This month, UTMB celebrated Nurses & Health System Week, a special opportunity for UTMB leadership to recognize employees across the Health System and show appreciation for everything our care teams do to deliver excellent care and service to our patients and their loved ones.

This year, UTMB’s theme for 2016 Nurses & Health System Week (May 6-12) was “You Can Count on Me”. At the same time, Nurses Week was celebrated nationally with the theme, “Nursing’s Contribution to Safety and Collaboration”. Meanwhile, National Hospital Week’s theme was “Health Care from the Heart.” No matter which theme you like best, each speaks volumes of the caliber of UTMB employees.

It is no secret that our providers, nurses and employees regularly demonstrate compassion for our patients and their loved ones, both on the job and around their communities.

And lately, UTMB employees have been gaining a national reputation for their innovative contributions to improving care processes in the recently opened UTMB MakerHealth Space™.

That’s why this month, Friday Focus highlighted five nurses who are using their creativity and talent to help make a difference in health care at UTMB Health.

Meet Laura Hafferty, nurse clinician III, Neurocritical Care Unit (pictured left). When Laura isn’t busy helping save lives in the Neurocritical Care Unit (NCCU), she is busy training dogs.

Above: Neuro ICU nurse Laura Hafferty (left) and her Mutts with Manners co-worker, Trelle Dandridge, recently brought their therapy dogs, Darla (left) and Muri (right) to UTMB for Nurses Week.
Jennifer Acklen, nurse clinician V, TDCJ ICU, wanted to help increase hand hygiene compliance on her unit. Her idea: create a motion detector Hand Washing Alert System, which would prompt staff and visitors to perform hand hygiene whenever they pass a hand gel dispenser. The device even thanks them for keeping patients safe after they gel in or out.

To make her idea a reality, Jennifer visited the UTMB MakerHealth™ Space. Jennifer first discussed her plan with Nik Albarran, a researcher at MIT’s Little Devices Lab and UTMB contractor, over Skype. They decided that the best way to develop a prototype was by using a product called the TinyDuino, made by Tiny Circuits™, a company that specializes in creating tiny open source electronics.

The TinyDuino platform is the size of a quarter and is completely modular, almost like an electronic LEGO. This allows innovators like Jennifer to easily add complex functions, like speakers and motion detectors, by plugging in an expandable module.

After several visits to the MakerHealth Space, Jennifer is making progress with the device and looks forward to working with a MakerHealth Space coordinator in person during her next visit.

Andrew Maxwell Parish, a full time Program Coordinator for the MakerHealth Space, joined UTMB on May 23. He is available Monday through Friday during business hours to assist with maker projects (John Sealy Annex 5.212).

Jennifer hopes her project will further increase hand hygiene compliance across UTMB. “Upon hearing an alert from a gel dispenser, a person’s natural instinct will be to turn towards the gel dispenser, and this will help them remember to gel-in and gel-out. Innovating a Hand Washing Alert System that is motion activated could help UTMB maintain the strides it has made toward 100 percent hand hygiene compliance across the entire organization.”

Meredith Hartzog, nurse clinician V, Adult Patient Care Services (pictured left) was recently recognized in the Houston Chronicle’s “Salute to Nurses”. She has also taken advantage of the UTMB MakerHealth™ Space. When she noticed that backboards were being stacked up on the floor, instead of ordering hangers for them, she stopped by the space and made them herself.

“It saved a lot of money, and now I’m making one for each unit,” she said.

She’s also working on a device for the central monitoring unit. “I’m trying to make something so they can hang their telemetry leads. Currently, staff roll up the cords, but that can lead to broken wires. To cut down on cord replacements, I’m developing something that will hang 300 lead sets.”

All UTMB employees are invited to visit the MakerHealth Space to bring their ideas for improving health care to life.

Gwen Hildebrand, nurse clinician III, Neurology/Neurocritical Care (pictured right), was recognized alongside Meredith in the Houston Chronicle’s “Salute to Nurses”.

The salute recognizes the top 150 nurses in Houston’s growing healthcare community and are selected by a panel of experts. The list is published in the Houston Chronicle during National Nurses Week.

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Juanita Norton, interim nurse manager, Pediatric Unit & Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, is a “Do-the-2” campaign proponent.

Focused on encouraging healthcare providers to use two patient identifiers (name, date of birth and/or medical identification number), the goal of the campaign is to promote the positive identification of every patient prior to every test, treatment or procedure.

Juanita has been a central force in creating and promoting the campaign because she knows firsthand how important it is to “Do-the-2.” She recently shared her story as part of a monthly video series that emphasizes this important patient safety action.

While working at another hospital one evening, Juanita became very sick and had to visit the emergency room to be examined. After some time, the doctors came in and recommended a very aggressive course of action, including a blood transfusion, even though Juanita was beginning to feel better and didn’t feel that it was necessary. She asked the physicians to repeat her blood labs. After a few hours, the doctors returned and said her blood was fine. Juanita was confused—there was a large discrepancy between what the doctors originally told her and the new results. Then it dawned on Juanita what happened.

“I noticed when they took my blood labs the first time, they didn’t do the two patient identifiers. When they came back and redrew my labs, they didn’t do the two patient identifiers, either—this is something every nurse knows needs to be done with every blood draw. I questioned them about the difference between the test results, and the doctor said the original results were for another patient. If I hadn’t spoken up, I would have received blood products that weren’t meant for me, and the outcome could have been very disastrous.

“My primary concern was that they didn’t do right by the patients by verifying the two patient identifiers. As a result, the other patient who was very ill didn’t get the treatment that she needed before she left the hospital that day.”

Juanita urges all providers to avoid making the same mistake.

“Please help prevent this or something worse from happening to your patient. Do-the-2. Verify two patient identifiers, every patient, every time.”

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**National Asthma And Allergy Awareness Month: The Importance of Pharmacist’s Role**

Submitted by Hoang A. Huynh, PharmD, MBA PGY1 Pharmacy Resident, Department of Pharmacy

As the spring season begins, so does allergy and asthma season. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), asthma affects more than 25 million Americans, and it is one of the most common long-term disease states of children. Additionally, more than 50 million Americans suffer from allergies and the rate continues to climb. The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) has declared May of each year as “National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month,” and it is officially recognized by the CDC and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

Managing asthma patients, especially pediatric asthma patients, starts from the initial diagnosis or hospitalization. Pharmacists can provide discharge education to these patients—a key to increasing awareness of this disease. An asthma education session includes a description of the pathophysiology of asthma, identification of triggers and ways to minimize exposure, and discussion of patient’s medications and common side effects. Pharmacists also review the Asthma Action Plan to reinforce patients’ knowledge.

As patients’ care continue to an ambulatory care setting, an ambulatory care pharmacist will work closely with physicians to appropriately manage and monitor these medications’ effectiveness. They can help to determine if patients need to step-up or step-down their therapy based on the level of asthma severity. Once patients receive a new prescription, the outpatient pharmacist can counsel on specific points regarding these asthma medications. Outpatient pharmacists can also recommend treatment modalities for those who suffer from allergy symptoms. Overall, pharmacists can be essential practitioners for asthma and allergy patients, because they are present at all phases of patients’ care.

The AAFA and the “Get Smart About Asthma” websites provide tips and educational tools for managing asthma and allergies. Patients can also consult their pharmacists for additional recommendations since they are presence throughout patient’s care continuum, from inpatient to ambulatory care to outpatient. As a medication expert, pharmacists can optimize therapeutic regimens and help reduce asthma exacerbations and hospitalizations for these patients.

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2001 to 2010 National Asthma & Allergy Awareness Month.
In an era of reality TV shows, “The Biggest Loser” has been one of the “biggest winners” since it debuted in October 2004. The concept is simple—whoever loses the most weight during the competition wins. Many of the competitors arrive on the show carrying weight that they have gained gradually over their lifetimes. Through what most consider a Herculean effort, the contestants rapidly shed this weight through exercise, extreme caloric restriction, and the support of a team of doctors, psychologists, trainers, and dietitians. The all-time Biggest Loser shed 262 pounds in just thirty weeks.

In 2008, researchers from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases began a study of the contestants in an attempt to unravel the secrets of weight loss for obese individuals. To track the success of the contestants’ long-term weight loss, the team measured both their resting metabolic rate and body composition and followed them for six years after the competition. The findings of the study, published in the Journal of Obesity, are disheartening.

Researchers discovered that the contestants’ metabolism had not only slowed with the initial weight loss, but it remained slow, even six years later. In an apparent attempt to halt further weight loss, their bodies became very efficient in fuel utilization. In other words, after the sudden weight loss, the dieters’ bodies functioned more like fuel-sipping Prius cars than gas guzzling Mack trucks! That efficiency is a blessing for some people in the world, but for those trying to maintain weight loss, it is a curse!

Researchers learned that in order to maintain their weight loss, these individuals must consume nearly five hundred fewer calories per day than another person of comparable size. As if that were not enough of a challenge, their bodies also try to regain the lost weight by releasing a surge of hormones that bombard their brains with the message, “Hunger!” A person who has lost a great deal of weight, and who is determined to keep it off, must constantly battle his or her body—for years.

While this news is sobering, there is still a lot we still don’t know about obesity and weight loss. We cannot be certain that this extensively studied small group is representative of everyone who loses weight. We have no idea when or if the body will ever accept the “new normal”. The findings of this particular research study point us in two possible directions to counter the body’s insistence on obesity: we can search for agents that increase the body’s metabolic rate (without the undesirable side effects of amphetamines), and/or we can find ways to prevent the release of those hormones that drive us to eat.

It has long been understood that losing weight and keeping it off is a daunting task. Now we have a better idea of why. As a physician, I know I will be more understanding when an overweight patient expresses frustration and says that they eat like a bird and still gain weight.

Obesity is both a serious health risk. High blood pressure, coronary artery disease, diabetes, and premature death are all related to obesity. I believe the best approach to weight loss is to begin by taking small, steady steps toward a healthier lifestyle. That way, the body may not try to counteract sudden weight loss (what it possibly perceives as a threat).

Simple changes like eating a little healthier and watching portion sizes can make a big difference. Exercise more. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Park toward the back of the parking lot instead of at the front. This adds activity to your day and will help increase your fitness level. Even though these actions may not result in all of the weight loss you desire, you will significantly reduce our lifetime risk for heart disease, cancer and diabetes. You might even feel better and more empowered to continue and increase your efforts. With luck, you might become the biggest winner!

1Fothergill E, Guo, J, Howard, L, et al. Persistent metabolic adaptation 6 years after “The Biggest Loser” competition. Article first published online: 2 MAY 2016. DOI: 10.1002/oby.21538 © 2016 The Obesity Society
On May 11, a special awards ceremony was held to recognize excellence among staff members in Correctional Managed Care (CMC) TDCJ Hospital Galveston. The event coincided with Nurses & Health System Week.

The “Owen Murray Award for Excellence” event was hosted by none other than Dr. Owen Murray, chief medical officer and chief physician executive, CMC, himself. He was joined by Dr. Olugbenga Ojo, chief medical officer and chief physician executive, TDCJ Hospital Galveston and Clinics.

“Nursing is a calling,” said Murray, “but the nurses in Hospital Galveston truly go above and beyond for a unique patient population.”

Keynote speakers included Deb McGrew, chief operating officer, UTMB Health System, and Dr. David Marshall, chief nursing and patient services officer. Said McGrew of the members of CMC, “When people ask me what sort of individuals choose to deliver health care in a correctional environment, my response is simply, “The Best.” Both speakers underscored the high levels of clinical competency and exceptionally compassionate care delivered by CMC professionals.

These statements rang especially true as Drs. Murray and Ojo presented the nominations and awards for nursing and administrative excellence. Mohamud Mohamed, nurse clinician III, Medical/Surgical Telemetry, was the winner of this year’s Owen Murray Award for Nursing Excellence. A geriatric offender recently said of the care he received from Mohamud, “No one in my entire life has ever cared for me like this nurse did.”

Kellie Perrone, a patient care technician in the Transitional Care Unit, was the recipient of the Award for Administrative Excellence. Kellie received the award for “always going the extra mile to assist her peers and other staff…she anticipates

(Above) ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE AWARD nominees and awardee. Pictured from left to right: Dr. Olugbenga Ojo; Bridget Jones, senior business coordinator, Nursing Administration (second runner up); Kellie Perrone, patient care technician in the Transitional Care Unit (awardee); Jessica Wallace, patient placement coordinator; Oralia “Lolly” Zuniga, clinic service representative, Scheduling (first runner up); Hemal Amin, health unit coordinator, Surgery; Lori Glycenfer, health unit coordinator, Transitional Care Unit; and Dr. Owen Murray.

“Cure sometimes, treat often, comfort always.”

HIPPOCRATES

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The UTMB Health and UTMB Health Angleton Danbury Stroke Program has received the American Heart Association’s Get with the Guidelines™ Bronze Quality Achievement Award.

The award recognizes hospitals that have demonstrated at least 85 percent compliance in each of the seven Get with the Guidelines-Stroke Achievements Measures for 90 consecutive days.

UTMB Health and the League City community celebrated the completion of League City Hospital with a ribbon cutting ceremony on May 3, 2016. The hospital is officially scheduled to open for patient care on June 4 at the League City Campus.

The full-service hospital features a 24-hour emergency department with full diagnostic capabilities. Labor, delivery and postpartum services, as well as specialized nursery services, are offered. The facility includes 10 operating rooms and perioperative services for endoscopy and cardiac catheterization, as well as beds for patients requiring overnight stays.

For more information, visit utmb.edu/league-city-campus. To schedule an appointment, call 409-772-2222 or visit UTMBHealth.com.
University Federal Credit Union recently awarded the UTMB Nursing Department $5,000 to increase the number of certified nurses at UTMB Health.

The first 33 individuals to successfully complete the certification exam who meet the following criteria will be reimbursed $150 of the exam fee:

- Applicant must be a full or part-time employee at the time of the application and at the time of reimbursement
- This must be the applicant’s first certification in the specialty area
- Applicant must be under no current disciplinary action

Submit the application, located on the Nursing Service website (http://intranet.utmb.edu/nursing) under the “Forms” tab to Barbara Bonificio at babonifi@utmb.edu.

As a member of the UTMB Diversity Council, when I hear co-workers discuss diversity, it is usually in terms of race, age, gender, gender expression, or culture. However, diversity also includes ways in which diseases and mental health affect an individual’s life and change the way society regards an individual.

We may be familiar with the symptoms of mental illnesses identified by doctors and other professionals, but if one has not personally experienced these symptoms, would they know how to recognize it?

Often, clinical terms don’t do justice to what life with a mental illness feels like. Two people with the same diagnosis can experience the different symptoms and to different degrees. They may also describe the way they feel in very different ways. As a result, understanding and recognizing how mental illness feels may feel confusing—and sometimes can contribute to ongoing silence or hesitation to get help.

It is important that people are able to talk about how it feels to live with a mental illness without the fear of discrimination or rejection. Today, we know that mental illnesses are common and treatable, and help is available. But not everyone knows what to look for when they are going through those early stages of a diagnosis. It is important to speak up early—Before Stage 4—and in real, relatable terms so that people do not feel isolated and alone.

Addressing mental illnesses B4Stage4 means more than burying feelings and waiting for symptoms to clear up on their own. B4Stage4 means more than wishing that mental health problems aren’t real and hoping that they will never get worse. B4Stage4 means more than thinking that someone on the edge of a crisis will always pull himself or herself back without our help or praying that someone else will intervene before a crisis occurs.

B4Stage4 means, in part, talking about what mental illnesses feel like, and then acting on that information. It means giving voice to feelings and fears, and to hopes and dreams. It means empowering people as agents of their own recovery. It means changing the trajectories of our own lives for the better and helping those we love change theirs.

So let’s talk about what life with a mental illness feels like, to voice what we are feeling, and so others can know they are not alone. May is Mental Health Month, and the Diversity Council would like to raise awareness of the importance of speaking up about mental health.

Individuals are invited to share what life with a mental illness feels like by tagging social media posts with #mentalillnessfeelslike. Posting with this hashtag is a way to speak up, share your point of view with others who may be struggling with mental illness, or help others who think they may be suffering from a similar condition.

The Life with a Mental Illness campaign is meant to help remove the shame and stigma of speaking out, so that more people can be comfortable coming out of the shadows and seeking the help they need. Whether you are in Stage 1 and just learning about those early symptoms, or are dealing with what it means to be in Stage 4, sharing how it feels can be part of your recovery.
Congratulations to Rhonda Kurtz, PT, DPT, CWS and Jocelyn Wilson, OTR/L, MOT who presented their poster, “Strategies for Prone Positioning on a Tilt Table—A Multidisciplinary Approach” at the 48th Annual Meeting of the American Burn Association.

I was recently hospitalized with a health crisis on April 8-12 of 2016, and I would like to share my experience during my stay at Jennie Sealy. The following staff members treated me exceptionally well. Ben RN with Rose CNA, Nadia RN with Jennifer CNA, Glady RN and her CNA plus other RNs and their CNAs. From housekeeping Ms. Betsy Martinez and countless others that help me during my stay. There are other team members that I fail to mention because, at the moment, cannot remember their names; my apologies. I started at the old hospital and the move to the new hospital was a smooth transition; the staff made the move effortless. These individuals not only provided health care one expects to receive, but they went beyond the call of duty, offering compassion, empathy, reassurance, listened to me, a smile and sometimes a little humor to set me at ease. They are the epitome of what healthcare providers should be. I hope they are commended beyond this letter for the hard work and care they provide their patients.

I have been in Dr. Daneshvari Solanki’s care for quite a few years. She has always been consistent and professional and her staff are wonderful. (Pain Control)

Shout out to Dr. Laurie Kilborne who was on call all weekend and stayed with me through my entire procedure, even during my recovery. (Anesthesiology, Angleton Danbury Campus)

My lactation nurse, Martha Urbina, was helpful and encouraging. She came by twice to check on me and the baby. (Obstetrics)

Our family loves Dr. Beena Thomas. She is very thorough, gives her full attention to my children when she sees them, addresses all my questions and most importantly, she cares about my children's health. (Children’s Clinic of Clear Lake)

Dr. Cynthia Binder has my complete confidence. Even if she’s out of the clinic I am able to reach her directly by phone and she is always kind, supportive, encouraging and knowledgeable. She is truly a wonderful doctor and lady! (Texas City Pediatrics)

I cannot praise Dr. Richard Wagner enough. Dermatology resident Dr. Emily Grimsaw is on track to be pillar in her field! (UHC Dermatology)

Dr. Randall Urban is the perfect combination of intelligence, medical knowledge and compassion. He responds to patient questions and needs quickly, patiently and caringly. Despite a heavy schedule, he always demonstrates genuine concern and attentiveness to patient needs and concerns. (Endocrinology, PCP Internal Medicine Specialties)

Dr. Patricia Stockman listens carefully and takes time to make sure she understands you. I trust her completely. (Friendswood Pedi/Adult Specialties)

Dr. Maurice Willis and his team have always kept me informed, provided copies of results and discussed results with me to make sure I understand the course of action of treatment. (Oncology)

Dr. Patricia Litchfield and her staff are very loving and caring about the needs of their patient. (Occupational and Physical Therapy)

I was a patient prior to the opening of the Jennie Sealy Hospital and remained hospitalized during the transition from one building to another. I wanted to write to say how smooth of a transition it was and the staff I was in contact with along the way made the move effortless. I was treated exceptionally well by everyone. From nurses to housekeeping, everyone provided top notch service and care. UTMB not only provided the healthcare one expects to receive, but they went above and beyond the call of duty. They are the epitome of what healthcare providers should be.
Nurses & Health System Week 2016
Thank You For All You Do!