

Healthy

Spring 2023

COMMUNITY

Randy Travis

Country Music Legend
and Stroke Survivor



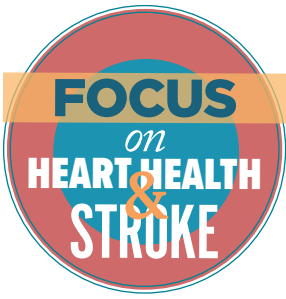
FOCUS ON
**HEART HEALTH
& STROKE**



**COMMUNITY
HEALTHCARE SYSTEM®**

COMHS.org

Photography by Marisa Taylor



Overcoming the *Storms of Life*

10 years after surviving a massive stroke, Randy Travis shares his inspiring story of perseverance and hope

In 1986, Randy Travis became a country music superstar overnight with the release of *Storms of Life*, his debut album. Then, 27 years later, Randy faced a “storm of life” he never could have imagined when he suffered a near-fatal stroke. *Healthy Community* recently spoke to Randy and his wife, Mary Davis, to let the seven-time Grammy winner share his heartfelt story of determination and hope.

The stroke occurred in July 2013. Were there any warning signs?

Randy: No, the stroke came out of the blue. There is no history of heart disease in my family, and two days before my stroke, I felt perfectly healthy. Then it all went downhill.

What happened?

Randy: I had worked out earlier in the day and was helping to pack our tour bus for a trip to Canada. I told Mary I wasn’t breathing well, and we went to the emergency room just to be safe. I was diagnosed with walking pneumonia and sent home with a nebulizer and some antibiotics. I couldn’t sleep and could hardly breathe at all. We went back to the ER, and they told me I had double pneumonia. Then I really took a turn for the worse. I was at a hospital in Dallas when I flatlined. It took them two-and-a-half minutes to get me back. I was put on life support and was in a coma for three days. That’s when they noticed I had suffered a stroke.

What were your options?

Mary: The doctors told me that Randy would die if we did nothing, but if they did operate, there was only a 1 percent chance he would survive. Seven different things would have to go perfectly during the three-hour surgery to relieve pressure on his brain. However, 1 percent is better

than 0 percent, and Randy made it! He had so many opportunities to head up to heaven, but he just kept fighting. I think Duane Allen of the Oak Ridge Boys said it best: “The devil don’t want him, and God’s not ready for him.”

What was the prognosis after the surgery?

Mary: When we left the hospital after six months, the doctors said Randy would be in and out of hospitals the rest of his life and probably be bedridden. Randy didn’t believe it, and neither did I. For two and a half years, Randy did stroke rehab five hours a day. During that time, and even today, I have always been amazed at the positive attitude Randy has about everything — even after all he has gone through.

Did doctors figure out what caused the initial breathing problems?

Mary: They think it was a case of viral cardiomyopathy, an infection that can shut down the heart and fill up the lungs in just 48 hours. A doctor thought Randy might have been exposed



Above: Randy with his wife, Mary Davis

Right: Randy on stage at The Ryman Auditorium in Nashville



“I’ve found that the best therapy is doing the things that I love to do.”

to a mold or spore about five weeks earlier when he was filming at an old feed-and-seed store in Louisiana. Four or five weeks is the time it takes for the mold or spore to incubate and become a virus.

What kind of support have you received from your fans and colleagues?

Randy: A lot! My fans have been incredible. I’ve received boxes and boxes of cards and letters. It has been almost 10 years since the stroke, and we still receive letters where people express their love and support and tell us how much my music has meant to them.

And now some people have crowned you the King of TikTok!

Randy: We got the idea from Zach Farnum (Randy’s publicist). When he mentioned it, we didn’t even know what TikTok was. We thought it had something to do with a grandfather clock. But then it took off like a rocket.

What does the future hold?

Randy: Well, I’ve found that the best therapy is doing the things that I love to do. So, I’m still on the road touring and going horseback riding. I’m just doing it a little differently now.

What have the last 10 years taught you?

Randy: Never give up hope. If the medical records say something will happen, it doesn’t mean it will. The healing power of the human body is amazing. ■

When Every Second Counts, We Are Your First Choice

During a heart attack, time is muscle. Fast treatment can prevent further heart damage and even save your life. During a stroke, time is brain. The quicker you recognize the symptoms of a stroke and seek medical care, the better the chances of preventing long-term disability or even death. In both cases, the faster you can get to an emergency department (ED), the better.

That makes the hospitals of Community Healthcare System your first choice when you or a loved one suffers a heart attack or stroke. Our ED team is ready 24/7, fully trained and fully equipped with the diagnostic imaging equipment and technology that can make a life-saving difference. When every second counts, we are here.

Emergency Services



To learn more about emergency services at Community Healthcare System, visit COMHS.org/ED-HC.



TimeLine of a Stroke

Every 40 seconds, someone in the United States suffers a stroke. That is almost 800,000 people a year, and of these, almost 140,000 die. Stroke is also a leading cause of serious long-term disability. For example, half of stroke survivors 65 and older suffer reduced mobility. Yet having a stroke is not limited to the elderly. In fact, 38 percent of people hospitalized with a stroke are younger than 65, and Randy Travis suffered his stroke when he was 54.

A stroke occurs when the brain doesn't receive the blood and oxygen it needs. Experts say 87 percent of all strokes are *ischemic* strokes, in which blood flow to the brain is blocked. The other 13 percent are caused by a burst blood vessel, called a *hemorrhagic* stroke.

Time is precious when someone is having a stroke. Almost 2 million brain cells die every minute once a stroke begins. Receiving emergency care as fast as possible can make all the difference.

► The First Minute

Strokes happen fast. In just a few seconds, a person can go from feeling perfectly normal to slurring words or being unable to move an arm. At this point, knowing the signs of a stroke is critical. Use the **F.A.S.T.** warning signs to check yourself or someone else.

Face: Ask the person to smile to see if one side of the face droops.

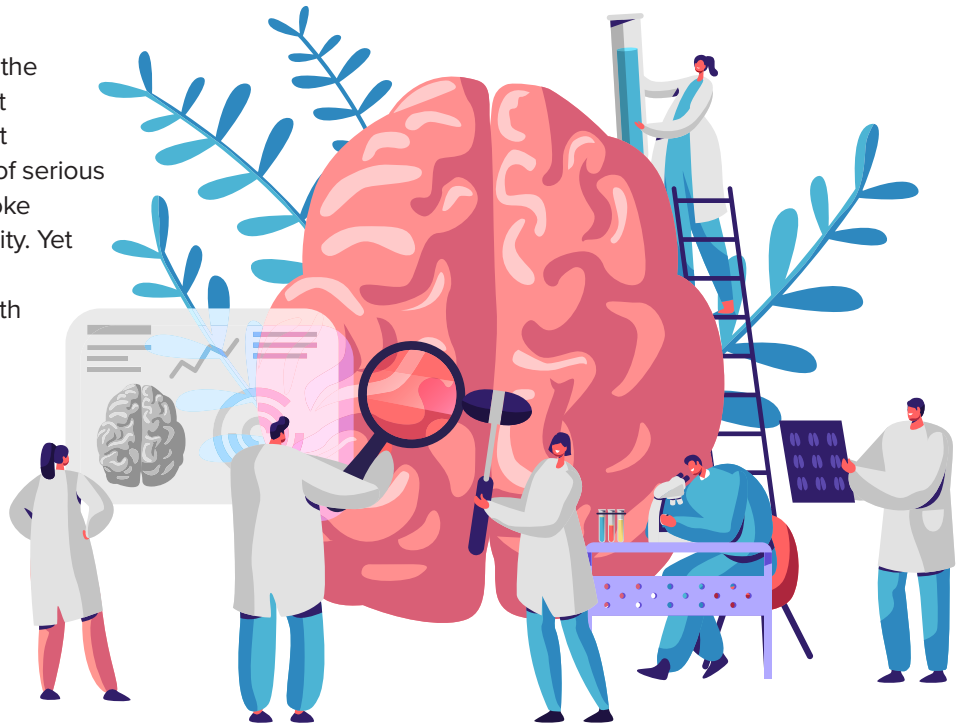
Arms: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drop down?

Speech: Ask the person to say something, and check for slurred or strange speech.

Time: If the answer to any of these is yes, call 911 immediately. Here is why:

► The Golden Hour

Stroke patients have a much greater chance of surviving and avoiding long-term brain damage if they receive



treatment within the first hour. Time lost is brain lost. With each hour that passes, the brain loses as many neurons as 3.6 years of normal aging.

► When the Ambulance Arrives

Emergency personnel will quickly check to make sure the patient is breathing and has a pulse. They also will use the F.A.S.T. warning signs to check for a stroke. They might check the patient's blood sugar level. If there are any signs of a stroke, the patient will be rushed to the nearest hospital, where the ER team will be standing by.

► At the Hospital

The stroke team jumps into action. Staff will ask the patient's loved ones about his or her symptoms and medical history. A computed tomography (CT) scan may be given to tell what kind of stroke is occurring. Blood tests are performed. Most importantly, if needed, the clot-dissolving drug TPA will be administered. All will be performed with great speed and efficiency, because during a stroke, time is everything.

Sources: CDC, American Stroke Association

Understanding Cardiovascular Disease

More than 80 million Americans have some form of cardiovascular disease, a group of conditions that affects the heart and blood vessels. Sometimes called heart disease, cardiovascular disease can take many forms. Here are four of the most common types:

1 Coronary Artery Disease

This common form of cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in America. It occurs when the arteries that supply blood to your heart become hardened and narrowed, usually caused by a buildup of fat and cholesterol. Symptoms are those of a heart attack (see Page 6).

2 Stroke

A stroke occurs when the brain does not receive the blood and oxygen it needs. Symptoms often include slurred speech; confusion; and sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body. Other symptoms include trouble speaking or understanding speech; trouble walking; dizziness; loss of balance, or lack of coordination.

3 Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD)

PAD is a long-term disease caused by the accumulation of fat and cholesterol in your legs and arms. Symptoms include coldness in the lower leg or foot, and leg numbness or weakness.

4 Arrhythmia

An arrhythmia is a problem with the speed or rhythm of your heartbeat. The heart may beat too quickly, too slowly or have an irregular rhythm that feels like your heart is fluttering.

Your 3 Essential Heart-Health Screenings

The best way to prevent heart disease is to understand your risk factors. For this reason, it is so important to schedule an annual wellness exam with your primary care provider and have these three screenings performed.

High Blood Pressure

Also known as *hypertension*, high blood pressure occurs when the force of the blood pushing against the artery walls is consistently too high. If you are obese, smoke or have high cholesterol levels and your blood pressure is also high, your risk of a heart attack or stroke increases dramatically. High blood pressure is sometimes called the Silent Killer because it often produces no symptoms. Have your blood pressure checked regularly by your primary care provider.

High Blood Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in your blood. High cholesterol usually has no signs or symptoms. The only way to know if you have high cholesterol is to have a simple blood test performed by your primary care provider.

Diabetes

The leading cause of death for people with diabetes is heart problems. In fact, 65 percent of patients with diabetes die from some form of cardiovascular disease. Check for diabetes during your annual wellness exam and keep your blood sugar levels under control if you already have diabetes.

Sources: Cleveland Clinic, American Heart Association, cdc.gov

Need a Doctor?



Free physician referral is available online at [COMHS.org/find-a-doctor-HC](https://www.comhs.org/find-a-doctor-HC) or by phone at 219-703-2032, 8:30 am to 5 pm Monday-Friday.





Your 4-Minute Guide to Heart Health

The next four minutes could add years to your life. That is how long it will take you to read this article and discover the four essentials for taking care of your heart.

1 Live Heart Healthy

Do Not Smoke: Not smoking may be the best thing you can do to improve both your heart health and your overall health. The results can be dramatic. After a year of not smoking cigarettes, the risk of heart disease is cut in half.

Get Moving: Regular physical exercise is so beneficial for your health. It reduces the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes and stroke. It also can help you lose weight. Aim for 150 minutes a week of moderate exercise, such as walking, or 75 minutes a week of vigorous exercise, such as jogging. And remember, even activities like housekeeping or taking the stairs are good for you.

Eat Heart Smart: Avoid salt, sugar, alcohol, saturated fats (red meat, full-fat dairy) and trans fats (fried fast food, chips and baked goods). Instead, load up your plate with vegetables, fruits, beans, lean meat and fish, and whole grains.

Watch Your Pounds: Losing just a little weight really helps your heart. Reducing your weight by as little as 3 percent (just 6 pounds if you weigh 200) can reduce certain fats in the blood as well as the risk of diabetes. Ask your primary care provider to check your body mass index (BMI) to see if you are overweight or obese. Ideally, your BMI should be less than 25.

Manage Your Stress: Feeling stressed can lead to many unhealthy habits, such as smoking, drinking or overeating. Regular physical activity as well as relaxing activities, such as yoga, can lower your stress level.

2 Know the Signs of a Heart Attack

Chest Pain or Discomfort: With most heart attacks, people experience uncomfortable pressure, squeezing or pain in the center of the chest. The sensation may last more than a few minutes, or it may go away and then return.

Discomfort in the Upper Body: Pain or discomfort also can occur in the neck, back, arms or stomach.

Shortness of Breath: This can occur with or without chest pain.

Other Signs of a Heart Attack: These include nausea, feeling lightheaded and breaking out in a cold sweat. In addition to chest pain, women are more likely to experience shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting and back or neck pain.

3 Get Diagnosed

Your primary care provider can choose from a long list of diagnostic tools to determine if you have heart disease.

Electrocardiogram (ECG): An ECG tests your heart's electrical impulses. It often is used to check for an abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia).

Exercise Stress Test: This is a type of ECG test that is usually performed when running on a treadmill or riding a stationary bike. The test checks your heart rate, blood pressure and heart activity to see how it performs under physical exertion.

Echocardiogram (Ultrasound): This non-invasive test uses high-frequency sound waves to check the heart's structure and to evaluate its blood flow. It is often used to check your heart's valve and chambers as well as the efficiency of your heart in pumping blood.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI): A MRI uses powerful magnets and radio waves to produce hundreds of high-resolution images of the heart from many different perspectives. Sometimes a special dye is injected into the arteries to make the heart and its vessels easier to see.

Computed Tomography (CT) Scan: This X-ray imaging technique produces cross-sectional images of your heart to check its structure and determine if there are blockages in the coronary arteries.

Cardiac Catheterization: Also known as a coronary angiogram, this specialized X-ray test can reveal how much your coronary arteries are clogged or blocked. A small tube (catheter) is inserted into an artery in your groin or wrist and then moves up inside the artery until it reaches your heart. After a special dye has been injected, X-rays are taken.

Holter Monitoring: This test uses a small, portable machine to record a patient's heart rhythms over an extended period of time, usually from 24 to 48 hours. The test analyzes the electrical activity of the heart and can detect heart rhythm problems that come and go and may not be apparent using a standard ECG.

4 After a Heart Attack or Stroke, Participate in Rehabilitation

Cardiac rehabilitation is a structured, supervised exercise and education program for people who have had bypass surgery, angioplasty, heart failure or other major heart conditions. The benefits of cardiac rehab are many. One study found that patients who completed a cardiac rehab program lowered their risk of death by 47 percent and their risk of having another heart attack by 31 percent. Unfortunately, only one in four people who is eligible for cardiac rehab participate in the program. The program usually lasts about three months and involves exercise training, emotional support and education about how to reduce the risk of heart disease. For stroke rehab, the long-term goal is to help the stroke survivor become as independent as possible. Studies show that up to 85 percent of patients will learn to walk independently after six months of rehabilitation.

Sources: American Heart Association, Million Hearts

Cardiac Care



To learn more about heart health services at Community Healthcare System, visit COMHS.org/heart-HC.

Local participants, big impact



Clinical trial investigates efficacy of heart device vs. blood thinners

by Vanessa Negrete

After a 45-minute procedure and an overnight hospital stay, David Orchowski could be done with blood thinners for good. The 72-year-old was among the first to enroll in a clinical trial at Community Hospital to see if an atrial fibrillation device can replace blood thinners, which pose a stroke risk.

Community Healthcare System is participating in the CHAMPION-AF clinical trial, which evaluates the safety and efficacy of the WATCHMAN FLX™ left atrial appendage closure (LAAC) device against blood thinners. One group of study participants received the device, and the other group continued to take blood thinners without having the device implanted.

“Our cardiovascular teams were the first in Northwest Indiana to offer WATCHMAN and the next-generation WATCHMAN FLX as an effective treatment option for these patients,” said Samer Abbas, MD, medical director of Cardiovascular Services at Community Hospital and the Structural Heart program of Community Healthcare System. “We are pleased to participate in this important study that will evaluate whether a one-time WATCHMAN FLX procedure is equally effective as blood-thinning medication as a first-line treatment for a wider population of patients.”

The trial involves patients at low to moderate risk of bleeding from the use of blood thinners, or those who are seeking an alternative to long-term anticoagulation.

“It could be one more tool in the toolbox that doctors have available to them to help people live a longer, healthier life with less fear of a stroke,” Orchowski said.

His path to blood thinner use began after he experienced heart arrhythmia and underwent a

cardioversion and a cardiac ablation to help bring his heartbeat to a normal rhythm. After a cancer diagnosis and treatment, and after another cardioversion, Orchowski was prescribed a blood thinner.

He learned about the clinical trial during a visit with William Spear, MD, an electrophysiologist with Community Care Network.

“I took the blood thinner Eliquis, and Dr. Spear asked if I had experienced excessive bleeding from a cut or excessive bruising from bumps,” recalled Orchowski, a resident of Chicago’s Hegewisch neighborhood. “I explained that I had, and he mentioned that Community Hospital was looking into doing a clinical trial on the device.”

After enrolling in the study, Orchowski was chosen at random among study participants to receive the WATCHMAN FLX device. His procedure was Oct. 18, 2021, and lasted about 45 minutes. For the procedure, a surgeon cuts an incision in the upper leg near the groin, inserts a narrow tube and guides the WATCHMAN FLX device to the heart, where it is permanently implanted.

“I had outstanding cardiovascular nurses and technicians. Everyone went out of their way to take care of me.”

“I stayed overnight to be monitored,” he recalled.

The medical team checked Orchowski’s vital signs and drew his blood before he was cleared to leave.

“I had outstanding cardiovascular nurses and technicians,” he said. “Everyone went out of their way to take care of me.”

Participating in the program is not complicated, Orchowski explained. He takes his blood pressure and heart rate twice a day, occasionally answers questions over the phone about his health and meets regularly with his doctor. “I am extremely pleased with how things are going,” he said.



David Orchowski, 72, was among the first to enroll in a clinical trial at Community Hospital to see if an atrial fibrillation device can replace the need for blood thinners. “It could be one more tool in the toolbox that doctors have available to them to help people live a longer, healthier life with less fear of a stroke,” Orchowski said.

Over the course of the five-year study, Orchowski will have regular check-ins and check-ups, both over the phone and in person. A few months after the procedure, he underwent a transesophageal echocardiogram (TEE) to ensure heart tissue properly grew over the implant to build a barrier against blood clots. Once that barrier forms in patients who received the implant, most stop taking blood thinners and begin taking 81 milligrams of aspirin a day.

“I look forward to being a participant over the long haul,” he said.

Community Healthcare System has a well-established history of providing excellence and innovation in cardiac care, which has distinguished the system as a leading site for clinical trials such as this.

“We are fortunate to have been asked to participate in this study in the company of nationally recognized centers such as Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic and others,” Abbas said. ■

Cardiovascular Care



For information about the Structural Heart & Valve Center at Community Healthcare System, visit [COMHS.org/heart-HC](https://www.comhs.org/heart-HC).

Shaping the Future of **Medicine**

Clinical trials provide groundbreaking treatment options

by Karin Saltanovitz



At Community Healthcare System, our cardiology and neuroscience teams are actively conducting research and clinical trials to explore promising and innovative ways to diagnose, treat and prevent disease.

“Clinical trials result from intervention and observation,” said Swayamprava Panda, a Neuroscience clinical research coordinator with Community Healthcare System.

“Investigators study new ideas, concepts and methods for the advancement of current practices and the improvement of outcomes and quality of life for patients.”

Clinical researchers are committed to identifying new approaches by taking their work from the lab to the patient. Clinical trials guide researchers in determining whether a new treatment, such as a new medication or medical device, is safe and effective. Depending on the nature of the study, trials may run from two to five years or longer.

“These trials are always geared to the best interest of our patients,” said Tera Gagne, Cardiovascular Research nurse manager for Community Healthcare System. “Being part of a clinical research trial gives patients an opportunity to participate in studies that directly benefit not only themselves, but others around the world who are faced with similar illness.”

Community Healthcare System is hosting nine active cardiovascular trials, including the CHAMPION-AF clinical trial featured on Pages 8 and 9 in this issue of Healthy Community. Neuroscience Research has four active studies. They range from a new device to a drug. NeVa Stent Retriever is for clot removal in stroke patients. The drug Tenecteplase extends the treatment window from 4.5 hours to 24 hours after the onset of stroke.

All clinical trials have criteria that must be met before volunteers qualify to participate. Before being enrolled, all participants receive detailed information about the treatment, benefits and risks. Participation in a clinical study is voluntary, meaning participants may leave a study at any time.

“Everyone has his or her reasons for volunteering as a research participant,” Panda said. “Engaging in a research study provides a unique opportunity to play a role in advancing modern medicine and changing the standard of care.” ■

For More Information



Cardiovascular Research: Visit [COMHS.org/heart-research-HC](https://www.comhs.org/heart-research-HC).
Neuroscience Research: Call 219-703-1483.

Climbing the Ladder

Community Healthcare System offers growth,
career development programs

by Vanessa Negrete

ANNA WEBER'S INTEREST in science started young, and medical school was on her mind as she continued through college. Then an experience in a Community Healthcare System program influenced her career trajectory.

Between her junior and senior year of college, Weber, now laboratory manager at Community Hospital, participated in a continuing medical education externship at St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart. There, she shadowed physicians and encountered different areas of medicine. Her interest turned toward the laboratory.

Programs such as externships are valuable because they expose people to careers within healthcare, said Nicole Griffin, coordinator of clinical laboratory education at Community Hospital.

"The majority of students looking for a career in healthcare are familiar with nursing, but they may not have heard of medical laboratory science, nuclear medicine or perfusion," Griffin said.

After earning a bachelor's degree, Weber participated in the Medical Laboratory Science (MLS) program at Community Hospital.

"During that program, I was fortunate enough to be hired as a laboratory fellow in the microbiology department," Weber said. "With the completion of MLS training, I was able to transition from fellow to a full-time position in microbiology."

She then moved to point-of-care supervisor, gained more experience and became lab manager in March 2022.

"Community Healthcare System fosters a culture of growth," Weber said. "They offer opportunities for education and career advancement."

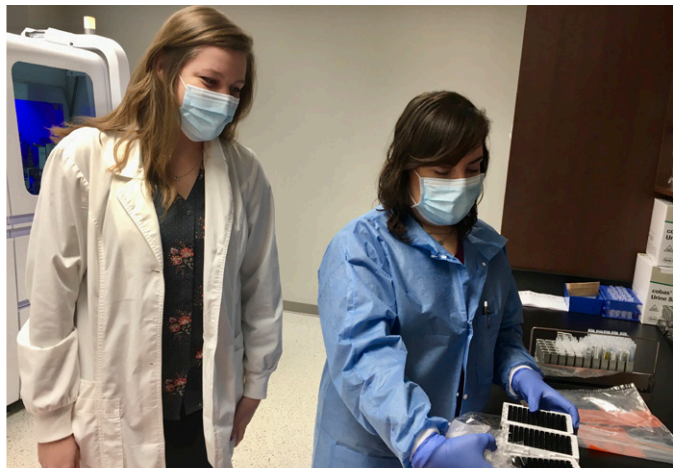
These career advancement and professional development opportunities include a nursing assistant training program, medical laboratory science program, phlebotomy program, clinical lab assistant program and pharmacy technician program.

Weber said she loves working for Community Healthcare System.

The departments work together well as an interdisciplinary team, and the camaraderie among staff makes coming to work each day enjoyable, she said.

"Community Healthcare System strives for the best patient care and outcomes," she said.

Weber grew up in Northwest Indiana, graduated from Lake Central High School, earned a bachelor's degree from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, a master's degree from Purdue University and is in the final stretch of earning an MBA from University of Southern Indiana. ■



Anna Weber, laboratory supervisor, left, observes Cassandra Bonneville, medical laboratory scientist, as she prepares supplies for a molecular testing machine at Community Hospital in Munster. Weber's interest in science started young, and she now works as laboratory manager at Community Hospital. "Community Healthcare System fosters a culture of growth," Weber said. "They offer opportunities for education and career advancement."

Professional Development



For more information about career opportunities at Community Healthcare System, visit [COMHS.org/careers-HC](https://www.comhs.org/careers-HC).

Rest Easy

Community Healthcare System's
sleep studies, treatments put you
on a path to wellness

by Kerry Erickson



When Sandy Reynolds was diagnosed with a heart condition, her physician ordered a slew of tests, including one that took her by surprise — a sleep study.

Community Care Network cardiologist Sulman Hussain, DO, wanted to check for obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), a potentially serious sleep disorder in which breathing repeatedly stops and starts.

Reynolds, of Highland, was diagnosed with mitral valve regurgitation, a type of heart valve disease in which the valve between the left heart chambers does not close completely, causing blood to leak backward across the valve.

Frequent drops in blood oxygen while sleeping increase blood pressure and strain the cardiovascular system. The more severe the obstructive sleep apnea, the greater the risk of coronary artery disease, heart attacks, heart failure and strokes.

As she prepared for the sleep study, Reynolds was anxious about being able to fall asleep in what she thought would be a hospital-like setting. After arriving for her appointment, she quickly was put at ease.

"It was like being in a hotel room, or even like being in my own bedroom," Reynolds said of her experience at Community Hospital Sleep Diagnostics in Munster. The center is one of three sleep testing facilities in Community Healthcare System, including St. Catherine Hospital Sleep Diagnostics in East Chicago and St. Mary Medical Center Sleep Diagnostics in Hobart.

A sleep technologist readied Reynolds for her night of testing. The preparation took about a half an hour and included getting fit with electrodes, a sleep mask and a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machine to monitor her sleep.

"I was able to fall asleep in about 15 minutes," she said Reynolds' test results netted comforting news. She did not have sleep apnea and was getting enough oxygen throughout the night.

"When you get to a certain age, you feel like your check engine light is blaring," said Reynolds, who is 59 years old. "I was fine four years ago, and then I was getting dizzy and had heart palpitations, and I was thinking, 'What is wrong with me?' With all the stuff going on, it was a great comfort to know that I do not have sleep apnea and I am getting enough oxygen."

Get Talking

Loud snoring may indicate a potentially serious problem.

However, not everyone who has sleep apnea snores. Talk to a doctor about scheduling a sleep study if you have the following signs or symptoms of sleep apnea:

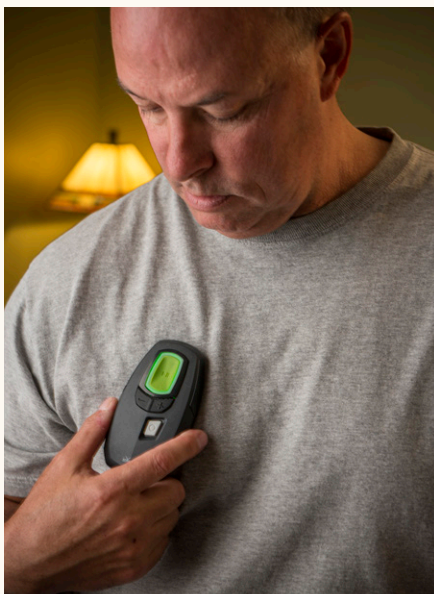
- Awakening with a dry mouth
- Difficulty paying attention while awake
- Difficulty staying asleep (insomnia)
- Episodes in which you stop breathing during sleep
- Excessive daytime sleepiness (hypersomnia)
- Gasping for air during sleep
- Irritability
- Loud snoring
- Morning headache



Above: Accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, the Sleep Diagnostics Centers of Community Healthcare System provide diagnosis to manage or end disruptive sleep behaviors. Board-certified sleep experts specialize in assessing both respiratory and non-respiratory sleep disorders in adults and children.

Right: Leonard Covello, MD, an otolaryngologist with Community Care Network, is the only physician in Northwest Indiana currently offering the Inspire implant procedure.

Below: Inspire, a small device inserted under the skin in an outpatient procedure, works with a patient's natural breathing process to treat sleep apnea. The patient uses a small handheld remote to activate Inspire.



It also is important to talk to your doctor about a sleep study if you are considering weight-loss surgery.

“There is a high incidence — about 78% — of obstructive sleep apnea in individuals seeking bariatric surgery,” said Marcia Alpuche, supervisor of Community Hospital’s Sleep Diagnostic Center. “Unfortunately, while weight loss may provide significant improvements in OSA, it usually does not result in a complete cure.”

Get Tested

The only way to determine if a person has OSA is through a sleep study.

“Your physician should set up an appointment for a sleep study, or you may self-refer to one of our three Sleep Diagnostic Centers,” Alpuche said.

The sleep study — also called a polysomnogram — is a simple, non-invasive test used to monitor sleep and breathing patterns.

“The patient-friendly environment offers the comforts of home — a

full-sized bed, flat-screen television and private bathroom — while you are evaluated by highly trained sleep physicians,” Alpuche said. “Quality sleep is essential to our emotional and physical well-being.”



Get Treatment

Obstructive sleep apnea is treatable.

CPAP is the most commonly prescribed treatment. It involves a mask and hose to send pressurized air into the airway to keep it open during sleep.

Community Healthcare System also offers Inspire Therapy.

Leonard Covello, MD, an otolaryngologist with Community Care Network, is the only physician in Northwest Indiana currently offering the Inspire implant procedure.

Inspire, a small device inserted under the skin in an outpatient procedure, works with a patient's natural breathing process to treat sleep apnea. It delivers mild stimulation to key airway muscles, allowing the airway to open during sleep. The patient uses a small handheld remote to activate Inspire before bed and deactivate it when he or she wakes up.

“Sleep should not be a battle,” Covello said. “Sleep should be rest from the battle.” ■

Healthy Sleep



To take a sleep quiz and learn more about the sleep diagnostic centers and Inspire, visit COMHS.org/sleep-HC.

Delivering Healthy Beginnings

Perinatal navigators, highly skilled staff
have youngest patients' health at heart

by Vanessa Negrete

COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE SYSTEM delivers healthy beginnings. More than a snappy slogan, those words guide patient care for mothers and babies, from recruiting the best healthcare providers to investing in high quality technology.

Pregnant patients may turn to a perinatal navigator to help with early intervention in overcoming obstacles. Patients with transportation problems, limited support systems, food insecurities and other concerns may rely on Community Healthcare System to assess their situation and help secure the services and resources they need.

“When a patient is expecting, we have two individuals who need access to healthcare and community services,” said Hope Robinson, RN, clinical

educator and coordinator of nurse navigation at Community Hospital.

“It is critical that the expectant patient is assessed early in the pregnancy for deficits in these social determinants of health so we can connect them with vital treatments and services needed to promote a healthy pregnancy and outcome.”

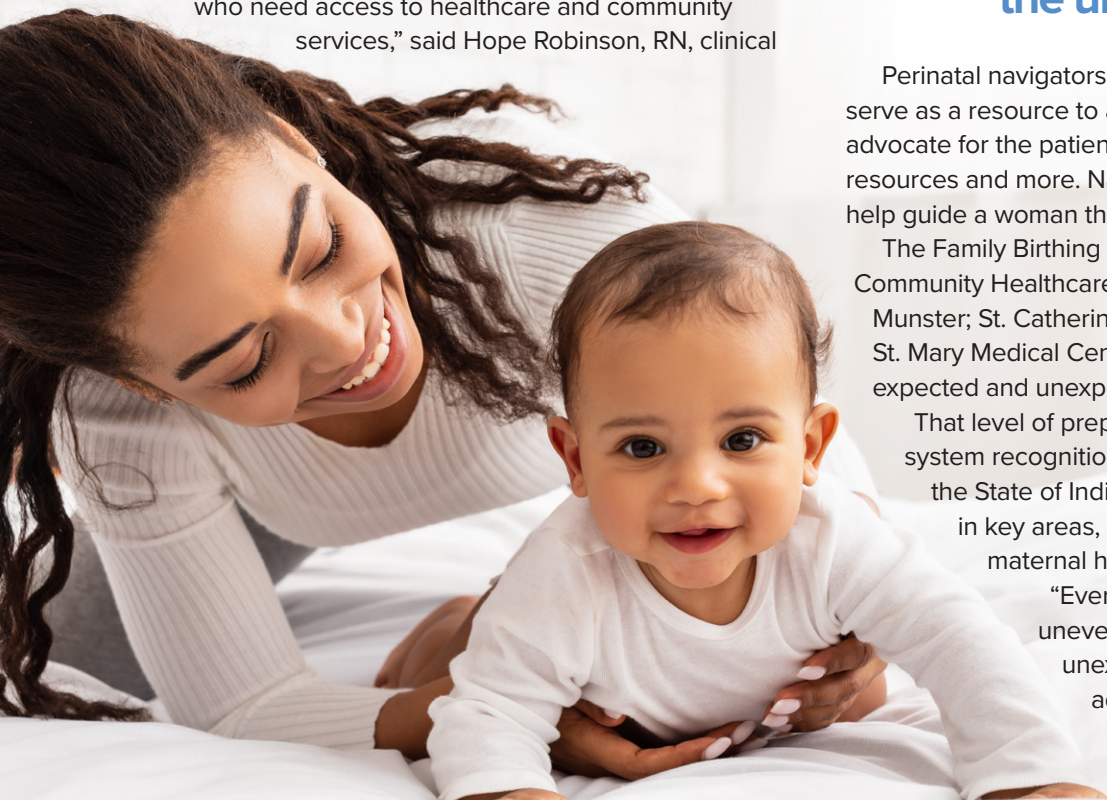
“Everyone’s goal is for a pregnancy to be uneventful, but we have to prepare for the unexpected.”

Perinatal navigators are specially trained nurses. They serve as a resource to answer questions, address concerns, advocate for the patient and her child, connect women with resources and more. Navigators serve as the extra hand to help guide a woman through her pregnancy.

The Family Birthing Centers at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System – Community Hospital, Munster; St. Catherine Hospital, East Chicago; and St. Mary Medical Center, Hobart – are prepared for the expected and unexpected.

That level of preparedness has earned the healthcare system recognition, including the INspire award from the State of Indiana, which examines best practices in key areas, including infant safe sleep and maternal hypertension.

“Everyone’s goal is for a pregnancy to be uneventful, but we have to prepare for the unexpected,” said Carla Meyer, administrative director of nursing at Community Hospital.



Continuing education programs and monthly drills help staff stay at the top of their game at St. Mary Medical Center, said Brittany Pankiewicz, RN, Family Birthing Center nurse manager at the hospital.

When an emergency arises, the team is prepared. Afterward, they comprehensively de-brief in an effort to always refine.

“By doing that, we have substantially increased our quality outcomes,” she said. “The more you train, the better care you can give.”

The Family Birthing Center at St. Mary Medical Center has a dedicated operating room for Cesarean sections and other surgical needs. It is designated a Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), which means medical staff can care for babies born at 32 weeks gestation and older. The nursery has achieved Level II OB and Level II nursery from the Indiana State Board of Health.

A top priority of the healthcare system and of the State of Indiana is to improve maternal and child wellness and reduce infant mortality numbers.

“We are proud to take a leadership stance in creating effective solutions to help mothers and babies have a healthy start during the first year,” Pankiewicz said.

Community Hospital offers an Obstetric Emergency Department (OB-ED) that treats women who have pregnancy-related medical concerns from as early as 16 weeks of pregnancy, up to six weeks postpartum. Along with the OB-ED, Community Hospital offers a maternal-fetal medicine program and laborists on staff 24/7.

The hospital is certified as an Obstetric Level of Care III and Neonatal Level of Care III facility, granted by the Maternal and Child Health Division at the Indiana Department of Health.

The designation indicates Community Hospital is equipped to care for patients facing complex maternal medical issues and for infants who require neonatal intensive care.

Community Hospital also houses a newborn follow-up clinic for high-risk babies who were treated in the NICU.

Education is essential to healthy beginnings. Community Healthcare System offers classes for expectant mothers, grandparents and siblings. The grandparents class is especially popular. In many ways, infant care has evolved over the years. One example is the best practice of placing infants to sleep on their back in an empty crib, without any blankets, toys, bumpers or any other items.

Safe sleep education begins even before a woman delivers at St. Catherine Hospital, said LaTina Ashana, RN, Family Birthing Center nurse manager at the hospital.

“We are big on educating patients, especially with infant safe sleep,” she said. “We even give them a little HALO sleep sack for swaddling.”

For more information about the Family Birthing Centers at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System – Community Hospital, Munster; St. Catherine Hospital, East Chicago; St. Mary Medical Center, Hobart, and about healthy baby initiatives, visit COMHS.org/baby-HC. ■



Above: The hospitals of Community Healthcare System have earned the Indiana Hospital Association’s INspire award for programs and education in the form of healthy mom-baby initiatives that are leading to healthier beginnings for new families.

Healthy Beginnings



For more information about the Family Birthing Centers at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System, visit COMHS.org/baby-HC.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Randy
Travis



Timeline
of a Stroke



Essential
Screenings



Heart
Health

Heart Healthy Quiz

Answer these six true/false questions.
Then check your answers.

- 1 The leading cause of stroke is high blood pressure.**
 True False
- 2 F.A.S.T. stands for Fast, Acting, Saves, Time.**
 True False
- 3 Aspirin should be given for a suspected stroke.**
 True False
- 4 Lack of physical activity is the biggest risk factor for heart disease.**
 True False
- 5 Your heart stops beating when a heart attack occurs.**
 True False
- 6 Eat only fat-free foods to protect your heart.**
 True False

Answers:

- 1) True. A healthy blood pressure is 120/80.
- 2) False. It stands for Face, Arms, Speech, Time.
- 3) False. No medication should be given during a stroke except by a medical professional.
- 4) True. Forty percent of Americans are at risk for heart disease because they are inactive.
- 5) False. When your heart stops beating, it is called cardiac arrest.
- 6) False. Some fat in moderation is good for your heart and overall health.

Sources: Kettering Health, LifeShield, webMD

