

Spring 2022

HealthSigns




Sleep Well, Live Well



Sleep apnea patients find that with treatment, the difference is night and day



Virtual Health & Wellness

 facebook.com/WashingtonHosp
 youtube.com/whhsInHealth



Men: Take Charge of Your Health!

Thursday, June 9
6:30 p.m.

A surprising number of healthy men do not know their family health history and do not get regular checkups or health screenings. Join Dr. Tam Nguyen for a presentation on men's health to understand the importance of regular physician visits.



5 A Stroke Success Story

Our Stroke Team is ready around-the-clock, every day of the year to treat stroke victims fast.



6 Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Most people with this serious medical condition go undiagnosed. Learn about the symptoms and treatments.



8 Spine Disorders

HealthSigns sat down with our newest neurosurgeon, an innovator in complex spine solutions.



10 Cancer Screenings

A 30-year Washington Hospital OB/GYN shares her own cancer story and a message for everyone.



Mission

As the local Health Care District, our mission is to meet the health care needs of District residents through medical services, education and research.

Within this scope, Washington Township Health Care District is committed to assuming the leadership role in improving and maintaining the health status of the residents by:

- Identifying and assessing community health care needs.
- Developing mechanisms to respond to the identified need within the financial capabilities of the District.
- Committing to a culture of patient safety and accountability.
- Adopting identified best practices.
- Providing access to high-quality, cost-effective health services through an integrated delivery system.
- Partnering with a diverse medical staff, academic medical centers and other providers to meet the health care needs of District residents.
- Providing appropriate employee, professional and community educational resources to enhance patient care and health promotion throughout the District.

Vision

To support the fulfillment of the mission, the District's strategic vision is to be the regional medical center of choice in Southern Alameda County offering quality services that span the full range of care within the available financial resources.



Washington Township Health Care District

Resolved by the Board of Directors
Washington Township Health Care District
April 22, 2020

From the Chief Executive Officer



Kimberly Hartz
Chief Executive Officer
Washington Hospital
Healthcare System

Fremont was recently named America’s “happiest” city, scoring number one in emotional and physical well-being, according to WalletHub’s “2022 Happiest Cities in America” list. Our city’s top score includes measures like percentage of adults reporting good or better health, long life expectancy, and a high vaccination rate. I’m thrilled with this news because I know that Washington Hospital Healthcare System (WHHS) strives to help improve and maintain the health status of local residents.

Good news is especially welcome in the wake of the intense past 2.5 years spent fighting COVID-19. I am incredibly proud of our entire WHHS family for their perseverance, most recently during the Omicron variant wave. We remain thankful to our community that stood by us, supporting public health guidelines, Hospital policy changes, and ongoing vaccination recommendations to help protect family, friends, and patients along with our staff and physicians. It has been a trying time for everyone, but we are emerging stronger and focused on the future.

Designs are underway for the final phase of construction necessary for the Hospital to meet unfunded California seismic mandates by the 2030 deadline and serve our growing community going forward. This includes the completion of unfinished areas in the Morris Hyman Critical Care Pavilion and a new building to house our Birthing Center, Pediatrics, Medical/Surgical units, and many more areas that must move out of the non-compliant original patient tower. We are also growing our partnership with UCSF Health, which will result in the Warm Springs Outpatient Center opening in Southern Fremont at the end of next year to meet the growing needs of the community in that area.

While we’re cautiously optimistic we can manage COVID cases moving forward, its unprecedented financial impact on the Hospital remains. Despite receiving Federal Coronavirus aid in FY20 and FY21, we reported a significant operating loss last year when there was minimal federal support. While the Healthcare System remains financially stable with a strong balance sheet, we are investigating ways to recover from these losses and continue to focus on disaster preparedness and meeting the health care needs of our community into the future.

Again, we are honored to be a premier health care provider in the nation’s happiest city — in part due to our residents’ physical well-being! We promise to continue to focus on bringing you the highest quality health care possible. That means operating a community Hospital with the Patient First Ethic central to everything we do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kimberly Hartz". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light green background.



Be FAST...call 911...Code Neuro!

Members of our multifunctional Stroke Team assess a stroke patient in the Emergency Department: (from left) Adriane Crawford, RT; (at computer) Stephanie Hioe, PharmD, BCPS, BCCCP; Beth Padilla, CPT-1; Naveenpal Bhatti, MD; Nick Schluchter, ED RN, BSN, CEN; Christopher Delarosa, Stroke RN, BSN, TNCC; and Meagan Smith, ED RN, BSN.

A Stroke Success Story

On February 28 at 9 p.m., a local 83-year-old man suddenly was unable to speak and his right side went limp. His wife dialed 911. From the ambulance, the EMTs called ahead, “Code Neuro,” en route to Washington Hospital’s Emergency Department (ED) — the designated receiving center for strokes in Southern Alameda County and a certified Primary Stroke Center. Our Stroke Team was waiting to run diagnostic tests and treat him upon arrival.

The fundamental rule of stroke care is, “time is brain,” and it’s critical to call 911. Within 37 minutes of arrival in our ED, this patient was administered a clot busting medicine called tPA which likely saved him from debilitating disabilities, or even death (the national goal ‘from door to needle’ for tPA delivery is 60 minutes). Three days later he left the Hospital to continue his rehab, talking and even laughing, with more than 75% of his original functionality.

“Upon arrival this patient presented at an 11 on the National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS) which is dangerously high, and his CT imaging confirmed he suffered an acute ischemic stroke,” explains his neurologist and our Stroke Program’s co-medical director Prabhjot Singh Khalsa, MD. “Upon receiving tPA, his score lowered to an NIHSS of 3 as he regained his ability to speak and sit up and was ultimately discharged with a good prognosis.” Last year, 61% of the 467 stroke patients were discharged from Washington Hospital with a good outcome, which is more than twice the number of all other California hospitals reporting.

“A stroke can take away someone’s humanity, or ‘what makes them who they are,’ explains Dr. Khalsa. “Not calling 911 to get medical attention right away at the first signs of stroke risks that person’s ability to think, communicate, and function on their own for the rest of their lives.”

Strokes happen when blood flow to part of the brain is cut off due to blocked arteries or when a blood vessel bursts in the brain. When it happens, time is of the essence. The acronym BE FAST can help you remember the signs of stroke.

Balance – Are they experiencing a sudden loss of balance or coordination?

Eyes – Are they having a sudden change in vision or trouble seeing?

Face – Ask them to smile. Does one side of the face droop?

Arms – Ask them to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

Speech – Ask them to repeat a simple phrase. Is their speech slurred or strange?

Time – If you observe any of these signs, call 911 immediately.



Our Otolaryngology Team helps patients with ear, nose and throat-related conditions including obstructive sleep apnea: (from left) Joanne Ricci; Jason Van Tassel, MD; Stephanie Salinas; and Maria Gonzalez.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea: A Serious Health Condition

WTFM Doctor Helps Patients Breathe Easier

It is believed that obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) affects up to 10% of Americans, but in most cases it goes undiagnosed. Untreated, OSA can lead to serious health consequences like heart arrhythmias, heart attack, hypertension, and stroke. For severe sufferers of OSA, risk of death is five times that of the general public. Washington Township Medical Foundation otolaryngologist and ear, nose and throat (ENT) Surgeon Jason Van Tassel, MD, is a board-certified, foremost expert on this complex condition and has been treating local people with it for over 15 years.

“Obstructive sleep apnea is a physiologic phenomenon where unfavorable anatomy and/or insufficient muscle tone of the upper aerodigestive tract causes a person’s airway to collapse

while they sleep,” explains Dr. Van Tassel. “Over time, daily fatigue and hormonal effects from not sleeping well causes weight gain and other health problems which only exacerbate the problem.”

So how would you know if you have OSA if it happens when you’re asleep? Telltale signs are a family member reporting loud snoring; waking up feeling like you didn’t sleep well; morning headaches; and extreme fatigue in the afternoon to the point where you may fall asleep at work or even behind the wheel.

If this sounds like you or a family member, talk to your doctor about getting a sleep study — the first step in diagnosing OSA. Once it is determined someone has OSA, further investigation is needed to determine where the blockage is and what treatment will work to open the airway at night. In addition to a physical evaluation, Dr. Van Tassel sometimes uses a drug-induced sleep endoscopy (DISE) procedure to investigate the obstruction.

Treating OSA is complex because the obstruction may be at one or many levels; it can be based on numerous factors; and in severe cases, people may completely lack the physiologic tone to maintain an open airway while sleeping. In addition to weight loss, changing sleeping positions and use of nasal decongestants, patients may require one or a combination of the following treatments to treat OSA:

CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machines, used with a breathing mask, are the gold standard for moderate and severe sleep apnea. When well tolerated and used consistently, these devices eliminate snoring and can be very effective in treating OSA.

Oral Appliances worn in the mouth hold the lower jaw forward just enough to keep the airway open and prevent the tongue and muscles from collapsing.

Inspire is a device that is implanted, much like a pacemaker, to stimulate the hypoglossal nerve during sleep, delivering tone to key tongue muscles and opening the airway.

Surgery may be necessary for those who are not helped by other treatments and is effective in 65 to 75% of cases.

Because it generally occurs at night, and daytime symptoms may be subtle at first, obstructive sleep apnea goes undiagnosed in as many as 80% of cases. If you snore and experience symptoms like extreme daytime fatigue, talk to your doctor about undergoing a sleep test.

— Dr. Van Tassel

Dr. Van Tassel is a pioneer in the field and performs an innovative surgery called hyoid myotomy and suspension with uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UPPP). He has published a heralded research paper on the procedure for which he reports an 80% success rate, an outstanding result for OSA surgeries.

In addition to working with OSA patients, which entails about 20% of his practice, Dr. Van Tassel also treats other ear, nose, throat, head, and neck conditions. These include sinusitis, vertigo, cancerous tumors, and voice and hearing disorders, as well as facial plastic and reconstructive surgery. About his work he says, “My motivation is to partner with patients to help them work through their health ailments and ultimately make a positive impact on their lives.”

Advanced Complex Spine Disorder Solutions

An Interview with our Newest Neurosurgeon

Complex spine disorders are conditions that change a person's spinal stability and structure. They can affect vertebrae, discs, joints, and soft tissue in the upper and lower back and neck, causing pain and debilitating effects on important bodily functions. UCSF researcher, associate professor and board-certified neurosurgeon Rajiv Saigal, MD, PhD, FAANS, joined Washington Township Medical Foundation's renowned team of neurosurgeons in July 2021, bringing the latest in complex spine research and surgical techniques to the Taylor McAdam Bell Neuroscience Institute at Washington Hospital. We sat down with him to discuss his work.

Rajiv Saigal, MD, PhD, FAANS, is a pioneer in the field of neurosurgery. In addition to his ongoing research as a UCSF associate professor, he treats patients with complex spine conditions at Washington Hospital.



HealthSigns: Please tell us about your research and practice.

Dr. Saigal: In addition to my work as a surgeon, I have been conducting varied research on spinal cord injury since I was an undergraduate 20 years ago. Now I am part of a large UCSF research consortium called TRACK-SCI, focusing on clinical outcomes from spinal cord injury. The research, paired with my clinical work at Washington Hospital, allows me to pursue complementary interests at both institutions.

HealthSigns: Why did you choose to bring your practice here?

Dr. Saigal: I was attracted to the high-quality program and excellent team at the Bell Neuroscience Institute. It was an opportunity to offer academic level expertise in a community hospital setting where I can care directly for patients without the layers frequently seen at large medical centers. I also enjoy the family atmosphere here. My colleagues and physicians across other specialties are very collegial and everyone is focused on providing the best possible care to patients.

HealthSigns: What types of complex spine surgeries do you perform?

Dr. Saigal: What's unique about my practice is the ability to offer a wide range of procedures from the smallest to the most complex. I do minimally invasive outpatient procedures like discectomy (removing part of a herniated or bulging disc) and kyphoplasty (fixing spinal compression fractures), as well as larger surgeries for spine tumors, or spinal deformity corrections, which may require fusion of many levels.

HealthSigns: How many of your procedures are minimally invasive vs. traditional open surgeries?

Dr. Saigal: The majority are done minimally invasively through small incisions, which means less pain, blood loss, and chance of infection. These patients often go home the same day. That said, we are able to handle any complex spinal surgery using the best approach for the patient.

HealthSigns: What does it mean that you partner with your patients on their treatment plan?

Dr. Saigal: First of all, my mantra is to do the smallest procedure that will benefit the patient. I am a conservative surgeon and always try to treat patients' symptoms nonoperatively first. If those treatments fail, and if the patient is a good candidate for surgery and we agree the benefits outweigh the risks, then we consider surgical options. I also get to know each patient so we can work together on the right treatment plan to produce the best outcome based on their lifestyle.

HealthSigns: How have you found the facilities and technologies at Washington Hospital?

Dr. Saigal: I am very impressed. In the operating rooms (OR) we have ready access to an excellent neuronavigation suite which is computer-assisted technology that allow us to precisely place implants and target tumors during surgery. The OR runs so efficiently that I can see more patients in less time which allows me the time to pursue research and my clinical practice. Also, the Hospital's Critical Care Unit is new, modern, and comfortable, which patients and their families appreciate.

HealthSigns: What is your message to the Tri-City Community?

Dr. Saigal: We are happy to offer academic-level expertise for the most complex brain and spinal conditions, so patients don't have to travel across the Bay where they may be seen by a trainee or midlevel provider instead of an attending neurosurgeon. We are committed to seeing new referrals quickly and scheduling surgical appointments as soon as possible, which gets our patients the procedure they need to greatly improve quality of life.

Taylor McAdam Bell Neuroscience Institute
2500 Mowry, Ave., Suite 222
Fremont, CA.
510.818.1160

Make Cancer Screenings Part of Your Healthy Lifestyle

A Doctor's Inspiring Cancer Journey



OB/GYN and Lifestyle Medicine physician Victoria Leiphart, MD, has advocated about the importance of routine cancer screenings as part of a woman's healthy lifestyle for three decades. A cancer diagnosis after her annual mammogram this year proved her right.

This year Victoria Leiphart, MD, celebrates 30 years at Washington Hospital as a highly regarded OB/GYN physician and passionate advocate for a healthy lifestyle for women. Dr. Leiphart has always championed cancer screenings for her patients, and in January, her own annual mammogram detected breast cancer. Her testimonial is inspirational and it is a powerful reminder to lead a healthy lifestyle and get regular cancer screenings.

Although Dr. Leiphart is no longer doing her Women Empowering Women monthly seminars, she still practices what she preaches by eating right, exercising, managing stress, and staying on top of cancer screenings. Genetic testing showed no predisposition to cancer and she never felt a lump during regular breast self-exams. Nonetheless, a 3D mammogram and subsequent ultrasound-guided biopsy found Dr. Leiphart had a malignancy.

Once she read her pathology report, concern changed to a positive outlook. “When I realized the tumor was found early and my prognosis was good, I knew having breast cancer would be an inconvenience but I was not going to die from it. The good news is this is the case for the vast majority of women whose cancer is found during a regular mammogram — most are usually diagnosed with a curable disease.”

Following Dr. Leiphart’s diagnosis, she underwent a lumpectomy in February and is having radiation therapy in April. Though her clinicians are also her colleagues, she knows the cancer care she describes as “amazing” is also provided to all patients. Here are a few of the benefits she appreciates from her unique perspective as a physician and now a patient:

- The nationally accredited Washington Women’s Imaging Center offers state-of-the-art tomographic **3D mammography**. Dr. Leiphart was told her tumor would likely not have been found with traditional 2D imaging.
- Dr. Leiphart says the process is seamless because every patient with an abnormal mammogram is contacted by a **Nurse Navigator** who schedules

all necessary appointments and educates each patient about their condition and offers available support services.

- Every cancer patient’s case is analyzed by a panel of oncologists, radiation therapists, pathologists, plastic surgeons, and other specialists at the monthly **Breast Tumor Board**. In fact, Dr. Leiphart participates on the board when her patients are discussed.
- Because of Washington Hospital’s **affiliation with UCSF Health**, our oncologists and radiation specialists are UCSF physicians. That means patients are treated using the latest research and technologies only available through a world-class academic medical center.

SCHEDULE YOUR SCREENINGS

To avoid cancer, the American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends people not use tobacco; get to and maintain a healthy weight; exercise regularly; eat fresh, healthy foods; and limit alcohol use. Dr. Leiphart, who is 62 and has taken this advice during her life, also thankfully took the important step of getting regular cancer screenings that ensured hers was found early. If it can happen to a medical expert on lifestyle medicine who walks the talk, it can happen to anybody.

Talk to your primary care physician or go to the ACS website (cancer.org) to find out when you should get tested for breast, cervical, colorectal, prostate, and lung cancers. Most cancer screenings begin around the age of 40 and are used to find cancer in people who have no symptoms. Regular screening gives you the best chance of finding cancer early, when it’s small and before it has spread.

“My message to patients about self-care is exactly what the airlines tell you — you need to put on your own oxygen mask first before you can help others,” says Dr. Leiphart. “You will be a much better parent, spouse, sibling, co-worker or friend if you make your own well-being a priority.”

POSTAL CUSTOMER

Got Health Questions? Check Us Out at [YouTube.com/WHHSInHealth](https://www.youtube.com/WHHSInHealth)

Washington Hospital's InHealth Comcast TV channel 78 will go off the air June 30, 2022, but all our award-winning video content is easily accessible on our InHealth YouTube page. Now you can search health topics and watch videos on demand on any computer, smartphone, or smart TV from home or anywhere.

Our extensive video library includes Health & Wellness seminars presented by top physicians, monthly Washington Township Health Care District Board of Directors meetings, insightful looks into Hospital departments and programs, and much more!

“*The Washington Hospital InHealth YouTube channel enables us to more effectively fulfill our mission of providing community educational resources to enhance patient care and health promotion throughout the District.*

— Kimberly Hartz, CEO ”

FOR LOCAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS INFO AT YOUR FINGERTIPS:

Open your internet browser and go to: [YouTube.com/WHHSInHealth](https://www.youtube.com/WHHSInHealth)

Here you'll see recently posted programming available for instant streaming, or click the magnifying glass icon to search what you're looking for.

