



ISSUE 2 / 2019

# Stay Healthy

YOUR RESOURCE FOR HEALTHY  
LIVING AND WELLNESS

## Lifting Spirits

Creative mom holds her  
own against cancer

### MEDICINE MADE EASY

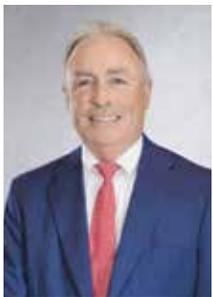
The new UHS Retail  
Pharmacy makes the  
patient experience  
more convenient

### TEAM EFFORT

A patient-centered,  
team-based care model  
improves care at  
UHS Primary Care  
Greene



# We foster confidence and trust



At UHS, we believe our performance, accountability and engagement come together to form what we call “The UHS Way.” This means that our goal always is to create an outstanding healthcare experience for our patients. In this issue of *UHS Stay Healthy Magazine*, you will find several examples of The UHS Way in action.

At UHS Primary Care Greene, the providers and employees have developed a method of improving appointment scheduling, follow-up calls, test results and decision-making to ensure that patients’ visits are efficient and productive. As a result, people in the Greene area are giving the practice high marks on patient satisfaction surveys and are more apt to get screened for breast or colon cancer.

And a Susquehanna County, Pa., woman battling a rare form of lung cancer has plenty of praise for the cancer care team at UHS Wilson Medical Center, which is enabling her to cope with the disease. Following radiation and chemotherapy, Deborah Kessler said: “The staff was so amazing, so patient with me. I had the best of care. Dr. Harris is excellent, and I didn’t have to go all the way to New York City to get great care.”

I hope you will find the articles in this issue compelling and helpful. They demonstrate how individuals and departments within our organization accomplish life-saving and life-enhancing tasks with skill, respect and compassion. Our aim is to keep the patient the center of everything we do. We pursue our goals with a sense of pride, dignity and determination, believing that there is no higher calling than to serve and restore.

*John M. Carrigg*  
PRESIDENT & CEO OF UHS

# The Benefits of Books

*UHS provides an opportunity for kids to take in a story during checkups*

Being exposed to the world of books and reading from infancy is an important component of wellness for children. To encourage more exposure to reading, UHS is proud to announce our UHS Childhood Literacy Program. Our goal is to add yet another step in building strong children by incorporating books into pediatric care and encouraging families to read together. UHS will be providing developmentally appropriate books to children at each “well-baby” visit from birth through age 6.

To accomplish this, UHS is working with a national program called Reach Out and Read. The effectiveness of the Reach Out and Read model is recognized by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which recommends early literacy promotion as an essential component of pediatric care. Research shows this approach results in more frequent reading at home, accelerated vocabulary and critical brain stimulation.

The UHS Foundation is graciously funding this program for the first year. “Early childhood literacy is critical in building a foundation of health and curiosity. We are delighted to be a part of providing the necessary building blocks for this program,” says Cory Jacobs, executive director of the UHS Foundation.

“When families read aloud to their young children, they can give them a better start to life.”



## MORE UHS CONTENT ONLINE

### WEB-EXCLUSIVE CONTENT

When should you take antibiotics and when are they ineffective? Find out the answer and read extended versions of other stories at [stayhealthyuhs.org](http://stayhealthyuhs.org).

### GET THE LATEST NEWS

Sign up for our e-newsletter, direct to your inbox, to receive the latest UHS updates and stories from our community. Visit [nyuhs.org](http://nyuhs.org).

# medicine made easy

*The new UHS Retail Pharmacy makes the patient experience more convenient*

This spring, the opening of a new retail pharmacy at UHS Binghamton General Hospital (BGH) will bring easier and better access to medicine to the UHS community. The UHS Retail Pharmacy at BGH, located on the first floor of the Summit Building, is a full-service pharmacy that accepts prescriptions from any provider.

“Our goal is to provide on-site pharmacy services to patients and employees of the UHS Binghamton General campus,” says Meaghan Owen, PharmD, RPh, Pharmacy Supervisor at the UHS Retail Pharmacy at BGH.

Historically, patients and employees on the Binghamton campus would have to get their prescriptions filled by another UHS pharmacy, requiring extra travel, which can be difficult, especially for patients without a means of transportation. Now, however, “having a dedicated pharmacy right here on campus improves access to our current services and allows us the ability to expand those same services to meet a greater public need,” says Ms. Owen.

## FILLING EVERY PRESCRIPTION

Standard medications are available at the UHS Retail Pharmacy at BGH, as are specialty pharmacy items, which include certain types of expensive, limited-distribution drugs. Specialty pharmacy services include drugs for multiple sclerosis, HIV, cancer, hepatitis C and rheumatoid arthritis, among other conditions.

“Some of these higher-risk communities have providers in [the Summit Building] or right across the street,” says Ms. Owen, “and now they’ll be able to get their medications from us,” which improves access for these patients.



In addition, for convenience, the UHS Retail Pharmacy at BGH stocks many of the most-requested over-the-counter items, so patients and employees can buy cough drops, aspirin or other items when picking up a prescription.

## PHARMACY SERVICES

The UHS Retail Pharmacy joins four other UHS pharmacy sites: UHS Vestal, UHS Wilson Place, UHS Endicott and UHS Delaware Valley Hospital. Like the other outpatient pharmacies, the UHS Retail Pharmacy utilizes PharmASSIST® automation technology, provided through a partnership with the Johnson City-based company Innovation. Their pharmacy automation solutions help enhance workflows, patient safety and prescription transparency, as well as offer other efficiencies.

Unique to the UHS Retail Pharmacy at BGH, however, is the private consultation room, where pharmacists can provide one to one attention to patients who have questions or concerns about their prescriptions. “The separate consultation room allows us to have a private conversation by creating a safe space for a patient to ask questions while maintaining confidentiality,” says Ms. Owen.

Once the Retail Pharmacy is open to the public, there are also plans to mimic the “Meds to Beds” program that is currently offered at UHS Wilson Place. This program offers bedside delivery and consultations to patients who are in the process of being discharged from the hospital.



## FIND US

The UHS Retail Pharmacy at BGH is located on the first floor of the Summit Building at 33 Mitchell Ave., Binghamton, N.Y., across the street from the main entrance to UHS Binghamton General Hospital. It is open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and on Saturday and Sunday, 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. If you have any questions, you may reach the pharmacy at **352-5950**.

## Make a Difference in Your Community with UHS

Are you looking for a career that makes a lasting impact? UHS is a dynamic organization of talented and dedicated professionals just like you. We foster a collaborative and supportive environment that lets our employees grow as professionals and as people. We have positions open in our hospitals, primary care offices, specialty care offices, walk-in centers, home care agencies and senior living centers.



## VISIT

[nyuhs.org/careers](http://nyuhs.org/careers)  
for more information,  
or to apply.



Creative mom holds her own against cancer

# lifting SPIRITS

**I**n early 2018, Franklin Forks, Pa., resident Deborah Kessler was energetic and fit. She had run several half-marathons previously and was excited about running her first full marathon. She completed the race in good time, but a few days later she was experiencing strange pains in different parts of her body.

“I couldn’t straighten my arm out,” recalled Ms. Kessler, who added a yoga class to her routine, hoping that the stretching would help ease the aches. When the pain settled in her back, she went to a chiropractor. By March, Ms. Kessler was in so much pain that she went for an MRI.

The news was not good. The MRI and additional tests showed that Ms. Kessler had metastatic cancer in her bones, lymph nodes and brain. Her pain was becoming severe, and her physicians felt it was best that she start radiation treatments right away to help

ease the pain and prevent further growth and spread of the metastases.

## STARTING THE FIGHT

Rashid Haq, MD, radiation oncologist at UHS Radiation Oncology, described the treatment plan that was developed for Ms. Kessler. “We treated different areas that showed bony disease,” he explained. “The radiation provided excellent pain control in her spine and left shoulder area. When she was found to also have multiple brain metastases, we were able to treat those to prevent neurological symptoms from those areas of disease. She had headaches, which had prompted the MRI, but neurologically she had been quite well. The spots on the brain were quite small.”

Ms. Kessler kept her spirits up during radiation treatments, even though the treatments—and the disease itself—made her exhausted. “The staff was so

✦ Deborah Kessler, right, shares a scrapbook she made with UHS oncology nurse navigator Mary Mancini, RN.



To find out more about UHS oncology services, visit [nyuhs.org/care-treatment/cancer](https://nyuhs.org/care-treatment/cancer).

amazing,” she says. “Positioning my arm and shoulder for the radiation was difficult, and the mask I had to wear when they were doing the brain treatment made me a little claustrophobic. But they were so patient with me. I had the best of care.”

### DISCOVERING THE SOURCE

As Dr. Haq and the Radiation Oncology team worked with Ms. Kessler on her treatments, other physicians were working to determine exactly what the source of the cancer was. It turned out that even though she had never smoked, the cancer was a type that originated in Ms. Kessler’s lungs. Ronald Harris, DO, UHS medical oncologist, diagnosed Ms. Kessler with stage IV non-small-cell lung cancer, which was caused by a genetic mutation known as ROS1.

Although the ROS1 type is rare, Dr. Harris was hopeful. “This type of cancer makes Deborah an ideal candidate for targeted oral chemotherapy with Xalkori (crizotinib). It will extend her longevity and improve her quality of life.”

“I take the Xalkori two times a day at home,” says Ms. Kessler. “I feel sick for a couple hours after taking it, but it’s not as bad as I thought it would be. I am just so grateful to the researchers who came up with this therapy—without them I wouldn’t be here. Dr. Harris is excellent, and I didn’t have to go to all the way to New York City to get this great care.”

### SUPPORT THROUGH THE PROCESS

Ms. Kessler also had support from Mary Mancini, RN, oncology nurse navigator. “For so much of the first six to nine months, I was just a body in a wheelchair,” says Ms. Kessler. “But Mary was so positive and encouraging. She set up a nutritionist to help me and arranged for what I call my ‘old man’ aerobics.” When the radiation caused Ms. Kessler to lose her hair, there was a volunteer who helped her get a wig.

Initially, she was so ill that she had to use a wheelchair to move around. As her strength returned, she also used her wheelchair as a walker. The Xalkori and a drug that strengthens her bones have helped Ms. Kessler immensely. “At first, they said the cancer was moving so fast, and that I had to be strong for my family. Now, I am so far from where I was.

“I feel that the cancer was this horrible storm swirling around me, but I had peace about it. The Lord put an umbrella over me and the sun was shining underneath.” 🌈

## SPECIAL DELIVERIES

Deborah Kessler has had a tough time with her cancer fight, but you wouldn’t know it based on how her optimistic spirit shines. She took time to handcraft journals and thank-you letters to every one of the dozens of people she encountered at the UHS Cancer Center during her care, from the housekeeping staff and parking attendants to administrators and clinicians.

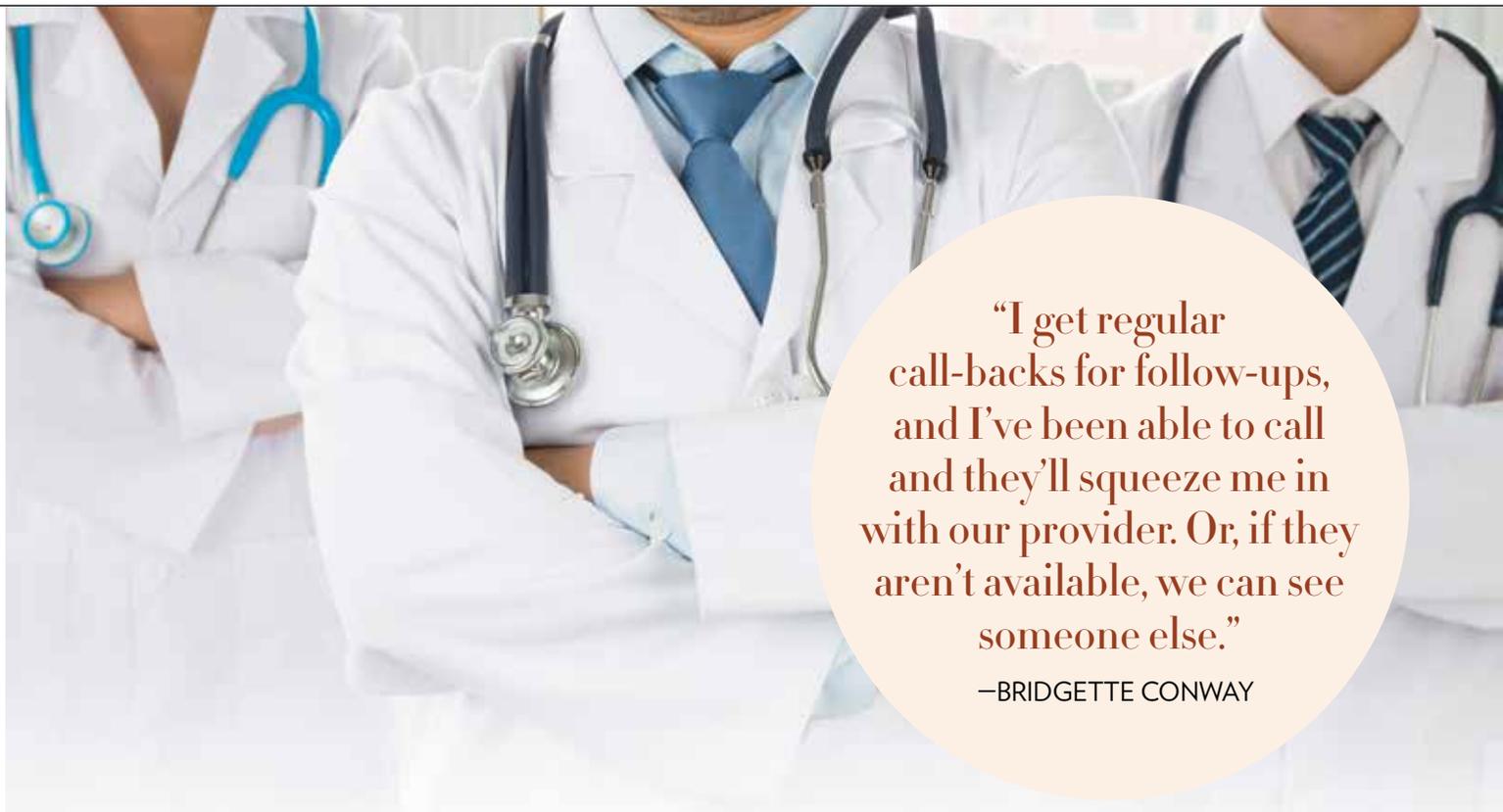
“Deb was a true inspiration to all of us in the cancer center,” says Mary Mancini, RN, oncology nurse navigator. “She never faltered from her faith and always asked us how our day was and found a way to put a smile on her face.”



+ Journals Deborah Kessler shared with UHS employees.



+ Deborah Kessler formed a lasting bond with her care team at UHS. Pictured in bottom row (starting at left): Ronald Harris, DO, medical oncologist; Deborah Kessler; Amber Funnell, RN, Medical Oncology. In top row (starting at left): Mary Mancini, RN, oncology nurse navigator; Danielle Lewis, radiation therapist; Rashid Haq, MD, radiation oncologist; Molli Navarro, RN, Radiation Oncology; Philip Messina, radiation therapist.



“I get regular call-backs for follow-ups, and I’ve been able to call and they’ll squeeze me in with our provider. Or, if they aren’t available, we can see someone else.”

—BRIDGETTE CONWAY

# TEAM *effort*

*A patient-centered, team-based care model improves care at UHS Primary Care Greene*

Improving the patient experience is always top-of-mind for UHS employees. It gets to the heart of UHS’ mission to provide patients with “Your care. Your way.” For the past two years, the providers and staff at UHS Primary Care Greene have taken this goal to heart by working on a patient-centered, team-based care model to improve their practice.

Through this model, the practice looked at better coordinating patient care to ultimately give their patients better access to care. Rethinking their plan and launching a team-based approach has not only helped the staff provide better care, but also greatly improved patient satisfaction and experience.

“We identified gaps in care with the goal of answering the question: How can we best meet the needs of our patients and give them a consistent experience?” says Martin Masarech, MD, family physician at UHS

Primary Care Greene, who is known as “Doc” around the office. “We looked at all levels of the organization and tried to empower employees so they could use their skills most efficiently and perform at the best level.”

Sarah Singlar, NP, nurse practitioner at UHS Primary Care Greene, says an important part of making this successful was keeping everyone in the loop.

“We have a full staff meeting monthly and meetings throughout the month where we bounce things off each other,” she says. “Clinical and front-end staff all give their input, and it works well.”

## THE PERSONAL IMPACT

Empowering the employees at UHS Primary Care Greene has many positive effects for patients: Quick requests such as test results or prescription refills are now generally taken care of that day, and patients can



+ Martin Masarech, MD, family physician at UHS Primary Care Greene, has been with UHS for 33 years. Recently his practice embarked on a plan to rethink how they provide care.

get seen for unplanned sick visits sooner—often also on the same day.

Bridgette Conway, a mother of three from Greene, whose husband and children are patients of UHS Primary Care Greene, has seen the advantages these changes offer.

“I get regular call-backs for follow-ups, and I’ve been able to call and they’ll squeeze me in with our provider. Or, if they aren’t available we can see someone else,” says Ms. Conway. “It’s definitely been helpful in keeping us out of the urgent care.”

### EMBRACING CHANGE

Making these changes took a lot of thought. Being more efficient meant providers may be taking care of patients who usually see a different provider at the practice. Some patients are wary of putting their trust in a doctor they don’t usually see.

“There are always patients that will wait and want to see ‘Doc’ because they’ve always seen ‘Doc,’ but a lot of people have taken advantage of it, and they’re realizing it’s a lot better to get in when they need care instead of waiting,” says Genevieve Romano Helm, FNP, nurse practitioner at UHS Primary Care Greene. “They end up knowing us all better and having a better relationship with all of our providers.”

Dr. Masarech notes that explaining the changes so patients can see the advantages has helped put any anxious patients at ease.

“It was just a matter of being very proactive with our patients and showing them that we’re making their experience more consistent, no matter who they see,” says Dr. Masarech. “And I’m not going anywhere, so we’re really just giving them a better alternative than going to the ER or urgent care.”

This new approach has been a hit with patients.

“Patients appreciate that they don’t have to wait a week to get an appointment if their provider is out,” says CarrieAnne Pisani, RPA-C, physician’s assistant at UHS Primary Care Greene. “Lots of patients are taking advantage of it, and we fill our spots quickly.”

### A RESOURCE FOR THE SYSTEM

In addition to bringing these changes to their own practice, the providers at UHS Primary Care Greene

have been sharing their experiences with providers throughout the UHS System. With this new model, the goal has always been identifying the successes and replicating them at other practices where it makes sense.

“On the provider side, some of the big things we talk about are sharing the workload and sharing messages,” says Dr. Masarech. “We also emphasize that when you spend all of this energy to change the way you do things, the benefit is an efficient workday, and that really means an easier workload for everyone. When questions get answered during the day, there are fewer questions to deal with after hours.”

By sharing their experience and information, the staff at UHS Primary Care Greene is helping all members of the UHS System provide better care to patients. It’s an important example of a commitment to serving patients better, and giving our community “Your care. Your way.” 

## GETTING SATISFACTION

The patient-centered care model focusing on a team-based approach at UHS Primary Care Greene has made the practice more efficient, allowing it to provide better service. In addition to the anecdotal evidence providers at the practice have seen, UHS has also been tracking data on patient experience and satisfaction. Here are some of the positive outcomes from this project:



- Patients giving the practice the top score in “Overall Doctor Rating” increased from 84.3 percent in January 2017 to 91.3 percent in February 2019.



- The quality score for front-end staff at the practice increased from 88.5 percent to 97.1 percent.



- The practice has also seen increased scores in breast cancer screenings and colon cancer screenings, lower A1C test scores (which helps diagnose type 2 diabetes and prediabetes), and better managed blood pressure scores.

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# stay cool

Have a fun and safe summer with these sun protection tips

As the weather heats up, you're probably getting excited to head outside and enjoy the warmth. But with the beautiful sunshine comes caution: You can't overlook the danger and damaging aspects of UV rays that come from the sun.

Heather Foley, NP, a nurse practitioner at UHS Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery and Sun Safety Champion with Broome County's Cancer Prevention in Action program, explains that protecting yourself from the sun is important because too much sun can lead to melanoma, or skin cancer. In fact, one in five individuals will end up with skin cancer in his or her lifetime. "UVA and UVB exposure from the sun is the primary cause of melanoma," she says. To help reduce your risk of skin cancer, here are some things to consider if you'll be out and about this summer:



[stayhealthyuhs.org](http://stayhealthyuhs.org) for more healthy tips.



## TIME IT RIGHT.

The hottest part of the day is 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., so limit your hours in the sun during that time frame.



## KEEP A CAP ON.

People often overlook protecting the head and face when enjoying the sun. "Especially with men, noses, top of the head and ears are places we often find melanoma. So, wear a wide-brimmed hat, at least 3 inches deep, to protect from UV rays," says Ms. Foley.



## EYEWEAR IS IMPORTANT.

Especially for people with light-colored eyes, melanoma can form in your eyes. Make sure your sunglasses block UV rays. Darker-tinted sunglasses are even better if you're at the beach, because reflection off the water can amplify sun rays.



## SUNSCREEN RULES.

Apply at least one ounce of sunscreen, about 15 to 20 minutes before you go outside. Then reapply every two hours. Use SPF 30 or higher. Remember, if you go swimming, sunscreen is not waterproof. Reapply after getting out of the water.



## CONSIDER YOUR CLOTHING.

Make sure to wear long sleeves to protect against the sun. SPF clothing is also available, which helps protect against UV rays.

## FIND SOME SHADE.

Make sure you have access to an area with shade in order to give yourself a break from the beating heat.



## GET CHECKED.

Even with these protection measures, you may still be at risk for sun-related illnesses. Ms. Foley advises seeing a professional every year to make sure your skin is healthy.

