Transforming rural healthcare in Kansas

Federal grant helps new group target heart disease, stroke

Northwest Kansas is home to some of the country’s most rural communities – and it’s also at the center of a pioneering new healthcare initiative targeting heart disease and strokes.

The program involves numerous organizations: The University of Kansas Hospital, Hays Medical Center, 10 critical access hospitals, a federally qualified health center and primary care physicians and specialists serving northwest Kansas.

Funded by a $12.5 million federal grant, the groups established the Kansas Heart and Stroke Collaborative to focus on improving the prevention, diagnosis, management and treatment of heart disease and stroke, the No. 1 cause of death in Kansas.

“The primary objective of the collaborative is to provide new models of care and payment across the continuum of care to improve clinical outcomes and reduce healthcare costs in rural Kansas,” said Barbara MacArthur, RN, Cardiac Services vice president at our hospital.

“Through this program, we will implement new strategies to more effectively manage patients’ treatment, post-care and long-term care – from primary care providers to community hospitals to medical centers.”

Another component is a preventive health program focused on at-risk patients. The collaborative will establish care managers and health coaches within rural communities to engage residents in improving their health through personalized education, health screenings and ongoing monitoring.

The goal of the three-year grant is to reduce deaths from stroke and heart attack in northwest Kansas by 20 percent while reducing healthcare costs by $13.8 million (1.9 percent savings). The savings will make the program financially sustainable after grant funding ends.

With all members working together, the collaborative will:
- Develop shared clinical guidelines for moving patients to the next level of care
- Provide care coordination and management
- Deliver more telemedicine resources
- Leverage electronic health information exchanges
- Establish standards and procedures to increase efficiency and economies of scale
- Design and deploy payment models to support rural providers
- Create a forum for sharing best practices and regional care strategies

“We believe the collaborative’s innovative models will ensure rural Kansans receive the right care at the right place at the right time,” MacArthur said.

By the Numbers: Patient growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Inpatient discharges</th>
<th>Outpatient visits</th>
<th>Emergency Department visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>31,070</td>
<td>663,360</td>
<td>53,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>30,689</td>
<td>562,977</td>
<td>50,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>28,331</td>
<td>530,918</td>
<td>47,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>26,998</td>
<td>365,223</td>
<td>45,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>26,180</td>
<td>361,652</td>
<td>46,209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FY 2014 increase in outpatient visits: 17.8%
**Events**

- **Breast cancer survivorship** – Back in the Swing Breast Cancer Survivorship is 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 27, at Johnson County Community College Hospitality and Culinary Academy. It offers a comprehensive, personalized, multidisciplinary approach to breast cancer survivorship care. Register at jccc.edu/alumni or call 913-469-2323.

- **Bicycle ‘tour’** – The Sixth Annual Tour de BBQ is Saturday, Sept. 27, at the Prairiefire Entertainment District in Overland Park. The event features bicycle routes of 15, 35 and 62 miles, with KC’s most famous BBQ restaurants providing samples. Proceeds benefit the Midwest Cancer Alliance Survivorship Transition Clinic. For information and to register, visit tourdebbq.com.

- **Alumni reunion** – The University of Kansas Medical Center’s Alumni Reunion Weekend is Oct. 10-11. The weekend includes tours, educational presentations and social functions. Details are at kumc.edu/alumni.

- **Vision awareness fun** – KU Eye will host a free “In Sight Out” picnic 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Oct. 11 at Franklin Park in Prairie Village. The event features screenings for vision, hearing, blood sugar and blood pressure, as well as family activities. For details and registration, visit kumc.edu, search “KU Eye” and then go to Upcoming Events.

- **Boots and breast cancer** – Nigro’s Western Store will host “Giddy Up for Boots and Breast Cancer” 5-9 p.m. Oct. 23 at its store in Kansas City, Kan. Billed as “a girls’ night out full of shopping and fun,” the evening includes a $10 donation, drinks and appetizers. Some proceeds benefit the University of Kansas Cancer Center. Breast cancer physicians from the cancer center will be on hand to meet guests. Call 913-262-7500 for information.

---

**PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT**

**Sharing medical expertise with the world**

It may be based in America’s Heartland, but the University of Kansas Medical Center has expanded its global reach, thanks in large part to the Office of International Programs.

Each year the five-person office facilitates international travel and related arrangements for approximately 400 students, physicians and researchers.

Most of them are from other countries attending our medical center for education and training. About a fourth are going the other direction – domestic students, physicians and staff traveling abroad. Their goal also is education and research, or medical missions to disadvantaged countries.

**Kimberly Connelly,** who directs the international office, said the worldwide crisscross of experts and their knowledge is fundamental to an academic medical center.

“In a global society, it is essential that we experience firsthand the people and healthcare challenges of other countries,” she said. “We do everything possible in our office to make sure the experience for our students, physicians and international visitors is safe and satisfying.”

The office focuses on ensuring travelers have visas and proper insurance and paperwork. Staff also have increased the number of educational workshops designed to prepare travelers for immersion in a new culture, including new “Culture Hour” sessions each week.

The medical center has partnerships with 20 countries, from Australia to Zambia. **Doug Girod,** MD, the medical center’s executive vice chancellor, lauds the international office’s ability to help students, researchers and physicians connect with healthcare needs worldwide.

“The vast majority of our domestic students will end up practicing healthcare in the United States, and many right here in Kansas,” Girod said. “But that doesn’t detract from the importance of understanding the relationship between healthcare and society in other cultures.”

---

**EXPOSURE**

**Treads & Threads magic**

Music… dancing… fireworks… gourmet food from more than 20 top restaurants — it was all part of another successful Treads & Threads, The University of Kansas Hospital’s 13th annual fundraiser for cancer patient care. Held Sept. 5 at Kansas Speedway, the black-tie gala attracted approximately 3,500 people and generated more than $1.4 million. Proceeds will support personalized cancer treatment, including genetic counseling and a new palliative care suite for patients and their families. This year’s sold-out event also boasted a record number of sponsorships. At right, guests enjoyed a concert with pop singer-songwriter **Gavin DeGraw** and danced until midnight to the music of Emerald City Band. Far right, **Debbie and Russ Welsh,** with DeGraw, were this year’s event chairs. See more photos at treadsandthreads.org.
New rapid response team at Westwood

A rapid response team (RRT) is now available at The University of Kansas Cancer Center’s Westwood Campus. Like RRTs at the main campus, the group of six nurses offers medical intervention at the first sign of clinical deterioration in anyone on campus – patients, visitors or staff.

"As we treat more and more patients at the cancer center, the need for immediate medical care has increased," said Thu Janes, RN, KUCC-Westwood assistant director. "Our team provides an extra set of hands until emergency personnel can be on the scene." People should not hesitate to call an RRT for any reason. Call 913-588-5656 to activate an RRT at the main campus or Westwood Campus. The Westwood RRT is available 7 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Friday.

2nd floor Radiology services expanding

Starting next month, the southwest side of The University of Kansas Hospital’s second floor will receive a complete makeover. Home to Radiology, the area is being expanded to meet the increasing demand for imaging and Interventional Radiology services.

The $14 million remodel includes Outpatient Radiology, Interventional Radiology, Nuclear Medicine, Diagnostic Ultrasound and Radiology reading rooms. The renovation is scheduled for completion in fall 2015.

Head/neck cancer awareness at The K

For its third and final health awareness event at Kauffman Stadium this season, The University of Kansas Hospital turned the spotlight on head and neck cancer.

Highlights of the Sept. 12 event:

- Teresa Walsh tossed out the first pitch to Terry Tsue, MD, The University of Kansas Cancer Center’s physician-in-chief. Walsh, who is a cancer survivor, and her husband created the Walsh Family Foundation Patient Navigation Fund. More recently the couple founded HNC Living Foundation, which provides financial help to people suffering from head and neck cancers.
- James “Hooty” Wade, a parotid (salivary gland) cancer survivor – and T-Bones bullpen catcher – was honored in the Buck O’Neil legacy seat.
- The hospital’s previous health awareness days at The K focused on concussions and skin cancer.
Our People

Burn survivors offer ‘peer support’ – Burn patients and their families at The University of Kansas Hospital will soon receive extra support from a very knowledgeable source: former burn patients.

The new program is called SOAR, short for Survivors Offering Assistance in Recovery. Developed in 2001 by The Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, along with a national committee of experts, it has since spread to 63 hospitals around the nation. Ours is the only member in the Kansas City area.

Though they won’t dispense medical or rehabilitation advice, the former burn patients and families will offer a special type of care, said Rehabilitation Services’ Janelle Epp, OT, one of four people who coordinate the SOAR program at our hospital.

“Our burn center staff can educate and assist with the emotional and psychological aspects of a burn injury,” she said. “But there is nothing like talking and sharing with someone who’s been through a similar experience.”

Ten burn survivors participated in our hospital’s first SOAR training session this summer. The one-day session featured lectures, discussions, case studies and role-playing. Participants reviewed their role as “peer supporters,” as well as communication skills and the process of psychosocial recovery for patients and families.

The Midwest Regional Burn Foundation funded the SOAR program at our hospital, including education materials and trainers.

Epp believes SOAR adds another dimension to our Burnett Burn Center’s support services. “For burn victims, recovery is more than medical treatment;” she said. “Peer visits help reduce fears. They also increase patients’ hopefulness and sense of belonging.”

Outstanding resident – Internal Medicine’s Kelsey Able, DO, has received The University of Kansas Hospital’s Outstanding Resident Award. Hospital nurses each quarter recognize a medical resident who demonstrates excellence in practice.

“Dr. Able not only excels in her clinical knowledge and skill set, but also in her ability to connect with patients and their families,” wrote a nurse on Unit 63, who nominated her.

“Every time I had a concern regarding a patient, she would come to that patient’s room at her next free moment to personally assess the situation. I have been a nurse for over 10 years and have never encountered a resident more deserving of an award than Dr. Kelsey Able.”

The Outstanding Resident Award, which is open to any of the approximately 500 residents at the hospital, honors excellence in professionalism, quality and patient and family care.