

CULTIVATING *health*

Garfield County Hospital District | Fall 2023



Garfield County
Hospital District
Caring for Generations

Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking the time to read our Fall 2023 issue of Cultivating Health, Garfield County Hospital District's health magazine. As the year draws to a close, it gives us a chance to look back on 2023 and appreciate the many blessings this year has provided.

This edition features some spectacular stories we're excited for you to enjoy. They all focus on the exceptional care our providers deliver, across a wide variety of different health services. This exceptional care is a reflection of our dedication to you — our patients — and our mission to help you live your healthiest life.

One of the stories is about a patient who is receiving care from our transitional-care team, comprised of many different providers that help with this swing-bed care. This team is helping him recover from past injuries, so he can safely return home when he is healed and ready to do so. We're grateful this patient was willing to share his first-hand account and proud our team is delivering such high-quality transitional care.

We also feature a must-read story about November being Diabetes Awareness Month. In this article, one of our providers shares helpful insights into this prevalent disease, a breakdown of the differences between Type 1 and Type 2, and actionable steps on how to prevent the onset of Type 2.

In this edition, we also highlight GCHD's unique diagnostic (DX) ultrasound services, made even more comprehensive by our investment in the ACUSON Juniper Ultrasound System in 2021, thanks to COVID-19 stimulus funds. Through this technology, our radiology department has been able to help many more patients, ensuring they can receive ultrasound exams close to home.

It is a pleasure to share this publication with you, and we look forward to continuing to serve our community with high quality health care. Thank you for trusting us to be your health partners.

Yours in good health,

Jayd Keener & Mat Slaybaugh

Co-Chief Executive Officers



Mat Slaybaugh, DPT



Jayd Keener, CNO

EXPERT DIAGNOSTIC ULTRASOUND SERVICES THROUGH GCHD

Local Patients Benefit from Siemens
ACUSON Juniper Ultrasound Technology

Driving more than 30 miles for an ultrasound is no longer a reality for Pomeroy-area residents thanks to Garfield County Hospital District's (GCHD) 2021 investment in expert diagnostic (DX) ultrasound technology.

Through COVID-19 stimulus funds, the hospital purchased a Siemens ACUSON Juniper Ultrasound System that year and, upon its installment, the GCHD radiology department started providing basic ultrasound services to patients.

"Our patients are so happy to be able to stay local and not have to drive to the next nearest facility, which is about 30 minutes away," shared Rob Maves, Diagnostic Medical Sonographer who performs general, vascular and cardiac ultrasound procedures at GCHD. "That distance can be difficult for patients, especially in the winter. This ACUSON Juniper has been wonderful for the community."

The ACUSON Juniper is a shared services system that allows GCHD sonographers to perform a variety of DX tests - through one lightweight and compact machine that delivers powerful capabilities.

Maves - who has more than 30 years of experience working with DX ultrasound - pointed out that, even if a patient sees a physician that is outside the Pomeroy area, ultrasounds can be performed at GCHD.

GCHD's radiology department is conveniently located next to the ER.

To learn more about ultrasounds with GCHD, please visit: [garfieldcountyhospital.com/diagnostic-imaging](https://www.garfieldcountyhospital.com/diagnostic-imaging) or call **509-843-1591**.



"Many patients think they have to schedule their ultrasound exams done where the physician operates," explained Maves. "But that isn't true. They can request to have all their ultrasound services performed here at GCHD, close to home."

The ACUSON Juniper is used for everyone from in-house care patients to referred outpatients, emergency room (ER) patients and more.

- Abnormal growths
- Blood clots
- An enlarged spleen
- An ectopic pregnancy
- Gallstones
- An aortic aneurysm
- Kidney stones
- Bladder stones

Beyond ultrasounds, the radiology department at GCHD offers echocardiograms, vascular studies (venous and arterial) basic X-rays, EKGs, some OB/GYN services, small-parts exams, abdominal exams, and some needle drainages.



How Transitional-Care Services ARE HELPING ONE PATIENT RECLAIM HIS HEALTH AND LIFE

When patients are no longer in need of acute clinical care, but also not ready to return home, they can count on the transitional-care services at Garfield County Hospital District (GCHD) to help them safely recover. Our transitional-care team is comprised of highly skilled physicians, nurses, CNAs, and others who work together to provide high-quality care in a compassionate and convenient environment.

These providers help patients transition to more independent living by delivering:

- Post-surgical support, including cardiac, neuro, orthopedic, and abdominal care
- Respiratory care
- Wound care for healing and prevention
- Intravenous (IV) antibiotics and therapy to treat a variety of infections and conditions

The transitional-care team also works with other therapeutic providers, as needed, to ensure patients receive the treatment they need to achieve a successful recovery. These include:

- Physical therapists
- Occupational therapists
- Speech therapists

Care like this can be life-changing for patients. This is true for one GCHD patient, for whom the transitional-care services have not only been life-changing but have altered the trajectory of his healing journey – for the better.

THE IMPACT ON ONE PATIENT'S LIFE

Michael Reilly has received transitional-care services at GCHD since summer 2023, particularly for wound care. He is paralyzed from the chest down and gets pressure-sore wounds from sitting in his wheelchair. His care team is working around-the-clock to help his wound heal, so he can return home.

“I’ve been in a wheelchair for 48 years and have always lived by myself, and I hope to again,” said Reilly. “I’d like to at least get out on my own and maybe just have help from a home nurse.”

However, while Reilly has only been at GCHD for a few months, his struggle with getting this latest pressure-sore wound to heal has lasted much longer. He has been in and out of multiple hospitals and care facilities since the end of 2019, and he is just now seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

Pressure sores grow from the inside out. They start by the bone and then move out to the surface. In Reilly’s case, his pressure sore opened up and became seriously infected, leading to a large wound that needed immediate medical attention. “I had multiple surgeries to remove all the dead and infected tissue, which left a large open wound on my bottom,” explained Reilly.

“I needed somewhere to recover and started at a skilled nursing facility in Bellingham. But that wasn’t the end of it.”

After further complications led to the wound reopening and becoming infected again, Reilly moved to a hospital in Seattle and made the decision to get a colostomy bag. This would reduce the risk of the wound continuing to get infected. He also hoped this might mean the recovery would be smoother going forward. “After getting my colostomy bag, I went to a nursing facility in Seattle, and they were terribly understaffed,” Reilly shared. “I was there for two years, and my wound didn’t heal.”

The next step in his wound-care journey led him to GCHD. Fortunately, Reilly is now making progress toward recovering from this wound and reclaiming his independence. “The difference between GCHD and the other facilities is huge. GCHD is just amazing,” expressed Reilly.

“When I was in Seattle, if I pressed my call button, I could wait for up to an hour for someone to come. At GCHD, someone is usually there in under five minutes.”

Another way the GCHD transitional-care team has exceeded Reilly’s expectations is through clear and transparent communication. “I see three doctors regularly, as well as many nurses and CNAs, and they all communicate so well between shifts,” he said. “If a note is made on a change in medication, the next doctor or nurse sees that immediately and the change is made the same day, without me needing to remind anyone. It’s a great feeling to know everyone really cares about you.”

Of all the ways Reilly can see the higher quality of his care at GCHD as compared to the other facilities, the most significant is also the most obvious. His wound has healed more in a couple of months at GCHD than it did over years at the Seattle facility. It is healing so well, in fact, that he is scheduled to have reconstructive surgery on this area in the beginning of November. This should be the last major step in his recovery, and hopefully, his ticket to resuming life outside a healthcare facility.

“I’ve had other pressure-sore wounds before — none as bad as this — and yet none have healed as well as this one has,” he shared.

“The level of care and the frequency of how often the providers check on me are wonderful. Even my doctors are amazed at my progress.”

Reilly is constantly in awe of the work of his care team, including those who do not usually work with him directly but are there to help when needed.

“If the nurse assigned to me is ever busy, another nurse often steps in to help. Others will wave and say ‘Hi’ as they walk past my room,” he explained. “They truly take care of everything I need. It’s like the Hilton of healthcare facilities. I’m so grateful for all they’ve done for me and all they continue to do for me.”

If you or someone you love needs transitional-care services, the team at GCHD is here to help.

From clinical care and help with insurance filing, to everything in between, we’ll take care of all you need to return home in good health.

NOVEMBER IS Diabetes Awareness Month: GCHD IS YOUR PARTNER IN PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

This Diabetes Awareness Month, and every month, GCHD is here for our community. If you have questions regarding diabetes management, prevention, or screenings, please reach out to your primary care provider, or call GCHD to learn more at **509-843-1591**.



Every year, healthcare systems across the U.S. recognize November as Diabetes Awareness Month. According to recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data, 37.3 million Americans are diabetic, representing 11.3% of the population. Additionally, 96 million Americans (more than one in three) are pre-diabetic.

GCHD is here to support any patient who has been newly diagnosed with diabetes in managing long-term effects of the disease and developing a care plan. Our providers can also support those at risk of developing diabetes in working to prevent the onset of the disease.

“All of us providers know that proper education and management are essential to controlling complications that can arise from diabetes,” said Marybella Dodson, Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP).

“This disease doesn’t discriminate — it affects people young and old, as well as everyone in between. We’re here to help these patients along the way.”

Providers at GCHD emphasize diabetes education with patients to ensure they have the best possible chance of effectively managing the disease and symptoms, and these same providers strive to help prevent the disease in others who are at risk.

When it comes to care plans for diabetes, they are each based upon the specific patient’s individual health needs and unique health history. A typical starting point, however, is a routine primary-care visit and lab screenings, which all help to indicate if the patient is either at risk for diabetes or already has the disease and needs care.

“As a small, rural health facility, we take great pride in building trust with our patients and really getting to know them,” Dodson explained. “This helps establish strong communication, so we can answer any questions a patient has and then provide them with the resources they need to improve their health. If any diabetes complications arise, we’ll quickly address them, get them treatment, and modify their care plan accordingly.”

COMPARING TYPE 1 VS. TYPE 2 DIABETES

Ultimately, both Type 1 and Type 2 forms of diabetes cause the same health issue – they disrupt the body’s ability to secrete insulin, which is vital for turning carbohydrates into usable energy. If carbohydrates are not properly converted into energy, they build up in the bloodstream, making a person ill and causing serious health complications. The core causes of the two diabetes types are quite different:

- **Type 1:** With Type 1, the person’s immune system attacks and destroys insulin-producing beta cells of the pancreas, causing the pancreas not to produce any insulin. It is a chronic condition.
- **Type 2:** In the case of Type 2, the body makes too little insulin or a type of insulin that isn’t effective. The person usually becomes insulin-resistant over time due to factors like being overweight or obese, being physically inactive, or having a condition that puts them at particular risk of insulin-resistance (such as cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome, or polycystic ovary syndrome).

Type 1 is not a preventable disease, and once diagnosed, can only be managed. Type 2, however, can be prevented, or even reversed, with certain medical treatments and lifestyle changes. Once diagnosed with either Type 1 or 2 diabetes, a patient will receive a personalized treatment plan often including insulin injections, oral medications, blood sugar monitoring, diet changes, and more. Proper management of the disease is critical to avoiding more serious complications, which can include:

- Heart attack (cardiovascular disease)
- Stroke
- Organ failure
- Loss of vision (diabetic retinopathy)
- Infection
- Peripheral neuropathy (weakness, numbness, and pain in the hands and feet)
- Loss of limbs

“A diabetic patient must work closely and continuously with a provider to monitor the condition,” Dodson shared. “At GCHD, we can help you manage this disease, even outside of the doctor’s office, so you can take your health in your own hands. We’ll learn and grow together to best meet your specific needs.”

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DIABETES

There are warning signs to watch out for when it comes to diabetes—both Type 1 and Type 2—that can help determine if someone has this disease along with lab screenings. Knowing these signs can help get an early diagnosis and potentially avoid more serious health consequences.

- Frequent urination
- Increased thirst
- Excessive hunger
- Blurry vision
- Slow-healing wounds
- Weight loss (Type 1 only)
- Tingling, pain or numbness in extremities

“If someone is experiencing any of these symptoms, we encourage that person to talk to a provider right away,” said Dodson. “While it might not be diabetes, the only way to know for sure is to have the proper labs checked and reviewed. It could mean protection from much more serious health issues.”

PREVENTING TYPE 2 DIABETES

Type 2 diabetes can be prevented —or potentially reversed— with some healthy lifestyle changes. These include:

Establishing and maintaining a relationship with a primary-care provider

Eating a well-balanced diet that incorporates fiber-rich foods, such as:

- Fruits (tree fruits and berries)
 - › Tomatoes and peppers
 - › Leafy greens, broccoli, and cauliflower
 - › Whole grains
- Regularly exercising
- Slowly losing extra weight (NOT crash dieting)

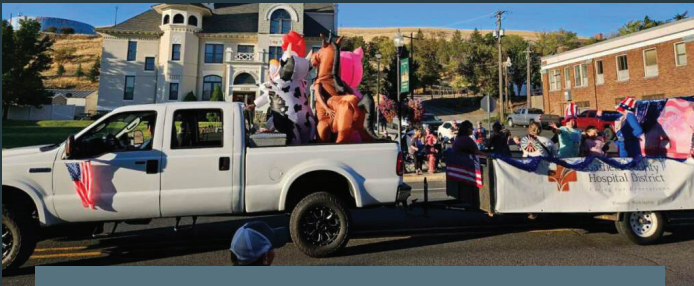
“Making consistent health choices can seem daunting but can go a long way in preventing someone from getting this disease at all,” explained Dodson. “If someone is pre-diabetic, we are here to help in finding realistic, but healthy, changes that fit that person’s life. No one needs to be in this alone.”



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Out and About IN THE COMMUNITY



PARTICIPATING IN THIS YEAR'S GARFIELD COUNTY PARADE WAS GCHD SHOWING THEIR PRIDE WITH A BARN IN THE USA FLOAT.



IN PREPARATION FOR COLD AND FLU SEASON, GCHD PROVIDED A DRIVE THRU FLU SHOT CLINIC.



SHOWING THEIR SUPPORT AT THE LOCAL FARMER'S MARKET, GCHD STAFF HANDED OUT FREE POPCORN.