OK

Carl Albert State College is proud to announce that its Associate of Applied Science in Nursing Program has been recognized as the top nursing school in Oklahoma by Research.com. The CASC program was identified by the Research.com team as among the best schools apart from OU nursing programs. This prestigious acknowledgment highlights the program's commitment to providing an affordable, accessible, and exceptional education to aspiring nurses.

The nursing program at Carl Albert State College stands out for its comprehensive curriculum, which focuses on preparing students to provide safe, evidence-based nursing care. Through a combination of theory, clinical, and simulation experiences, students develop essential skills in client assessment and clinical



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judgment, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet the demands of modern healthcare.

"We are thrilled to be recognized as one of the top nursing schools in Oklahoma," said Rebecca Sanders, Director of the Nursing Program at Carl Albert State College. "This achievement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our faculty and staff, as well as the commitment of our students to excel in their studies."

Central to the program's success is its emphasis on essential nursing communication, management, and technological skills. By integrating these critical components into the curriculum, students graduate with a well-rounded understanding of the nursing profession and are prepared to excel in a variety of healthcare settings.

Furthermore, the nursing program at Carl Albert State College strongly emphasizes the value of lifelong learning. Students are encouraged to continue their education beyond graduation, ensuring they remain up-to-date with the

latest advancements in healthcare and are prepared to provide high-quality care to the communities they serve.

"We believe in fostering a culture of lifelong learning among our students," added Sanders. "By instilling this value early on in their education, we are preparing them to be adaptable and informed healthcare professionals who can meet the evolving needs of their patients and communities."

As Carl Albert State College celebrates this prestigious recognition, it reaffirms its commitment to excellence in nursing education and looks forward to continuing to serve as a leading institution for aspiring nurses in Oklahoma.

For more information about Carl Albert's nursing program visit <https://carlalbert.edu>.



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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2024 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

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OMRF Study Ties Autoimmune Disease to Aging

Often the concept behind a scientific study is quite complex. But sometimes it's simply a matter of proving an idea that seems like common sense.

And so it was for Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientists Harini Bagavant, Ph.D., and Umesh Deshmukh, Ph.D.

Their discovery partially answers a lingering mystery of Sjögren's, an autoimmune disease that affects moisture-producing glands. The condition causes painful dry eyes and mouth and can result in irreversible tissue damage, neurological problems, lung disease and cancer. Up to 4 million Americans live with Sjögren's.

Scientists have long wondered why age is a risk factor for Sjögren's. The median age for diagnosis is 52, and women are nine times more likely than men to develop it.

The OMRF study determined that a particular white blood cell associated with aging proliferates and infiltrates the salivary glands in older mice, resulting in inflammation and loss of immune tolerance.

"We found that as normal mice age, many of them spontaneously get the same features we see in Sjögren's disease in humans,"

Bagavant said. "The aging process drives the inflammation in the glands."

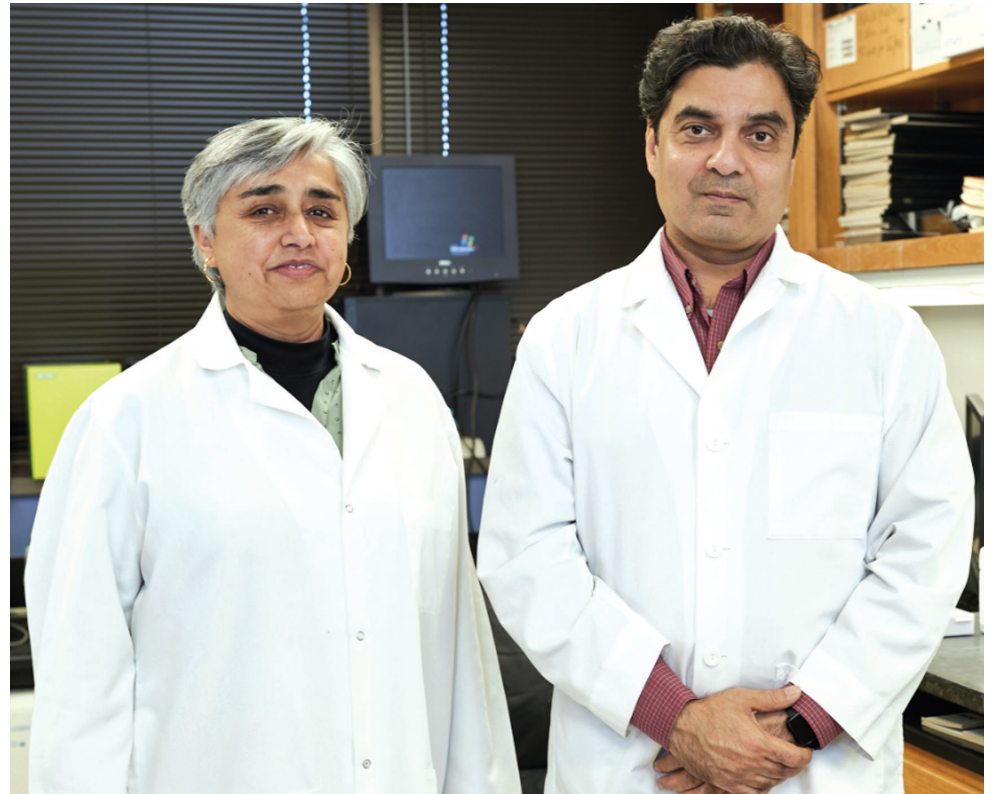
White blood cells generally circulate in the blood and lymph and create antibodies to protect our bodies against infection. In this study, the specific cell type also was found in various organs - a finding that raised more questions.

"The fact that we found them in the salivary gland, just spontaneously accumulating along with the presence of inflammation, tells us they must be doing something," Bagavant said. "Figuring that out is our next step."

Beyond their finding is a more universal idea for future research of Sjögren's and perhaps other autoimmune diseases: Reliable results require age-appropriate research models.

In this case, this means using mice between 15 and 24 months old. Historically, scientists have used younger mice for drug testing.

"What our study suggests is that if you want to test a potential drug, and your target population is older humans, those drugs should be tested in age-matched animal models," Deshmukh said. "As more research is done, I believe we'll see



Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientists Harini Bagavant, Ph.D. (Left), and Umesh Deshmukh, Ph.D. (Right)

a directive on this topic from the National Institutes of Health."

Their discovery was published recently in the journal *Geroscience*. The research was supported by grant No. DE032911 from the National

Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, part of the NIH, and from Shared Instrumentation grant No. 1S10OD028479-01, also from the NIH, for the use of specialized equipment.



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Children's Health Foundation Celebrates Gift From the Mill Creek Community Foundation

Children's Health Foundation is excited to announce a \$5,000 grant from the Mill Creek Community Foundation for the Sooner Success Fall Family Festival. The grant will support the community event to be held in October 2024 in Oklahoma City. CHF celebrates the Mill Creek Community Foundation's partnership to hold this important community event.

Sooner Success, a program of the OU Child Study Center, is dedicated to promoting locally-based health, social, and educational services for Oklahoma children and youth with special healthcare needs. In a community where disabilities, diversity, and stigma around mental health services are prevalent, the Sooner Success Fall Family Festival serves as an informal platform for staff, community members, and organizations to learn, build trust, and share resources, improving the lives of children and families.

The festival will feature entertainment, food, and a resource fair with booths from community organizations, including emergency services, nonprofits, and local churches. This will be the event's third consecutive year, and organizers expect around 300 people to attend.

Children's Health Foundation Executive Director Kathy McCracken said, "Sooner Success provides vital services to children with special healthcare needs in Oklahoma. We are incredibly grateful for the support of the Mill Creek Community Foundation for this community-wide event that will increase awareness of and access to critical resources that improve the lives of children and families."

For more information about the Fall Family Festival, follow Sooner Success online at <https://www.facebook.com/SoonerSUCCESS> or on their website at <https://soonersuccess.ouhsc.edu/News-Events>. To support Children's Health Foundation, please call 405-384-4446, or visit <https://www.chfkids.com>.

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Children's Hospital OU Health, Bethany Children's Collaborate

In a groundbreaking achievement, Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health in collaboration with Bethany Children's Health Center successfully performed the world's first robotic Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) procedure in a pediatric patient, resulting in immediate improvement in motor function the child did not have prior.



DBS, a surgical technique involving the implantation of electrodes into specific brain regions, has traditionally been used to treat movement disorders like Parkinson's disease, essential tremor and dystonia. This procedure had never been performed robotically in pediatric patients until now. The use of robotics enhances the surgical precision and safety of the procedure while also unlocking new possibilities for improved patient outcomes.

The medical collaboration rallied around 8-year-old Karleigh Fry, who has rapid-onset primary dystonia, a movement disorder that causes the muscles to react involuntarily. Initially Karleigh was paralyzed and could not eat, walk or even sit up on her own. Despite many different medications, she recovered only a bit, but had at times self-injurious dystonia.

As a result, her care team at both Oklahoma Children's Hospital and Bethany Children's explored other treatment options. Together, they decided she was a good candidate for a new procedure that would advance her care. "This marked the global debut of using a robot from our operating rooms to perform DBS in a child, setting a precedent not only in Oklahoma but also across the United States and worldwide," said Oklahoma Children's Hospital pediatric



Pediatric Neurosurgery Team at Oklahoma Children's Hospital Performs First Pediatric Robotic DBS Procedure.

neurosurgeon Dr. Andrew Jea, M.D.

Following her groundbreaking surgery at Oklahoma Children's Hospital, Karleigh's postoperative care was seamlessly continued at Bethany Children's Health Center, an innovative leader in the field of pediatric rehabilitation and 24-hour complex care and the only inpatient pediatric rehabilitation facility in Oklahoma.



bethany children's
HEALTH CENTER

"It's exciting that we're on the leading edge of what's happening in the world of deep brain stimulation, as well as robotics," said Dr. Amber Stocco, M.D., pediatric neurologist and medical director of Child & Adolescent Neurology at Bethany Children's Health Center. "We are thrilled to have achieved this milestone. Our young patient is already showing promising results, and we hope this procedure will pave the way for more pediatric DBS cases worldwide."



Karleigh Fry Receives Care at Bethany Children's Health Center.

When the neurostimulator was activated after the procedure, Karleigh was able to lower and relax her arms within minutes, something she was unable to do prior. Her movements are becoming more controllable, and her verbalization has shown improvement as well. "Her arms used to lock up to the point we would put socks on her hands because she would scratch her neck," said Karleigh's mother, Trisha Fry. "There's definitely been some improvements, even from the

moment they turned it on. She is even using her voice a little bit more, and we can make out some of her words. I think she's going to have a great future for sure."

The successful collaboration between Oklahoma Children's Hospital and Bethany Children's Health Center showcases how combining expertise and technologies can achieve optimal results to improve the quality of pediatric patient care in Oklahoma and beyond.

INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center Changes Name

INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center has changed to INTEGRIS Health Enid Hospital. The name change was officially announced to the hospital board members, stakeholders and caregivers on June 10 and has been implemented throughout the hospital campus and clinics.

The name signifies a “strategic evolution” of the system’s brand and identity and begins a new chapter for the Northwest Oklahoma hospital.

“The Bass family is a pillar of our community, in which we are grateful for them allowing us to carry their name for so long,” says Keaton Francis, the chief hospital executive at INTEGRIS Health Enid Hospital. “As we reflect on our rich history of providing care in Northwest Oklahoma, we are proud of the role INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center has played in serving the community for so many years.”

The name change follows the INTEGRIS Health organization’s continuing integration, growth and naming style standardization across all locations and enterprises. With the change, comes an INTEGRIS Health



Enid Hospital logo and rebranding.

“A lot has changed since our hospital opened its doors in 1910. Over the decades, we’ve changed, too. This name change reflects our commitment to the community we care for. Some of the changes are subtle, but some are quite profound,” says Francis. “You will see

clinic name changes, beautiful new monument and wayfinding signs and new INTEGRIS Health beacon signs as INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center transitions to INTEGRIS Health Enid Hospital.”

INTEGRIS Health Enid Hospital will continue to provide excellent care and is committed to delivering

medical services to our community. With a legacy of excellence, we are here to be your most trusted partner for health.

For more information about INTEGRIS Health Enid Hospital or the services provided, please visit <https://integrishealth.org/enid> or call 580-233-2300.

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