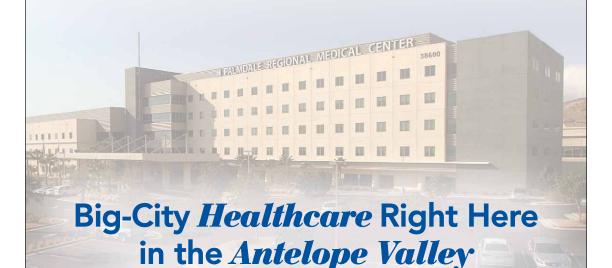


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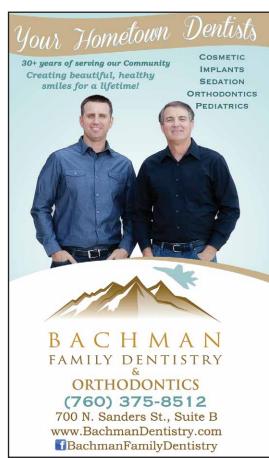
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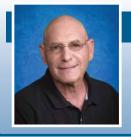
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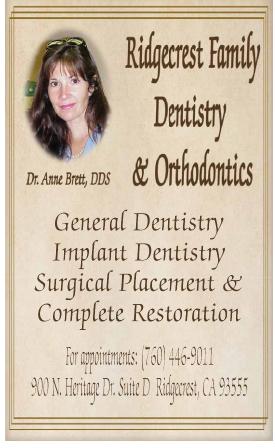
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relatively new program that uses transitional-care nurses to identify specific health needs of geriatric patients in emergency rooms is cutting their rates of hospitalizations and leading to better medical outcomes.

About one-third of patients older than 65 who visit an emergency room nationwide end up being hospitalized, but this new program can cut that rate, according to a study by researchers from Mount Sinai Health System in New York City; St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center in Paterson, New Jersey; and Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

The Geriatric Emergency
Department Innovations in Care
through Workforce, Informatics and
Structural Enhancements, or GEDI
WISE, program launched in 2012.
At the three hospitals that were part
of the study, a patient was 10
percent more likely to be discharged
from the hospital when compared
to the same type of patient not seen

by such a transitional nurse.

Interventions initiated during an older patient's arrival in the emergency room have a significant impact on care, said lead investigator Ula Hwang, MD, associate professor of emergency medicine and of geriatrics and palliative medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

"Specifically trained advancedpractice nurses target older adults through questions and assessments to see if they can face a safe discharge," Hwang said.

Specialized triage

While a patient who has suffered cardiac arrest is not going to be sent home, others who may have come in for a cough or a fall may be. In the past, though, many of these individuals were "social admissions," Hwang said, meaning no safe discharge arrangements could be made for the patient, so he or she was hospitalized.

Transitional-care nurses assess patients for cognitive function, delirium, agitation, functional status, falls risk and caregiver strain.

A score-based assessment determines the extent of care that will be delivered in the emergency department, Hwang said.

Nurses ask questions to understand the bigger picture of what's going on in a patient's life, Hwang said: What medications are you taking, and do you have other underlying medical conditions? What level of social support do you have at home? Can you care for yourself or do you need help?

If discharged, patients will receive follow-up calls, receive counseling from a social worker or sometimes be transferred to a nursing home.

Ahead of a trend?

Programs like GEDI WISE are trending nationwide. In 2013, the American College of Emergency Physicians, **American Geriatrics** Society and Society for Academic Emergency Medicine joined with the **Emergency Nurses** Association to develop and publish the Geriatric **Emergency Department** Guidelines. In 2017 the first ACEP Geriatric **Emergency Accreditation**

became available for such ERs.

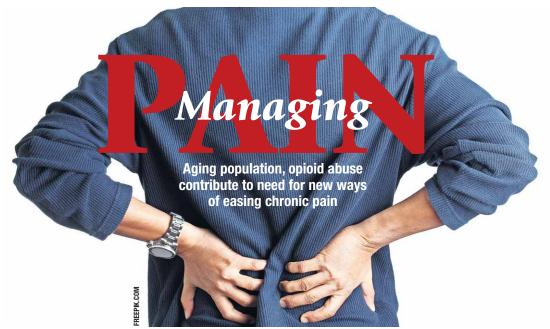
"Bottom line, the population is aging. Hospitals and health-care systems have to focus on this vulnerable aging population. At a time when the national average for emergency department admissions with older adults is on the rise, programs that can reduce hospitalization risk are crucial," Hwang said.

Hospitals can be a dangerous place for older adults, Hwang said. Some risks include adverse drug effects, falls, cognitive decline and ulcers. More than 30 percent of older adults develop a hospital-associated disability after an acute admission, and many do not return to their previous functional state.

Nurses are a central part of making programs like this work, Hwang said. "They play an interdisciplinary role working" with other medical professionals including social workers, pharmacists, doctors, physical therapists and home health aides, she said.

"Bottom line, the population is aging. Hospitals and healthcare systems have to focus on this vulnerable aging population. At a time when the national average for emergency department admissions with older adults is on the rise, programs that can reduce hospitalization risk are crucial."

Ula Hwang



By Melissa Erickson More Content

hen it comes to a patient's pain management, nurses are leading the way. When zero pain is not an option, nurses help alleviate discomfort by understanding and acknowledging pain, being responsive and involved in care, and communicating effectively as patient educators.

Considering herself new in the area of pain research, Janiece Taylor, RN, assistant professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing, lets frustration drive her instead of holding her back. "Pain really is outside the box," Taylor said.

For nurses who love caregiving but struggle with doubt about how to treat pain, Taylor says, "Don't give up." She hopes her research might one day "be making it just a little bit easier for that brand-new nurse" out there.

New solutions for pain

Nurses play a huge role in pain management.

"We advocate for our patients in so many ways whether through research, at the bedside or as advanced-practice nurses," Taylor said. "It is essential that we stay up to date on current research surrounding pain management and that we don't treat chronic pain patients all the same. We cannot forget how individualized the pain experience is and how different strategies work differently in our patients."

A researcher in the area of pain management, Taylor's current work "focuses on new and innovative ways to address pain among communitydwelling older adults living with various types of pain. I seek to find ways that can be easily used in the community/home setting that are not necessarily pharmacological in nature but can complement pharmacology or serve

as the main pain management tools in those who are not able to take pain medications," she said.

Her research is a crucial piece of addressing the opioid crisis.

"Pain researchers are working tirelessly to find alternative options for pain management. Although there is a place for opioids, however, it is important to find practical alternatives to reduce the risk of not just addiction but side effects," Taylor said.

Especially exciting are new developments in managing pain through the use of virtual reality as well as in mental health, Taylor said.

Keep fighting

Pain can be overwhelming, but Taylor urges people to never give up on pain management. Communication between providers and patients is a simple yet effective component to adequately managing pain, she said.

Patients should "advocate for themselves with their providers and don't just live with the pain. Express any concerns, questions or challenges to keep communication open with providers. There are other options that can compliment pharmacological pain management," she said.

For her fellow nurses, Taylor also encourages tenacity.

"It can seem very difficult but we must try to identify effective and successful treatments that can be sustained over the long haul," she said. "Education in pain management among nurses is a vital component to addressing pain in our aging populations and those experiencing chronic disabling pain."

"It is essential that we stay up to date on current research surrounding pain management and that we don't treat chronic pain patients all the same. We cannot forget how individualized the pain experience is and how different strategies work differently in our patients."

Janiece Taylor









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