



# COVID-19 Pandemic: Reflecting in Gratitude

Recognizing the extraordinary efforts of our teams from 2020 to 2022



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

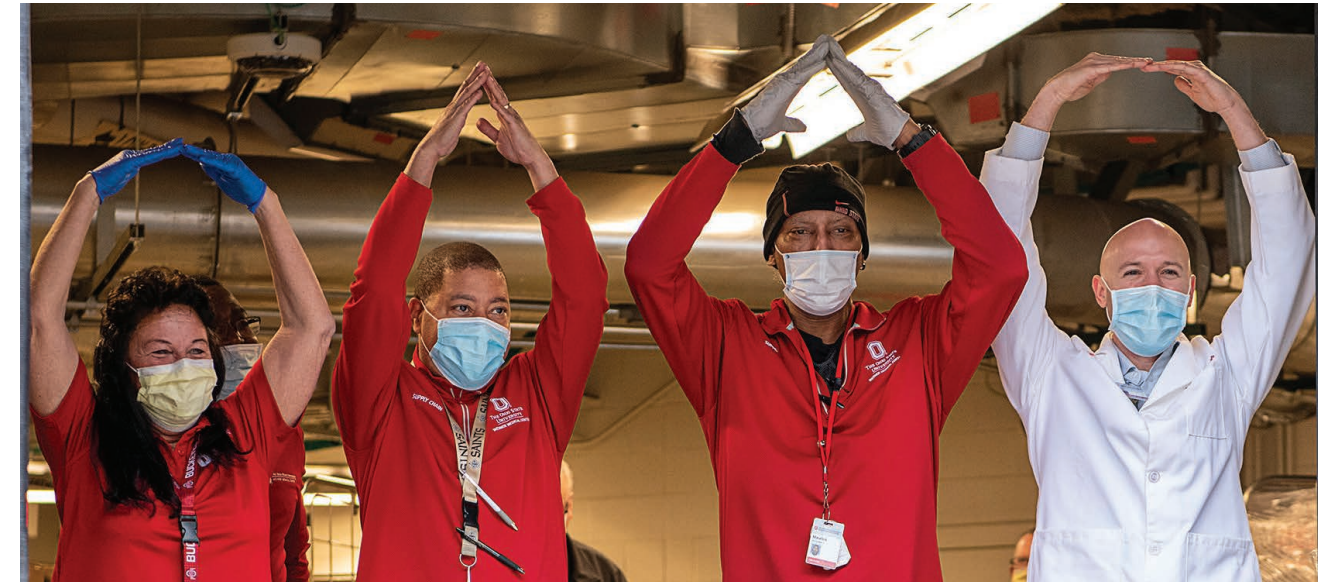
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER



*Some of the photos in this booklet were taken prior to the COVID-19 masking guidelines.*

# Looking back:

**Messages from Wexner Medical Center leadership to faculty and staff**



When COVID-19 struck in early 2020 and a global pandemic was declared, much of the world was blindsided. At The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, we faced unprecedented challenges, but because of our staff's expertise, preparation and determination, our organization was able to adapt to a new reality and provide vital care in what was, for many people, a frightening time. We quickly developed creative solutions that not only benefited our community, but also were adopted throughout the world. This booklet serves as a time capsule of an era in which Ohio State faculty and staff rose to the occasion with bravery, ingenuity, compassion and perseverance, dedicating extraordinary efforts to our patients, to our community and to one another.

The booklet contains content adapted from a gratitude email series dedicated to Ohio State Wexner Medical Center faculty, clinicians and staff from then-Interim Co-Leaders Andrew Thomas, MD, chief clinical officer, and Mark Larmore, chief financial officer and vice president for Health Sciences. It also contains selected news stories, blogs and videos published on our web channels that help complete the picture of the medical center's experience and contributions over the course of the pandemic.

## COVID-19 spurs research, innovations, care and hope

As we approach the one-year mark since the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Ohio, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center continues working to stop it. Our teams rise to the occasion and meet every challenge caused by the pandemic.

Throughout this uncertain time, we've been a source for health care, information, compassion, equity and truth. We're proud of what we've accomplished with research, innovations and patient care.

In the earliest days of the crisis, we teamed up with Battelle to create a new rapid diagnostic test for COVID-19. We also created our own COVID-19 viral test fluid when there was a national shortage and printed 3D test swabs to expand access to testing.

We're involved in innovative research for COVID-19 antibody drug testing, convalescent plasma therapy and COVID-19 vaccines. We're studying disparities in COVID-19 testing among vulnerable communities, hosting Community Day and providing underserved populations with community care kits.

We've greatly expanded our telehealth visits to expand access to health care and keep patients safe. So far, we've processed more than 450,000 COVID-tests statewide and administered about 60,000 vaccine doses to protect people from COVID-19.



We're dedicated to our work, to our community and to each other. Watch this video for more highlights from this challenging year.



[go.osu.edu/covid-19-spurs-research](https://go.osu.edu/covid-19-spurs-research)



WEDNESDAY, NOV. 24, 2021

## ECMO Treatment Program



Thanksgiving begins a season of gratitude that extends through the end of the year. As we close in on nearly two years since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we want to express our gratitude for the commitment each and every one of you makes to our mission.

In the coming weeks, we will use this weekly email to spotlight your exemplary work in the face of the pandemic's most trying situations. Each week, one group will be featured so that we can share our appreciation for the exceptional work being done across the organization. We invite you to nominate teams or departments that exemplify our Buckeye values by emailing [BuckeyeSpirit@osumc.edu](mailto:BuckeyeSpirit@osumc.edu).

In this week's message, we are highlighting the highly skilled, multidisciplinary team caring for patients with COVID-19 who require ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) treatment at the Ross Heart Hospital. ECMO is a technology that supports the patient's heart and lung function by oxygenating the patient's blood outside the body. This technology is used in cases of severe heart or lung failure to give providers

time to treat underlying issues and, if needed, arrange for an organ transplant. **Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have performed 13 lung transplants on post-COVID patients with severe respiratory failure.**

We have one of the largest ECMO programs in the Midwest and can support up to 10 patients on ECMO at a time. Since March 2020, 40% of the medical center's over 200 ECMO cases have been critically ill with COVID-19, many of them young and otherwise healthy prior to getting COVID-19. Despite the incredibly complex nature of these cases, patients receiving ECMO at Ohio State have a 30% survival rate, when they likely would not have survived at all without access to the treatment.

There is always an emotional toll on health care providers when we lose a patient. But the anguish suffered by members of the ECMO team has been inordinately high, especially in recent months when some of these deaths in young, healthy patients could have been prevented by the patient simply getting vaccinated for COVID-19.

Our respect for their dedication cannot be overstated. With heartfelt thankfulness, we acknowledge:

- The **4 Ross nursing and PCA team** who spend the most time with these patients and their family members, including the **4 Ross nurse specialists** who manage the ECMO technology on an hour-to-hour basis.
- The **4 Ross advanced practice providers** who are responsible for routine daily care for these complex patients.
- The team of **perfusionists** who are staffing both cardiac surgery cases as well as the ECMO patients on the floor.
- The **respiratory therapists** who assist with managing ventilators and other pulmonary interventions for these complex, fragile patients.
- The **anesthesia critical care physicians** that staff the 4 Ross Cardiac ICU to oversee the critical care aspects of the care plan.
- The **OR anesthesia teams**, including **attendings, anesthesia fellows, anesthesia residents** and **CRNAs**, who play a significant role in the success of the ECMO program.
- The **cardiac and vascular surgeons** whose unique, subspecialized surgical skills are integral to the success of the program.

- The **ECMO Retrieval Program**, a mobile ECMO unit with expert personnel, responsible for transporting 35 patients from referring hospitals since it began a year ago.
- The **lung transplant team** of pulmonologists, lung transplant surgeons and advanced practice providers who prepare patients for lung transplants and care for them after surgery.
- The **palliative care team** for their partnership with the primary teams managing these patients in helping to set reasonable expectations and for assisting with end-of-life decisions when necessary.
- **Pharmacists** are integral to the unique and highly precise drug therapy management of ECMO patients. Their work has resulted in positive outcomes for many patients.

To these teams and everyone who is involved in the care of patients on ECMO, we extend our deepest appreciation for your heroic efforts every day.



WEDNESDAY, DEC. 1, 2021

## Supply Chain Management



Container ships idling off the coast of California offer up just the latest example of supply chain issues that our Wexner Medical Center teams have been troubleshooting since the COVID-19 pandemic began nearly two years ago. Global and national shortages and bottlenecks have created never-before-seen challenges to the flow of supplies. Owing to the ingenuity of our Supply Chain team and their clinical collaborators, our caregivers and patients have been spared many of the negative effects of these major disruptions with suppliers and distributors.

Shortages of PPE early in the pandemic required an all-hands-on-deck effort over many months to replenish a 90-day stockpile that is stable today. Now other supplies like crutches, syringes and tubes used for blood draws (vacutainers) are vulnerable to unexpected disruptions stemming from a variety of issues including truck driver shortages, congestion in China and at U.S. ports, labor issues and a scarcity of raw materials.

We are grateful to the individuals on these teams for their exhaustive efforts to keep our patients and personnel safe and our hospitals running smoothly. Listed below are just a few examples of how the Supply Chain

team demonstrated creativity, flexibility and decisiveness to act swiftly in the face of unpredictable changes.

- The **Distribution and Logistics team** opened a new warehouse in only three weeks' time to address PPE shortages. Staff dedicated countless hours, days and weekends to keep supplies moving and control the distribution of the most in-demand products throughout the medical center.
- **Supply Chain Operations** kept systems running, buyers processed orders at all hours of the day and night, and many people stopped their normal duties to keep the shelves stocked with PPE.
- The **Strategic Sourcing team** vetted hundreds of potential new PPE vendors before selecting the small subset that proved reliable.
- The **Value Analysis team** relied heavily on the **Safety & Emergency Preparedness team** to identify the most reliable PPE suppliers in order to create our current 90-day stockpile.
- The **Master Data team** orchestrated Workday's launch in the midst of the pandemic, an around-the-clock effort to renumber and often rename nearly every product ordered.
- **Buyers** worked well after normal hours in collaboration with **Accounts Payable** to prevent credit holds to stabilize the new system.
- Our **research lab and pharmacy staffs** jointly collaborated on the creation of COVID-19 test kits by mixing our own viral transport media and filling specimen collection tubes sterilely under negative pressure hoods so that we could supply hospitals and other testing programs around the state at a time when specimen containers were in short supply.
- Our **clinicians** partnered with **faculty from the colleges of Dentistry and Engineering** to 3D print COVID-19 testing swabs so that we could supply testing programs around the state at a time when the swabs were in short supply.
- Our **Clinical Laboratory team** managed the unpredictable supply chain issues related to COVID-19 testing reagents in order to ensure we had the capacity needed to complete nearly 640,000 COVID-19 PCR tests since the beginning of the pandemic.

- The "extended" supply chain team brought together numerous **clinical care workgroups, clinical nurse specialists, Epidemiology staff, Nursing Education staff** and constant support from **Analytics**.
- **Nurse leaders** are currently meeting three times a week with the Supply Chain team to assess anticipated, changing shortages and determine substitutions or other options.
- Donors, many of them **Wexner Medical Center staff**, have jumped in to help replenish medical equipment such as crutches in a true community effort.

We would like to thank everyone involved in maintaining our supply chain for their effective communication and collaboration throughout the course of the pandemic.

For now, supply shortages are the norm, and expected to last at least through the summer, and in some cases, possibly until the end of 2022. If we have learned any lessons from the past year and a half, it is that we cannot predict the future. We are exceedingly grateful for the creativity and tenacity so many of you have shown in the face of uncertainty. Your ability to adapt and support one another is one of our organization's greatest strengths.



WEDNESDAY, DEC. 8, 2021

## COVID-19 Testing Operations



This week, we are pleased to acknowledge the adaptability, airtight collaboration and community service of the medical center's **COVID-19 Testing team**, which has been a beacon for central Ohio since the earliest angst-ridden days of the pandemic. From our first COVID-19 test on March 19, 2020, we quickly ramped up operations to process more than 3,000 tests a day and have since completed more than 640,000 tests to date.

We are in awe of this operation within actuality, a service continuum comprising a call center, multiple testing sites and our university laboratory. It has offered the public a seamless experience with outstanding access to COVID-19 testing and with short turnaround times for results even during the height of the pandemic. Our own faculty, staff, learners and their families have benefited from the around-the-clock test processing that continues to protect and reassure us with timely, accurate results.

Flexibility has been a hallmark of this operation and everyone involved. Teams have maintained great service even while changing the testing sites. Testing locations have changed four times in less than two years to accommodate demand, COVID-19 surges and seasonal weather. Our most monumental operation at the Ohio State Fairgrounds involved a

collaboration with multiple regional health partners featuring an eight-lane drive-thru service for both testing and vaccinations.

We are grateful to the departments and teams below for the valuable ways you have and continue to help the medical center serve the public through your connection to the COVID-19 Testing team.

- The **COVID-19 Call Center**, comprising nursing, access and call teams, worked quickly to stand up the operations and recruit staff to answer calls, triage symptoms, notify patients of positive results and educate patients on swabbing and quarantine guidelines. It has processed more than 250,000 calls since March 2020.
- The **Swab Station Operations team** was overseen initially by the Emergency Department and the Emergency Preparedness leadership teams from March 2020 until July 2020 when the **Ambulatory Services team** picked up the baton. The Swab Station Operations group has included staff from multiple disciplines such as nurses, physicians, medical assistants, nurse practitioners, therapists and other medical center staff of all roles who have worked at our testing locations. They created an adaptable, compassionate rotating army serving the thousands of patients who came through our testing lines.
- The **University Clinical Laboratory team's** leadership, expertise and partnership were critical elements in quickly creating operations to process the results for hundreds of thousands of tests in record-breaking time for our patients and our community. Special recognition to the **physicians** who called patients with positive test results in the early days of the pandemic and to the **laboratory physicians and staff** who stayed abreast of constantly changing testing methodologies and laboratory supply shortages. Also, the **clinical lab team** has stood up multiple new testing platforms throughout the course of the pandemic with great support from colleagues in Wexner Medical Center research labs, Battelle, the Ohio Department of Health and the Governor's Office.
- The **Analytics team** spent many late nights and early mornings developing the infrastructure to support testing, reporting and dashboards needed to manage the process for mass COVID-19 testing and vaccinations sites, ensure compliance and report to leadership.
- The **Facilities team** worked rapidly to set us up at each new location, ensuring we had power, water, restrooms and warm or cool air depending on the season. And they came to the rescue when rain flooded our site.

- The **Ambulatory Services team** also helped transition COVID-19 testing to more than 20 primary care offices and 30 preoperative surgical units, making the testing safer and more convenient for patients. We still operate a community testing site at 650 Ackerman.
- Our **Community Care Coach team's** outreach mission to serve the underserved led to opening our third testing location in collaboration with Columbus Public Health at their Parsons Avenue site, which operated from May through October 2020.
- Our **Infectious Diseases team** has ensured that we have the latest information related to the gold standard of COVID-19 testing and collection. Their expertise and knowledge are invaluable.
- **Information Technology teams** contributed in the following ways to facilitation of the testing operation:
  - Figuring order changes, resulting workflows, travel screening and infection flags to support testing and treatment of patients with COVID-19.

- Creating multiple registries and metrics to identify eligible populations for vaccines, while MyChart functionality was leveraged to support patient notification.
- Providing the necessary equipment and technology so that patients could literally drive through in minutes for their test, with lab labels printed and in-hand at the click of a button.
- Handling countless behind-the-scenes details to build the many schedules and innovative functions so providers could easily order tests and schedule patients.
- Ensuring patients could self-schedule tests or vaccines when appropriate.
- The **Marketing and Strategic Communications team** provided new signs, wayfinding, patient instructions, driving directions, logistics support and more at a moment's notice to assist patients with all they needed to know about the testing process.

We are so grateful for the dedication of these teams and all of you across the Wexner Medical Center for the exemplary work we continue to witness.



# COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign

One year ago, on Dec. 14, 2020, the Wexner Medical Center helped usher in a new era in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic when we were chosen to distribute some of the very first doses of the COVID vaccine in the country. The vaccine offered the first proactive tool against a virus that had already claimed more than 300,000 American lives. Amid great optimism and hope, our frontline workers from the highest-risk work environments rolled up their sleeves and shared emotional accounts with national media of what it meant to be receiving the vaccine.

This week we are honoring the anniversary of that historic day by recognizing the commitment of countless individuals who have supported our COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Thanks to these concerted efforts, we have administered more than 268,000 lifesaving vaccinations and boosters for adults, teens and children as the largest vaccination program in central Ohio.

From the earliest days, our **Vaccination team** masterfully executed a tiered distribution plan according to state requirements that made it convenient for eligible individuals to get vaccinated. At peak periods, we were administering nearly 4,000 vaccinations a day at the Schottenstein Center, our largest centralized public distribution site. The Ohio State Athletic Department deserves high praise for its outstanding collaboration over many months this year.



*Making history: Dispensing one of the world's first COVID-19 vaccines*

[go.osu.edu/vaccine-world-was-waiting-for](https://go.osu.edu/vaccine-world-was-waiting-for)

To staff this operation, more than 3,000 individuals from hundreds of departments and colleges received training to fill a variety of volunteer positions. Overall, we have administered vaccines and boosters across nearly 30 inpatient and outpatient sites at different times through the pandemic.

Tens of thousands of people are alive today because of Ohio State's vaccination campaign, which owes its success to the teamwork of thousands of individuals outlined below. We are extremely grateful for the inordinate dedication that the entire Buckeye community has shown to all aspects of this mission.

- **Check-In, Registration, Runners and Vaccinators** made up the staffing core of centralized, public distribution site operations at the Schott. More than 3,000 students, faculty and staff from across the medical center and various colleges served in these roles over the past year. For example, dozens of **Registered Nurses** and **Advanced Practice Providers** worked overtime and extra shifts to help support the mass vaccination program. The **OSU Health Plan** reassigned its nursing team to provide consistent vaccinators to care for patients and assist with training. **Registration staff** throughout the medical center registered patients and scheduled follow-up visits, ensuring a patient-friendly process and reimbursement for services. **Attending Physicians** and **House staff** volunteered their time at the Schott, heartening patients with their kindness.



- In addition to the incredible support received from the Schottenstein Center and Athletics, the staff, providers, students, facilities teams and administration from the following locations have been instrumental in supporting vaccine administration efforts across campus and central Ohio:
  - **Biomedical Research Tower**, where the medical center's first shots were administered, was a critical location to administer vaccine to frontline health care workers on campus.
  - **Ackerman Road** was used during the early days of vaccinating staff and continues into providing evening vaccine blitzes. Special thanks to the **OSUCCC – James staff** who twice “loaned” their office space at 600 Ackerman to support these vaccine clinics.
  - **East Hospital's Talbot Hall & Wallace Auditorium** were critical for vaccinating East employees and ensuring access to the vaccine for vulnerable residents of the Near East Side neighborhood.
  - **Ohio Union** offered the vaccine for a two-week period at the end of Spring Semester to increase student vaccination rates leading into the summer.
  - **Jesse Owens North** served as a critical location for vaccine administration for students and employees for many months.
  - **Ambulatory Clinics** with Same Day Care, Family & Community Medicine, the mobile Community Care Coach, and General Internal Medicine Clinics with continue to provide a large number of vaccinations to new and existing patients.
  - **James Clinics** in The James, Stefanie Spielman Breast Center, Mill Run, Morehouse Tower and JamesCare East continue to provide a large number of booster vaccines to Ohio State faculty, staff and students.
  - **Retail Pharmacy Locations** at University Hospital, East Hospital and Outpatient Care New Albany
  - **Inpatient Units and Emergency Departments** both at Main Campus and East Campus
  - All those involved in coordinating the successful single-day pop-up vaccine efforts at **Ross Heart Hospital**, **East Hospital** and **Friendship Missionary Baptist Church**, as well as Health Community Day events.

- **The Contact Center**, comprising staff from **James Patient Access**, **Central Scheduling** and **Financial Counseling**, has fielded more than 110,000 calls to help patients with scheduling, CDC guidelines and more.
- **The Department of Pharmacy** managed procurement, inventory, storage, security and compounding for the vaccine at all mass vaccination sites and clinics. They provided pharmacists to administer vaccines and counsel patients at distribution sites, including retail operations, and coordinated the audit of operations by the CDC and the Ohio Department of Health.
- **Pulmonary/Critical Care, Emergency Medicine and Hematology/Oncology** attending physicians coordinated and provided on-site support to high-volume clinics to answer patient and staff questions and respond to medical concerns.
- **James Nursing Staff (James Line, AfterHours and ambulatory clinic RNs)** supported a 24/7 RN Vaxx Line that became a source of education and reassurance for our pre-vaccine population. The ambulatory James clinics provided easy access for faculty and staff boosters.
- **The Medication Safety/Drug Information team** and representatives from **Critical Care, Emergency Medicine, Allergy/Immunology, Rheumatology and Dermatology** created a systematic process to screen, evaluate and respond to patients with allergic histories or concerns about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **IT, IT PMO and Field Services Desktop team** helped develop patient and clinical workflows/registries in addition to acquiring, deploying and updating equipment, infrastructure and interfaces. They worked closely with Epic and operational teams to develop efficient processes for patient communication, scheduling and vaccine administration. Special recognition goes to the Cadence team for 24/7 availability.
- **Wexner Medical Center Security, Ohio State University Police** and the **Schottenstein Security team** provided on-site presence and technologies to ensure the safety of our staff, patients and vaccine supply.
- **Allocation of Scarce Medical Resources Workgroup** assumed the unenviable task of developing priority levels based on ethical principles, risk factors and ever-evolving federal and state guidelines.
- **Buckeye Paws** and **Brutus** provided an uplifting presence and tail-wagging devotion to ease the anxiety of patients and bring a smile to staff.



- **Marketing, Strategic Communications and Digital Strategy team** secured comprehensive access to many international, national, regional and local media outlets to promote our COVID-19 vaccination efforts. This team created and distributed signage, wayfinding and patient education materials and supported special events and media engagements. In addition, our **Infectious Disease faculty members** served as experts to educate the media and the general public on the effectiveness and safety of COVID-19 vaccines.
- **The Community Engagement team** worked tirelessly with dozens of community organizations to ensure we were providing COVID-19 vaccines to high-risk patient populations from underserved and immigrant communities.
- **Employee Health Services** provided dedicated support for tracking and reconciling employee vaccine compliance in addition to working with **Epidemiology** developing protocols for COVID-19-positive employees, treating them and approving them for return to work.
- **Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases** helped plan, execute and minimize infectious risk to staff and patients while providing high-quality clinical care throughout vaccine sites.
- **Facilities and Space Planning** provided leadership, accountability and constant flexibility to help set up new spaces and reimagine existing spaces to meet the rapidly changing needs of the vaccine operations.
- **Supply Chain** kept us stocked with critical supplies, including PPE, at a time when there was a general shortage and demands were high.
- **Human Resources** supported significant labor needs for the vaccine clinics with flexibility and creativity.
- **Analytics Center of Excellence (ACE) team** developed the prioritization infrastructure and then built and maintained numerous real-time dashboards and reports that facilitated appointments, staffing adjustments and compliance monitoring. This information enhanced the ability to respond to state and national reporting requirements.
- **Legal Services** provided expert counsel and developed, with ongoing modification, the COVID-19 vaccine disclosure and acknowledgement.





- **Nationwide Children's Hospital** partnered with us to transfer vaccine doses in the early stages of vaccine administration to ensure zero waste.
- **Nutrition Services** provided a constant supply of snacks, drinks and meals while seamlessly meeting dietary requests and requirements of the teams.
- **Patient Experience/Interpreter Services** removed language and cultural barriers for non-English-speaking patients.
- **Revenue Cycle teams** from the **Wexner Medical Center** and **OSUP** managed SignUpGenius to support staffing, develop training materials, follow up on revenue collections and support runners, check-in and registration.
- **OSUCCC – James researchers and staff** created the SIIREN (Study of Infections and Immune REspoNse) Study at the Schottenstein Center to address the gap in knowledge of immune responses from COVID-19 vaccination in people with cancer.

## How the Schott became the place to get the Shot

As the sun sets in Columbus, Ohio, the line for the COVID-19 vaccine clinic at the Jerome Schottenstein Center slows to a trickle.

Inside, the final patients of the day sit down at tables in the concourse and roll up their sleeves.

A deep bass beat thumps throughout the arena.

Behind thick curtains, an announcer thanks the evening's sponsors. The ice resurfacer clears the rink. As The Ohio State University men's hockey team prepares to take on Minnesota, a health care worker arranges a bin of syringes.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Schottenstein Center has served a dual role as sports arena and vaccination hub for central Ohioans.

### Everyone and everything has had to adapt since the arrival of COVID-19.

Nowhere is that more clear than at the Schottenstein Center, where a doctor monitors patient vaccinations from what used to be a beer stand. Since January, the home of Ohio State basketball and men's hockey—serendipitously nicknamed “the Schott”—has served as The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center's all-day mass COVID-19 vaccination site, capable of accommodating more than 3,000 patients a day.

Meanwhile, Ohio State's home games have gone on as scheduled.



*Transforming the Schottenstein Center into a mass vaccination site*

[go.osu.edu/schott-becomes-the-place](https://go.osu.edu/schott-becomes-the-place)

Right before Christmas, managers at the Schottenstein Center got word that the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center was eyeing the 770,000-square-foot Columbus landmark as a possible location. It was an unexpected request for a venue more accustomed to hosting basketball and Bruce Springsteen, but the Schott was built—and renovated in 2018—to be flexible.

Ohio State medical staff arrived to tour the space, trying to visualize how a pop-up clinic might look atop the Schott's polished terrazzo concourse floors, nestled between lighted Script Ohio signs and nacho counters. It took a bit of a mental leap, says Ohio State Associate Athletic Director of Facilities and Events Colin Thompson, but he could envision it. His team drew up designs and dug into work just after the holidays.

### Their initial plans cleanly separated sports from shots.

Placing athletics on the north side of the center and the clinic on the south side seemed a fine strategy until they learned more about the patients who fell into Phase 1B of the vaccine rollout. They realized they'd need to shrink the walking distance and provide ample handicapped-accessible parking for what would be a largely elderly crowd.

The fix turned out to be relatively easy. They shifted the same footprint by flipping south and north, maintaining a separate entrance for the athletes, athletic staff and media while positioning vaccine patients just steps from the Schott's northeast rotunda. They also lined up a fleet of 65 wheelchairs and arranged for a shuttle to drive up and down nearby parking lots.



**Inside the center, the medical side of the operation took over.**

The Ohio State Wexner Medical Center sent over freezers to store the ultra-cold vaccines—connecting them to emergency power to avoid any catastrophic outages—and set up two makeshift, state-approved pharmacies for mixing the vaccine and preparing syringes. They also trucked in emergency equipment to prepare for any adverse or allergic reactions.

Information technology experts helped build a secure network to protect medical records, and training at the new site began in earnest. Staff and volunteers came from all across the university—nurses, students, engineers, finance employees, supply chain experts, you name it—all pulling together to get the clinic off the ground.

The finishing touches were a matter of rearranging and repurposing.

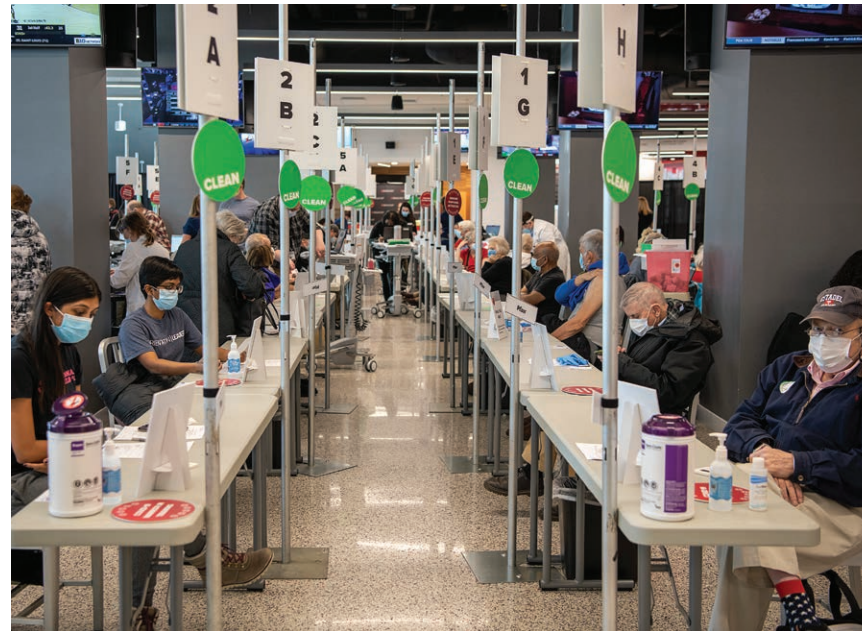
The Schott's 2018 renovation had conceived of such a thing: not a pandemic, of course, but the need to be able to transform the space for any reason. And so two large concourse dining areas—empty anyway during a season without fans—were cleared to make way for rows of vaccination stations. Floor stickers marking 6 feet of distance were pressed to the terrazzo. Dining tables turned into registration counters. Beer coolers stored the lunches of pharmacists.

A Brutus Buckeye statue donned a white lab coat.

**In all, more than 1,700 patients were vaccinated that first day.**

On Jan. 19, the Schottenstein Center hosted a men's basketball game against Purdue and opened Ohio State's mass vaccination clinic to the public. The home team lost, but there were plenty of victories to go around. A 100-year-old got the first shot of the day and pumped her arms in joy. A son livestreamed his mom's vaccination as family around the world cried happy tears.

In the weeks that followed, tens of thousands more streamed into the Schott for their shot. For the staff who pulled it off, the joint operation has forged new relationships and brought a deeper meaning to the work—a cause, indeed, greater than any one usher or pharmacist or athletic director.



*Governor Mike DeWine and First Lady Fran DeWine visit the Schottenstein Center vaccination site.*



# Public COVID-19 vaccinations for those 80 and older begin at Ohio State

## 'It's an exciting day'

It was still dark when David Brehm wheeled his mother into the Jerome Schottenstein Center. To her, it felt like the middle of the night. But Helen Formet was wide awake. She was ready. She'd dressed in scarlet, an Ohio State scarf draped around her neck, the university's Block O logo winding around her walking cane. She wore lipstick under her face mask.

**"Smile, Mom!"** Brehm shouted over the cameras and microphones.

**"I am!"** Formet called back.

In fact, she would have leapt for joy if she could. On Jan. 19, just after 7 a.m., 100-year-old Formet became the first member of the public vaccinated at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center's mass COVID-19 vaccination site, kicking off a distribution plan that starts with first-round vaccines for those who are 80 and older and rolls out to younger ages in the coming weeks.

## One step closer to normal

But if ever there was a day worth documenting, this was it. About 1,700 people streamed into the Schottenstein Center to take that first step back to normal after nearly a year of worry. They rolled back their sleeves and dreamed about their futures. Some posed jubilantly beside a masked-up Brutus Buckeye statue.



*Scenes from a successful day*

[go.osu.edu/80-and-older-vaccinations](https://go.osu.edu/80-and-older-vaccinations)

John Varanese, the second of 84-year-old Barbara Varanese's 10 children, recorded his mother getting her shot and immediately shared the image with family around the world.

## A smooth process

Margo Dunn, 78, waited on the sidelines Tuesday as her 82-year-old husband received his shot and sat for the required 15 minutes so he could be monitored for any adverse reactions. Dunn was impressed by how smoothly everything was going. People were checking in and waiting in short lines before being ushered to stations, where they received their first shots and booked their follow-up appointments. "It's amazing," Dunn said. She'd been concerned after seeing news reports of long lines in other states.

## More vaccines to come

Over the following weeks, as dictated by federal and state guidelines, vaccines will open to new groups of patients each week: 75 and older the week of Jan. 25; 70 and older the week of Feb. 1; and 65 and older beginning the week of Feb. 8. For those who meet the criteria, Ohio State is scheduling vaccine appointments through the Ohio State MyChart and by phone.

"I've talked to so many of my own patients over the past week, and they're just thrilled. In many cases, it's the first time they've been out of their house to do anything meaningful in weeks—if not months. This is one step closer to normal for our community," said Andrew Thomas, MD, chief clinical officer for the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center.

For Formet, who lives on her own in Dublin, normal will look like hugging her sons and going back to church and resuming her cherished bridge games. She knows that's not happening right away. As medical experts recommend, she'll continue to wear her face mask and socially distance, even after her second vaccine in a few weeks.

But this day meant something. This was no regular shot. She joked about it—"gee, I didn't even scream or cry"—but when it was over, the people around her applauded. She spoke of the privilege and honor of receiving such a vaccine. And she talked about her 101st birthday, only a few months away. "I'm so excited I could jump up and down. If I was a little younger, I would."



WEDNESDAY, DEC. 15, 2021

## COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign



One year ago, on Dec. 14, 2020, the Wexner Medical Center helped usher in a new era in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic when we were chosen to distribute some of the very first doses of the COVID vaccine in the country. The vaccine offered the first proactive tool against a virus that had already claimed more than 300,000 American lives. Amidst great optimism and hope, our frontline workers from the highest risk work environments rolled up their sleeves and shared emotional accounts with national media of what it meant to be receiving the vaccine.

This week we are honoring the anniversary of that historic day by recognizing the commitment of countless individuals who have supported our COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Thanks to these concerted efforts, we have administered more than 268,000 lifesaving vaccinations and boosters for adults, teens and children as the largest vaccination program in central Ohio.

From the earliest days, our Vaccination team masterfully executed a tiered distribution plan according to state requirements that made it convenient for eligible individuals to get vaccinated. At peak periods, we were administering nearly 4,000 vaccinations a day at the Schottenstein Center, our largest centralized public distribution site. The Ohio State Athletic Department deserves high praise for its outstanding collaboration over many months this year.

To staff this operation, more than 3,000 individuals from hundreds of departments and colleges received training to fill a variety of volunteer positions. Overall, we have administered vaccines and boosters across nearly 30 inpatient and outpatient sites at different times through the pandemic.

Tens of thousands of people are alive today because of Ohio State's vaccination campaign, which owes its success to the teamwork of thousands of individuals outlined below. We are extremely grateful for the inordinate dedication that the entire Buckeye community has shown to all aspects of this mission.

- **Check-In, Registration, Runners and Vaccinators** made up the staffing core of centralized, public distribution site operations at the Schott. More than 3,000 students, faculty and staff from across the medical center and various colleges served in these roles over the past year. For example, dozens of **Registered Nurses** and **Advanced Practice Providers** worked overtime and extra shifts to help support the mass vaccination program. The **OSU Health Plan** reassigned its nursing team to provide consistent vaccinators to care for patients and assist with training. **Registration staff** throughout the medical center registered patients and scheduled follow-up visits, ensuring a patient-friendly process and reimbursement for services. **Attending Physicians** and **House staff** volunteered their time at the Schott, heartening patients with their kindness.
- In addition to the incredible support received from the Schottenstein Center and Athletics, the staff, providers, students, facilities teams and administration from the following locations have been instrumental in supporting vaccine administration efforts across campus and central Ohio:
  - **Biomedical Research Tower**, where the medical center's first shots were administered, was a critical location to administer vaccine to frontline health care workers on campus.

- **Ackerman Road** was used during the early days of vaccinating staff and continues to providing evening vaccine blitzes. Special thanks to the **OSUCCC – James staff** who twice “loaned” their office space at 600 Ackerman to support these vaccine clinics.

- **East Hospital's Talbot Hall & Wallace Auditorium** were critical for vaccinating East employees and ensuring access to the vaccine for vulnerable residents of the Near East Side neighborhood.

- **Ohio Union** offered the vaccine for a two-week period at the end of Spring Semester to increase student vaccination rates leading into the summer.

- **Jesse Owens North** served as a critical location for vaccine administration for students and employees for many months.

- **Ambulatory Clinics** – Same Day Care, Family and Community Medicine, including the mobile Community Care Coach, and General Internal Medicine Clinics — continue to provide a large number of vaccinations to new and existing patients.

- **James Clinics** in The James, Stefanie Spielman Breast Center, Mill Run, Morehouse Tower and JamesCare East continue to provide a large number of booster vaccines to Ohio State faculty, staff and students.

- **Retail Pharmacy Locations** at University Hospital, East and Outpatient Care New Albany.

- **Inpatient Units and Emergency Departments** both at Main Campus and East Campus.



- All those involved in coordinating the successful single-day pop-up vaccine efforts at **Ross Heart Hospital, East Hospital**, Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, as well as the vaccination stations at both Health Community Day events.
- **The Contact Center**, comprising staff from James Patient Access, Central Scheduling and Financial Counseling, has fielded more than 110,000 calls to help patients with scheduling, CDC guidelines and more.
- **The Department of Pharmacy** managed procurement, inventory, storage, security and compounding for the vaccine at all mass vaccination sites and clinics. They provided pharmacists to administer vaccines and counsel patients at distribution sites, including retail operations, and coordinated the audit of operations by the CDC and the Ohio Department of Health.
- **Pulmonary/Critical Care, Emergency Medicine and Hematology/Oncology attending physicians** coordinated and provided on-site support to high-volume clinics to answer patient and staff questions and respond to medical concerns.
- **James Nursing Staff (James Line, AfterHours and ambulatory clinic RNs)** supported a 24/7 RN Vaxx Line that became a source of education and reassurance for our pre-vaccine population. The ambulatory James clinics provided easy access for faculty and staff boosters.
- **The Medication Safety/Drug Information team** and representatives from **Critical Care, Emergency Medicine, Allergy/Immunology, Rheumatology and Dermatology** created a systematic process to screen, evaluate and respond to patients with allergic histories or concerns about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **IT, IT PMO and Field Services Desktop team** helped develop patient and clinical workflows/registries in addition to acquiring, deploying and updating equipment, infrastructure and interfaces. They worked closely with **Epic and operational teams** to develop efficient processes for patient communication, scheduling and vaccine administration. Special recognition goes to the **Cadence team** for 24/7 availability.
- **Wexner Medical Center Security, Ohio State University Police and the Schottenstein Security team** provided on-site presence and technologies to ensure the safety of our staff, patients and vaccine supply.

- **Allocation of Scarce Medical Resources Workgroup** assumed the unenviable task of developing priority levels based on ethical principles, risk factors and ever-evolving federal and state guidelines.
- **Buckeye Paws and Brutus** provided an uplifting presence and tail-wagging devotion to ease the anxiety of patients and bring a smile to staff.
- **Marketing, Strategic Communications and Digital Strategy team** secured comprehensive access to many international, national, regional and local media outlets to promote our COVID-19 vaccination efforts. This team created and distributed signage, wayfinding and patient education materials and supported special events and media engagements. In addition, our **Infectious Disease faculty members** served as experts to educate the media and the general public on the effectiveness and safety of COVID-19 vaccines.
- The **Community Engagement team** worked tirelessly with dozens of community organizations to ensure we were providing COVID-19 vaccines to high-risk patient populations from underserved and immigrant communities.
- **Employee Health Services** provided dedicated support for tracking and reconciling employee vaccine compliance in addition to working with **Epidemiology** developing protocols for COVID-19-positive employees, treating them and approving them for return to work.
- **Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases** helped plan, execute and minimize infectious risk to staff and patients while providing high-quality clinical care throughout vaccine sites.
- **Facilities and Space Planning** provided leadership, accountability and constant flexibility to help stand up new spaces and reimagine existing spaces to meet the rapidly changing needs of the vaccine operations.
- **Supply Chain** kept us stocked with critical supplies, including PPE, at a time when there was a general shortage and demands were high.
- **Human Resources** supported significant labor needs for the vaccine clinics with flexibility and creativity.

- **Analytics Center of Excellence (ACE) team** developed the prioritization infrastructure and then built and maintained numerous real-time dashboards and reports that facilitated appointments, staffing adjustments and compliance monitoring. This information enhanced the ability to respond to state and national reporting requirements.
- **Legal Services** provided expert counsel and developed, with ongoing modification, the COVID-19 vaccine disclosure and acknowledgement.
- **Nationwide Children's Hospital** partnered with us to transfer vaccine doses in the early stages of vaccine administration to ensure zero waste.
- **Nutrition Services** provided a constant supply of snacks, drinks and meals while seamlessly meeting dietary requests and requirements of the teams.
- **Patient Experience/Interpreter Services** removed language and cultural barriers for non-English-speaking patients.
- **Revenue Cycle teams** from the **Wexner Medical Center** and **OSUP** managed SignUpGenius to support staffing, develop training materials, follow up on revenue collections and support runners, check-in and registration.
- **OSUCCC – James researchers and staff** created the SIIREN (Study of Infections and Immune REspoNse) Study at the Schottenstein Center to address the gap in knowledge of immune responses from COVID-19 vaccination in people with cancer.





**Launch of Johnson & Johnson  
single-dose vaccine**

[go.osu.edu/first-johnson-and-johnson](https://go.osu.edu/first-johnson-and-johnson)



**Why I got vaccinated  
campaign**

[go.osu.edu/why-we-got-the-covid-vaccine](https://go.osu.edu/why-we-got-the-covid-vaccine)



**Governor DeWine and President  
Johnson visit with Ohio State  
students getting vaccinated**

[go.osu.edu/gov-dewine-visits](https://go.osu.edu/gov-dewine-visits)

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 22, 2021

## Inpatient Care and Support



This week, we are proud to recognize our **inpatient care teams and support staff** for their amazing commitment to care for patients with COVID-19 over the past 22 months. The commitment of so many across all of our hospitals over such a long period of time speaks volumes about the dedication and professionalism of our team and has bolstered our already strong reputation as a land-grant university supporting the health care needs of our fellow Ohioans.

While University Hospital (over 2,500 COVID-19 discharges) and Ohio State East Hospital (over 1,300 COVID-19 discharges) took care of the majority of our pandemic patients, frontline personnel from the Brain and Spine Hospital (nearly 700 discharges), the Ross Heart Hospital (nearly 400 discharges) and the James Cancer Hospital (over 200 discharges) all contributed to the effort.

From our first COVID-19 admission on March 16, 2020, our health care personnel and our learners have risen to the occasion so many times to see us through multiple surges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, our work appears to be far from done in light of the omicron variant.

Despite the personal risk from a virus that we didn't know much about at the time, overnight our medical professionals became frontline first-responders. They did this as the first surge of patients with COVID-19 quickly overwhelmed our ICUs and required isolation and around-the-clock surveillance in step-down units.

In response, staff blurred the lines separating ICU, PCU and Med/Surg by relocating, merging and forming new units within our hospitals. This inventive, highly strategic move enabled us to manage hundreds of critically ill patients with COVID-19 at multiple hospitals while simultaneously ensuring the safety of non-COVID-19 patients.

Staff quickly and bravely stepped into the unknown by increasing their levels of training so they could care for higher-acuity patients. Pharmacists joined their colleagues at COVID-19 bedsides to advise on emerging drug treatments and delivery methods, as did respiratory therapists, who offered expertise in treating the disease that imperiled breathing. Physicians showed tremendous adaptability with hospitalists, taking primary responsibility for patients with COVID-19, and specialists, sub-specialists and residents provided care where needed outside of their routine specialty. Managers, directors and leaders across departments extended their hours to guide staff through unfamiliar circumstances at any time of the day, night or weekend.

The strain of this protracted, high-stakes environment was compounded by other factors. Understandably, many faculty and staff chose to isolate from loved ones prior to a vaccine. Many took advantage of the local hotel respite space that was provided to rest between shifts. Meanwhile, at the hospitals, staff personally felt the anguish of their suffering patients who were themselves alone and isolated because of COVID-19.

Specifically, we all owe a huge debt of gratitude to the **Division of Infectious Diseases**. This group of dedicated faculty, fellows and advanced practice nurses has played a critical role from January 2020 when the Epidemiology Department first began tracking the viral outbreak in China at a time when no one had ever heard the word COVID. The Infectious Diseases team has seen thousands of consults for admitted patients with COVID-19 and has worked collaboratively with people from nearly every subspecialty to develop our protocols for medication treatment, COVID-19 testing and vaccine administration. Our Infectious Disease research team served as a site for both monoclonal antibody and COVID-19 vaccine research trials. And from an education perspective,

Infectious Disease colleagues have presented at dozens of internal conferences and grand rounds and led education sessions for providers from all over Ohio related to COVID-19 treatment and vaccination. Their tireless commitment and partnership have definitely made our institution's response more data-driven, timely and effective.

Through it all, the professionalism and perseverance of our colleagues listed below have been beyond exceptional. As individuals and as teams, you have demonstrated bravery in the face of the unknown, determination over obstacles and incredible resilience.

- **Respiratory Therapy** took on new urgency during COVID-19, which imperils patients' ability to breathe. Therapists provide respiratory support, rapidly adapt treatments and strategies and provide insight to providers. Working closely with physicians in pulmonary/critical care, the Respiratory Therapy team implemented new treatment protocols for heated high-flow oxygen early in the pandemic, which have saved many patients from needing intubation and freed up ICU beds that continue to be in short supply.
- The **Stat Nurse team**, our mobile critical care team, provides lifesaving care to decompensating patients and ensures they are safe until stabilized or moved to a higher level of care.
- **Critical care unit nursing staff** provided intensive, high-quality care to acutely decompensating patients, coming up with innovative practices like IV pump externalization and continuous glucose monitoring that have garnered national recognition.
- **Med/Surg and Progressive Care Unit nursing staff** expanded their expertise to provide new care and more acute therapies to a more complex patient population. Many units converted nearly overnight





from surgical units to medical units in the spring of 2020 to care for hundreds of patients with COVID-19 at a time when our surgical cases were being postponed.

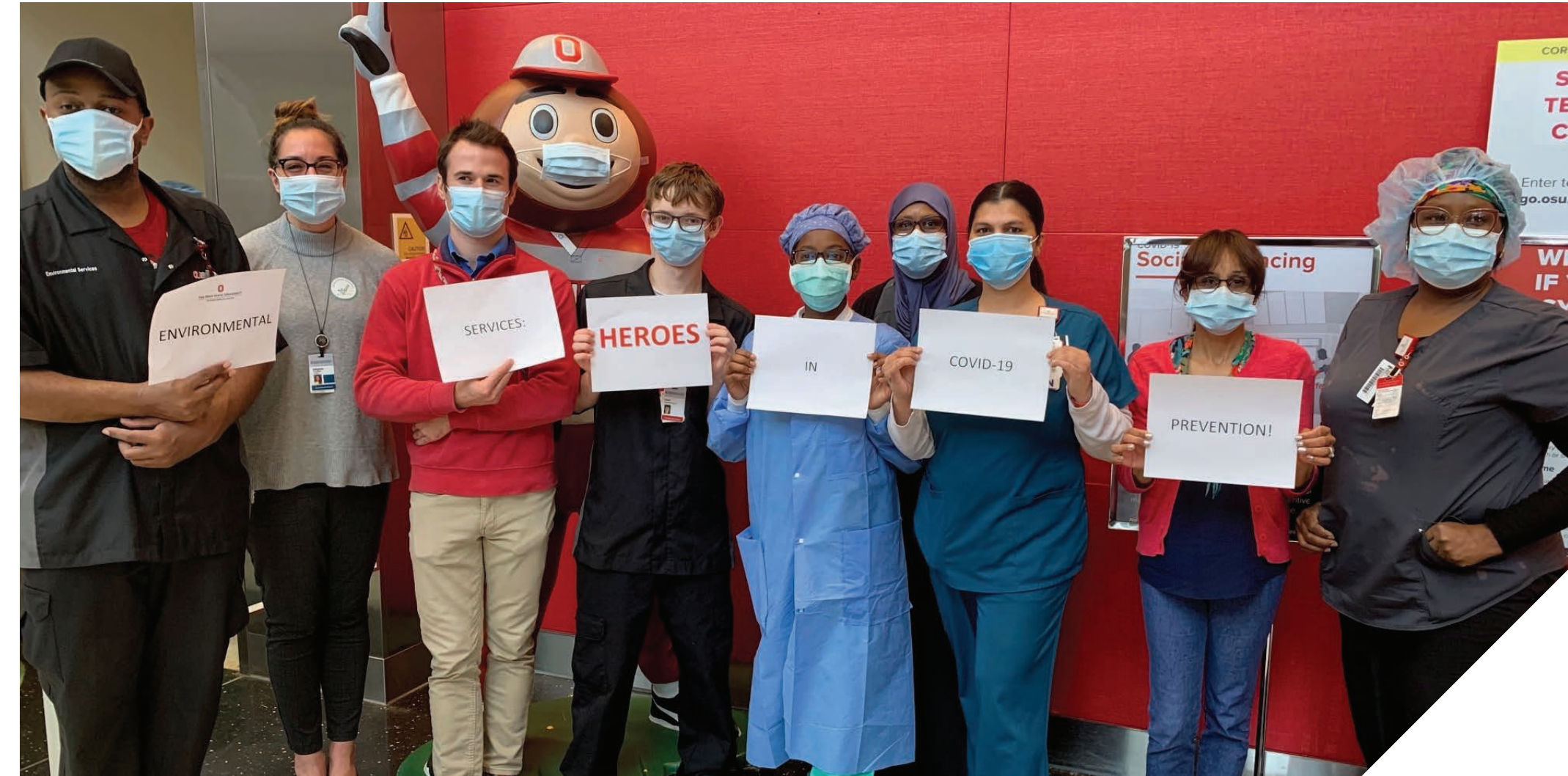
- The **Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology** has navigated the care of COVID-19-infected moms since the start of the pandemic. The virus has been linked to more severe disease, often leading to preterm births, postpartum hemorrhage, admission to the intensive care unit and other complications.
- **Unit Clerical Associates and Patient Care Assistants** serve as the face of our units to our patients and their families. UCAs patiently explain visitation rules and PPE requirements. PCAs, who are instrumental in keeping patients safe and comforted, adopted the innovative use of baby monitors for high-risk situations.
- The **Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine** faculty, fellows and advanced practice providers expanded services across East Hospital and the Critical Care tower to meet the demands of increasing volumes of patients with COVID-19. They provided care for the vast majority of over 1,600 patients with COVID-19 who spent time in the ICU during their hospital stay. The team also collaborated closely with other **Surgical ICU, Neuro ICU and Ross ICU teams** who have stepped up to assist with these more traditional MICU patients. They also managed numerous difficult discussions with family members about chronic ventilated patients and novel care pathways.
- The **Department of Pathology** should be commended for quickly bringing testing online and under difficult circumstances.
- **Division of Hospital Medicine** consolidated PCU and Med/Surg patients with COVID-19 into their services to limit exposure to other patient groups, often caring for patients who would have typically been in the ICU. By far, this division cared for the largest number of patients with COVID-19 with over 3,200 discharges from their multiple services. Simultaneously, they helped create new guidelines for inpatient COVID-19 care, discharge instructions and care pathways that were used by all services caring for these patients.

- **The Internal Medicine and Family Medicine residency programs** coordinated and executed a schedule over three months to accommodate general medicine surge teams, both day and night, which disrupted the educational, outpatient and elective schedules. The Internal Medicine fellows and subspecialists formed necessary general medicine surge teams and accommodated high patient volumes during the height of inpatient COVID-19 admissions.
- **Case Management** developed solutions for families to see their loved ones “virtually” when visitation was restricted, through the use of tablets and other technology. Case management leadership also assisted with the development of COVID-19 patient kits for those patients being discharged from the emergency department with a new diagnosis of COVID-19. The kits included a pulse oximeter to effectively monitor their oxygen at home.
- The **Social Work team** worked to coordinate discharges across a variety of locations, which were made more difficult by COVID-19 restrictions and remote conversations with patients and families.
- The **Acute Rehab team**, including Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Speech-Language Pathology, responded to countless bed expansions, unit changes and rising patient acuity, and advanced the department toward substantial long-term growth.
- **Transport Services** has worked harder than ever over the past 18 months to deliver our patients to safe locations in a timely manner.
- **Environmental Services** put their own lives at risk to accomplish the herculean effort of cleaning and disinfecting the hospitals daily to keep everyone safe.
- **Nutrition Services** worked with patients to make sure that they were getting meals on time and accurately.
- **Pharmacists team**, including the **clinical specialists, generalists and pharmacy residents**, have helped frontline providers every step of the way by finding ways to get the appropriate treatments through the myriad drug and supply shortages and by writing and frequently updating treatment algorithms with the most current literature.

- **The Pharmacy Technician team** safely and accurately prepares and delivers medications to patients while adjusting on the fly to accommodate supply chain interruptions and cutting-edge therapies such as monoclonal antibodies. They are also essential to preparing COVID-19 vaccine doses for patients and staff.
- **Patient Experience Services** helped to establish a safe perimeter around our hospitals and outpatient care centers by coordinating a team of volunteers to staff the temperature screening stations at all entrances. With their expertise and the commitment of the faculty and staff who signed up to assist, we were able to add an additional layer of protection.

Because of the additional workflows and steps the team continues to implement related to COVID-19 visitation precautions, we are able to keep our patients, faculty, staff and everyone who visits our campus as safe and healthy as possible.

Once again, we cannot say enough how grateful we are to each of you for all you do for Ohio State and the communities we serve. As we consider reasons to celebrate this holiday season, your contributions to providing excellent patient care, developing innovative research and leading future health care professionals, especially in response to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, is at the top of that list.



WEDNESDAY, JAN. 12, 2022

## Front Door Services



This week we pay tribute to the teams that serve as the front door of the Wexner Medical Center, the places the public turns to in those frightening moments when they suspect they have COVID-19 or when mild symptoms significantly worsen. Since the earliest days of the pandemic, these emergency, immediate, same-day, virtual and primary care providers have provided the public's first line of defense.

The compassion that these teams continue to exhibit for their patients and for one another is a mark of their professionalism as demand for their services remains at an all-time high. They have adapted admirably under tremendous pressure. Here are just a few examples of how they have responded to adverse conditions to ensure the best care for patients and support for their colleagues throughout the pandemic.

- **Emergency Department (ED) teams** at University and East hospitals — physicians, APPs, nurses, pharmacists, PCAs, UCAs, respiratory therapists and radiology techs — have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 response since the beginning, when information on staff safety was still developing, seeing large numbers of patients acutely ill with COVID-19.

When hospital beds are at capacity and the ED itself is full, these teams step up to partner with inpatient teams to care for admitted patients while continuing to handle an intense stream of emergency patients. They, like other teams throughout the medical center, have gone above and beyond to cover shifts for one another and stepped in to help colleagues at other sites during COVID-19 surges.

- Teams at our **Outpatient, Advanced Immediate Care and Same-Day Immediate Care clinics** have been working extended hours to meet the unrelenting demand for after-hours care of acutely ill patients with COVID-19. Indicative of demand across the board, visits at the recently opened Advanced Immediate Care Outpatient Care New Albany has been running 130% ahead of budget. In the spring and summer of 2021, many of these same clinics added COVID-19 vaccinations to their services — delivering more than 28,500 doses of vaccine since May 2021.
- **Family and Community Medicine and General Internal Medicine teams** partnered early in the pandemic to develop and implement a drive-up respiratory clinic to assess acute patients, a move that helped relieve pressure on the Emergency Departments.

These teams also developed one of the country's best programs for streamlining the time-sensitive process of referring patients with positive COVID-19 test results to embedded pharmacists for evaluation for monoclonal antibody infusion treatment. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of MyChart messages pour into their departments monthly with pandemic-related questions, information requests about COVID-19 vaccination and so many other topics.

- Our **Telehealth Immediate Care program** launched in March 2020 and was up and running in one month, providing a critical element in our efforts to slow the spread of the virus. This was an impressive team effort, and we would like to thank our clinical faculty, advanced practice providers and IT team for their flexibility in adapting to this new way of serving our patients.

In addition to the safety and convenience this service offers, it has two features unique to virtual and COVID-19 care. First, we provide access to an Ohio State behavioral health specialist to every inpatient discharged due to COVID-19. Second, we have the capability to remotely monitor blood oxygen levels using a device called a pulse oximeter that assesses progression of the infection and whether it is safe for patients to remain at home.

None of these teams works in isolation. Our appreciation extends to the departments and teams below that collaborate in these efforts.

- **Emergency Medical Service (EMS) teams** from across central Ohio often provide the first intervention and assessment for countless patients experiencing a medical emergency, including many patients with COVID-19 symptoms, and stabilize them for transport to the hospital.
- **Emergency Department faculty** staffed additional ICU beds at East Hospital during the winter 2020-2021 surge.
- **Emergency Medicine teams** worked closely with the **Stroke, STEMI and Trauma teams** to treat time-sensitive diagnoses in a manner that kept providers safe while not delaying care.
- The **General Internal Medicine and Family Medicine Post-Acute Geriatrics team** takes health care of all types, including monoclonal antibody infusion treatments, directly to patients living in nursing homes.
- **Registration, Admissions and Check-In staff** work extended hours to help manage the surge in patients at multiple sites across the medical center.
- **Security personnel** work diligently to maintain safety by ensuring that weapons do not make their way into the hospital.
- **Corporate staff at OSUP** manage coding, billing and compliance related to telehealth visits.
- **Patient Contact Center staff** manage and coordinate all patient visits and help our patients connect with providers.
- **Information Technology teams** educate, train, allocate equipment and implement telehealth services.



- **Embedded pharmacists** work closely with primary care clinicians and the **COVID-19 monoclonal antibody team** leaders to ensure high-risk patients are reviewed immediately after receiving COVID-19 test results and are given infusions in the short treatment window.
- **East Hospital Administration** coordinates and leads operations such as the vaccine and infusion clinics at Wallace and the COVID-19 testing site outside East Hospital.
- **Environmental Services** keeps our hospitals clean and disinfected daily to ensure the safety of all.
- **Case Management, Supply Chain and Emergency Medicine teams** built COVID-19 discharge kits with a pulse oximeter included to allow patients to be safely discharged.
- **Patient Experience teams** constantly update visitation policies to protect staff and patients.



WEDNESDAY, JAN. 26, 2022

## Perioperative and Procedural Operations



This week, we're proud to recognize our perioperative and procedural teams from the Wexner Medical Center and The James for their leadership in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic with interventions to keep our patients and our health care personnel safe. The implementation of new protocols for COVID-19 testing prior to surgery and the enhanced safety procedures related to intubation and other high-risk aerosol-generating procedures effectively prevented transmission in the clinical setting. Our imaging staff developed new ways to continue performing inpatient and outpatient procedures at a time when they were mourning the loss of one of their leaders who was the first patient to die of COVID-19 at the Wexner Medical Center.

At three different points in the pandemic, we've needed to postpone surgeries and procedures to varying degrees in order to create capacity within hospitals. Initially, from March through May 2020, we participated in the postponement of nearly all nonurgent procedures and surgeries

along with other hospitals in the state. In summer 2021, many of our general surgeons postponed cases to create additional capacity during the delta variant surge. And most recently, since mid-December, we've been postponing all nonessential surgical cases that require an overnight stay in the hospital.

As the region's only academic health center, we have an institutional commitment to accept time-sensitive, critical cases that referring hospitals cannot manage – whether they're patients with COVID-19 or individuals with complex, high-acuity illnesses or injuries. By postponing elective surgeries, we've been able to provide improved access to immediate and lifesaving care to our patients and individuals from throughout the region even during times of COVID-19 surges.

We greatly appreciate the work of our surgical and procedural departments and divisions, the **Department of Anesthesiology** and our **perioperative and procedural staff** for designing and implementing an effective, patient-centered system for postponement and rescheduling cases. Our **IHIS and Analytic Center of Excellence (ACE) teams** worked quickly to implement this plan and to develop the associated dashboards that allowed us to track our progress for restarting these cases.

In tandem, we're exceedingly grateful to the **Department of Pathology** for enabling us to provide all our patients uninterrupted care throughout the pandemic. For two years, this team has been processing mounting COVID-19 tests, absorbing the added responsibility into its core work of processing biopsies, resections and blood tests and delivering those results systemwide. As an institution, we simply couldn't be meeting our commitment to the region during this public health crisis were it not for this team's dedication.

The **Central Sterile Services Department**, responsible for washing, cleaning, sterilizing and delivering surgical instrumentation, has worked tirelessly to make sure the OR staff have the tools they need for their necessary and life-saving procedures. In addition to continuing to adopt innovative practices and ideas for sterilization, they aided in the pandemic preparation by hand-packing and sterilizing thousands of COVID-19 nasal swabs, disinfecting reusable respirator masks and navigating the opening of a new offsite campus while managing an ever-fluctuating surgery scheduling.

In a related acknowledgement, we want to recognize the **Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology**, which has experienced a significant increase in mothers with COVID-19 since the emergence of the omicron variant. This latest challenge is one of several unique COVID-19 situations this team has navigated in the care of pregnant women and babies since the start of the pandemic. When the delta variant was prevalent, COVID-19-infected moms experienced more severe disease, often leading to preterm births, postpartum hemorrhage, admission to the intensive care unit and other complications. In tackling each new challenge, they brought expertise, agility and collaboration with partners including Epidemiology, Pharmacy, Neonatology, Pulmonary Medicine, Anesthesia and Critical Care.

Alongside these departments, the following teams have helped deliver high-quality, uninterrupted care for our patients and our region. We're exceedingly proud of their contributions.

- **Surgeons** continued to perform essential procedures and transplants necessary to avoid risk to life, permanent dysfunction, progression of cancer or risk of rapidly worsening pain, while also contacting patients to postpone and reschedule surgeries as soon as it was safe to do so.
- **Surgical nurses and surgical techs** made it possible to continue providing high-quality, patient-centered care in the operating room despite the rescheduling and offered extra comfort to patients missing support from their loved ones when visitation was limited for safety.
- **Anesthesiologists**, including **attendings, fellows, residents, CAAs** and **CRNAs**, continued to care for patients as part of the periop team and also used their skills and expertise to support the COVID-19 treatment team, caring for patients in need of intubation for ventilator support.



- **Periop Administration** helped the department turn on a dime to accommodate postponed elective surgeries, including working with surgeons to determine which cases to postpone and placing cases in a depot to be rescheduled at a future date.
- **Endoscopy, Interventional Radiology, Cath Lab and Electrophysiology (EP) Lab teams** continued safely screening our patients to ensure conditions were caught and treated early and patients could continue to count on the high-quality care we've always provided.
- **Clinical Pathology Lab team** has expanded its regular workload to incorporate COVID-19 tests, adeptly responding to the ever-changing needs of the pandemic while adapting to fluctuations in basic supplies, such as test tubes, stemming from supply chain issues.
- **Anatomic and Molecular Pathology Lab teams** demonstrated a commitment to essential patient care even with significant staffing challenges.
- **Digital Pathology team** kept clinical, research and educational operations moving with digitized glass slides that facilitated remote working as necessary.
- **Autopsy and Morgue Services** has experienced a more intensely personal and elevated role, given the high morbidity of patients with COVID-19, assisting families with dignified services for loved ones.
- **Pathology Information Services** kept the lines of communication open among clinicians, patients and families for the transfer of test results amidst high demand and urgency.
- **Transfusion Medicine Center team** worked to provide convalescent plasma early in the pandemic and now works daily with our blood supplier to maintain our supply during this time of national blood shortages.
- **Women's Imaging team** that, despite the pandemic, performed obstetrical scans on pregnant women, including those with COVID-19.
- **Neonatology teams** have developed protocols making it possible for babies to safely room with their moms who've tested positive for COVID-19.

- **Labor and Delivery nurses** and the **Women and Infant Unit** worked together as a team to streamline the care for pregnant mothers with or without COVID-19, focusing on providing the best possible care for moms and their babies.
- **Data Analytics team** coordinated vaccination efforts for providers and staff.
- **Pharmacy team** facilitated the use of monoclonal antibodies for pregnant mothers and other high-risk patients.

Please join us in recognizing and thanking these groups for their extraordinary efforts to ensure our patients continue to have access to the exceptional care they count on us to provide even in the face of extreme challenges.



## Ohio National Guard joins frontline staff at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

Sgt. Kinnis White (pictured right) of Centerburg, Ohio, joined the Army National Guard as a way to serve her community.

Now she's doing just that in central Ohio at the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center, where she's using her Army medic training to help relieve hospital employees who are grappling with the rising number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19.

Sgt. White is one of more than 2,000 members of the Ohio National Guard deployed by Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine to alleviate frontline workers during a new surge of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. She's also one of 10 guardsmen at the medical center who earned EMT certification while in the Guard. That training qualifies them to work in the hospital's Emergency Department.

Dozens of other guardsmen have been sent to assist in non-clinical roles, including environmental services, nutrition services and patient transportation. And more are expected in the coming weeks.

***"The staff have been amazing," says Sgt. White, who has temporarily traded in her Army fatigues for scrubs to conduct emergency medical technician duties including checking bloodwork and taking vital signs. "It's been great to give back."***



*Ohio National Guard bolsters a weary front-line staff*

[go.osu.edu/national-guard-joins-frontline-staff](https://go.osu.edu/national-guard-joins-frontline-staff)

### Guard members helped out in all kinds of ways.

Specialist Macy Quinn was spotted singing a lullaby to a 6-month-old baby while the baby was being swabbed during a COVID test.

***"It was amazing,"*** says the infant's mother, Jennica Johns, MD, who specializes in internal medicine at Ohio State. "It probably was not what she wanted to be doing that day, but she went above and beyond."

The personal touch was critical to patients, as Ohio set a one-day record for COVID-19 hospitalizations of more than 5,300 in early January. That's a big number that tested the stamina of already overworked personnel.

***"We recognize the stress that you've been under,"***

Maj. Gen. John C. Harris said during a visit to the medical center on New Year's Eve. "I've seen firsthand and talked to members of the staff here who've been in this fight for 22, 23 months. We appreciate what you've done, not just for central Ohio, but for the state and our loved ones."

Maj. Gen. Harris said he was struck by similarities he saw between military and hospital workers. Both depend on cohesive teams that trust each other and build on each other's qualifications and character.

### Humbled and grateful for the help

"Our goal in the National Guard is to be a part of that team. We're here to help."



Julie Meddles, director of Nutrition Services, knows the importance of teamwork needed to produce 3,000 patient meals a day. She guided Maj. Gen. Harris on a portion of his tour and subsequently trained guard members for work in nutrition services, focusing on patient care needs. Guardsmen will help serve meals, assemble patient trays and prep food.

"I'll never forget the pictures that day, or the sight now, of the guardsmen delivering meals to our patients and working in our kitchens. I'm humbled, honored and grateful that the Ohio National Guard dropped what they're doing to come help us. It's truly lifted the spirits of our staff so much to have their help," Meddles says.

Sous chef Cody Harden finds the help "indispensable." He's getting assistance with preparing meals, which today includes a baked fish sandwich and French onion soup. "It's helped us breathe a little bit."

### Keeping the priority on patients

Other indispensable aid comes in the form of patient care.

*"From a nursing standpoint, it's a huge help," says Jessica Mahle, nurse manager of the Neuro step-down unit. "Now we're able to have PCAs who've been sitting with individual patients in rooms be out on the floor for all patients."*

Army National Guardsman Raphael Andoh, of Ghana, recently started a 12-hour shift at the Brain and Spine Hospital. "I'm having a great time so far," he says.

His contribution is allowing Nicole Teffenhardt, a student nursing assistant, to work with more patients.

*"It'll free us up to take vitals and blood draws while he's able to watch for patient safety-related things,"* Teffenhardt says.

### COVID-19 testing site

Meanwhile, 20 other guardsmen have joined Ohio State health care providers at a new COVID-19 testing site at CAS. The three-lane, drive-thru station can swab more than 1,000 patients a day.

*"We were able to train all guardsmen on the swabbing technique because that doesn't require them to do any computer work or have access to our medical records,"* says Christine Harsh, director of Ambulatory Services.

Staff Sgt. Justin Martin is helping to process rapid COVID-19 tests and swab people, from infants to 90-year-olds. He says he never thought he'd be in a hospital setting during a pandemic as part of his guard services.

*"It's not something I would go out and do for fun, but it's something that needs to be done,"* he says. *"I'm happy to be here."*

### Maj. Gen. Harris on Ohio National Guard deployment

Maj. Gen. Harris shares this message with the community about how the National Guard is helping reduce the strain for hospital staff at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, and how every Ohioan can do their part to help keep everyone as safe as possible and control the COVID-19 pandemic as soon as possible.



Ohio State faculty and staff thank the Ohio National Guard

[go.osu.edu/thank-you-ohio-national-guard](https://go.osu.edu/thank-you-ohio-national-guard)



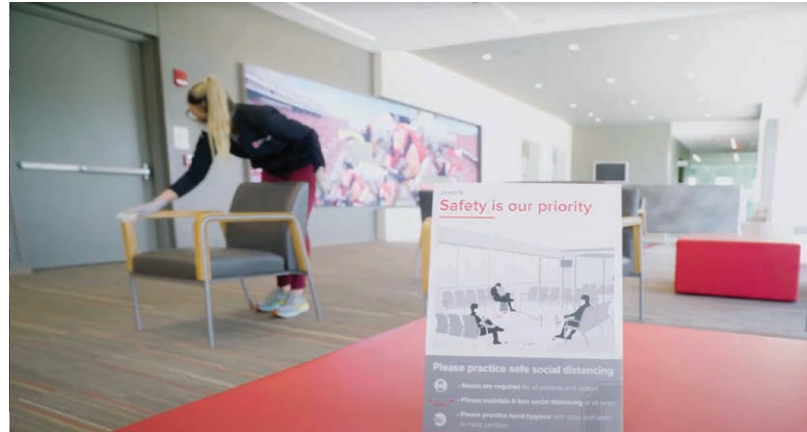
Major Gen. John C. Harris of the Ohio National Guard

[go.osu.edu/maj-gen-john-harris](https://go.osu.edu/maj-gen-john-harris)



WEDNESDAY, FEB. 9, 2022

## Inpatient Hospital Support



This week, we extend our deepest gratitude to our inpatient hospital support teams that have worked in lockstep with clinicians and administrative leaders for two years to respond to the shifting demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. These teams often work behind the scenes, but their work is an essential ingredient in the success of the medical center's clinical operations.

From the start of the crisis, they've gone above and beyond their regular scope of work. Turning on a dime, they've reckoned with the pandemic's challenges in ingenious and efficient ways to protect our frontline workers, patients and families while expertly managing costs. They've contributed countless hours of overtime, sacrificed weekends and vacations and volunteered beyond their regular jobs to assist with temporary needs such as temperature check-in stations, despite COVID-19-related absences within their own departments. Even as the pandemic drags on, they continue to show exemplary Buckeye Spirit in their commitment to our mission.

We're proud to recognize these teams for their unflagging dedication over the past two years. Their ingenuity and commitment to the needs of the organization has had sweeping implications for the good of the enterprise and those we serve.

Our **Patient Transport teams** have shown tremendous flexibility and dedication to our patients throughout the pandemic. Their role in our patients' health care journey took on greater significance when COVID-19 safety protocols prevented patients from having family and friends by their sides. This team often provided our patients the comfort that they would have received from their loved ones on the way to a test or procedure. One transport team began wearing smiley faces on the outside of their protective masks to brighten their patients' days. In ways like this, the transport team elevated their job beyond moving patients from one place to another, making it instead about connection and comfort at a time when the person might be feeling alone or anxious.

**Information Desk, Visitor Management and Patient Experience staff** adapted to a new way of engaging with patients and visitors due to enhanced and fluctuating COVID-19 safety protocols. They're now, more than ever, the face of the medical center as they greet patients, confirm appointments, welcome visitors and respond to questions. These teams have fielded the inquiries from loved ones and vendors about new visiting hours and other changes. They also helped family members get needed personal effects to their patients during times of restricted admission. For the first year of the pandemic, these teams supervised volunteers from across the medical center who assisted with screening stations. Now back to their regular roles, they're managing this process through creative job sharing and cross coverage within their own team. Continuing to navigate through uncertainty, these teams are willing to take on additional duties and responsibilities to ensure our patients and families get the compassionate care they deserve and expect.

Pandemic-related stressors in our community have heightened emotions for patients and visitors and have increased the risk for volatile situations in our environment. We have great respect for our partners in **Security**, including both uniformed officers and dispatchers, who have kept us safe in this challenging environment. Our officers remain committed to the principles of the crisis intervention training they receive to go above and beyond each day to de-escalate tense situations and serve as a calming force when they arrive on site. The Security team's technical knowledge and expertise

informed new access controls and surveillance systems that streamlined entry points at our facilities systemwide. In addition, the **Access Control Group** provided technological expertise to implement security systems that limit access to the medical center so that we could effectively implement visitor restrictions as part of our COVID-19 safety protocols. The **Security Projects and Technology teams** also helped Security deliver technology such as cameras, card readers and alarms to all medical center care locations, including the Greater Columbus Convention Center and vaccination sites. Together, their work has supported the success of our temperature check points, new visitor policies and other changes designed to protect all who use our facilities. This team also moved quickly to plan and prepare security measures with Zone 2 partners for a COVID-19 overflow site at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, though this site was ultimately not deployed.

**Environmental Services (EVS) team** members work shoulder-to-shoulder with clinical staff on patient floors to provide one of the most critical services to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Early in the pandemic, they braved the unknowns and dangers of the virus to clean, disinfect and sterilize rooms. Throughout the past two years, they've tirelessly adapted these essential services as the science has progressed to provide the highest level of protection possible. An example is UV-light treatment they initiated to kill the virus in all COVID-19 patient rooms. Even though it lengthens room turnover time and increases work for the team, the EVS team is happy to take this extra measure to keep our patients and staff safe.

At a time of rising food costs and supply challenges, our growing team in **Health System Nutrition Services** has kept costs down without sacrificing quality, variety or nutritional balance in the daily delivery of 3,000 patient meals and 5,000 BistrOH!





and BistrOH! To Go customers served every day throughout the pandemic. A new approach to macaroni and cheese shows their inventiveness and efficiency. The once decentralized process to make this frequently prepared dish now comes from a “mother sauce” allowing for cost-effective purchasing of ingredients, centralized production and a superior taste. Further, the team streamlined batch cooking for their seven patient kitchens and 13 restaurants. They also piloted and implemented a central call number (3-4EAT) for clinical staff to solve patient-related meal issues, saving time for busy bedside staff.

When the pandemic hit, the **Planning, Project, Facilities Operations, Engineering and Space Planning teams** assessed and revamped millions of square feet across our enterprise to implement new safety standards. In short order, they increased air filtration measures to meet CDC guidelines for COVID-19; developed protocols and handled logistics to restage the medical center’s public areas, classrooms and staff spaces; and responded to urgent requests to stand up testing, vaccination and infusion sites. They helped plan and open COVID-19 testing stations at various locations and ensure continued, safe operations of medical center facilities that support the work of physicians, nurses and clinical staff. Additionally, they facilitated logistical aspects of work-from-home, created distanced employee dining in the Ross Heart Hospital by repurposing conference space and they’re now creating hoteling, touch-down and hybrid workspaces. They’ve assumed these pandemic projects while managing ongoing maintenance issues and keeping major construction projects on time, including completing, opening and operationalizing the new Central Sterile Supply and Outpatient Care New Albany facilities despite the many challenges presented by COVID-19.

The **Central Sterile Supply (CSS) team** is responsible for cleaning, sterilizing, packaging and delivering surgical instrumentation to our operating rooms and procedure suites across the medical center. Throughout the pandemic, they’ve worked tirelessly to equip our clinical teams with the tools necessary for lifesaving procedures for our patients. They’ve adopted innovative practices and ideas for sterilization and aided in pandemic preparation by hand-packing and sterilizing thousands of COVID-19 nasal swabs and disinfecting reusable respirator masks. They accomplished these pandemic-related tasks while navigating a fluctuating surgery schedule, opening the new CSS location on Kenny Road in February 2021 and supporting our newest ambulatory surgery location, Outpatient Care New Albany.

Our **Clinical Engineering team**, a specialty area that oversees our medical equipment and technology, is responsible for tens of thousands of pieces of equipment. During the pandemic-related shortages and supply chain challenges, they worked in partnership with Supply Chain colleagues and others to reallocate already-owned medical center equipment to meet unfilled needs. The team innovated to design and build mobile telemetry stations to stand up COVID-19 patient floors and potential new COVID-19 areas like the Harding Hospital gym and the Greater Columbus Convention Center. They worked diligently to keep ventilators operational and in good supply for our patients amidst this time of unprecedented, increased demand and utilization. Clinical Engineering also had anesthesia machines delivered early and diverted patient-monitoring technology from other projects in anticipation of COVID-19 needs.

**Registration team members** are often the first individuals to interact with patients when they arrive on-site — even before their COVID-19 status is known. They’ve responded to the stress of the unknown with a focus on our mission and by providing great service to our patients, their families and the hospital in whatever ways they could. They’ve adapted readily to changing safety protocols with unwavering grace and patience, which isn’t always easy as we ask them to convey messages such as new visitation policies that can sometimes be difficult for family members to hear. Their goal is to help patients and families feel safe and welcomed as they enter the hospital — a responsibility this team takes to heart. In addition, their willingness to support our vaccination sites at the Schottenstein Center, BRT, Ackerman and East Hospital was critical to the success of the vaccine operation by getting “second doses” efficiently scheduled for our patients before leaving.

We would also be remiss not to share a resounding thank you to all the **screening volunteers** from the hospital and Shared Services departments who served as screeners and supported registration and information desk staff by helping with visitor screenings for COVID-19 at check points across the medical center, particularly in the first year of the pandemic.



WEDNESDAY, FEB. 23, 2022

## Community and Civic Engagement



In this week's tribute, we're extremely proud to recognize our community-based care teams. These groups pivoted during the pandemic to break down barriers to health care access for residents of the populations and communities we serve. Building on a strong foundation, these individuals explored new ways of partnering with the community to engage patients in a digital world that have forever changed our outreach for the better. In some cases, their work led the nation in addressing the difficult health disparity issues that surfaced during the pandemic. It's an honor to recognize these groups.

Beginning even before the vaccine was available to the general public, a number of individuals on the **Community and Civic Engagement team** began working in the community to counteract disinformation and rumors about side effects, risks and the impact of the vaccine on specific patient populations. The **Community Vaccine Partners** program collaborated

with community stakeholders, including churches and community-based organizations, to address resident concerns and questions about the vaccine — even going door-to-door to spread credible information about the vaccine. Through conversation, they determined people's needs and addressed barriers, including daycare, food and transportation, even adding a modesty room out of respect for certain religions.

A few weeks after opening our mass vaccination site at the Schottenstein Center, we worked with the **Analytics Center of Excellence team** to evaluate whom we were reaching at that facility. The data showed that people coming to the campus location were predominantly white, and fewer people of color were being vaccinated than expected. In response, we quickly mobilized multiple strategies to increase our engagement with people living in underserved and immigrant communities. We launched a public vaccination center at East Hospital, which along with our other locations, helped serve more than 13,000 individuals from 11 identified underserved ZIP codes downtown and on the Near East and South sides of Columbus, not including medical center faculty and staff. Further, these teams' work represented some of the nation's best for addressing the health care disparities, systemic racism and other social determinants of health that drive COVID-19's more negative impact on communities of color across the country.

In addition to the work outlined above, others teamed up to help with these important COVID-19 vaccination efforts:

- A number of physicians from **Ohio State East Hospital** had a monthly dinner with pastors at a church within walking distance of the hospital to champion the benefits of the vaccine and build relationships and trust.
- The **External Vaccine Education Workgroup** provided patient navigation to help individuals overcome obstacles such as transportation or language differences that might prevent them from receiving the vaccine.
- The **Center for Cancer Health Equity** offered its team, including patient navigators, to follow up with the people who registered through the **Community Vaccine Partners Program** to be sure they had what they needed to get there.
- The **Community Engagement Task Force** worked closely with the **COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center** to find alternative ways to register people for vaccinations when they couldn't access digital technology.

These community partnerships have formed strong bonds. Today, the newly named **Community Valued Partners** comprises 39 partners. They continue to collaborate with the medical center, and together we're addressing ways to improve health care and health equity for our communities. A current initiative is looking for ways to increase at-home colorectal cancer screenings for our Black primary care patients.

Early in the pandemic, we recognized that certain individuals weren't only at higher risk for contracting COVID-19 due to an underlying condition, but also that populations that already experience health inequity would be further impacted by the barriers created by the pandemic. We recognize the outstanding work being done by a number of groups to overcome those barriers:

- To mitigate the risk for people with diabetes, the **Diabetes Care and Education Specialist team**, in partnership with the **Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism**, revolutionized how they provided their educational interventions. Beginning in March 2020, they pivoted their operation to 100% telehealth and moved what had been mostly group classes to one-on-one appointments. Training on how to use insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitors also went virtual, which resulted in significantly more people taking advantage of the training. They also partnered with **The James Mobile Education Kitchen** and the **Diabetes Metabolism Research Center** to transition their twice-monthly healthy cooking demonstrations to virtual, which resulted in nearly 550 registrations.
- Isolation exacerbated the state's mental health and addiction crises, leading to greater risk of overdose at the same time that many people stopped seeking substance abuse treatment at Talbot Hall because of the pandemic. The **Project**



**DAWN team**, which had provided intranasal naloxone to patients in the Emergency Department or upon hospital discharge since 2019, changed its tactics in April 2020 to address these challenges. They teamed up with the Columbus Division of Fire and the local health departments to take naloxone directly into communities with the highest rates of overdose.

- When the pandemic forced **Moms2B** to flip its in-person program to wholly virtual sessions, it created a significant challenge for many of the 200 moms who don't have access to the appropriate technology or the internet. This team quickly facilitated partnerships with community organizations and corporations to get devices into the hands of those moms. Through creative measures, they managed to keep their weekly Zoom education sessions consistent, predictable and reliable as well as fun and personal.
- The Wexner Medical Center's **Community Care Coach** had only been in service for about two weeks when the pandemic hit. The state-of-the-art mobile health unit, which was intended to take screenings, physicals and immunizations to neighborhoods, quickly outfitted itself to temporarily support COVID-19 prevention. The coach initially worked with Columbus Public Health to distribute masks, hand sanitizer and credible information about COVID-19. All distributed items were donated, and **students from the College of Medicine** pitched in to help pack kits. For a number of months in 2020, the Community Care Coach spent two days a week at Columbus Public Health to support our COVID-19 testing program there before our testing team moved to the State Fairgrounds. Later, the coach added vaccinations along with flu shots and other health care to its services.

During the pandemic, a **COVID-19 Consulting Program** began holding monthly webinars for local corporations, local governments and other community organizations. Of the 18 webinars presented to date, the majority have been related to COVID-19, and others to mental health in the workplace. Now, the group is pivoting to focus future webinars on employee engagement, health and well-being to enhance and extend our relationships with these groups.

As always, we're incredibly grateful for all that you do.



## Sen. Brown tours COVID-19 testing site at CAS

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown traveled from Washington, D.C., to his home state of Ohio Friday, Jan. 14, to tour The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center's COVID-19 testing site at CAS in Columbus with leaders from the Ohio National Guard, The Ohio State University, Columbus Public Health and CAS, a division of the American Chemical Society.

Sen. Brown talked with members of the Ohio National Guard who've joined health care workers across the state on the front lines in the battle against COVID-19.

***"I know we're all exhausted by this pandemic. But we're in a much better place than we were a year ago. We got shots in arms and workers back on the job and kids back in school,"*** Sen. Brown said.

No one knows the need for clinical help more than Dr. Andrew Thomas, interim co-leader and chief clinical officer at the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center. The medical center is getting assistance from dozens of the more than 2,000 members of the Ohio National Guard who were deployed by Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine in early January to relieve fatigued frontline workers during the pandemic.

***"Sen. Brown's visit today was truly uplifting for our staff and members of the Ohio National Guard who've been testing thousands of central Ohioans over the past two weeks,"*** Dr. Thomas said. ***"It's important for our frontline workers to see that Ohio's elected leaders support them, value their tireless work and are doing what they can to help all of us get through this pandemic."***



U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown visits with medical workers and the Ohio National Guard at CAS.

[go.osu.edu/senator-brown-tours-cas](https://go.osu.edu/senator-brown-tours-cas)

Among the guard members Sen. Brown personally thanked was Specialist Macy Quinn of Lancaster, who's become known for singing to infants as they've gotten swabbed and tested for COVID-19.

***"I sang to a few different infants – "Let It Go" from Frozen to one, and "Itsy Bitsy Spider" to another,"*** said Quinn, who works as a patient care assistant in the newborn intensive care unit at Nationwide Children's Hospital when not on active duty. She now works Monday through Friday at the drive-thru COVID-19 testing site at CAS.

***"Working at Children's helped prepare me to soothe them before a traumatic experience. Along with everyone else, we're trying our best to be as personable and helpful as we can,"*** Quinn said.

Sen. Brown also thanked nurse practitioners Sarah Hartfield and Lindsey Hamm. Both work in Ohio State's Department of Family and Community Medicine, but during the pandemic have dedicated much of their time to the Wexner Medical Center testing sites, including the CAS location, which has seen an increase from 160 tests per day to 1,000 tests per day in just its first two weeks.

Hartfield, who's managed the clinical care of testing stations since July 2020, credits the National Guard for bringing attention back to their efforts and boosting morale. ***"Patients love it. I don't think they've ever seen uniforms at a medical center before."***

Hamm agreed. ***"It's kind of lightened our load. And they're all very nice, respectful and helpful. I've noticed kids are like, 'That's a soldier.'"***

Sen. Brown, who was born in Mansfield, received a Master of Arts in education and a Master of Public Administration from Ohio State in 1979 and 1981, respectively. He taught at Ohio State's Mansfield branch campus from 1979 to 1981.

He said his Ohio State education "gave me a better understanding of state government and local government and a broader, deeper understanding of budgets and public service, and I hope it makes me a little better in this job."



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2022

## Shared Services



This week we're proud to spotlight the Wexner Medical Center's **Shared Services**. These teams have kept our enterprise financially strong and expedited COVID-19-specific legal, financial and administrative protections to safeguard our mission at a time when more than one-third of hospitals nationwide finished last year with negative operating margins. We're extremely grateful for their commitment and long hours to secure the resources to pay salaries, recruit talent, offer respite for staff and much more. At the same time, each of these teams volunteered at temperature screening and vaccination stations in true Buckeye Spirit. We're grateful for their contributions.

The **Office of Legal Affairs and Compliance** recognized the urgency of the global health crisis in March 2020 and assisted the medical center in all necessary ways. We relied on this team in myriad critical areas, some that you might not consider, including the legalities needed to use 3D printers to produce products such as face shields. Other key contributions included:

- Research and guidance that enabled us to treat out-of-state patients using telehealth — such as which virtual communication service to use, applicability of out-of-state licensure and patient insurance coverage requirements.
- Advice on then-new Ohio laws protecting clinicians and volunteers from COVID-19-related litigation.
- A reprieve on the deadline for medical malpractice renewal applications to allow our health care providers to focus on patient care.
- HIPAA guidance on COVID-19 test results, including the best manner to share (or not) those results to internal and external partners.
- New consent forms for COVID-19 treatments, including convalescent plasma and remdesivir.
- New laboratory COVID-19 testing agreements for use by hospitals and nursing homes throughout Ohio.

The **Government Affairs team** kept federal, state and local officials apprised of the medical center's role in supporting the region throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, sharing how the medical center actively reached out to historically underserved populations and communities for testing, vaccinations and care kits, as well as how we cared for the state's prisoners with COVID-19. Their advocacy positioned us for significant COVID-19 Provider Relief Funds and FEMA packages that were made available to medical systems to offset lost revenue due to COVID-19. In addition, they've advocated for waivers for telehealth and Medicare at the federal level, toured elected officials around our vaccination and testing sites and partnered with federal organizations on legislative issues of common interest for the medical center.

The **Finance teams** for the College of Medicine, OSUP and the health system worked together to protect the institution's financial integrity and keep payroll on schedule. During the transition to work-from-home, these teams made home visits to help staff become fully operational so all employees would be paid on time. Meanwhile, they were briefing leadership on a daily basis with financial forecasts to guide institutional decision making and planning through the pandemic's market and supply chain volatility. Over time, as cost control became essential, these teams provided



expense modeling and tracking of COVID-19 supplies that helped maintain our balanced budget. They simultaneously provided the tracking and reporting required by state and federal government entities for the millions of dollars we received in COVID-19 Provider Relief Funds and FEMA funds.

Also, as we previously shared, **Revenue Cycle teams** from the **Wexner Medical Center** and **OSUP** managed SignUpGenius to support staffing, develop training materials, follow up on revenue collections and support runners, check-in and registration.

For a team whose work is centered on cultivating and maintaining relationships, the **Advancement team** showed its prowess when required to transition to a virtual environment. Through virtual meetings and events, the team maintained meaningful connections with their donors and encouraged them to make significant gifts, which totaled \$300 million during 16 months of the pandemic. In addition, they initiated a special campaign that raised \$2.3 million from 4,655 donors for COVID-19 projects, research and support of health care workers. The **Health Care Workers Wellness Fund team** has supported thousands of clinical and nonclinical employees across the medical center with initiatives to show gratitude and provide respite and support, including 30 Columbus Symphony Orchestra performances in three of our hospitals, 10,000 catered meals, a hotel respite program and events partnering with Buckeye Paws.

The **Human Resources Department** went above and beyond during the pandemic to provide innovative resources to and improve benefits for faculty and staff, all while recruiting new employees.

- **Human Resources Business Partners:** Supported managers and staff in shifting to remote and hybrid work models and returning to the office as COVID-19 significantly impacted the work environment and experiences of our faculty and staff.
- **Human Resources Business Operations:** Provided multiple solutions to pandemic challenges including services to help employees with dependent care.
- **Talent Acquisition:** Met an all-time high for new hires this year despite the “Great Resignation.”
- **Talent Management:** Converted New Employee Orientation and Leadership Academy classes to virtual platforms.

- **Human Resources Business Partner/Human Resources Consultant team and Compensation Partners:** Developed multiple retention strategies, including additional compensation programs and market adjustments.

- **Employee and Labor Relations:** Created a pandemic leave policy that afforded employees time off for COVID-19 to rest and recharge, and extended annual anniversary vacation accrual.

The **Health Plan team**, the service arm of our Employee Health Plan, responded with timely changes to meet the needs of faculty, staff and their dependents. Some highlights:

- **Employee Assistance Program Counselors:** Adapted individual counseling sessions to a virtual platform and provided support for departments. Counselors added “Pause and Reset,” a peer-support program for employees, and a BuckeyeLearn self-guided resiliency module for all employees.
- **Clinical team of OSU Health Plan Nurses, Pharmacists and Health Coaches:** Initiated check-ins with Health Plan members living with certain disease states, followed up with people with specific needs and expanded virtual wellness education.
- **Provider Relations, Data Analytics and Utilization Management:** Implemented provider payment changes for telehealth appointments and COVID-19 services, facilitating best results for members and meeting new government mandates. The Customer Service team fielded questions related to the new coverage, and on occasion, talked members through their COVID-19 fears.

The **Strategy and Transformation team** showed resolve and insight in redirecting the medical center’s strategic planning process in light of a health crisis no one could have predicted. They kept us moving forward to deliver on the strategic plan, working to factor in the impact of COVID-19 and environmental changes affecting our business model, health care (nationally and globally) and political and world affairs. At the height of the crisis, the team lent its modeling and project management skills to assist in hospital capacity and workforce fluctuations, evaluating gap closure tactics and project managing key COVID-19 work streams. Their strategies for patient flow helped to ensure beds for patients even during COVID-19 surges.

The **Chaplaincy and Clinical Pastoral Education team** found creative ways to be a source of solace for staff, patients and their families even when they couldn’t be with them in person. Whereas they historically worked at the bedside providing support to patients and caregivers in high-acuity situations, the team’s 17 chaplains took the emotional and spiritual care through phones and tablets to patients with COVID-19, their families and providers. They created bereavement kits in multiple faiths that nurses could use with patients and share with families through tablets. They also created a card especially for the nurses who not only cared for but also comforted patients suffering through and even dying from COVID-19 without their families being able to be by their side. A chaplaincy-led faculty and staff support program formerly called “Tea for the Soul” offered staff the chance to decompress in a quiet space with tea, snacks, music and the presence of a chaplain. The team revamped the program, calling it “Tea for the Soul on the Go,” and delivered individual bags of tea and snacks to clinical units. The team also provides remembrance services for medical center departments when one of their own staff passes away. The Chaplaincy team will work with managers to create personalized videos to help the team grieve their loss and honor their co-worker.

From the infrastructure demands of a large workforce working from home and the need to monitor employee temperatures, to the building of new testing facilities and the deployment of the vaccine, **Information Technology teams** were involved every step of the way to help the medical center, our patients and the community through the pandemic. At the same time, their teams staffed over 1,600 screening station shifts at various hospital entrances and worked vaccine shifts at the Schottenstein Center. Here are highlights.

- IT immediately deployed technology and solutions such as Microsoft Teams and new features of M365 that allowed over 6,000 employees to work and collaborate from anywhere. They managed and oversaw a four-fold increase in the telework system, assisting faculty, staff and medical students with tools such as AnyConnect VPN and VMware Horizon software that enabled remote access from home and responding to a marked increase in calls to the service desk and new COVID-19 portal users.

- IT deployed technology solutions enabled the medical center to swiftly stand up COVID-19 research and patient care. They developed the infrastructure to manage swabbing stations at Jameson Crane, Ackerman and the Ohio State Fairgrounds and converted Jesse Owens North into a student testing center. They installed a new Applied Microbiology Services Lab and helped to stand up the COVID-19 testing lab in the Biomedical Research Tower. They expanded telehealth services to accommodate 30,000 visits a month, helped patients schedule vaccination appointments online, incorporated MyChart into the COVID-19 testing and scheduling procedures and so much more.

The **Marketing, Communications and Digital Strategy teams** have supported all of the COVID-19 workgroups throughout the pandemic and has done an outstanding job of running point on changing COVID-19 needs to keep employees and the public informed. The **Faculty and Staff Recognition Team** has facilitated personal connections and acknowledgements for the organization that’ve been so important over the past two years.

We hope you’ll join us in thanking these teams for the important role they play in the medical center’s continued success.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022

## Behavioral Health and Addiction



Ohio's battle to reduce some of the nation's highest rates of mental illness and addiction began long before we heard of COVID-19. The pandemic made things worse. The medical center's **Behavioral Health and Addiction teams** met the challenges of these compounding public health crises even as the pandemic forced them to create physical distance with the people who needed their personalized care.

No one was immune from the pandemic's strain. Reports of depression, anxiety, addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder doubled and, in some cases, tripled over the past two years. Overdoses in Franklin County were the highest on record in 2020 and 2021. Suicide rates climbed in Ohio's communities of color and rural communities, and Ohio adults reported the highest increase in suicidal thoughts in the nation last year.

We're deeply grateful for how these teams cared for a community in crisis along with our own medical center employees.

### Care for our own

We have several programs that provide health and well-being resources for our own faculty and staff. These teams supported health care professionals as they met the relentless demands of the pandemic.

- Our team of specialized providers in the **Stress, Trauma And Resilience (STAR) Program** has provided support for all medical center employees through this pandemic through a wide range of respite and self-care programs developed to address pandemic-related stress, as well as private counseling sessions and around-the-clock mental health crisis intervention.
- **Psychiatry residents** set up an informal peer support program through which they offered their behavioral health expertise to residents in other specialties.
- **The Behavioral Emergency Response Team (BERT)**, trained to de-escalate situations involving upset patients or family members, shielded our frontline workers from an increasing number of intense and potentially volatile situations exacerbated by the pandemic.

Showing exceptional Buckeye Spirit, **Harding Hospital and Talbot Hall** collaborated during pandemic surge periods, consolidating care for their patients under one roof, to loan providers to the institutional effort to manage the influx of patients infected with the virus. We're extremely grateful to the **nurses and clinicians** who stepped outside their specialty areas and to the **administrative staff** who coordinated and oversaw this collaboration. We know this wasn't easy for anyone, including your patients, and we greatly appreciate your commitment to the medical center's greater good.

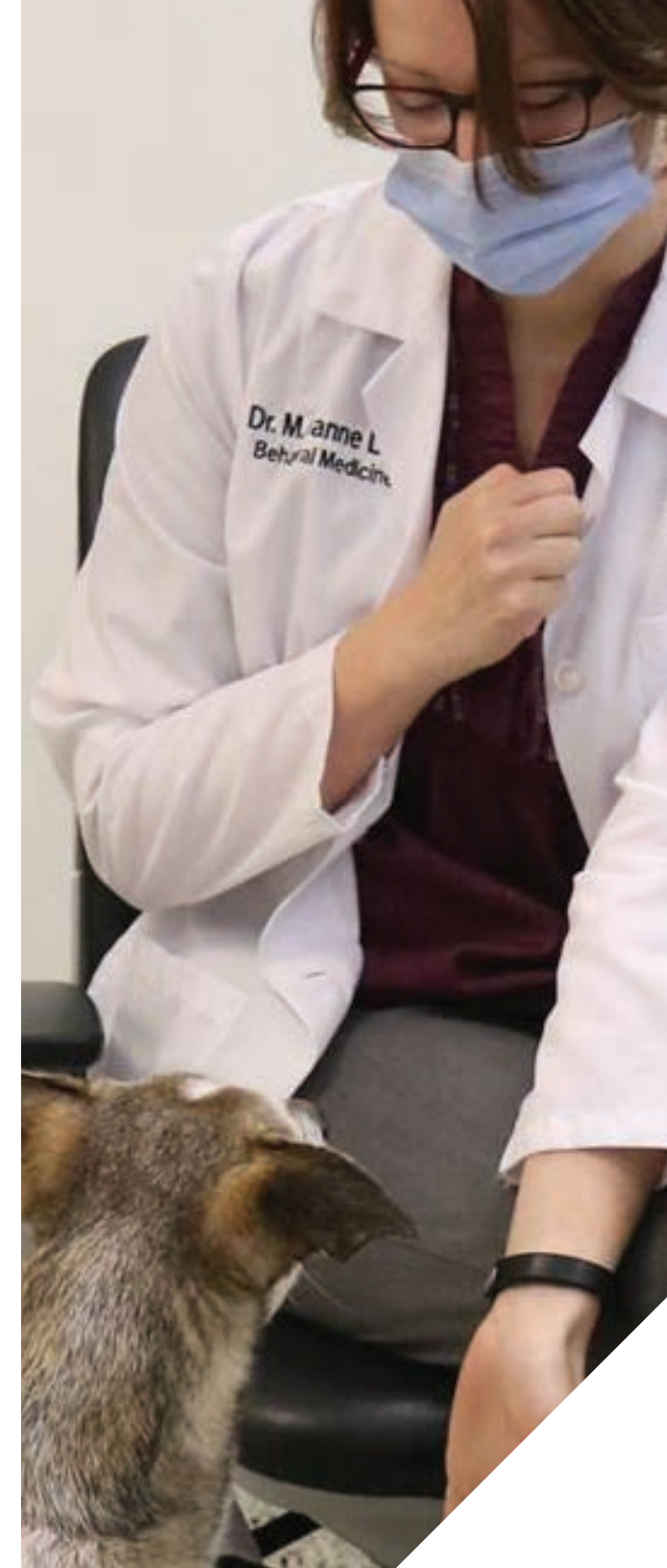
### Care for the community

With the pandemic fueling an unprecedented need for addiction and mental health services, these teams adjusted their pre-pandemic operations to reach more people in new ways.

- **Talbot and Harding physicians, administrators, social workers and nurse managers** met daily to address changing COVID-19 guidelines and safety protocols resulting in unique strategies. One example: Harding clinical staff opened a special COVID-19-positive unit that treated 40 patients for psychiatric and addiction issues during the omicron surge.

- **Psychiatry and Addiction Consult teams** offered creative approaches to support their clinical colleagues with patients hospitalized for other medical conditions who also required behavioral health or addiction counseling. Patients were often hospitalized for extended periods for COVID-19 treatment and sometimes required further placement for mental health or addiction intervention.
- The **Partial Hospitalization Program** and Intensive Outpatient Program teams quickly pivoted their in-person program to an all-virtual platform, a switch that required teaching many patients and families how to use their technology to receive care.
- **Behavioral Health and Addiction Ambulatory Service teams** converted their services to a virtual platform, which helped patients needing crisis intervention overcome fears of the virus and barriers such as transportation and child care.
- **Wexner Medical Center administrators** provided access to supplies such as computer cameras for Zoom meetings to help Talbot and Harding teams modify their programs.
- The **Psychiatric Emergency Services team** established COVID-19 safety protocols for patients coming to the Emergency Department during a mental health crisis. Diligent pre-admission COVID-19 testing and virtual services helped to protect Harding patients and staff.
- **Harding's specialty pharmacist and care teams** identified patients who weren't vaccinated, allowing staff to encourage and help facilitate vaccinations, resulting in one of the medical center's most effective inpatient vaccination efforts.
- **Neuro-interventional teams** implemented pre-procedure testing for COVID-19 for their patients with treatment-resistant depression requiring ECT, TMS and ketamine/esketamine care.
- The newly opened **Behavioral Health Immediate Care clinic** pivoted in the early months of 2020 to offer mental health services for health care providers. Its **administrative and interdisciplinary care teams** established an all-virtual platform for their core work of providing continuity of care for patients experiencing a mental health crisis. They opened their doors to in-person appointments in September 2021.

Throughout this long, difficult journey, our Behavioral Health and Addiction teams have renewed the spirits of so many in our community and in our Buckeye family. We greatly value their compassion and expertise.



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2022

## Research and Education



From the earliest days of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, **The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, College of Medicine and the Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute (OSUCCC – James)** mobilized research and education efforts to improve patient health and support global efforts to defeat the deadly virus. Without a doubt, we're safer today thanks to the treatment options and body of knowledge that emerged from this rapid, coordinated response to study the COVID-19 virus (known as SARS-CoV-2) and to disseminate evidence-based information to the public.

**Researchers, physician-scientists, scientists, nurses, library educators and research and educational staff** answered the call of this public health crisis. We're proud to highlight some of their numerous contributions.

### Research and Discovery

**Basic science research and clinical trial teams** joined the global effort to study COVID-19 with fervor while simultaneously keeping critical studies into other important diseases on track through temporary shutdowns and

the gymnastics of shifting experiments from in-person to virtual to hybrid settings.

- Principal investigators and their teams have led breakthrough studies to untangle the mysteries of a previously unknown disease. Their research covered these and so many other topics:
  - Viral sequencing that provided Ohio and the nation line of sight into the evolution and infectivity of the COVID-19 virus
  - Therapies for patients with COVID-19, including convalescent plasma, monoclonal antibody treatment and new anti-viral therapies
  - Molecular and antigen tests that diagnose as well as trace the lineage of the evolving viral strains
- Several studies have examined the effects of COVID-19 infection, treatments and vaccinations on different patient populations, including:
  - The **Pulmonary and Critical Care Clinical Trials Team** led important COVID-19 research, including risks for contracting COVID-19 in health care workers and the general public, new testing methods for COVID-19, leading-edge research on the biology of COVID-19 infections, and innovative treatments such as convalescent plasma and monoclonal antibody therapy. During the pandemic, approximately 1,500 participants were enrolled in COVID-19-specific trials.
  - **Ohio State investigators** conducted pivotal COVID-19 treatment clinical trials, including those that resulted in the first emergency use authorization of a monoclonal antibody combination for COVID-19 treatment and led to the approval of the Regeneron monoclonal antibody combination for post-exposure prophylaxis for immunocompromised patients. Ohio State was also one of the top enrolling sites of the SAC-COVID trial that evaluated CD24Fc, a novel immune modulator, for patients hospitalized with severe COVID-19, and of the NIH-sponsored ACTIV-2 platform trial that evaluated 10 different treatments including four monoclonal antibody combinations.
  - Ohio State was a site for the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine trials, one of the early vaccines that showed promise in controlling COVID-19. In just over two months, the **Infectious Diseases Clinical Research Team** enrolled nearly 150 participants of whom nearly 25% were over the age of 65 and more than half represented diverse racial and

ethnic populations. Not only did this trial provide potential early access to a COVID-19 vaccine, it was also a great opportunity for providing education about the importance of vaccines.

- **OSUCCC – James research teams** investigated the impact of COVID-19, its treatments and vaccines on patients with cancer through multiple studies. A stellar example is the **OSUCCC – James SIIREN trial**, which involved coordination with our Schottenstein vaccination teams to gather thousands of blood samples to study the effects of COVID-19 vaccinations on the immune systems of patients with cancer.
- The medical center, College of Medicine and the OSUCCC – James developed infrastructure to review and track COVID-19 research proposals with representatives from the **Center for Clinical Research Management, Comprehensive Cancer Center Clinical Trials Office, College of Medicine Office of Research, Clinical Research Center, Center for Clinical and Translational Science and the Office of Responsible Research Practices.**
- These teams devoted long hours, including weekends, to expedite and facilitate complicated research projects in record time with minimal disruption to the expedition of non-COVID-19 studies.
  - Since April 2020, the 100+ studies they've approved from 200 COVID-19 proposals have involved about 2,500 clinical trial participants, including 400 **Ohio State health care workers.**
  - In a related acknowledgement, **Pelotonia** masterfully continued its community fundraising for cancer research by creatively revamping its annual event when in-person gatherings were prohibited.







## Education and Public Outreach

**College of Medicine faculty and staff** upheld our high standards for educating the next generation of physicians, scientists and health and rehabilitative clinicians. Repeatedly modifying the curriculum and its manner of delivery, they preserved the integrity of learning and evaluation so students would meet graduation requirements on time.

- **Faculty** developed new teaching plans each time learning shifted from in-person to remote to hybrid models. They put considerable thought into translating course, laboratory and bedside instruction, as well as clinical assessment, into the virtual environment.
  - In addition to their classroom, clinical and lab responsibilities, many faculty also served as medical and science experts to the community through television, radio and print media outlets as well as through webinars for local businesses and community members.
  - They offered evidence-based data and recommendations to help inform the decisions of state policymakers and also worked to educate other health care providers and hospital systems through vehicles like the state of Ohio's "Zone" structure and the Columbus Medical Association.
- **Residents and Fellows** adroitly responded as the pandemic changed the structure of their programs and isolated them from colleagues and peers. They continued their roles as health care workers on the front lines treating patients with COVID-19, at times sacrificing planned educational opportunities to care for the health and well-being of the community.
- **Clinical Skills Education and Assessment Center** staff developed ways to deliver the same educational content and quality assessments through changing environments, particularly when students couldn't be at the college or medical center for hands-on learning with equipment, mannikins or standardized patients.
- **Evaluation and Assessment team** staff worked tirelessly to deliver high-quality assessments, pivoting quickly to adapt to the changing modes of instruction – sometimes with as little as 24 hours' notice – while preserving the integrity of the evaluation.
- **Student Life** and the **HRS Office of Academic Affairs** and **Student Services teams** actively reached out to learners to connect them to resources and maintain a sense of community. These teams include academic advisors who never missed a day of advising for students and mental health counselors who immediately established much-accessed telehealth practices.

- **Clinical coordinators** worked tirelessly to adapt to frequently changing regulations to place students in clinical rotations.

The **Health Sciences Library team** serves up to 30,000 learners, faculty, staff, residents and fellows. Part of their job is collecting source material for researchers and educators and archiving information with historical value, two areas that took on greater significance with COVID-19.

- **Research and Education Librarians** augmented resources as research on COVID-19 ramped up and education needs changed. Early in the pandemic, they quickly developed a COVID-19 subject guide with search strategies and links to reliable publications and articles. Throughout the crisis, they've fielded increased requests from Ohio State researchers for source material for new studies. For educators, they developed a Virtual Instruction Guide with videos and multimedia resources to help them develop virtual curriculums.
- **Public Services staff** remained on-site throughout the pandemic, putting themselves at risk while developing creative ways to keep the library open for Ohio State visitors. They created signage encouraging safe practices, altered study areas to accommodate social distancing and devised ways for students to access the library outside of the shortened hours of operation.
- **Medical Heritage Center staff** in partnership with University Archives is leading a Pandemic Preservation Project to collect and preserve the public's pandemic experience. A survey they developed and shared on their website has received more than 700 responses. They're capturing pandemic stories through oral histories, in partnership with professional historical interviewers.

We're extremely impressed by the initiative our research and education teams have taken in responding to the pandemic. Their work reflects Ohio State's leadership in academic medicine and our commitment to tackling the world's most pressing health issues.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2022

## Home-Based and Post-Acute Care



Bringing health care to people in their communities and homes is a commitment the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center has embraced for years as an industry leader. The pandemic helped to inform and accelerate our expanding continuum of care, which today extends from the most highly specialized care on our campus to post-acute and home-based care throughout the region. Our ever-broadening system promotes better health for all in the best of times and ensures our readiness in the event of another public health crisis.

This week we express our gratitude to a spectrum of **teams that cared for patients with COVID-19 and post-acute COVID-19** after discharge or in a public setting and educated the community and industry about the disease. Their adaptive approaches have helped to diversify how we deliver health care and serve the community at large. We're proud to recognize their innovation and dedication.

### Home-Based and Post-Acute Care Teams

During the height of the pandemic, we launched several home-based care offerings:

- **OSU Home Care**, in partnership with Alternate Solutions Health Network, began providing services in August 2021. We've had a great relationship with Alternate Solutions for many years through our home health preferred provider program, but this new partnership provides further opportunities for collaboration and innovation moving forward.
- **OSU Home Medical Equipment**, which we have co-owned with DASCO since 2019, provided home oxygen services to meet continuing respiratory care needs of our patients with COVID-19 who've been discharged.
- **In-home urgent care**, in partnership with DispatchHealth, was launched in July 2021 and included the COVID Care at Home program that allows us to discharge patients with COVID-19 earlier from an inpatient bed.
- **Integrated Care Management team** was aware of ACO patients in the community who had comorbidities that could increase their risk for infection and death from COVID-19. They developed an outreach tool to make wellness checks and increase vaccine access to these patients during the pandemic.
- **Case Management team** provided the information about patient cases, many of which were complex, to ensure a smooth transition after discharge to in-home care.
- **Home-Based Care and Post-Acute teams** coordinated with several partners to ensure provision of high-level continuing care for our in-home patients, many of whom were receiving follow-up treatment for COVID-19.
- **Hospital, ER and Primary Care Medical teams** were the first providers to care for the patients with COVID-19, collaborating in the transition to in-home care and remaining involved as needed after patients were discharged. Assisting the transition were COVID-19 home care kits that were developed and implemented through a program involving the following teams: **Case Management, Social Work, Nursing, Physicians, Education Development & Resources, Quality & Supply Distribution** and **OSU Home Medical Equipment**.

### Post-COVID-19 Recovery Program Teams

This dedicated interdisciplinary team formed in January 2021 to care for patients with post-acute COVID-19. In partnership with Bon Secours Mercy Health under the Healthy State Alliance, the team created a clinical practice guideline for the assessment and treatment of post-COVID-19 symptoms. Thousands of primary care physicians, APPs and specialists accessed the resource campaign they developed and implemented by way of Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. **Medical center researchers** contributed to the impressive clinical practice guidelines, which offered an excellent example of how academic medicine advances clinical knowledge. In both April 2021 and April 2022, the Healthy State Alliance has sponsored half-day webinars with both Ohio State and Bon Secours Mercy Health experts providing continuing education on post-acute COVID-19 and other learnings from the pandemic, with a combined total of more than 800 attendees.

Since April 2021, approximately 900 patients have been evaluated and received treatment, rehabilitation and validation for this little-understood syndrome. The program is led by five **general internal medicine physicians** who provide direct care for patients and collaborate with specialists and researchers from **pulmonary rehabilitation, cardiology, neurology, rheumatology, physical therapy, occupational therapy, sleep medicine, psychiatry, gastroenterology, physical medicine and rehabilitation, ENT** and **social work**. The **nurse navigator** provides critical intake of patient medical records, symptoms and quality-of-life assessment, guiding patients throughout their interactions with the program. Part of a larger network in Ohio, they've become the medical center's resident experts on post-acute COVID-19.



## Managed Care Team

As the liaison between the medical center and insurance companies, the **managed care team** has been instrumental in facilitating reimbursements for many of the innovations needed to respond to the pandemic. Through negotiation with multiple payers, this 10-person team negotiated first-time coverage in record time for telemedicine, at-home care and vaccination administration, in addition to expanded coverage for services at ambulatory sites and outpatient procedures. Thanks to their diligence, we were able to successfully launch our Home Health and Post-Acute Care program and transition to telehealth as quickly as we did. Likewise, their coordination with insurance providers helped us to postpone elective surgeries during surge periods and shift more procedures to ambulatory sites. Collectively, their behind-the-scenes work truly made it possible for us to respond to the pandemic safely, efficiently and in a manner affordable for patients.

## Patient and Family Education Teams

Responsive and flexible, these teams provided timely, free resources to educate the public about COVID-19 at critical junctures throughout the pandemic. Clear, reliable information was translated into multiple languages. Representatives from these groups also served on the medical center's COVID-19 task force to loan their health literacy expertise to marketing materials that were created for screening sites and clinical units.

- **Health System Patient Education**, reporting through **Health System Nursing Services**, facilitated patient education for all the hospitals and ambulatory sites, developing custom resources and providing content from our patient education vendor Healthwise. They worked with a multidisciplinary team that included staff from more than a dozen medical departments to create materials related to COVID-19 vaccinations, testing, prevention and care. Key resources were translated into seven languages.
- **Patient/Family Education for The James** produced 10 handouts with information specific to oncology patients about COVID-19 that were translated into seven languages. They also helped revise patient appointment letters to provide clear instruction about visitor restrictions and fielded an increase in information requests at The James Patient and Family Resource Center. Additionally, they partnered with the Mental



Health CNS group to offer space at the center where staff could do stress-reducing activities, and made the conference room available for therapy with CNS mental health counselors.

- The **Library for Health Information**, part of the **Health Sciences Library**, was responsible for disseminating patient education materials created by the other two groups as well as garnering information from external sources like the National Institutes of Health. Beginning in April 2021, this team had resource tables at various sites across the medical center and worked with patient groups to encourage vaccinations and other self-care strategies within diverse communities. In all, the library conducted 47 events that reached more than 1,200 people.

## Physical and Cognitive Rehabilitation Teams

- **Sports Medicine teams** stepped up to help the community and medical center colleagues early in the pandemic when athletic rehabilitation was temporarily halted. They continued to help even when their core functions returned to normal.
- **Extenders** – Athletic trainers and LPNs volunteered to test thousands of inmates for COVID-19 at three Ohio state prisons in addition to volunteering at Ohio State testing sites.
- **Patient Access Coordinators** – This team has done an amazing job of rescheduling hundreds of in-person appointments to virtual, rescheduling postponed elective surgeries and obtaining patient vaccination status. Additionally, collaborating with compact nurses and OR nurses, they coordinated patients' pre-procedure COVID-19 testing within very narrow time periods.
- **Outreach athletic trainers** – As part of medical center outreach, this team volunteered at drive-thru COVID-19 testing sites and at screening checkpoints throughout University Hospital campus, East Hospital campus and ambulatory sites while continuing their daily work.
- **Strength Conditioning staff** – Often doing double duty with their daily jobs, this team volunteered at temperature check stations throughout the medical center. Several strength coaches helped the Supply Chain team in the Ackerman Warehouse with transporting supplies.

- The **Dodd Rehabilitation team** brilliantly altered its approaches to rehabilitating patients with spinal cord injuries, stroke, brain injury, cancer and other serious illness or injury when COVID-19 forced changes to how the interdisciplinary teams could interact with patients and families. When visitor policies were restricted, for example, technology such as video conferencing substituted for in-person family trainings to teach skills like how to communicate with or dress patients. Another substitution involved the conversion of an in-person lecture series to a PowerPoint presentation with voice-over. The team also worked with IHIS to upload instructions to MyChart, and therapists followed up with patients and families individually. For patients and families who struggled with the technology, the team offered coaching over the phone. In the ultimate creative move, staff co-opted a Dodd efficiency apartment, previously used for inpatient therapy, to train a patient and family members together on the day the patient was being discharged.

We're impressed with the ingenuity of these teams. Like so many of you, they were undeterred by the constraints of the pandemic and instead excelled to strengthen how we deliver health care.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2022

## Nurses and Nursing Support



In the mid-1800s, a young Florence Nightingale walked away from the upper-class society that was her birthright to care for the ill, injured and dying during a cholera outbreak and an overseas war. The trailblazing pioneer earned acclaim for establishing data-driven battlefield sanitation practices that improved the survival rates of British soldiers by two-thirds and went on to develop the foundations of modern nursing practice and hospital epidemiology.

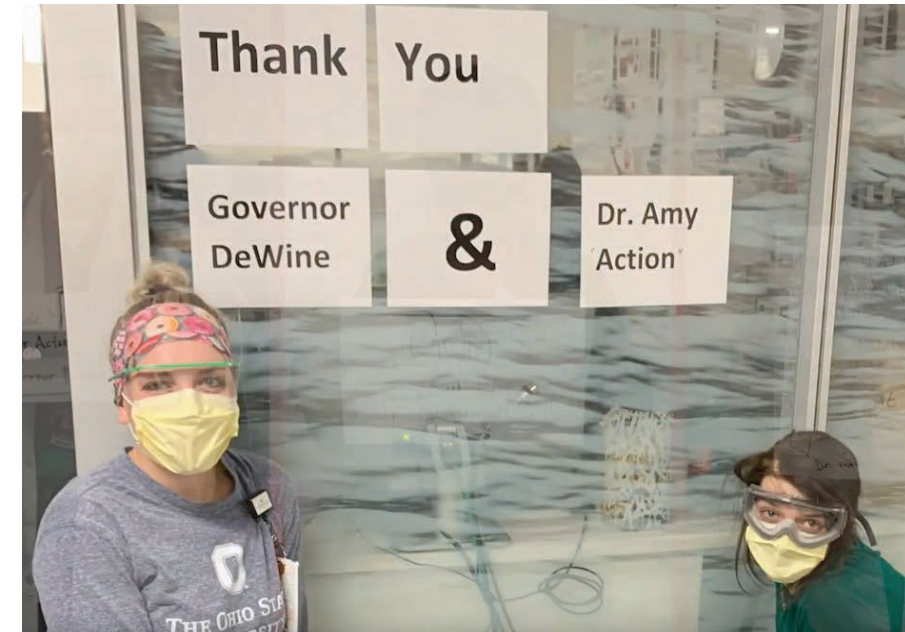
Her story embodies the commitment to both the art and science of clinical practice that we admire in all nurses. We witnessed this in action as our nurses selflessly cared for patients with COVID-19 and collaboratively developed innovations that helped keep their patients, their families and their co-workers safe during the pandemic.

Our Ohio State nursing community supports research, learning and evidence-based patient care and brings great value to our interdisciplinary health care teams. Beginning in March 2020, the pandemic called on nursing teams to address the immense challenges of COVID-19 with their

trademark out-of-the-box thinking, all while continuing to offer compassion, care and advocacy for patients and families. They saw more death than most had ever experienced, and many sat with their patients, holding their hands as they passed because family members were unable to be there during the early phases of the pandemic. Their intense effort and emotional support for patients and families, and to co-workers, were critical ingredients in keeping the organization moving forward through some very dark days.

Their actions showed that nursing isn't just a profession; it's a calling. Over the last six months, we've shown gratitude for the dedication and determination of our nursing teams many times in this space in our weekly email, but as we head into National Nurses Week (May 6-12), it's an outstanding time for all of us at the medical center to thank them for their work. As we turn a corner on the pandemic, we value the voice and expertise of the nursing community to help us move forward. **Please take time over the next week to make sure that the nurses you work with know how much you appreciate them, what they do and how they do it.**

- **Frontline nurses** exercised a keen ability to assess the needs of patients and provide individualized care for every patient and family. With rapid advances in clinical and safety protocols as researchers learned more about the virus, nurses were quick to innovate on the front lines, collaborating with physicians and other health care providers to implement changes in our emergency departments, surgical and procedural areas, inpatient units and ambulatory clinics. In fact, nurses on one inpatient unit volunteered to remain a COVID-19 unit when they were scheduled to return to being a surgical floor at the conclusion of the initial surge in spring 2020. While many nurses worked overtime to help staff our COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites, others helped to open new units to increase our patient capacity during COVID-19 surges.
- **Advanced practice nurses** partnered to ensure a consistent quality of care for patients with COVID-19 and other issues. Their skill, expertise and critical thinking were essential as new COVID-19 therapies became available. They quickly adapted to the implementation of telehealth to manage care and mitigate the spread of the virus. Through inpatient and virtual care, they monitored patient responses to treatments to deliver the most effective therapeutic plans. In addition, they were responsible for overseeing our many COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites.



*Faculty and staff thank Gov. Mike DeWine and Amy Acton, MD, former director of the Ohio Department of Health*

[go.osu.edu/thanks-gov-dewine-and-dr-acton](https://go.osu.edu/thanks-gov-dewine-and-dr-acton)

- **Nurse managers, supervisors and leaders** embodied the term “servant-leader” by providing support to patients, their families and our nurse teams. With staffing and clinical space at a premium, they ensured exceptional, personalized patient care, steady patient flow and prioritized patient transfers. They supported their nursing teams by providing an after-hours presence, rounding, scheduling small group huddles and promoting available staff self-care resources like free counseling, mindfulness resources, meals and stays in local hotels.
- **Nursing support staff** provided the administrative infrastructure to keep communication flowing in this fast-paced environment when compassion and communication with co-workers were essential. They also stepped up and offered their help wherever needed across many nonclinical roles during the height of the pandemic.

It's been an honor to recognize so many Wexner Medical Center teams and departments for their exceptional work during COVID-19 pandemic, and we encourage you to revisit our messages of appreciation from past emails.

As we move into the “endemic” phase of COVID-19, our focus in these weekly emails will turn to highlighting the amazing work being done by so many in our non-COVID-19-related clinical, research and education mission areas. So, we conclude this series with a final word of gratitude for **all medical center faculty, staff and learners**.

We remain grateful to all members of our Buckeye Family for your sacrifices and dedication over the past two years. Behind every achievement, every innovation, every long day and every volunteer shift, our medical center team believed it could be done and worked together to achieve it. At a time when many other institutions faltered, we not only endured, but emerged stronger in many ways. We couldn't be prouder of this exceptional Buckeye team. Thank you for all you've done and continue to do to make the Wexner Medical Center an amazing place to learn, work and, most importantly, to be a patient.

## What the pandemic changed — for good

Despite the destruction of the deadly COVID-19 virus, a global pandemic led to some long-term, positive changes for health and health care.

Society was forced to adapt to a new reality and, in some ways, these adaptations will benefit us all for many years, long after the threat of COVID-19 has faded.

Hear perspectives from experts across The Ohio State University as they detail some of these “silver linings” of the past two years:

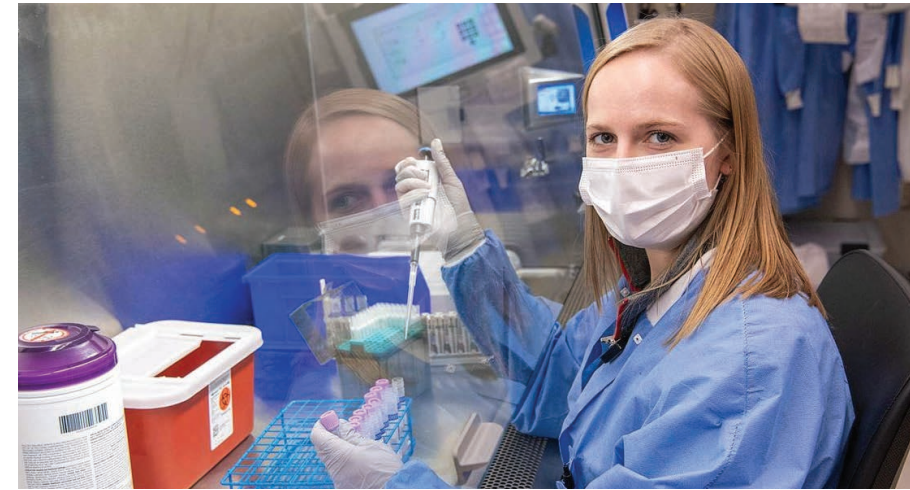
### The scientific community aligned and mobilized in new ways

*“In the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve experienced a paradigm shift as scientists, really reasserting our critical role in the world.”*

*“Across the world, instead of competing with other research institutions, more of us began to ask ourselves how we could work together. I feel that scientists were less concerned about their names being on published papers and more concerned with creating impact. I hope that’s something that’s not going to go away.”*

*“In part due to the pandemic, scientists began to think of solutions more globally — not as a state issue, not what our flag or mascot is — and began thinking more with a sense of urgency.”*

*“We learned some lessons about how quickly we could speed processes like testing and vaccine development if we removed certain barriers, reused existing technologies and worked to complete some processes simultaneously when previously we might have taken turns. It’s like having a*



Hear perspectives from Ohio State experts detailing “silver linings” of the pandemic.

[go.osu.edu/pandemic-changes-for-good](https://go.osu.edu/pandemic-changes-for-good)

*Thanksgiving dinner with 16 people cooking and setting the table and doing dishes instead of one person doing it all. It’s not that the dinner is any worse or better, but it’s done more efficiently.”*

*“At Ohio State during the pandemic, it was never about ‘us versus them.’ It was about ‘we’ — how are ‘we’ going to fix this or solve that? The teamwork was inspiring.”*

*“All throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there have still been people impacted by cardiovascular disease and cancer, for example. As we emerge from the pandemic, it’s important that we apply these same concepts to work together to tackle the diseases that continue to claim lives. We see now how much more we can harness from our scientific community to solve these issues.”*

*“The research community all over the world rapidly pulled together to tackle COVID-19 with an unprecedented degree of collaboration and cooperation. Here at Ohio State, for example, we saw a need for a multidisciplinary team of investigators to study the impact of COVID-19 on first responders, frontline health care workers and their household contacts. In the course of a month, we marshaled personnel and resources from all over the university and submitted a \$10 million proposal to the National Institutes of Health.*

*“Our proposal was quickly funded, and The Ohio State University Center to STOP-COVID has been working nonstop making discoveries that increase our knowledge of how the virus behaves and disrupts people’s lives. The pandemic forced us to develop new, more efficient ways of communicating, collaborating and conducting research. We assembled our team virtually and continue to conduct our high-level work this way as much as possible. It showed us that we can be much more nimble and creative in how we operate, and this will continue to improve our productivity in the future.”*



Thank You





**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

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WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER