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Daily patient visits support an exceptional hospital experience.

[Wellness Physicals Rescheduled](#)

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App allows safe transmission of clinical and confidential

Colleague
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information.

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LVH–Hazleton President Update: PRIDE Rounding Begins Oct. 9

by [Jane Danish](#) · October 2, 2017

At LVH–Hazleton, we always strive to provide our patients with the best experience possible, treat them with courtesy and respect, carefully listen to what they have to say and provide explanations they can understand. These are all examples of our PRIDE behaviors: privacy, respect, involvement, dignity and empathy.

Your PRIDE shows and does not go unnoticed. We want to support you in your role of giving exceptional care to everyone who walks through our doors.

Beginning Oct. 9, you will see colleagues visiting patients daily on our inpatient floors. These visits are something new we're calling PRIDE Rounding and will be an addition to the rounding processes already in place. During PRIDE Rounding, colleagues will let patients know what they should experience while they are here, follow up on any concerns, and work with nursing directors and myself to ensure they are having the best hospital experience possible.

Reminder cards restating our PRIDE commitment will be placed on each patient's nightstand. They will have the option, at any time, to give me, their nursing director or patient advocate Hipolito Madera a call should they feel they are not always satisfied with their stay.

Together, we will ensure our patients and their families are happy to say they chose LVH–Hazleton and will share their positive experience with others.

If you have any questions about PRIDE Rounding, you may contact me or Lisa Marie Halecky, PRIDE Rounding program coordinator, at lisamarie_e.halecky@lvhn.org or 570-501-4249.



TigerText – LVHN's New Secure Messaging System

by [Ted Williams](#) · October 3, 2017

Clinicians often need to communicate with a colleague about a patient. How often does this happen?

- The colleague is on rounds or in the operating room and cannot be disturbed.
- The clinician phones and waits for the colleague to call back but is tied up when the callback comes.
- The clinician sends an alpha page asking the colleague to call but runs into the same callback issues.
- The clinician considers sending a quick text but realizes standard texting applications aren’t secure and aren’t to be used to transfer patient information.



Such headaches are commonplace and time-consuming. That is why LVHN has taken steps to address the problem with [LVHN Secure Messaging](#), a cellphone, web and desktop app called TigerText that’s being used in hospitals across the country. It permits secure exchanges of patient information and other sensitive communications, including photos and video if necessary, in a moment’s notice. LVHN also is working with TigerText on the implementation of role-based functionality, which is the ability to assign a provider to a role, allowing a user to text based on a role rather than needing to know who is on call.

“It’s very similar to the texting feature in your cellphone with some significant enhancements,” says LVHN Chief Information Officer Donald Levick, MD. “It is a much more convenient, efficient way to securely exchange information versus picking up a phone to page someone, then having to wait until that person responds.” In addition to the mobile app, TigerText also offers web and desktop versions.

Levick’s team, the information services (I/S) department and various clinicians, began testing the TigerText app in December and have been rolling it out to providers and other departments over the last six months. While the primary target was clinical departments for the secure exchange of medical information, it’s also proven to be a valuable tool among non-clinical departments that have the need for immediate confidential communications. TigerText is available to LVHN colleagues on all campuses who receive supervisor

approval, and implementation is ongoing.

“We are working to define pilot programs to our nursing staff at this point,” Levick says. “When the role-based functionality enhancement is complete, we will begin to pilot hospital-issued mobile devices for our nursing staff.”

As cellular coverage has been an issue in some LVHN facilities and in some specific areas, colleagues always have the opportunity to access the Wi-Fi portion of LVHN’s Guest Network. Visit the secure messaging page for [Wi-Fi details](#).

Initially, TigerText went live on Dec. 27, 2016, being deployed to 530 “early introduction customers” – LVH–Cedar Crest physicians and residents. TigerText was deployed to the entire medical staff in January and more recently has been made available network-wide. To date, more than 3,500 colleagues utilize TigerText and the expectation is the system will soon become a crucial element in LVHN communications. Already, more messages are being exchanged through TigerText than through health network pagers. You can [register for TigerText](#) today.

“Pagers have become outdated, and TigerText will likely be replacing them network-wide except for some specific uses, such as code pagers,” he says. “We still have some things to work out, but I’m sure this will prove to be an invaluable tool in the near future.”

Help Honor and Support our Veterans

by [Jane Danish](#) · October 5, 2017

All area veterans and their families are invited to the Veteran

and Family Health Fair on Saturday, Oct. 14, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. at the Health & Wellness Center at Hazleton, 50 Moisey Dr., Hazle Township. The event is being organized by LVH-Hazleton's Veterans Health Initiative Committee (VHIC).

This event will open at 9 a.m. with a special ceremony and plaque dedication to honor all branches of U.S. military services. Free health screenings, prize drawings and refreshments will be held immediately after the ceremony until noon, followed by a closing ceremony.



Free health screenings and information for veterans and their families include: blood pressure, body mass index, body fat analysis, balance, cholesterol, foot care consultation, grip strength, hearing, InBody scan (comprehensive view of body composition balance), Legs for Life[®] (peripheral vascular disease assessment), non-fast blood sugar, oxygen saturation level and vision.

If possible, guests are asked to bring a non-perishable food product, which will be donated to local food pantries.

Colleagues can help make this event a success in the following ways:

- Volunteers are needed to help out the day of the event. If you can give a few hours of your time to help serve our military veterans, please contact Laura Jones, occupational health services, at 570-501-6801.
- The VHIC is in need of military photos to be displayed at the event. If you have photos of yourself, family or friends in military attire, please send them to Lisa Marie Halecky, community relations, third floor, Business & Education Center, or digitally to lisamarie_e.halecky@lvhn.org with "VeteranPHOTO" in the subject line. Make sure your name is on the back of the photo so it can be returned to you.
- Gift basket donations (non-alcoholic please) are needed for the event. Baskets can be donated as a team or individually. For more information, contact Jon Morell, materials management, at 570-501-4008. Gift baskets can be dropped off in the materials management department.

Thank you for your support of our local veterans and their families.

Reppy Named to Congressional Roundtable on Health Care

by [Jane Danish](#) · October 5, 2017

LVH–Schuylkill President Bill Reppy has joined a roundtable

panel of community members directly impacted by health care legislation to discuss and debate the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and offer recommendations on how to improve the ACA.

The roundtable is an initiative of U.S. Rep. Matt Cartwright, whose district includes Schuylkill County and portions of Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe and Northampton counties. Cartwright serves on the House Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.



Reppy will join 21 other individuals including other medical professionals, business owners, representatives from patient advocacy groups, insurance company professionals and others.

“This roundtable represents a diverse cross-section of our business, industry and health care community,” Reppy says. “LVH–Schuylkill is very pleased to have a seat at the table where we will discuss the challenges and opportunities we face.”

The roundtable format is meant to encourage discussion, debate and conversation among a diverse group of professionals in order to recommend sustainable solutions to strengthen our health care system. The outcomes from the panel will be shared with other members of Congress as part of ongoing work to reform and refine the ACA.

According to the congressman, the roundtable was formed because health care is a complex national issue. Additionally, it is one of the few issues that has a direct impact on Americans young and old, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, gender or ability.

“I am eager to begin the roundtable meetings early next month, and I look forward to the lively conversation that will ensue from such an accomplished and passionate group of people,” Cartwright says.

Medicare Patients of LVHN Physicians Eligible for New Affordable Health
Plans

by [Ted Williams](#) · October 2, 2017

Colleagues who know someone who is Medicare-eligible and has an LVHN physician as a health care provider should let that person know about several affordable 2018 Medicare Advantage health plans through Highmark Blue Shield. These health plans will be made available during the insurance company's annual election period running from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7.



The wide-range of plans include some with a zero-dollar monthly premium that will be offered in Lehigh and Northampton counties, and some with very low price points that will be available in Carbon, Schuylkill and Monroe counties as well as Lehigh and Northampton.

[LVHN entered into a partnership with Highmark Blue Shield last year](#) in order to create long-term health improvements that would lower costs for both individuals and employers.

This press release provides more details on the new Medicare Advantage plans being offered through Highmark Blue Shield below.

Highmark Blue Shield Announces 2018 Medicare Advantage Plans for Central Pennsylvania

PITTSBURGH (Oct. 1, 2017) – Highmark Blue Shield announced today a wide range of affordable Medicare Advantage health plans for Medicare-eligible individuals to choose from during the 2018 annual election period, which begins October 15 and runs through December 7, 2017.

“Our plans are simple to understand and easy to use,” said Debbie Smith, senior vice president of Senior Markets at Highmark. “We offer affordable plans at multiple price points including zero dollar monthly premium plans. Highmark’s extensive network in Central Pennsylvania now includes in-network coverage for Lehigh Valley Health Network doctors and physicians.”

“Partnering with Highmark for the benefit of our Medicare-eligible population is an excellent adjunct to the recent expansions of Lehigh Valley Health Network into the east-central regions of Pennsylvania,” said Gregory G. Kile, chief insurance officer, Lehigh Valley Health Network. “Our quality care and the flexible options provided by Highmark are a perfect match for optimizing the health of our communities.”

Community Blue Medicare HMO zero premium plans, Highmark’s most popular Medicare Advantage plan in Western Pennsylvania, will now be available for the first time in Central Pennsylvania. Members pay:

- No additional monthly premiums
- No co-pays for primary care visits
- No co-pays for tier one generic drugs at preferred pharmacies
- No deductibles

“Seniors tell me they love the idea of zero premium plans, but then ask how much the monthly premium is,” Smith noted. “They cannot believe such plans are possible. Yet, Highmark has over twenty thousand members enrolled in zero premiums plans who already know they’re not too good to be true.”

Community Blue HMO zero premium plans offer members robust medical and prescription drug benefits as well as many supplemental benefits. Like members in other Highmark Medicare Advantage health plans, they can access routine dental cleanings every six months, routine vision care, free SilverSneakers gym memberships, routine chiropractic treatment and hearing aids. Annual wellness exams and preventive health screenings are also included. Consumers can read more about zero premium plans on the [Highmark Health Blog](#).

Community Blue Medicare PPO is Highmark’s new product offering for 2018. Community Blue Medicare PPOs offer the same benefits and use a similar network as the Community Blue Medicare HMO plans, with the additional freedom to travel across the United States and find in-network coverage. Detailed descriptions of all Highmark Medicare Advantage plans, including network and pricing are available at Shop.Highmark.com/Medicare.

Highmark’s Medicare Preferred Value Network for Pharmacy is another new benefit for Medicare eligible individuals in Central Pennsylvania. It is one of several ways Highmark helps members save money on prescription drugs. Members who choose to fill their prescriptions at participating pharmacies will save money on prescription co-pays and coinsurance, including a zero dollar co-pay for tier 1 generic drugs. Participating pharmacies include Giant Eagle, Rite Aid, Walgreen’s, Walmart, Costco, Sam’s Club and other popular retail pharmacies.

All Highmark Medicare members enjoy another important benefit – PALS which stands for People Able to Lend Support. PALS connects seniors with a network of neighborhood volunteers to help them with transportation, grocery shopping, light housekeeping and pet care, or simply a friendly visit. Many seniors in Pennsylvania would not be able to remain in their homes without the help of their PALS volunteer. To learn more about neighbors helping neighbors through PALS, visit [Highmark Health Blog](#).

Highmark's Security Blue HMOs, Freedom Blue PPOs, BlueRx PDP standalone prescription drug plans, and Medigap Blue Medicare Supplement plans round out Highmark's Medicare product offerings for 2018.

Medigap Blue members have access to any local hospital in Pennsylvania and any physician of their choice.

Your PRIDE is Showing: Patient Compliments ED and MedEvac
Colleagues

by [Jane Danish](#) · October 3, 2017

The following letter was sent to LVH – Hazleton President John Fletcher from a patient who received care in our emergency department and was transported via MedEvac helicopter to LVH – Cedar Crest.

Dear Mr. Fletcher,

I am writing this letter to compliment the staff in the emergency room and the flight crew on the (MedEvac) helicopter.

On August 28, 2017, I was transported to the emergency room by APTS ambulance crew after experiencing my defibrillator shocking me 17 times! The rapid response on the part of the ambulance crew, the staff in the emergency room, and the crew on the helicopter flight to Lehigh Valley Hospital–Cedar Crest saved my life!



Everyone did their job working on me to keep my heart going.

The flight crew on the helicopter were very polite, knew exactly what to do, and helped me to keep my composure after this unforgettable experience. In fact, the flight crew, upon their arrival in Allentown, called my wife on her cellphone as she was driving to Allentown that evening. They informed her I was stable and would be in the cardiac intensive care unit. They even went so far as to tell her exactly how to get to the room.

All this information was so helpful during this most stressful time. It was a comfort to know people care.

I would appreciate your telling the staff in the emergency room and the flight crew on the helicopter how much I appreciated their excellent care. It is always nice when people are complimented when doing their job, and that is exactly what they did, THEIR JOB. Nice comments make a person feel honored and continue to do what is necessary in an emergency situation.

Service Anniversary List – October 2017

by [Jane Danish](#) · October 2, 2017

Happy anniversary to these colleagues celebrating a career

milestone at LVH–Hazleton in October.

30 years

Joseph Aquilina, Health & Wellness Center occupational health

Bernadette Brasavage, RN, pre-admission testing

Cynthia Goodin, laboratory

Carmela Howey, Health & Wellness Center radiology

Michelle Zoscin, laboratory

25 years

Maria Fazio, pharmacy

Lisa Jacobson, RN, operating room

15 years

Deborah Brown, Health & Wellness Center mammography

Anita Coymen, RN, wound care

10 years

Mara Sullin, 7th floor med/surg/peds

5 years

Lynda Adamchick, LVPG Gastroenterology–14th Street

Charlene Balazs, RN, Gunderson Center

Nancy Bertolini, LVPG Gastroenterology–14th Street

Tricia Knecht, housekeeping

Edward Polashenski, DO, LVPG Gastroenterology–14th Street

Jennifer Shockley, LVPG Gastroenterology–14th Street

Deborah Thomas, RN, LVPG Gastroenterology–14th Street

Robert Yamulla, MD, Gastroenterology–14th Street



Colleague Flu Shots Clinics Oct. 5-Dec. 1

by [Jane Danish](#) · September 22, 2017



It's the time of year when we begin to think about fall foliage and unfortunately, the upcoming flu season. Colleagues know our annual flu shot clinics at LVH–Hazleton are just around the corner. This year, flu shots will be available in the sixth floor conference room and employee health office on varying weekdays and times from Oct. 5 to Dec. 1. Here is the schedule.

Sixth Floor Conference Room

Thursday, Oct. 5, 1:30-4 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 6, 1:30-4 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 9, 7-8 a.m.

Monday, Oct. 9, 2-4 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 10, 2:45-4 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 12, 7:15-8:15 a.m.

Thursday, Oct. 12, 1:45-4 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 13, 9-10 a.m.

Friday, Oct. 13, 2:45-4 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 16, 7:15-8:15 a.m.

Monday, Oct. 16, 2-4 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 17, 2-4 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 18, 9-10 a.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 18, 3-4 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 19, 7:15-8:15 a.m.

Thursday, Oct. 19, 3-4 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 23, 8-10 a.m.

Monday, Oct. 23, 3-4 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2-4 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 25, 9-10 a.m.

Friday, Oct. 27, 3-4 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 30, 7:15-8:15 a.m.

Monday, Oct. 30, 3-4 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 31, 1:45-4 p.m.

Employee Health Office

Wednesday, Nov. 1, 3-4 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 3, 7:30-8:30 a.m.

Friday, Nov. 3, 3-4 p.m.

Monday, Nov. 6, 2-4 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 9, 2-4 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2-4 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 17, 2-4 p.m.

Monday, Nov. 20, 2-4 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2-4 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 1, 2-4 p.m.

If you can't make any of the designated times, call the employee health office for an appointment at 570-501-4788. Colleagues who do not receive a flu shot or have received a flu shot elsewhere are required to sign a declination form at the employee health office. Colleagues receiving shots elsewhere also must provide proof of vaccination to the employee health office.

Colleagues at the Health & Wellness Center at Hazleton are asked to contact their department managers if they'd like a flu shot. You will be notified when flu shots will be administered at your department.

As in prior years, LVHN policy mandates a flu shot as a requirement for LVHN colleagues who have patient contact at most of our campuses. All other colleagues are strongly encouraged to get one as well. It's our way of keeping colleagues healthy while giving back to the community. Whether you are attending a religious service or out at a social event, you will not be potentially increasing the influenza risk.

“Why should I get vaccinated?”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the vaccine for all persons over the age of 6 months, especially health care workers. Everyone, including laboratory, clerical, dietary, environmental services, maintenance, security and administrative personnel, might be exposed to the flu virus even though they are not directly involved in patient care and could transmit the virus to others. Additionally:

- A flu shot is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu.
- A flu shot reduces the potential spread of the influenza virus through our hospitals, health centers and outpatient practices.
- Influenza/pneumonia is the No. 8 cause of death in the U.S.

This year’s quadrivalent vaccine protects against four types of influenza – two type A viruses and two type B viruses. They are:

- A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus
- A/Hong Kong/4801/2014 (H3N2)-like virus
- B/Brisbane/60/2008-like (B/Victoria lineage) virus
- B/Phuket/3073/2013-like (B/Yamagata lineage) virus

The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices continues to recommend that the live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) – also known as the “nasal spray” flu vaccine – should not be used during the 2017-2018 flu season. The recommendation is based on data showing poor or relatively lower effectiveness of LAIV in recent years. The nasal spray flu vaccine will not be available to LVHN colleagues through employee health services.

Medicare Patients of LVHN
Physicians Eligible for New
Affordable Health Plans

2 OCT, 2017

What is Lehigh Valley Flex Blue?

7 SEP, 2017

Colleague Wellness
Physicals at Hospital
Campus Oct. 4 and 11

27 SEP, 2017

DAISY Award Program Comes to LVH–Hazleton

by [Jane Danish](#) · September 29, 2017

LVH–Hazleton has joined other hospitals in our health network (LVH–Cedar Crest, LVH–Muhlenberg and LVH–Pocono) and more than 2,700 hospitals worldwide that recognize the legacies of exceptional nurses with DAISY Awards.

The DAISY Foundation was formed in 2000 in memory of J. Patrick Barnes by his family. He had an immune disorder that required high-tech care during the last eight weeks of his young life. The family wanted a way to honor and keep Patrick’s memory alive while recognizing the exemplary clinical skills and heartwarming compassionate care each of his nurses provided. Little did they know this idea would launch a foundation, as well as national and international recognition of outstanding nursing care. Today the program is administered by the DAISY Foundation. DAISY is an acronym for Diseases Attacking the Immune SYstem.



A DAISY Award Recognition Committee is in the process of developing procedures, templates and celebrations to bring this award to our deserving nurses throughout LVHN facilities in Hazleton. These include LVH–Hazleton, Health & Wellness Center at Hazleton, the Health Center at Mountain Top, LVPG–Hazleton practice sites and ExpressCARE. Each quarter, one RN will be chosen to receive the DAISY Award for his or her excellent clinical skills, compassionate care and exemplary service. Nominations can be submitted by colleagues, patients, families and/or volunteers.

The DAISY Award Recognition Committee will work throughout October to finalize the program, which is expected to roll out in early November.

Visit LVHN Daily–Hazleton to learn more about the DAISY Award program as it begins to unfold. In the meantime, start thinking about who you would nominate for the DAISY Award.

Leadership Rounds With Colleagues Scheduled Oct. 2-13

by [Jane Danish](#) · September 29, 2017

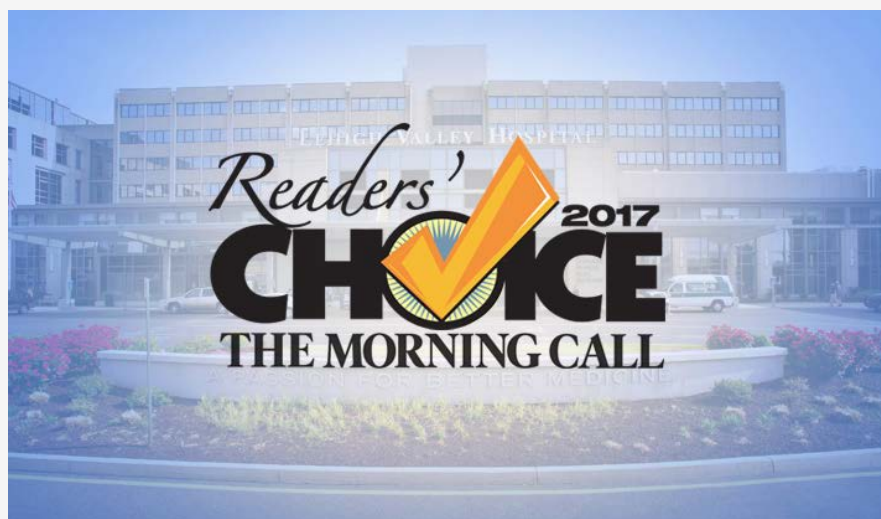
LVH–Hazleton senior leaders are continuing rounds to visit with colleagues in the nursing and ancillary

departments. Do you have a question, comment or suggestion? Take note of when rounds will be in your area and feel free to stop one of our leaders to talk about it. Together, we can make a difference for our colleagues and our patients.

LEADERSHIP ROUNDS-ANCILLARY OCT. 2-6		
LOCATION/DEPARTMENTS	DATE AND TIME	LEADER
<u>Hospital-Lower Level</u> Purchasing/Storeroom, Central /Sterile Supply, Food Service, Housekeeping, Pharmacy	Oct. 2 at 2 p.m.	Michael Golden
<u>Hospital 3rd, 4thand 5th floors</u> Respiratory Therapy, PT, Cardiology, 5 th floor nursing unit	Oct. 5 at 2 p.m.	Tony Valente, MD
<u>Hospital Annex</u> Lab, Quality Management, Medical Records	Oct. 3 at 1:30	Murray Swim
<u>Healthy Beginnings</u>	Oct. 3 at 10 a.m.	Melissa Curto
<u>Health & Wellness Center</u> Fitness, Rehab, Occ Health, Lab, Cardiac Diagnostics, Radiology, Patient Access, Café, Welcome Desk.	Oct. 3 at 1 p.m.	Melissa Curto
<u>Hospital Campus Buildings</u> B&E: Marketing, Community Relations, Bariatrics, Patient Access, Home Health, Finance ETC: Human Resources Plant Operations	Oct. 5 at 2 p.m.	John Fletcher

LEADERSHIP ROUNDS-NURSING OCT. 9-13		
LOCATION/DEPARTMENTS	DATE AND TIME	LEADER
Emergency Department	Oct. 10 at 7 p.m.	John Fletcher
3 rd Floor Nursing Unit	Oct. 10 at 6:30 a.m.	Melissa Curto
4 th Floor Nursing Unit	Oct. 10 at 6:30 a.m.	Murray Swim
5 th Floor Nursing Unit	Oct. 12 at 4 p.m.	Tony Valente, MD
7 th Floor Nursing Unit	Oct. 10 at 7 p.m.	Michael Golden

LVHN Claims 2 Honors in 2017 Morning Call Readers' Choice Awards



September 25, 2017

Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) has won two prestigious health care honors in the 2017 Morning Call Readers' Choice Awards, released by the newspaper on Sunday.

LVHN won Best Hospital/Health Network and LVPG Family Medicine won Best Family Doctor. The Morning Call invited readers to take part in an online survey to vote in several categories, including health care.

Such honors are a tribute to LVHN's mission to heal, comfort and care for our community. Accessing quality care at LVHN is now easier than ever before. You can do so by:

- Calling one number to access everything our health network has to offer: 888-402-LVHN

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LVHN Claims 2 Honors in 2017 Morning Call Readers' Choice Awards



Next Steps

Imagine care with skill,
compassion and
no appointment needed.

ExpressCARE

- Scheduling an appointment on our website, LVHN.org, or on our patient portal, MyLVHN
- Walking into an ExpressCARE without an appointment to get care for a common illness or minor injury
- Addressing a minor medical concern via a video visit with a provider from the comfort of your living room couch.

And on our website, you can choose the best doctor for you by reviewing physician star ratings submitted by real patients.

LVHN has set the standard for care and innovation in the region. And recently we took that standard to the next level with the development of three institutes: the LVHN Heart Institute, the LVHN Cancer Institute and the LVHN Institute for Special Surgery.

The word "institute" describes a health care organization where high-caliber clinicians work together to conduct patient care, research and education, and to better predict, prevent and combat disease. That means when you receive care at an LVHN institute, you'll have a team of experts working together to ensure you receive leading-edge care.

Lehigh Valley Hospital has been ranked among the nation's top hospitals by U.S. News & World Report for 22 consecutive years. Last month, LVHN was honored as one of 12 academic medical centers nationally to receive the Bernard A. Birnbaum, MD, Quality Leadership Award at the Vizient Clinical Connections Summit in Denver. The award is issued for demonstrating leadership, collaboration, adaptability and advanced analytics in improving performance across the care continuum.

LVHN also won Morning Call Reader's Choice awards for Best Hospital/Health Network in 2015 and tied in the 2014 voting. LVHN won Best Family Doctor in 2015 and 2016.

Sinusitis – A Common Ailment So Easily Confused



September 18, 2017

It's one of the most common conditions in health care, affecting from 10 to 30 percent of people in the U.S. in some form each year. Yet sinusitis (sinus infections) continues to be misunderstood.

“Many people assume allergies and sinus problems are one in the same,” says Lehigh Valley Health Network otolaryngology specialist [Kevin Kriesel, MD](#), with LVPG Ear, Nose and Throat. “Some symptoms can be similar, but these are two distinct disease processes. Nasal allergy issues can lead to sinusitis, but there are many other factors that can lead to chronic sinus disease.”

Sinusitis and its many causes

Sinusitis occurs when fluid gets trapped in the sinuses and causes inflammation. It's usually triggered by a virus, about 90 percent of the time in adults and 50 to 70 percent of the

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Sinusitis – A Common Ailment So Easily Confused



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FREE ENT GUIDE

time in children according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Otherwise, it's a bacterial infection. Most sinus infections can be treated by primary care doctors, but an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist is consulted when the frequency, duration, and severity of the infections become problematic.

Allergies can be a cause of sinusitis, and they are certainly a familiar culprit in the Lehigh Valley area where a variety of allergy triggers are widespread. But a cold or other respiratory tract infection can lead to sinusitis as well, as can nasal polyps, structural issues with the sinuses or a weakened immune system. Regular exposure to pollutants, chemicals, and irritants such as cigarette smoke also can cause sinusitis.

Getting relief from symptoms

Symptoms include headaches, fever and facial pain over the affected sinus areas, sometimes accompanied by a thick nasal discharge which could include pus or blood. Over-the-counter pain relievers and nasal sprays often help. Antibiotics will only help if the infection is bacterial. They do not aid in viral cases.

Sinusitis should get better on its own. But if symptoms remain for a week to 10 days, it's approaching the acute sinusitis stage and a visit to a primary care physician for evaluation is recommended, perhaps for some prescription medication if the infection is bacterial. A specialist such as Kriesel will get involved when cases become chronic sinusitis, which means symptoms last more than six-to-eight weeks, or recurring sinusitis if multiple sinus infections occur in a given year.

When to see a sinus specialist

"Essentially, I'll see a patient when he or she has exhausted all other options," Kriesel says. "They're not responding to antibiotics or saline flushes, or anything else that's been tried to correct the problem, or it's occurring again and again. We have a number of minimally invasive intranasal surgical options available depending on the problem that will correct it."

ENTs have several options at their disposal, including

maximizing medical therapy with combinations of anti-inflammatories and longer antibiotic courses. This combination is often required to eradicate very persistent sinus disease.

If that is not successful, sinus surgery may be required. The surgery spectrum includes everything from minimally invasive balloon sinuplasties which are used to open up the sinus with special dilating balloons, to extensive surgery using endoscopes.

Think you may have a hearing loss? Get more information at LVHN.org/ENTguide

Know the Signs of Gallbladder Disease

Your age, gender and diet can put you at risk



September 21, 2017

Have you ever felt sharp pain in your right side? It could be a sign of gallbladder disease. Learn the signs, symptoms and treatments from surgeon [Michael Mahoney, DO](#), with LVPG Surgery and family medicine nurse practitioner [Jennifer Yourey, CRNP](#), with LVPG Family Medicine.

What is the gallbladder?

This 4-inch pear-shaped organ lies just beneath your liver on the right side of your abdomen. It stores bile made in your liver – a mixture of water, cholesterol, bile salts and other substances that help digest fats in food. The gallbladder squeezes bile into your small intestine, where food has traveled from your stomach.

What can go wrong?

- **Gallstones:** These small, rock-like deposits form when bile

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Know the Signs of Gallbladder Disease



contains too much cholesterol or other substances. “You may not know you have gallstones if they’re small and don’t cause symptoms,” Mahoney says. However, they often grow and clog the bile duct opening.

- **Cholelithiasis:** This dangerous condition occurs when gallstones completely block the bile duct opening.
- **Cholecystitis:** This painful inflammation is caused by gallstones, infection or injury. It may start off acute (sudden and severe) and become chronic if left untreated.
- **Biliary dyskinesia:** This chronic disease occurs when your gallbladder muscles stop working properly for unknown reasons.

Who’s at risk?

- Women (especially during pregnancy)
- People over 40
- Obese individuals
- Those with high-fat, highcholesterol diets
- People who lose weight rapidly (including from bariatric surgery)

What are the symptoms?

- Classic symptom: Sharp pain in the upper right abdomen that radiates to the back and right shoulder
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Clay-colored stools

How do you treat gallbladder problems?

If you have gallbladder problems but mild or no symptoms, treatment is usually not necessary. “For mild symptoms, you may try living with them or switching to a low-fat diet,” Yourey says.

If symptoms get progressively worse, surgery is needed. “In those cases, the most effective treatment usually is surgery to remove the gallbladder,” Mahoney says.

- Surgery is typically done laparoscopically.
- Pain is minimal.
- Patients usually go home the same day.
- Back to work within a week or two.

Learn more about gallstone symptoms, diagnosis and treatment. Visit LVHN.org/gallstones or call 570-501-4LVH to make an appointment.