



Employee Health Beat

From the desk of Melody DeWitt, risk management & quality improvement

New variants of the virus that causes COVID-19, from the CDC

Information about the characteristics of variants is rapidly emerging. Scientists are working to learn more about how easily they spread, whether they could cause more severe illness and whether currently authorized vaccines will protect people against them.

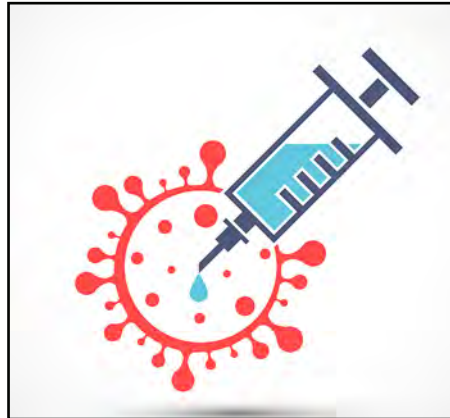
What is known

Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Sometimes new variants emerge and disappear. Other times, new variants emerge and persist. Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 have been documented in the United States and globally during this pandemic.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is a type of coronavirus, a large family of viruses. Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surfaces. Scientists monitor changes in the virus, including changes to the spikes on the surface of the virus. These studies, including genetic analyses of the virus, are helping scientists understand how changes to the virus might affect how it spreads and what happens to people who are infected with it.

Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 are circulating globally:

1. The U.K. identified a variant called B.1.1.7 with a large number of mutations in the fall of 2020. This variant spreads more easily and quickly than other variants. In January 2021, experts in the U.K. reported that this variant may be associated with an increased risk of death compared to other variant viruses, but more studies are needed to confirm this



finding. It has since been detected in many countries around the world. This variant was first detected in the U.S. at the end of December 2020.

2. In South Africa, another variant called B.1.351 emerged independently of B.1.1.7. Originally detected in early October 2020, B.1.351 shares some mutations with B.1.1.7. Cases caused by this variant have been reported in the U.S. at the end of January 2021.

3. In Brazil, a variant called P.1 emerged that was first identified in travelers from Brazil, who were tested during routine screening at an airport in Japan, in early January. This variant contains a set of additional mutations that may affect its ability to be recognized by antibodies. This variant was first detected in the U.S. at the end of January 2021.

These variants may lead to more cases of COVID-19. An increase in the number of cases would put more strain on health care resources, lead to more hospitalizations and potentially more deaths.

So far, studies suggest that antibodies generated through vaccination with currently authorized vaccines recognize these variants. This is being closely investigated, and more studies are underway.

Rigorous and increased compliance with

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public health mitigation strategies, such as vaccination, physical distancing, use of masks, hand hygiene, and isolation and quarantine, is essential to limit the spread of COVID-19 and protect public health.

What is unknown

Scientists are working to learn more about these variants, and more studies are needed to understand:

1. How widely these new variants have spread
2. How the disease caused by these new variants differs from the disease caused by other variants that are currently circulating
3. How these variants may affect existing therapies, vaccines and tests

Continued on p. 2

Employee Health Beat

From the desk of Melody DeWitt, risk management & quality improvement

New variants (from p. 1)

What it means

Public health officials are studying these variants quickly to learn more to control their spread. They want to understand whether the variants:

1. Spread more easily from person-to-person
2. Cause milder or more severe disease in people
3. Are detected by currently available viral tests
4. Respond to medicines currently being used to treat people for COVID-19
5. Change the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines

CDC, in collaboration with other public health agencies, is monitoring the situation. As new information becomes available, CDC will provide updates. ●●●

This information was provided by the CDC online: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/transmission/variant.html>

Understanding COVID-19 vaccines

To understand how COVID-19 vaccines work, it helps to first look at how our bodies fight illness. When germs, such as the virus that causes COVID-19, invade our bodies, they attack and multiply. This invasion, called an infection, is what causes illness. Our immune system uses several tools to fight infection. Blood contains red cells, which carry oxygen to tissues and organs, and white or immune cells, which fight infection. Different types of white blood cells fight infection in different ways:

1. Macrophages are white blood cells that swallow up and digest germs and dead or dying cells. The macrophages leave behind parts of the invading germs called antigens. The body identifies antigens as dangerous and stimulates antibodies to attack them.
2. B-lymphocytes are defensive white blood cells. They produce antibodies that



attack the pieces of the virus left behind by the macrophages.

3. T-lymphocytes are another type of defensive white blood cell. They attack cells in the body that have been infected.

The first time a person is infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, it can take several days or weeks for his or her body to make and use all the germ-fighting tools needed to get over the infection.

After the infection, the person's immune system remembers how to protect the body against that disease.

The body keeps a few T-lymphocytes, called memory cells, that go into action quickly if the body encounters the same virus again. When the familiar antigens are detected, B-lymphocytes produce antibodies to attack them. Experts are still learning how long these memory cells protect a person against the virus that causes COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccines help our bodies develop immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19 without us having to get the illness. Different types of vaccines work in different ways to offer protection, but with all types of vaccines, the body is left with a supply of "memory" T-lymphocytes as well as B-lymphocytes that will remember how to fight that virus in the future.

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to produce T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes after vaccination. Therefore, it is possible that a person could be infected with the virus that

causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and then gets sick because the vaccine did not have enough time to provide protection.

Sometimes after vaccination, the process of building immunity can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity.

Types of vaccines

Currently, there are three main types of COVID-19 vaccines that are or soon will be undergoing large-scale (Phase 3) clinical trials in the U.S. Below is a description of how each type of vaccine prompts our bodies to recognize and protect us from the virus that causes COVID-19. None of these vaccines can give you COVID-19.

1. mRNA vaccines contain material from the virus that causes COVID-19 that gives our cells instructions for how to make a harmless protein unique to the virus. After our cells make copies of the protein, they destroy the genetic material from the vaccine. Our bodies recognize that the protein should not be there and build T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes that will remember how to fight COVID-19 if we are infected in the future.

2. Protein subunit vaccines include harmless pieces (proteins) of the virus that cause COVID-19 instead of the entire germ.

Continued on p. 4

In the Spotlight

NCH opens up for more visitors, effective Feb. 5

Due to continued lower numbers of COVID-19 cases in Norton County, Norton County Hospital is opening its facilities more starting Feb. 5. Please be advised that policies could change at any time, based on the COVID-19 local environment.

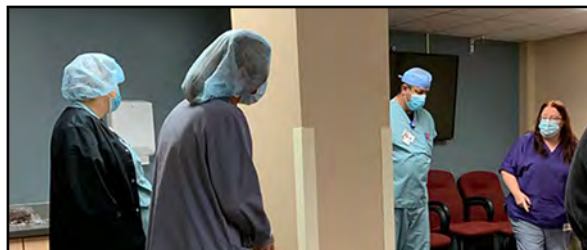
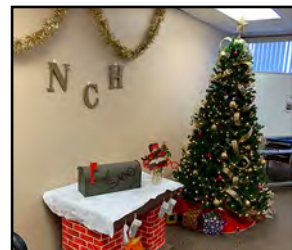
Here are the details:

- One visitor per patient, per day or visit, across the facility.
- That one visitor can come and go if needed (but no switching the one visitor during the day).
- No change to inpatient visiting hours (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.).
- Still no visitors 12 years or age and younger.
- Be prepared for temperature screening of all patients and visitors at facility entrances.
- Please continue to mask inside the facilities.
- Note that policies allow the hospital to make exceptions for certain circumstances (such as end-of-life).

Norton County Hospital would like to thank the community for its work in keeping everyone healthy. ●●●

Holiday celebrations

Our team had a different holiday party in 2020 compared to years past, due to COVID-19. Our Employee Committee worked hard to put together fun activities, including a cake walk, scavenger hunt and holiday puzzles. A lunch meal was also provided, courtesy of the hospital and catered by Brady's Smoke House from Hill City. ●●●



Employee Health Beat

From the desk of Melody DeWitt, risk management & quality improvement

Understanding COVID-19 vaccines (from p. 2)

Once vaccinated, our immune system recognizes that the proteins don't belong in the body and begins making T-lymphocytes and antibodies. If we are ever infected in the future, memory cells will recognize and fight the virus.

3. Vector vaccines contain a weakened version of a live virus—a different virus than the one that causes COVID-19—that has genetic material from the virus that causes COVID-19 inserted in it (this is called a viral vector). Once the viral vector is inside our cells, the genetic material gives cells instructions to make a protein that is unique to the virus that causes COVID-19. Using these instructions, our cells make copies of the protein. This prompts our bodies to build T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes that will remember how to fight that virus if we are infected in the future.

All but one of the COVID-19 vaccines that are currently in Phase 3 clinical trials in the United States use two shots. The first shot starts building protection. A second shot a few weeks later is needed to get the most protection the vaccine has to offer. One vaccine in Phase 3 clinical trials only needs one shot. Getting vaccinated is one of many steps you can take to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. ●●●

This information was provided by the CDC online: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/how-they-work.html>

Recent Milestones!

Join us in celebrating these employees and their dedication to NCH!

December

Pam Miller	18 years
Rhonda McDowell	10 years
Christen Skrdlant	1 year plus 8 prior years
Morgan Griffey	8 years
Carol Richmeier	7 years
Monica Hembd	4 years
Jeanette Haskett	2 years

January

Kellen Jacobs	7 years
Claudette Graham	6 years
Jean Carmichael	5 years
Marla Kuhn	4 years plus 6 prior years
Valerie Marble	4 years
Jordan Gemboys	recently re-joined NCH; 1 prior year
Marissa Schamberger	2 years
Yvette Taylor	1 year

February

Jordan Brown	12 years
Jessie Dougherty	9 years
Natalie Esslinger	5 years
Melody DeWitt	4 years
Heather Saville	4 years
Andrea Wilson	2 years
Kristin Leibhart	1 year ●●●

CEO Update

From the desk of Gina Frack, hospital CEO

Spring will eventually present itself and be a welcomed change! As the weather changes, so too does health care. Here are some recent NCH changes:

- Ni2 “Net Income Doubled” is a third-party company we have been in contract with to help increase revenue/reduce expenses. This company helped us with chargemaster management and meeting requirements for price transparency, as well as helped negotiate better rates for equipment and/or software purchases. Effective March 1, Ni2 will be assisting us with billing health insurance for our patients.

- We recently signed off an agreement for Holistic Pain Management (HPM) to bring a comprehensive pain management program to NCH. HPM will provide an advanced practice provider to see patients as an initial consultation. From the initial consultation, a treatment plan is developed with the involvement of the patient's primary care provider. Imaging, physical therapy, lab work, counseling and/or referral to other specialists can be a part of the plan.

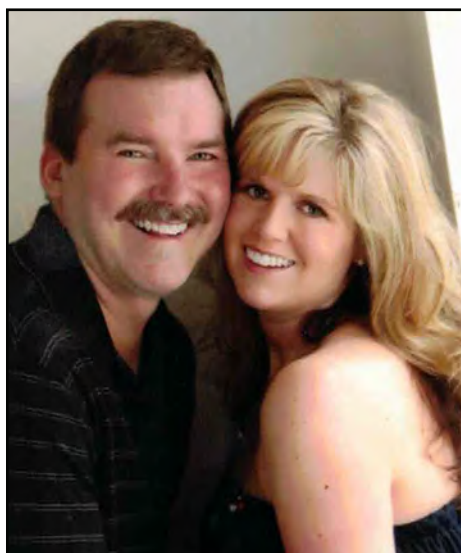
- Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) is due again in 2021! This is an assessment required to complete every three years.

- Great Plains Health Alliance (GPHA) joined us in a formal agreement to assist with coding, audits and ongoing training and education. This change will provide to our coding staff and providers the resources they need to stay on top of the ever-changing world of documentation requirements and coding in health care.

- H-1B visa workers will hopefully be joining us in the next couple months to fill staff shortages in our lab. Both candidates are currently living in the Philippines. Both have four-year degrees and experience working in facilities our size. Other rural hospitals have been using H-1B staffing for their labs. We are honored to be doing the same for two amazing people. I cannot imagine moving to a new country with nothing more than belongings you can carry. We will keep staff notified when the time gets closer for their arrival. Likely we may need some help getting them settled into housing, finding things they need and helping them find a place in our community. ●●●

In the News

From the desk of Katie Allen Wagner, communications and foundation



Norton County Hospital hires new CFO

Norton County Hospital is pleased to announce it has hired Ken Fisher as its new Chief Financial Officer. He and his wife, Jenn (both pictured above), are in the process of moving to Norton, and he will begin his duties in March 2021.

Fisher received a degree in accounting from Washington State University. He has 30 years of experience in health care finance, as he has worked at four different critical access hospitals (like Norton County Hospital) and even a large, 800-bed hospital.

"I am looking forward to becoming part of and working with the team at NCH," Fisher said. "I am excited to share my knowledge and experience. I am always looking at ways to run more efficiently without sacrificing quality and of course always looking for opportunities to be more profitable."

Fisher was born in Tonasket, Washington, which is located in the north-central part of the state approximately 20 miles from the Canadian border. There, he grew up on a farm where his dad grew apples and pears. He has one younger brother and one younger sister.

When not working, Fisher plays and watches all kinds of sports – football, baseball, basketball and golf. He enjoys snow and water skiing, as well as fishing

and traveling. The Fishers have five children: Tyler, Dustin, Shelby, Gracie and Matthew.

Norton County Hospital is excited to add Ken Fisher to the team and welcome the Fishers as part of the Norton community. ●●●

Sauter offers anesthesia coverage at Norton County Hospital

Norton County Hospital's mission is to meet the region's evolving health care needs and provide an exceptional staff and patient experience to empower health and wellness at any stage of life. Norton County Hospital is pleased to announce it has contracted with Midwest Anesthesia Alliance to further this mission.

MAA has hired a new certified registered nurse anesthetist, who will live and work in Norton, as part of this contract. Jimmy Sauter, CRNA, and his family have moved to Norton, and he began working in early 2021.

Sauter is originally from Jackson, Michigan, but he has spent most of his life in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He received his education (Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Master of Nurse Anesthesia) from La Roche University, a small university north of Pittsburgh. He trained in anesthesia at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh.

Sauter and his wife, Carol, have three children: Leo, 5; Audrey, 3; and Jackson, 6 months. Sauter's No. 1 hobby is spending time with his family.

"I believe a strong family unit is the most important part of our society," he said. "Building and maintaining a strong marriage and raising competent, God-loving children is my priority."

He also enjoys cooking and all things food related, building and fixing things, exercise and yoga, being outdoors, gardening, reading about historical events and figures, shooting guns (he said he has not done much hunting but wants to learn), playing drums, and most recently, playing the guitar.

Both Jimmy and Carol Sauter have interests in the health care field; Carol is an RN but has stayed home with their children since 2017. Sauter said moving to Norton and working at Norton County Hospital would allow him to know his patients as his fellow community members and have a more personal connection with them.

"For my patients to have the best surgical experience possible, knowing who is taking care of them is important," Sauter said. "I want to be not only the person who gives anesthesia but be a part of the community. Patients will be treated like family because they are. My favorite quote has always been, 'To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world.'"

Norton County Hospital's relationship with MAA began Nov. 1, 2020. It has expanded the availability of high-quality, safe and efficient anesthesia services at Norton County Hospital 24/7, 365 days a year.

Founded by Kansans in 2008, MAA is dedicated to providing high-quality clinical care to rural Kansans. MAA will work collaboratively with hospital administration, physicians, and medical staff to improve communication, optimize efficiency, and improve overall perioperative performance and patient throughput.

Norton County Hospital is a 25-bed critical access hospital and Level IV trauma center. Along with the Norton Medical Clinic, it provides medical services for residents in Norton County and surrounding northwest Kansas and southwest Nebraska communities. ●●●

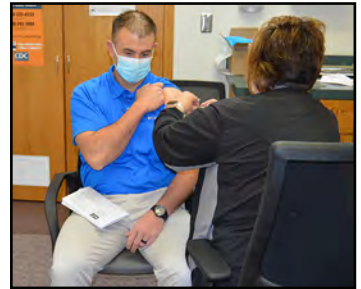
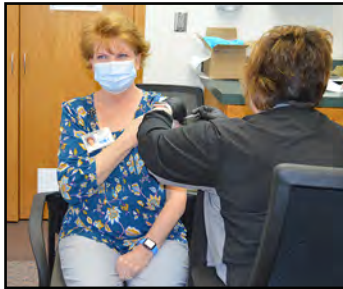


Engage the Community

From the desk of Katie Allen Wagner, communications and foundation

Online nursery

Since November 2020, Norton County Hospital has been delivering babies! We are so excited to bring back this service for our communities! There is now an online nursery available on the NCH website, where photos are being posted of all the new babies delivered at NCH (those photos posted are ones with photo waivers signed, so not all babies may be on the online nursery and/or Facebook page). ●●●



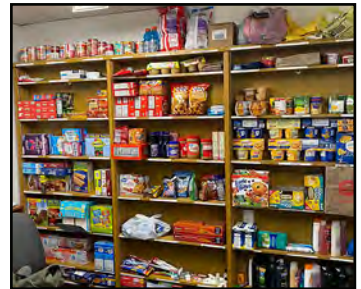
COVID-19 vaccines arrive

The first COVID-19 vaccine in Norton County was administered at the Norton County Health Department on Dec. 18, 2020! Jonna Inman, APRN, received the first vaccine. Other health care workers also received their vaccine on this day. ●●●



Helping local students

Our Employee Committee organized a food drive for USD 211's student food pantry. We were happy to help stock the shelves for Norton Community High School last fall! ●●●



Angel Tree donations for the community

Many of our staff bought gifts for the Angel Tree Program in Norton, so local children could have a wonderful Christmas. Thanks to all who were involved! ●●●

Giving back through treats

Thanks to all who supported the Live Well Norton drive for "Treats for Troops." We collected 11 pounds of candy and other treats for members of our active duty military and veterans!

Additionally, Live Well Norton will be gearing up for Kids' Cafe again soon! It is a summer meal program that provides FREE meals to anyone age 18 and younger. Did you know you can make a tax-deductible donation to support this important program for kids? Donations are accepted by Live Well Norton on behalf of Kids' Cafe. Make checks payable to Live Well Norton, and put Kids' Cafe in the memo line. Donations can be mailed to: Live Well Norton, Attn: Katie Allen Wagner, P.O. Box 250, Norton, KS 67654 ●●●



Showing economic impact

The Kansas Hospital Association published on its website "The Importance of the Health Care Sector to the Kansas Economy" for 2021. This is a great report to reference about the statewide and local economic impacts of health care (county-specific data is also available). *The report can be accessed online: <https://www.kha-net.org/CriticalIssues/EconomicImpact/>* ●●●



Engage the Community

From the desk of Kristen Brands, grant coordinator

Live Well Norton begins first grant action period for ‘Pathways to a Healthy Kansas’

As you may recall, in the summer of 2020 Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas (BCBSKS) announced that the Norton Regional Health Foundation (NRHF), along with Live Well Norton (LWN), was the second phase recipient of its BCBSKS *Pathways to a Healthy Kansas* grant initiative. Norton County continues to work on public health projects alongside 23 other communities in Kansas. Norton County will receive the pledged \$200,000 from BCBSKS over the next four years.

Feb. 1, 2021, marks the beginning of the first action period of the BCBSKS *Pathways to a Healthy Kansas* grant for Norton County. With help from NRHF executive director Katie Allen Wagner and Norton County Hospital (NCH) grant coordinator Kristen Brands, the first five months were spent collaborating with Live Well Norton members, Wichita State University’s (WSU) Community Engagement Institute, The Public Health Law Center, and the Kanas Health Institute to develop three annual documents: Local Action Plan, Local Evaluation Plan and Local Communications Plan. These plans outline the work and goals to be accomplished throughout the next year. More specifically, during the first action period, the framework of these three plans will serve as working documents to help LWN coalition members achieve milestones necessary to bring healthy programming and implementation grant dollars (up to \$300,000 additionally) into Norton County.

The healthy grant programming addresses the following three behaviors of focus: physical activity, commercial tobacco prevention and healthy eating. These will help reduce risk for serious health conditions through six areas of work, or pathways. The pathways include: Community & Social Context, Neighborhood & Physical Environment, Food, Healthcare, Education and Economic Stability.

Focusing on the Healthcare Pathway first, the NRHF will apply for implementation grant dollars to help complete the 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment/Community Health Improvement Plan (CHNA/CHIP). This requires pledged partners that include NCH and the Norton County Health Department (NCHD). In the spring of 2021, expect to see a community-wide survey administered by WSU, followed by focus groups and the completion of an implementation plan.

A similar process occurred with WSU in 2018. This process is required every three years by the Affordable Care Act for tax-exempt hospitals. Also, as a result of the assessment work and efforts to make improvements from the results, NCH became one of 10 participating sites in The University of Kansas Health System’s Care Collaborative outpatient behavioral health network. A new Financial Assistance Plan for patients was developed. More specialty clinics were introduced (now 10 in all).

Continued on p. 11

HR Updates

From the desk of Shannan Hempler, human resources

Heads-up: Outside retirement email to members

Recently, we’ve been told that a company called Fed Resource, also known as Gov Resource, has been sending emails to KPERS members and offering a “no-cost, retirement planning review.”

- KPERS does not offer personal financial advice.
- KPERS does not have an agreement with Fed Resource or Gov Resource and does not endorse any services they provide.
- Financial advisors who buy marketing or sales services from Fed Resource or Gov Resource do not work for KPERS. KPERS doesn’t employ or contract with any personal financial advisors or planners.

KPERS retirement resources

- When employees need KPERS retirement info, please tell them to get started by going to the Retirement Info Center on kpers.org, a good place for the basics to the fine details.
- Every quarter, KPERS also hosts pre-retirement webinars to answer the tough questions and personally walk employees down the path to retirement.
- KPERS is always just a phone call away. KPERS also offers in-person and virtual counseling sessions.

Questions?

Email employers@kpers.org

Toll-free 1-888-275-5737

In Topeka 785-296-6166 ●●●

Unemployment fraud

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the IRS noticed increased cases of identity thieves fraudulently filing claims for and receiving unemployment benefits on behalf of taxpayers. These taxpayers are now receiving Form 1099-G, Certain Government Payments, showing an amount of taxable unemployment benefits they never received. On January 28, 2021, the IRS provided guidance for taxpayers who find themselves in this circumstance.

Taxpayers who were incorrectly issued Form 1099-G for unemployment benefits they did not actually receive should contact the issuing state agency to request a corrected Form 1099-G showing zero unemployment benefits. Failure to do so may result in the taxpayer receiving an unexpected federal tax bill for unreported income. The taxpayer does not need to file Form 14039, Identity Theft Affidavit, which should only be filed if a taxpayer’s federal income tax return has been rejected because another return was already filed using the same Social Security number.

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HR Updates

From the desk of Shannan Hempler, human resources

Unemployment fraud (from p. 7)

After the request is received, the state will send the corrected Form 1099-G to both the taxpayer and the IRS. In cases where a taxpayer does not receive a timely, corrected form from the state, the taxpayer should still file an accurate tax return only reporting income actually received.

As a reminder, if you did receive unemployment benefits, the amount should be included in taxable income on your federal income tax return. Identity theft continues to be a growing concern. ●●●

Information provided by BKD tax notices, Norton County Hospital's accounting firm

EMPAC is here for you

During this time of uncertainty and anxiety, please remember that EMPAC (an employee-assistance program at NCH) is here to help you navigate the stresses of life. EMPAC has an after-hours counselor available every day of the week who can be reached at 316-265-9922 (1-800-234-0630 for out-of-state clients) and follow the prompts. Please leave a voicemail if the on-call counselor does not immediately answer, as the counselor may be assisting another client and will call back as soon as possible.

EMPAC encourages you to call to learn more, or you can visit the website: <http://empac-eap.com/members/members>
Login: NCH ●●●

Information provided by EMPAC

Leading by example (from EMPAC newsletter)

Parents and caregivers can lead by example by establishing regular sleep habits, eating nutritious food on a regular basis, exercising and using good coping skills. Taking care of yourself is more important than ever, and you are not selfish for taking time to get some Vitamin D, deep breathe, exercise and relax. Besides, children and adolescents thrive on these habits, too, and if they see you modeling this behavior, they are likely to follow.

However, we know times are tough. Because many families are struggling right now, it is more important than ever to connect with local resources. There is no shame in seeking additional help, especially if it benefits you and your family.

Reach out to your child's teacher if you have concerns about them keeping up with assignments or coping with remote learning in general. If nutrition or food shortages are an issue in your household, check with your school district and social services to obtain food. Be aware of mental health resources available in your community. [Prairie View \(www.prairievew.org\)](http://www.prairievew.org) offers telehealth services so you can speak confidentially



with a mental health professional from your home, office or parking lot.

As a parent or caregiver, you must learn how to remain positive and calm and manage your own emotions. Allow yourself to feel angry, sad or worried. Look at the big picture, and try to adjust your expectations if needed. Being

a parent or caregiver comes with a lot of pressure. Your children look up to you, and you may find that to be overwhelming. However, our goal is not to be perfect. Inspire your children, and don't be afraid to make mistakes. After all, haven't we all learned in 2020 that we're in this together? ●●●

Information provided by Charlotte Siemens, MD Board Certified Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Prairie View

Memory decline (from EMPAC newsletter)

Positivity or demonstrating an optimistic attitude has always been a valuable workplace trait in employees. Many research studies have examined its benefits on the bottom line, its ability to favorably influence others and its affirming effects on general health. Now research shows its benefits for helping prevent memory decline as we age. Positivity is learned, and optimism is a teachable skill. A simple online search will show hundreds of tips on how to develop a more optimistic disposition. Your Employee Assistance Program can also help, especially if depression or other life circumstances feel like they are robbing you of your ability to feel positive. ●●●

Information provided by www.sesp.northwestern.edu (search "positive memory decline")

Stress management "urgency kit" (from EMPAC newsletter)

There are many techniques for managing stress, but you may only be aware of a few, such as exercising, meditation, journaling or talking things over with a friend. Experimenting with different ways of managing stress can help you discover a collection of dependable techniques that fit your life and work for you—a personal stress management "urgency kit." Try these quick, "on-the-fly" stress management techniques to see if they qualify for your kit.

- 1) Peel an orange. Studies show the smell of citrus can help reduce stress;
- 2) Take a walk in green space;
- 3) Listen to classical music for five minutes;
- 4) Drink black or green tea;
- 5) Try a guided imagery exercise using all five senses;
- 6) Declutter your desk; and
- 7) Spend ten minutes in the sun. ●●●

Discover a thousand ideas in the book *Simplicity: 1,000 Ways to Reduce Stress and Simplify Your Life* by Glen Mizrahi.

Meet the Team!

Norton County Hospital and Norton Medical Clinic are excited to announce our new employees. Please say hello, and welcome them to our team!

	<p><u>McKenna Fortin</u></p> <p><i>Nursing – CNA – Full-time Day</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team on February 10, 2021.</p> <p>McKenna grew up in Oberlin, Kansas. She has one son and enjoys fishing, going to the lake, and spending time with friends and family.</p>
	<p><u>Kaylynn Johnson</u></p> <p><i>Dietary Aide – Full Time</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team on January 4, 2021.</p> <p>Kaylynn grew up in Cozad, Nebraska. She has seven siblings and is engaged to be married.</p> <p>In her free time, she loves playing softball and hanging out with family and friends. When asked what brought her to Norton, Kaylynn replied, "My fiancé and his son live here."</p>
	<p><u>Elyssa Pounds</u></p> <p><i>Clinic – Cert. Medical Assistant – Full Time</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team on December 8, 2020.</p> <p>Elyssa was born in Colorado Springs, Colorado, but grew up in Syracuse, Kansas. She graduated from Syracuse High School, attended Garden City Community College and has worked in the medical field for nine years.</p> <p>Elyssa is engaged to Micheal Nairn and together they have 12 kids ranging in age from 14 to 2 years old. They currently live in Lenora. She enjoys being with family, going camping, sewing and painting with diamonds in her free time.</p>
	<p><u>Matt Rushton</u></p> <p><i>Nursing – LPN – PRN</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team on February 5, 2021.</p> <p>Matt grew up in Norton and obtained his LPN from Colby Community College. He is married to Nicole and they have four children: Oren, Mattison, Lucas and Nora. Matt enjoys woodworking in his spare time.</p>
	<p><u>Kenzie Unterseher</u></p> <p><i>Clinic – Patient Access Representative – Full Time</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team on February 15, 2021.</p> <p>Kenzie grew up in Norton and is an LPN.</p> <p>When asked why she wanted to seek employment at NCH, she replied, "To use my nursing degree and to be more involved with the public."</p>
	<p><u>Jennifer Wildeman</u></p> <p><i>OB – RN – PRN</i></p> <p>Re-joined the NCH Team on November 3, 2020.</p>

	<p><u>Connor Alexander</u></p> <p><i>Lab Office Assistant – PRN</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team on December 28, 2020.</p>
	<p><u>Kaitlyn Baird</u></p> <p><i>OB – RN – PRN</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team on December 7, 2020.</p> <p>Kaitlyn grew up in Spencer, Nebraska, with two brothers and one sister. She received her RN, BSN from Northwestern, is married and lives in Almena.</p>
	<p><u>Kathy Carlin</u></p> <p><i>Dietary – Cook – Full-time</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team on December 10, 2020.</p> <p>Kathy was raised in Norton. She graduated from NCHS in 1980 and most recently spent nine years with the Norton County Treasurer's Office. Kathy's parents are Weldon "Willie" and Carol Carlin. She has one sister and two brothers. Kathy has one son, Donald, and three grandchildren ranging in age from 11-years-old to 4-months.</p> <p>In her spare time, she crochets afghans, enjoys diamond painting and spends time at the lake.</p>
	<p><u>Kay Fahlbusch</u></p> <p><i>Environmental Services – Part Time</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team on February 8, 2021.</p>
	<p><u>Kylie Saville</u></p> <p><i>Nursing – CNA – PRN</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team on November 25, 2020.</p>
	<p><u>Sandra Seems</u></p> <p><i>HIM – Medical Coder – Full Time</i></p> <p>Joined the NCH Team on December 7, 2020.</p> <p>Sandy grew up in Hays, Kansas. She holds an Associate's Degree and has worked in billing for over 25 years.</p> <p>Sandy has two children: Taryn, who lives in Norton, and Makell, who resides in Tulsa, Oklahoma. All three of her grandchildren are here in Norton.</p> <p>Some of Sandy's interests are camping, fishing, the Kansas City Chiefs, and spending a great deal of time with her grandkids. When asked what brought her to Norton, Sandy replied, "I moved here to live close to my daughter, son-in-law and three grandchildren. I plan on retiring here."</p>
	<p><u>Cassie Stanley</u></p> <p><i>Nursing – LPN – PRN</i></p> <p>Re-joined the NCH Team on February 1, 2021.</p> <p>Cassie was raised down the road in Almena. She is an LPN-IV Certified and has worked mostly in Specialty Clinics and the OR. Cassie is married to Rylee Stanley and has one son, Reed Sulzman. Her hobbies include updating/painting her home, gardening (trying to keep something alive) and playing outdoors with Reed.</p> <p>When asked why she chose Norton County Hospital, she replied, "I loved working here in the past and missed everyone."</p>

Other Celebrations

Employees of the Month

Congrats to our recent honorees for Employee of the Month!
In December 2020, the honor went to Eva Harrington, Environmental Services. Her nomination summary: She is working very hard to provide services for each department, while being short-staffed. I appreciate all of the work she is doing this month and every day.

In January 2021, Tami Black, Health Information Management, was recognized. Her nomination summary: Tami is part of our HIM team, which is a very crucial job to the hospital. Tami is extremely accurate and does a fantastic job. She also is very helpful in many other departments. Tami is and always has been a model employee. Her dedication and willingness to help out truly make a big difference for our hospital.

The February 2021 awardee was Tracy Ostmeyer, Respiratory Therapy. She received several nominations. She is recognized by her peers for being a fantastic RT, educator and co-worker. She is very dedicated to her patients and ensures they have the best respiratory plan of care. She always has a positive attitude and steps in to help. ●●●



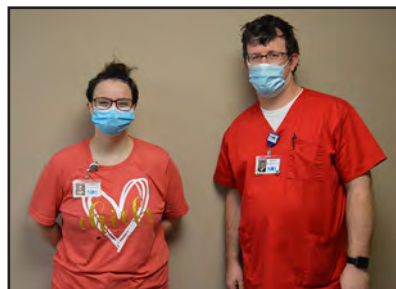
DECON shower training

Staff members participated in the annual DECON shower training in February. This helps us prepare for a hazardous chemical event. Thanks to Julia Thompson, Emergency Preparedness department coordinator, for organizing this event! ●●●



Supporting Heart Month by wearing red

February is National Heart Month. We help raise awareness for the importance of heart health by wearing red (National Wear Red Day was Feb. 5). We also supported the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl by wearing our Chiefs' red. ●●●



Other Celebrations

Blood drive a success

The most recent employee blood drive took place on Jan. 20 at the Sleep Inn. Thank you to Sabrina (pictured) and all those who donated! ●●●



Celebrating women physicians

National Women Physicians Day was Feb. 3! According to the American College of Gastroenterology, 2021 marked the 200th birthday of a woman who was famously allowed to attend medical school as a joke. She proved everyone wrong about her “intellectual inferiority” and became the first woman in America to earn her medical degree. She was Elizabeth Blackwell!

Here’s a shout out to our women physicians, Dr. Maurer, Dr. McKellar and Dr. Neill! ●●●

More protection for staff

Norton County Hospital recently received a sanitizing machine to help us mitigate COVID-19 spread, as well as reduce the overall spread of germs. Staff members can simply insert their phones, keys, etc. into the machine to allow UV light to properly sanitize. ●●●



Engage the Community

From the desk of Kristen Brands, grant coordinator

‘Pathways to a Healthy Kansas’ (from p. 7)

New, quarterly community meetings were also hosted to allow citizens to pose questions to hospital leadership.

The CHNA data may lead to adjusting areas of policy, systems and the environment. For example, NCH put into place a tobacco-free workplace policy based on need in 2020. Streamlining services and examining changes to building structure were other examples.

In addition to the Healthcare Pathway, other grant work is planned in the coming year. Expect to see: leadership trainings offered by the Kansas Leadership Center at NCH in the Community & Social Context Pathway; a master bike and pedestrian plan developed with the City of Norton in the Neighborhood & Physical Environment Pathway; assessment of community efforts in developing a healthy food systems plan in the Food Pathway; greater access to tobacco-free spaces and anti-vaping policies in the Norton County school districts in the Education Pathway; and formation of a Norton County community committee of daycare providers, businesses and organizations who will work to develop more family-friendly worksites (considering the need for affordable daycare) in the Economic Stability Pathway.

Signed BCBSKS *Pathways to a Healthy Kansas* pledges from partnering organizations will also affirm their commitment to taking on new opportunities that provide greater access to healthy living options for community members benefiting from the grant work. To learn more about these projects, look for the #BCBSKSPathways and #BCBSKS hashtags on Live Well Norton’s Facebook page – as well as other traditional media sites, such as the NCH website. ●●●