

Healthy

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COMMUNITY

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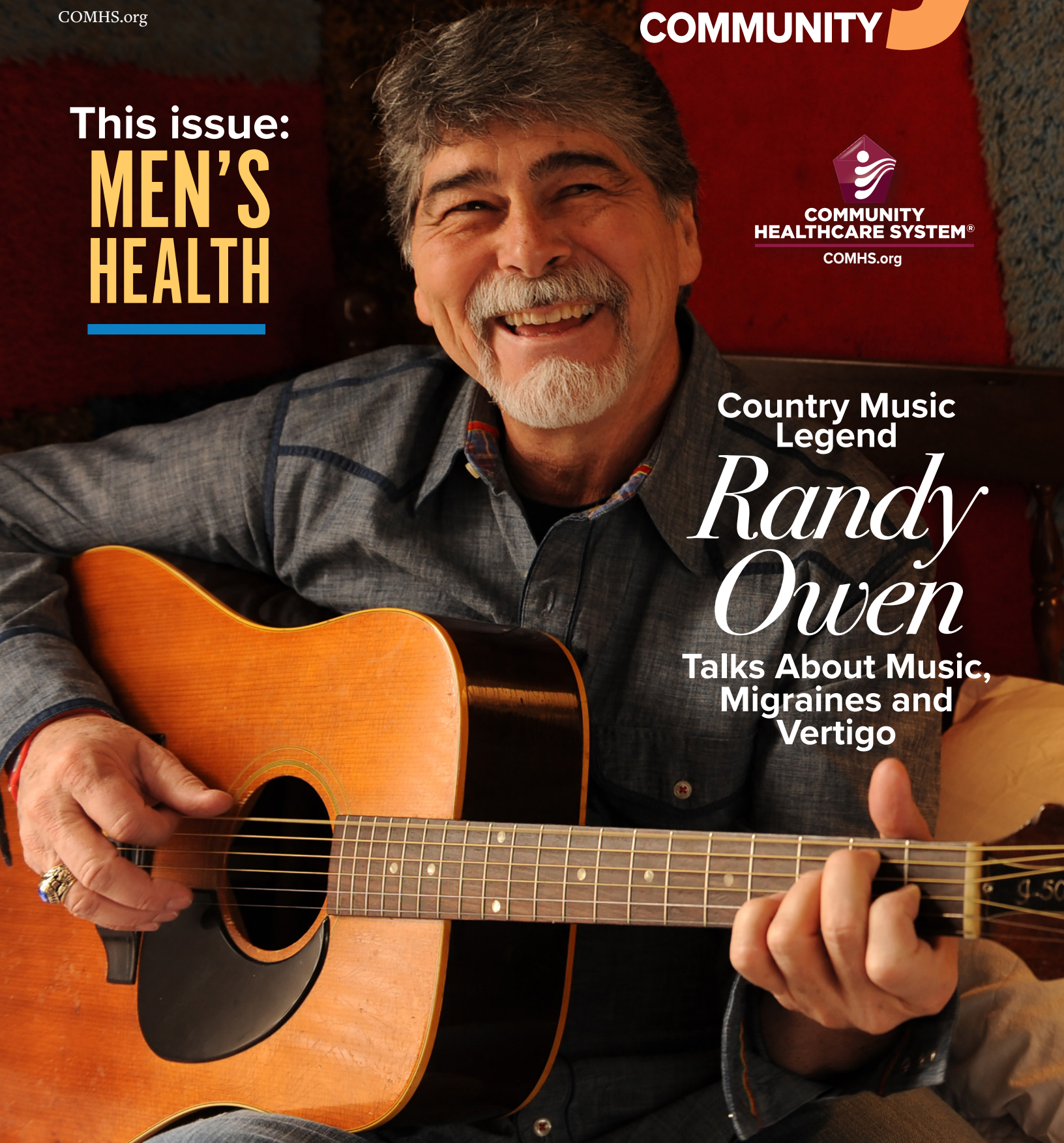
This issue:
**MEN'S
HEALTH**



Country Music
Legend

*Randy
Owen*

Talks About Music,
Migraines and
Vertigo



Checking in with Randy Owen

Two years ago, the lead singer for the famed country music band *Alabama* began suffering cluster migraines and headaches



“You don’t need to apologize for having a migraine or experiencing severe dizziness. It’s real and it’s serious.”

a normal headache. One time, it was so bad, I thought my right eyeball was going to fall out.

What did the doctors say about your symptoms?

Well, I’ve had every kind of test you can imagine and nobody can figure out what’s wrong with me. The pain pills I was prescribed did absolutely no good, even made me lose my voice.

What caused you to cancel the 50th Anniversary Tour?

We were about midway through the tour in 2019. I was trying really hard to keep going, but it just got to the point where I couldn’t continue. Sometimes, when I walked out on the stage and saw the bright lights and heard the crowd, I would start feeling dizzy and thought I was going to fall off the stage or the six-foot-wide runway. But then, once the music started, I was able to get past it because I was concentrating on the song. I was worn out that summer, physically and psychologically. After so many years of touring, I think my body was just telling me to stop.

AS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL band in country music history, *Alabama* has amassed more than 40 #1 hits and sold more than 75 million albums. But in August 2019, the band had to cancel the second half of its 50th Anniversary Tour when lead singer Randy Owen began experiencing severe vertigo and cluster migraine headaches. *Healthy Community* recently talked with Randy from his home at the base of Lookout Mountain in northeast Alabama to discuss his recent health struggles and his hopeful return to the road.

When did you realize you had a medical issue?

The vertigo came first. I was doing my usual stretches one morning when I suddenly became totally disoriented. It felt like I was losing all sense of where I was, like I was dying. I could still see a bit, but I couldn’t move or stand up. I’d lost all control of my body. I told my wife that I loved her because I thought that was the end. Since then, I’ve had other episodes of dizziness, but never anything like that. It was a horrible feeling.

What about the headaches?

The headaches come and go. The pain moves around. One side of my head will hurt and the next day, it’s the other side. The pain can be in my eyes, my forehead or the back of my head. It’s excruciating—much, much worse than



Being in the entertainment business can really take its toll—so many long bus trips, flights, and being on the road.

So what have you done for treatment?

Well, first and foremost, being able to get away from touring and get some rest has been a big help. About a month or two after we got off the road, I started feeling better. Getting out in nature helps me to relax, too. I love hunting or fishing, riding my tractor or getting on my four-wheeler. They all help me take my mind off the pain. Massages and taking a long hot bath really work, too.



So how are you doing today?

Some days are really good and some days not so much. Sometimes, when I turn my head sideways too quickly, I'll feel dizzy. But on the whole, I'm feeling much better, and I'm very thankful for that. We're still hoping that Alabama can hit the road again once COVID is over and play all those shows we had to cancel.

What advice do you have for people who are suffering from migraines or vertigo?

Don't ignore it or try to tough it out. Some people may tell you that, but it's the wrong advice. Find the medical help and support you need. And remember, you don't need to apologize for having a migraine or experiencing severe dizziness. It's real and it's serious.

Any final thoughts?

One more if I could. Ten years ago, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Fortunately, we caught it early because I was having regular prostate screenings. I chose High-Intensity Focused Ultrasound (HiFU) for my treatment, and today I'm cancer-free. So, I just really want to encourage all men to talk to their doctor about prostate screening. If you don't have your health, you don't have anything. ■

Find Your Balance

THE HOSPITALS OF Community Healthcare System provide comprehensive evaluation and treatment to patients who are lightheaded, unsteady or suffer from imbalance. The Dizziness, Balance & Neuro Rehabilitation team consists of highly trained physical and occupational therapists using the most advanced diagnostic and rehabilitative vestibular balance equipment.

Regionally, the Community Neuroscience & Sports Medicine Center in Schererville offers a “one stop shop” that serves as a single outpatient location for patients requiring evaluation and treatment of balance disorders and neurological conditions, as well as concussion and post-concussion neck and back pain.

“Our center features a neuroscience and balance suite where patients receive comprehensive evaluations and individualized treatments,” says John Doherty, vice president, Therapy Services, Sports Medicine & Occupational Health for Community Healthcare System. “To bring our skilled neuroscience and sports medicine physician specialists and therapists under one roof allows closer coordination of care. Our patients benefit from a team approach.”

From Migraines to Vertigo



To learn more about the Dizziness, Balance & Neuro Rehabilitation Clinic in Schererville or vestibular therapy at Community Healthcare System hospitals, visit COMHS.org.

BRAIN HEALTH 101

DISEASES OF THE BRAIN are more common than most people think, impacting the lives of one in six people. Here are several common conditions related to brain health.

Migraine Headaches

More than 39 million Americans have suffered migraines, a severe, throbbing pain, usually on one side of the head, and often accompanied by nausea, vomiting and extreme sensitivity to light and sound. Like Randy Owen, about one-fourth of those who suffer from migraines also experience vertigo, the sensation of feeling off balance or dizzy.

Stroke

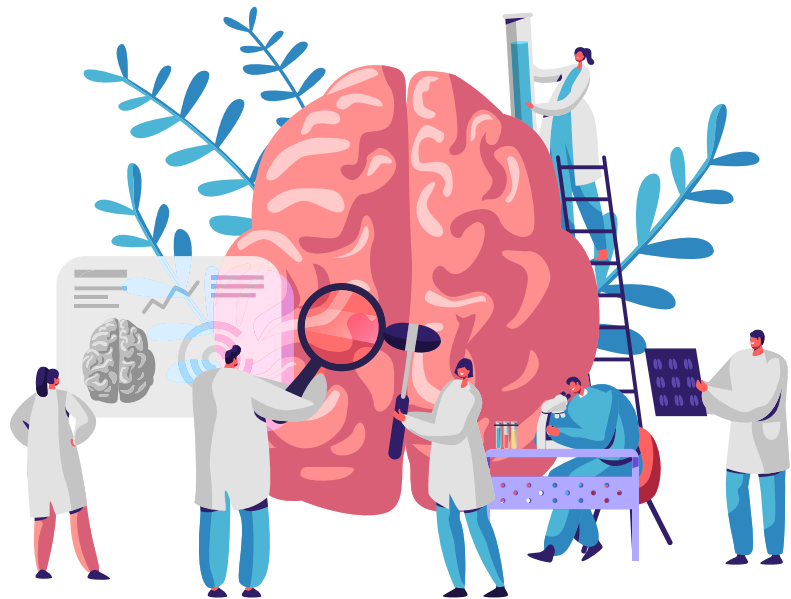
A stroke occurs when the blood supply to the brain is interrupted or reduced. Almost 800,000 Americans suffer a stroke each year. Use the letters F.A.S.T. to remember the signs of a stroke which requires immediate medical attention to prevent brain cells from dying:

- ▶ **F**ace drooping on one side or is numb
- ▶ **A**rm weakness or numbness in one arm
- ▶ **S**peech is slurred or the person is unable to speak
- ▶ **T**ime to call 9-1-1 if you notice any of these symptoms

Brain and Nervous System



Do you suffer from chronic headaches, dizziness, hearing or vision changes or numbness? If so, neurologists and neurological specialists at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System offer individualized therapies to ease effects and improve quality of life. To find out more about treatment options, visit COMHS.org.



Parkinson's Disease

This disorder of the nervous system occurs when nerve cells in the area of the brain that controls movement become impaired. The average age of diagnosis is 60.

Symptoms include:

- ▶ Tremors, often beginning in the hands or fingers
- ▶ Slowed movement that makes simple tasks like walking more difficult and time-consuming
- ▶ Rigid muscles that can be painful and limit range of motion
- ▶ Stooped posture and balance difficulties
- ▶ Changes in speech and handwriting

Dementia

Dementia is the general term used to describe the loss of memory, language and other thinking abilities to the point where they interfere with daily life. The most common form of dementia is Alzheimer's, which accounts for 60 to 80 percent of cases.

Symptoms can include:

- ▶ Trouble with short-term memory
- ▶ Not remembering to pay bills or prepare meals
- ▶ Forgetting appointments

Who To See

If you or a loved one is experiencing any of the symptoms described in this article, you should talk to your primary care provider or see a neurologist, a physician who specializes in the treatment of the brain and nervous system.



Prostate Health:

What Men Need to Know



Randy Owen was 60 years old when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He's not alone. One out of eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lifetime.

1 Risk Factors

Some of the highest risk factors for prostate cancer include:

- **Age:** The risk of prostate cancer increases as men grow older.
- **Race:** African-American men have a higher risk of developing and dying from the disease.
- **Family History:** Men with a close family member, such as a father, uncle or brother, diagnosed with prostate cancer before age 65 have a greater risk.
- **Diet:** Eating foods that are high in animal fats increases the risk.

2 Symptoms

In its early stages, prostate cancer may have no signs or symptoms. That's the reason it's so important to talk to your primary care provider about your screening options. The following symptoms may indicate a more advanced form of the cancer. Talk to your primary care provider if these symptoms persist:

- Trouble urinating
- Decreased force in the urine stream
- Blood in the urine
- Blood in the semen
- Bone pain
- Losing weight without trying
- Erectile dysfunction

3 Screening

There are two screening tests for prostate cancer: a PSA blood test and a digital rectal exam. Before any screening begins, the American Cancer Society recommends that men first discuss their options with their healthcare provider in order to make an informed choice. This discussion should take place at:

- **Age 50** for men who are at average risk
- **Age 45** for men who are at high risk: African-Americans and men with a first-degree relative (father, uncle or brother) diagnosed with prostate cancer before age 65
- **Age 40** for men who are at even higher risk: Have more than one first-degree relative who had prostate cancer before age 65

Individualized Treatment

From radiation therapy to robotic surgery, the hospitals of Community Healthcare System offer the area's widest range of prostate cancer treatment options. For more information, visit COMHS.org/cancer.

Sources: CDC, American Cancer Society, American Medical Association

WHY WOMEN LIVE LONGER

How Men Can Close the Gender Longevity Gap

IT'S A FACT: WOMEN LIVE LONGER THAN MEN—about five years longer on average. Any visit to a nursing home or assisted living facility can confirm there is a gender gap among the elderly.

So why do men have shorter life spans than women? The reasons are many. Boys and men are more likely to die in accidents or from violence, including suicide. On the whole, men engage in more dangerous professions, such as the military. Men are also 50 percent more likely to die of heart disease at a younger age.

Fortunately, there is one factor that men can easily address if they want

to live longer. **See your primary care provider!** Regular physical exams and recommended medical screenings can detect serious health risks, such as high blood pressure and diabetes, before they become serious medical conditions. Unfortunately, almost 60 percent of men don't regularly see their healthcare provider, going only if they are seriously ill. In fact, women are 33 percent more likely to see a healthcare provider and 100 percent more likely to have their recommended medical screenings.



The Top 7 Health Issues Facing Men

THIS EDITION OF *HEALTHY COMMUNITY* has been dedicated to raising awareness and increasing understanding about men's health issues. On the previous page we discussed prostate cancer, the second leading cause of cancer death in American men. Here, we take a look at seven more of the most common health issues facing men so they'll know the symptoms, be able to detect them early and see the right medical specialist for treatment.

Heart Disease:

At least 48 percent of adult Americans have some form of heart disease, the narrowing or blockage of the arteries or veins that provide oxygen and blood to the body. Left untreated, heart disease can lead to heart failure or stroke.

There are several different types of heart disease. Three of the most common are:

- **Coronary Heart Disease** occurs when the arteries that supply blood to the heart become hardened and narrowed.
- **High Blood Pressure** occurs when the pressure of the blood against the walls of the arteries consistently exceeds 130/80, forcing the heart to work harder to pump blood throughout the body. Also known as hypertension, high blood pressure is the most common form of heart disease.
- **Atherosclerosis**, also known as hardening of the arteries, is caused by a buildup of cholesterol and calcium deposits (plaque) inside the lining of the arteries.

The first step in the fight against heart disease is to schedule an annual physical exam and have your blood pressure checked regularly.

► **Who To See:** A Cardiologist specializes in the treatment of the cardiovascular system, which includes the heart and blood vessels.

Our team of cardiologists, nurses, dietitians and physical therapists can help you stop smoking, manage your blood pressure, create a heart-healthy diet and develop an exercise program customized to your specific needs and goals.

Diabetes

More than 34 million Americans suffer from diabetes, a condition in which the body does not properly convert food into energy. Another 88 million Americans have prediabetes, when blood sugar levels are higher than normal. Untreated, diabetes can severely damage the eyes, kidneys and nervous system as well as lead to a stroke or a heart attack.

There are two types of diabetes. Type 1 usually occurs in childhood or adolescence. Type 2 diabetes, which accounts for more than 90 percent of all cases, usually occurs in people 45 and older. Signs of diabetes include:

- **Hunger and fatigue**
- **Urinating more often**
- **Experiencing thirst more often**
- **Dry mouth and itchy skin**
- **Blurred vision**

Anyone who is overweight and 45 or older should be tested for diabetes. All it takes is a simple blood test, performed by your primary care provider.

► **Who To See:** An Endocrinologist specializes in treating the glands of the endocrine system, including the pancreas, the gland involved in diabetes.

Liver Disease

The liver sits just under the rib cage on the right side of the body. Liver disease can be inherited, but it can also be caused by viruses, obesity and alcohol use. Over time, these conditions can damage the liver, leading to scarring (cirrhosis). This can lead to liver failure, a life-threatening condition. Men are twice as likely to suffer from cirrhosis of the liver. One of the telltale signs of liver disease is jaundice, when the skin and the eyes appear yellow in color. Other symptoms include abdominal pain and swelling, itchy skin, dark-colored urine, swelling in the legs and ankles, chronic fatigue, nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite.

► **Who To See:** Both a Gastroenterologist and a Hepatologist are medical specialists who treat disorders of the liver.

Lung Cancer

After prostate cancer, lung cancer is the most common cancer in men. Smoking is still by far the leading cause of most lung cancers—up to 90 percent—so quitting smoking is a huge step in preventing the disease. By the time lung cancer is found, it is often at an advanced stage and difficult to treat—so early detection is critical. Symptoms include a new cough that doesn't go away, coughing up blood, shortness of breath, chest pain and hoarseness.

► **Who To See:** A Pulmonologist provides care for people with breathing issues and with diseases of the lungs.

Sources: Mayo Clinic, WebMD, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, American Lung Association

Skin Cancer

Men, especially those with lighter skin, are more likely to get skin cancer than women, and more likely to die from melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. By 65, men are twice as likely to develop melanoma, and three times more likely by age 80. Examine moles and birthmarks using the ABCDE rule:

Asymmetry: One part of a mole doesn't match the other.

Border: The edges are irregular, ragged or blurred.

Color: The color is not the same all over.

Diameter: The spot is larger than a pencil eraser.

Evolving: The mole is changing in size, shape or color.

► **Who To See:** A Dermatologist is a medical doctor who specializes in treating the skin, hair and nails.

COPD

COPD stands for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, a group of diseases that cause airflow blockage and trouble breathing. Chronic bronchitis and emphysema are two of the most well-known types of COPD, the third leading cause of death in the United States.

COPD is caused by long-term exposure to irritating gases, such as cigarette smoke. Having COPD increases your risk of heart disease, lung cancer and other medical conditions. Symptoms can include shortness of breath, especially during physical activities, wheezing, chest tightness, a chronic cough and frequent respiratory infections.

► **Who To See:** A Pulmonologist provides care for people with breathing issues and with diseases of the lungs.

Mental Health

Because of the stigma that often surrounds mental health, many men are reluctant to seek help when they need it the most. That can lead to tragic results. Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death among men and even higher among young men. American men are also more than 3.5 times more likely than women to commit suicide. Depression, anxiety and substance abuse are other mental health issues that affect men. If you think you or a loved one might have a mental health issue, we encourage you to reach out to a psychiatrist, psychologist or clinical social worker.

► **Who To See:** A Psychiatrist specializes in mental health issues including depression, anxiety and substance use disorders.

Specializing in Men's Health



From your head to your heart to your heels and everything in between, Community Healthcare System offers expert care for the full spectrum of men's health needs. Visit COMHS.org or call 219-703-2032 to learn more.

Advanced Care FOR THE Brain

Community Healthcare System offers individualized treatment for neurological conditions.

by Karin Saltanovitz

BY PAIRING MEDICAL EXPERTS with advanced technologies, the hospitals of Community Healthcare System: Community Hospital in Munster, St. Catherine Hospital in East Chicago, St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart and Community Stroke & Rehabilitation Center in Crown Point, offer the same specialized neuroscience resources you would expect at a large academic medical center close to home. Our multidisciplinary team is expert in treating various neurological conditions including movement disorders, seizure disorders, stroke, spine disorders, benign and malignant brain tumors and brain trauma.

Board certified neurologists at the hospitals and outpatient centers of Community Healthcare System use the latest tools to diagnose and treat neurological conditions for patients of all ages.

Depending on the neurological condition and the severity of illness, a patient may be referred for further consultations, testing, follow-ups or continued rehabilitation to one of Community Healthcare System's convenient outpatient locations in Northwest Indiana.

Epilepsy

Community Healthcare System offers a multidisciplinary approach for patients with new onset and refractory epilepsy (meaning medication is not bringing seizures under control). A new state-of-the-art epilepsy monitoring unit is scheduled to open this fall, creating a specialized inpatient area to evaluate, diagnose and treat new onset and uncontrolled seizures. Advanced diagnostic imaging is available, including a high definition 3 Tesla MRI scanner.



This ultra-efficient scanner provides quality detailed imagery and shorter examination times, creating a more pleasant patient experience.

Headaches

Headaches are common, but for people who suffer from frequent or extreme headaches that are disrupting their lives, a deeper evaluation and neurological exam may be necessary. Migraines are severe and sometimes debilitating headaches that can last between four and 72 hours. These headaches are often accompanied by nausea, vomiting and an increased sensitivity to light or sound, which could result in missed worked hours.

Memory Disorders

Neuropsychological assessment is pivotal in determining memory loss and associated conditions as patients get older. The neuropsychological assessment functions as a tool to gauge memory deficits and incorporates an effective treatment plan to help both the caregiver and patient.

Movement Disorders

Community Healthcare System's Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders program takes a multidisciplinary approach to treating patients. Fellowship trained neurology and neurosurgery specialists are supported by nurses, therapists and social service professionals to help patients with movement disorders improve to a better quality of life.



When movement disorders such as Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, essential tremor disorder, and dystonia begin to interfere with a patient's daily activities despite medical management, the program offers the latest DUOPA™ treatment and deep brain stimulation (DBS) techniques to help remediate the effects. The program is designed to restore patients' health so that they can return to a more normal everyday lifestyle.

This clinic also offers fall prevention technology, called VirtuSense, which analyzes a fall injury pre- and post-adjustment with special infrared computerized gait assessment.

Neurological Disorders

When an essential part of either the central nervous system (made up of the brain and spinal cord) or the peripheral nervous system, including the nerves, become damaged, it can result in a neurological disorder where the body functions abnormally. Signs of a neurological disorder often include chronic headache, dizziness, hearing or vision changes, numbness, tingling or seizures.

Board certified neurologists at Community Healthcare System hospitals and outpatient centers use the latest tools to diagnose and treat neurological conditions for patients of all ages.

Neurodiagnostics

Community Healthcare System's neurologists have access to some of the most advanced neurodiagnostic equipment that allow them to accurately assess a patient's condition. This may include imaging tests such as computerized tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and positron emission tomography (PET). Other scans or tests that may be used are electrical impulse

Above Left: Neurologist Andrea DeLeo, DO, MSE, assesses a patient for vestibular issues during a consultation at Community Neuroscience & Sports Medicine Center in Schererville.

Center: Neurologist Shaila Gupta, DO, studies MRI imaging for a migraine patient in the Headache Clinic at Community Neuroscience & Sports Medicine Center in Schererville.

Right: Justin Abraham, MD, one of the neurologists on staff at Community Healthcare System's Epilepsy Clinic in Schererville provides a gait evaluation.

detection tests including electromyogram (EMG), which measures the electrical activity in the muscles or electroencephalogram (EEG), which detects electrical impulses in the brain.

Sleep Medicine

Headaches in the morning after awakening is a common side effect of obstructive sleep apnea, due to intermittent breathing while asleep. Community Healthcare System's board certified neurology sleep specialists monitor oxygen desaturation during sleep and evaluate various sleep disorders including narcolepsy or excessive daytime sleepiness.

Stroke Care

For a patient requiring quality stroke care at the hospitals, Community Hospital, a Joint Commission Certified Comprehensive Stroke Center, is supported by the certified Primary Stroke Centers of St. Catherine Hospital and St. Mary Medical Center. These hospitals work together to deliver exceptional care so stroke patients and those at risk can live longer, healthier, more fulfilling lives. Specialists ranging from nursing, case management, pharmacy, therapy services and emergency medical services collaborate to provide standardized evidence based, acute stroke care and secondary stroke prevention so that patients achieve the best possible outcomes. ■


Neurological Services



For more information about the neurological services provided by the hospitals of Community Healthcare System, visit COMHS.org/services/neuroscience.

Keeping Cancer at Bay

Early detection
starts with
low-dose CT
screening

An anatomical illustration of human lungs, showing the trachea and bronchi. The lungs are rendered in a realistic, slightly translucent red color. Overlaid on the left side of the lungs is a semi-transparent hexagonal grid pattern. Within this grid, there are several small, stylized icons: a white plus sign, a green pill, and a white medical cross on a green background. The background of the entire illustration is a soft, light pinkish-red gradient.

by Elise Sims

CINDY MEBERT had been treated for emphysema for 10 years. During her annual checkup in July 2020, Community Care Network family medicine physician John Carter, MD, told her that he wanted to see if there were nodules on her lungs. When the results came in after the lung cancer screening, Dr. Carter told her that had they found a spot.

“It floored me,” Mebert says. “I was not expecting to hear the cancer word. He said nodules...from smoking. I never put it together.”

Lung cancer is the second most common cancer and the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States with approximately 228,820 people diagnosed and 135,820 died in 2020. Although lung cancer is one of the deadliest forms of cancer for both men and women, it has

an 88 percent survival rate at 10 years when diagnosed at stage one.

Lung cancer often stays silent until a late stage which is when symptoms usually occur. Low Dose CT (LDCT) lung cancer screening has proven to be very successful at detecting lung cancer at very early stages, before any symptoms begin. Detecting lung cancer in its earliest stages is relatively quick and easy with the use of LDCT scans of the chest. Community Healthcare System has a robust LDCT lung cancer screening program staffed with passionate and talented nurses who assist patients before and after their screening. Dedicated lung care navigators monitor follow-up and assist patients with getting their subsequent exams on time, while providing education to each patient so that they fully understand the screening process.

“Based on the results of Cindy’s screening, her

information was submitted and reviewed by Community Healthcare System’s multidisciplinary lung team which includes pulmonologists, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists and cardiothoracic surgeons. After extensive discussion, a plan of care was formed,” says Patricia Higgins, RN, OCN, Oncology Nurse Navigator, St. Mary Medical Center, who guided Mebert on her journey. “Completed diagnostic workup resulted in the discovery of a stage 1A lung cancer. Cindy was treated with stereotactic radiosurgery radiation therapy due to the early stage diagnosis and she is now back to her normal life needing only surveillance imaging every six months.”

All Community Healthcare System CT sites (at Community Hospital, St. Catherine Hospital, St. Mary Medical Center and Community Stroke & Rehabilitation Center) have earned the GO₂ Foundation’s Lung Screening Center of Excellence status which ensures use of best practices.

“The hospitals of Community Healthcare System consistently set the standards of offering new technologies and approaches in treatment that positively affect quality and outcomes for our patients,” says Marie D. Macke, administrator, Oncology Services.

Low Dose CT (LDCT) lung cancer screening has proven to be very successful at detecting lung cancer at very early stages, before any symptoms begin.

With Community Healthcare System’s focus on excellence in lung cancer care, the GO₂ Foundation also has awarded St. Catherine Hospital-East Chicago, Community Hospital-Munster, and St. Mary Medical Center-Hobart, with the Lung Cancer Care Continuum Centers of Excellence designation, which is a first in the Chicagoland area. This distinction is awarded to programs that meet rigorous qualifying criteria. Criteria guidelines include showing commitment to best practices in lung cancer screening and nodule follow-up, minimally invasive biopsy, surgical and radiation therapy techniques, tumor genetic testing, access to immunotherapies and new targeted therapies, access to clinical trials, extensive patient education and navigational support throughout treatment and survivorship.

“I received wonderful care,” says Mebert. “I give everyone who took care of me credit. Patty was absolutely awesome. She called me all the time to see how I was doing. Dr. Carter called me, too.”



Photos from top: After a lung cancer screening found stage 1A lung cancer, Mebert (right) was treated with stereotactic radiosurgery radiation therapy. She is now back to her normal life needing only surveillance imaging every six months. Oncology Nurse Navigator Patty Higgins visits with Mebert at her last appointment.

All Community Healthcare System CT sites have earned the GO₂ Foundation’s Lung Screening Center of Excellence status which ensures use of best practices. Dr. Jonathon Lee, Roxy Propeck, Marie D. Macke and Leo Correa meet in the lung cancer center of excellence at St. Catherine Hospital in East Chicago.

“They told me how good my prognosis is for the future,” she says. “It’s very promising. I was so relieved to hear. My advice to others is don’t hesitate to have a lung cancer screening and don’t second guess. I always thought it couldn’t happen to me. Well, it did. It could happen to anyone.”

Individuals may qualify for a low dose CT lung screening if they meet the high-risk criteria:

- You are between 55 and 77 years old
- You are a smoker or have quit within the past 15 years
- You have smoked at least a pack of cigarettes a day for 30+ years. ■

Lung Care and Low Dose CT Scanning



For more information about lung care at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System, visit <https://www.comhs.org/services/lung-care>

Working together for **Mobility**



by Debra Gruszecki

Acute Rehabilitation
unifies to safely return
patients home

NEVER ONE TO BE a homebody, Maria Carcamo was determined to recover as quickly as possible through acute rehabilitation after a lengthy hospital stay for COVID-19.

Within eight days of her transfer to an acute rehabilitation unit at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System in April 2020, she could communicate with others, perform daily living tasks, walk unaided and go home. Less than 60 days after she was discharged from the Community Hospital, Carcamo had the stamina, skills and confidence to do all the things she loved: cook, take long walks unaided and return to her job as a machine operator for a Northwest Indiana insulated pipe manufacturer.

“I needed to get back to my normal life and I did,” Carcamo says.

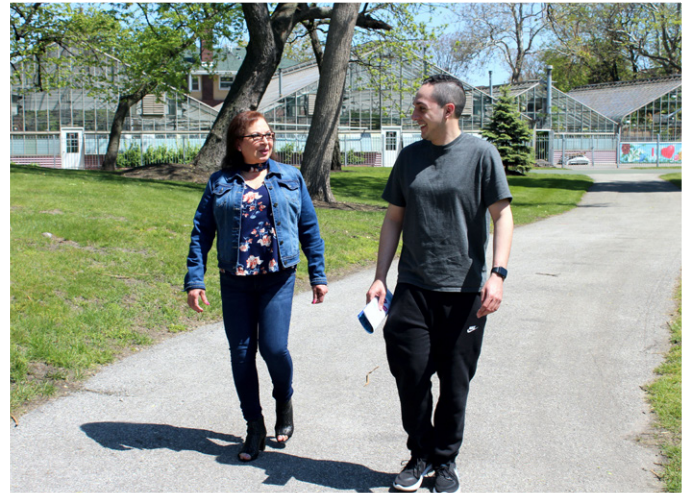
Acute inpatient rehabilitation offered through Community Hospital, St. Catherine Hospital, St. Mary Medical Center and Community Stroke & Rehabilitation Center takes recovery to the ultimate level by giving individuals who have experienced an illness or

injury both the opportunity and hope for restoring their functional independence in a safe structured way to return home.

“We are proud of our high quality rehabilitation to help patients improve their functional abilities and successfully transition them from hospital to home,” says Craig Bolda, vice president of Acute Rehabilitation Services for Community Healthcare System. “We acknowledge the unique physical, emotional and spiritual needs of each patient to provide support and resources to help achieve their personal goals.”

Before Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation physician Padmaja Neelaveni, MD, recommended acute inpatient rehabilitation for Carcamo, the 58-year-old needed occupational and physical therapists to help her perform everyday tasks 50 percent of the time. She became breathless just walking short distances. Hand-eye coordination was particularly challenging.

Getting patients ready to return home is the ultimate goal of acute inpatient rehabilitation. Individualized treatment programs are developed by an interdisciplinary team of rehabilitation professionals. The rehabilitation



team is led by physicians who specialize in the management of a full spectrum of medical conditions and coordinated care with case managers, medical consultants and neuropsychologists. Rehabilitation nurses and physical, occupational, recreational and speech therapists are part of the team. Ongoing therapy and nursing care for positive longer term results may also be offered, based on a patient's Home Health needs.

Communication among team members helps drive positive results, says Hope Wells, program director of the acute rehabilitation unit and therapy services at St. Mary Medical Center.

"We collaborate between all four (facilities) to get our patients to the most appropriate rehab unit within the healthcare system. Each program has therapists and nurses with a variety of specialties, experience and expertise. This helps us provide the best care to meet the patient's individualized goals and get them home as soon as possible."

Treatment is based on the patient's medical condition, physical limitations, mobility, strength, daily living skills, communication and swallowing ability. Therapy regimens consist of at least three hours of physical, occupational or speech sessions or any combination of these, five days a week.

Carcamo received physical therapy for balance, independent walking and mobility, speech therapy and occupational therapy for self-care and homemaking needs.

Doctors, nurses and case managers across the hospital system reached out to Carcamo's son, Michael, regularly with updates throughout his mother's hospitalization. As an active participant in weekly conferences with the rehabilitation team, Michael felt prepared and well equipped to handle his mom's needs at home.

"For us, the healing experience extends to the families of our patients, so they are equipped to provide a high

Above left and right: Before acute inpatient rehabilitation, Maria Carcamo needed occupational and physical therapists to help her perform everyday tasks 50 percent of the time. She became breathless just walking short distances. She got all the help she needed to do all the things she loves again like taking long walks and going to the park.

level of care after their loved one returns home," says Vikram Pancholi, director of the Rehabilitation Center at St. Catherine Hospital.

Between January 1 and July 31 of 2020, rehabilitation facilities of Community Healthcare System assisted more than 1,000 patients through recovery. In doing so, the team exceeded the national average for the amount of change a patient had in mobility and self-care from admission to discharge.

Rehabilitation performance is rated nationally through a Program Evaluation Model or PEM score. Scoring criteria includes the percentage of patients discharged home in a time efficient manner. Community Healthcare System inpatient rehabilitation units, ranked across 850 treatment sites in the country, scored above the 90th percentile for 2020. ■

Acute Rehabilitation Services



To learn more about acute inpatient rehabilitation services at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System, visit <https://www.comhs.org/services/rehabilitation>.



Caught in the web of COVID

Community Healthcare System offers recovery clinic for long-haulers

by Elise Sims

AS RESEARCHERS CONTINUE to study and learn about COVID-19, they have found that people with even mild cases of the virus can experience symptoms long after initial diagnosis. Crete resident Dawn Micco had been waging her battle against the coronavirus for more than one month until she found the help she needed at the post-COVID recovery clinic of Community Healthcare System.

“Friday, November 13, was truly unlucky for me,” she recalls. “My husband called to tell me he had been diagnosed with COVID. I had been tested before, but after I got his message, I immediately went to the outpatient center in St. John. Results came back positive and I quarantined for 10 days.”

“For mild initial COVID infections, recovery time is around two weeks and for severe disease, it is around three to six weeks,” explains Dylan Slotar, MD, a Community Care Network infectious disease physician on staff at Community Hospital, St. Catherine Hospital and St. Mary Medical Center. “A person who continues to experience symptoms after this acute phase of illness

could be considered a long-hauler. Lingering symptoms can be present in patients who had severe initial disease as well as in those whose initial infection was mild.”

Micco, a fitness trainer in good health, says COVID really hit her hard. She felt like she “went from 50 years of age to 90 in one day”. She could not take a shower without losing her breath and says it felt like she was breathing in sandpaper. There were days when she slept all day. Weeks later, when she just could not get over symptoms of fatigue and breathing difficulties, she went to Community Hospital’s Emergency Department. There, a nurse recommended that she make an appointment at the COVID Clinic to see Community Care Network practitioner Thomas Wilkins, DO, a COVID Clinic physician.

That appointment, on December 7, 2020, was the start of a turning point in her recovery, according to Micco.

“I want people to know that there is hope for getting over this,” she says. “For those who are still suffering, I would tell them that this isn’t forever. You are going to get over this. Your body is going to heal and recover in its own time.”

At Community Healthcare System’s COVID Clinic, multidisciplinary treatment options are targeted to the



Left: After getting help for her extended COVID symptoms, Dawn Micco has regained her strength and is able to resume her exercise routine.

Below: Dr. Thomas Wilkins is one of the physicians and practitioners on staff at the COVID Clinic for those with lingering symptoms.

Recovered COVID patients with lingering symptoms can get the support they need from Community Healthcare System's COVID Clinic. A multispecialty team of physical therapists, rehabilitation physicians (physiatrists), cardiologists, pulmonologists and others create a cohesive approach to patient care and ensure support for those individuals who are experiencing any adverse aftereffects.



“I want people to know that there is hope for getting over this,” she says. “For those who are still suffering, I would tell them that this isn’t forever.” — Dawn Micco

symptoms that the patient is experiencing. Many patients with symptoms of fatigue, respiratory and muscular issues benefit from physical, occupational and speech therapies. Patients with cognitive symptoms are also showing improvements from the same therapies used with concussion patients. Although the long lasting effects of COVID-19 are a new area of research, new information is coming out on a regular basis that is helping to shape screening and treatment options.

“To ensure support is available when needed, we are working closely with Community Healthcare System’s physical therapists, rehabilitation physicians (physiatrists), cardiologists, pulmonologists and other specialists to create a cohesive approach to patient care,” says Wilkins.

“While our current methods are showing improvement for our patients, we will continue to incorporate new research and recommendations into our plan as information becomes available.”

Anyone who feels they have persisting symptoms like Dawn Micco is a candidate for evaluation, Wilkins says.

“We encourage those with persistent symptoms to first contact their primary care physician for an evaluation,” Wilkins says. “Primary care practitioners are well adapted to working with their own patients for many of these issues and have the advantage of being familiar with the patient’s known medical history and treatment plan for chronic conditions. This can significantly aid in directing the next best steps.”

“The clinic staff has been great,” says Micco, who has

since finished respiratory therapy and has been fully vaccinated. “They will listen to you and treat you. They will give you what you need to get healthy and get better. It would be nice if there was a one size fits all treatment plan, but there isn’t. It has been four months since I was diagnosed and every day I am feeling more like I am finally getting back to ‘normal’”

“There are so many people who are still suffering from the lingering effects of having COVID,” says Micco. “If they live in or around Northwest Indiana or the south suburbs of Chicago, I would encourage them to make an appointment at the clinic.”

Community Healthcare System’s COVID Clinic hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Fridays. The clinic is located at 9042 Columbia Avenue, Suite B, Munster, with several satellite sites available through Community Healthcare System’s outpatient offices. Call 219-703-2448 for more information. Visit COMHS.org to learn about COVID care. ■

COVID Clinic



To learn more about COVID care services at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System, visit COMHS.org or call 219-703-2448.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Randy Owen



Brain Health 101



Prostate Cancer Awareness



Working Toward Mobility

Giving & Getting

Volunteer opportunities at the hospitals offer benefits

EVERYONE LIKES TO BE on the receiving end of a gift, a kind gesture or a helping hand; it feels good! But there are other experiences in life that demonstrate that it is better to give than receive. Volunteering your time is one of those experiences.

“Volunteering has many benefits,” says

Teresa L. Pedroza, system director, Volunteer Services, Community Healthcare System. “While our volunteers help to support the hospitals, they also receive personal satisfaction in giving their time and talents. It is a win-win situation. Our volunteers put in thousands of hours contributing to the mission and values of Community Healthcare System.”

At Community Hospital, St. Catherine Hospital, St. Mary Medical Center and specialty hospital Community Stroke & Rehabilitation Center, volunteers and



Above: Volunteers Jim and Peggy Snelson, married for 45 years, enjoy sharing their time and talents at St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart.

their unique talents are carefully matched with innovative work opportunities to extend the system’s mission of providing quality healthcare.

Whether working directly with patients to help them find their way through the hospital hallways or working behind the scenes, volunteers enjoy the opportunity to meet new people, keep active while providing important services and experience the personal satisfaction that comes from helping others. ■

Volunteer Opportunities



Just a few hours of your time and talent per week can make a big difference to a healthcare organization. Contact the hospitals of Community Healthcare System at [COMHS.org/donate/volunteer-opportunities](https://www.comhs.org/donate/volunteer-opportunities).