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DRUGS

*Serving others, giving hope, changing lives.*

SPRING 2020



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# SURGING AHEAD & the HopeHealth Patient Portal

*For several months, the HopeHealth IT department had been working on infrastructure and systems to incorporate telehealth appointments through the Patient Portal and had a plan to roll out the system to patients in May. Then, with the potential of COVID-19 spreading in the community, stepping up that roll-out became essential.*



A few HopeHealth providers have been using the system since 2016, but none were using TeleVisits with patients who were in their home. Instead, patients would visit one of our smaller sites to access TeleVisit appointments with specialty services such as our Diabetes Self Management Education program.

While more than 7,700 patients were actively using the portal to request medication refills, check upcoming appointments, review history, and communicate with their providers via messaging and email, an additional 17,000+ patients had provided an email address but never completed enrollment.

Getting these patients web-enabled and ready for using the portal for TeleVisits - especially those at high risk for complications from COVID-19 - was crucial.

“We knew that having TeleVisits as an appointment option for our at-risk patients was essential from the very beginning of the pandemic,” said Dr. Heather Leisy, director of preventive

medicine. “By fast-tracking the rollout with an all-hands approach we were quickly ready to provide care to patients without risking exposure to the virus.”

Overnight, the HopeHealth IT team developed an effective training program that quickly trained 50-plus primary care providers and 100-plus support staff in less than two weeks. Training included:

- Training sessions and webinars on the process to web-enable patient accounts and set up a TeleVisit
- Instructing providers on how to TeleVisit with their patients
- Preparing a team of HopeHealth employees to help patients set up the Healow app and access the portal from their smart phones and computers

“We also enlisted the help of other departments to form a support team that reaches out to hundreds of patients a day to enroll and prepare them for using the service through their computers or smart phones,” said Sean Whitfield, systems

integration analyst. “Our ongoing support for helping patients is a vital part of the process.”

By mid-April, the roll out had helped more than 1,400 patients prepare for a TeleVisit with their provider and eliminated the need for an individual to choose between visiting their doctor and risking exposure to the coronavirus. A decision especially hard for those with chronic diseases who are most at risk for complications with COVID-19.

“Maintaining continuity of care especially in management of chronic disease processes, such as for cardiovascular disease and diabetes, is extremely important,” said Dr. Heather Leisy, director of preventive medicine. “Given these individuals are at increased risk of poor outcomes from COVID-19, TeleVisits allows this continued medical care access. Additionally, stress and anxiety are high, so patients can discretely and easily reach out to our behavioral health counselors during this time without even leaving their homes.”

## New Providers

### Rebecca Oeffinger, MSW, LISW-CP



HopeHealth welcomed Rebecca Oeffinger, MSW, LISW-CP, to HopeHealth in January. Oeffinger is a behavioral health counselor at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence.

She earned her Master of Social Work from the University of South Carolina, and is passionate about her patients and helping them improve their quality of life. She enjoys working with many different populations, including children and teens.

### Laura Lee Samuel, APRN, FNP-C



Laura Lee Samuel, FNP-C, returned to HopeHealth in April as a family nurse practitioner. She has served as a clinical manager, director, and chief of nursing, and sees patients at HopeHealth in Timmonsville.

Samuel earned her Master of Science/Nurse Practitioner from South University, Savannah, Georgia, and her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from the University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

From Florence originally, Samuel is a member of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, American Nurses Association, and South Carolina Nurses Association. She is a community basic life support instructor, and has received numerous awards, including a SC Palmetto Gold award.

Learn more about our providers at [hope-health.org/providers](https://hope-health.org/providers).

## SAVE the DATE!

### National Health Center Week

## August 9-15, 2020

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### Community Health Centers: The Chemistry for Strong Communities!

Values

Populations

Enabling Services

Services

Innovations

Affordability

Mission

[healthcenterweek.org](https://healthcenterweek.org)  
#NHCW2020



## Timmonsville Team Takes on Colorectal Cancer

HopeHealth in Timmonsville reached out into the community (before social distancing measures were in place) and teamed up with Champions for CRC for Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

During the outreach event, Howard Yarborough, Timmonsville practice administrator, spoke to a woman who, after waiting for almost two years, committed to completing the test.

The team shared colorectal cancer screening information and provided refreshments, pins, and wristbands.



# COMMUNITY SUPPORTING HOPEHEALTH

A big thank you to all the individuals, organizations, and businesses helping support HopeHealth's employees during this time, including Xaxby's in Florence.

Chad Ham, Xaxby's vice president of operations, delivered lunch to HopeHealth's clinical team at the Medical Plaza on April 14.

"Our clinical team is working hard to ensure the well-being of our patients and staff during the COVID-19 outbreak," said Scherrie Cogdill, director of development. "We appreciate the Florence Xaxby's for their recognition of these efforts and this generous donation."



compassionate  
care ♥ fund

The HopeHealth Compassionate Care Fund assists patients with unmet needs, such as the cost of vision appointments, eyeglasses, specialty care, surgery, prescription drugs, and emergency assistance.



☐ \$20      ☐ \$50      ☐ \$100      ☐ \$500  
☐ \$1000      ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I've enclosed a check payable to HopeHealth.

☐ Please charge my credit card:

☐ Visa      ☐ AMEX      ☐ Master Card

Credit Card Number

Expiration Date

Cardholder Name

CVV Number

Signature

☐ This gift is in memory  
of (name of deceased):  
\_\_\_\_\_

☐ This gift is a tribute to  
(name of individual):  
\_\_\_\_\_

to commemorate \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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HopeHealth is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations to HopeHealth are tax-deductible according to current IRS laws. Mail donations to: HopeHealth Community Relations, 360 North Irby Street, Florence, SC 29501.

☐ Yes, I would like to make a donation to the HopeHealth compassionate care fund.



## 2019 Awards & Recognition



*From left, Carl M. Humphries, HopeHealth CEO, Sen. Ronnie Sabb, Madison Hall, health care access coordinator with the South Carolina Primary Health Care Association, and Kim Johnson, HopeHealth director of community engagement.*

### SCPHCA, HopeHealth Recognize CHC Champion of the Year

Senator Ronnie Sabb was presented the Community Health Center Champion award by the South Carolina Primary Health Care Association and HopeHealth in early March.

Nominated by HopeHealth CEO Carl M. Humphries for his “comprehensive understanding of the health care needs in and around Williamsburg County,” Sabb accepted the award and talked about how his interest in community health began long

before he entered politics.

“It is obvious Senator Sabb’s commitment goes beyond politics and is truly based on his love for people,” said, Humphries.

The award is presented to a local or state elected official who is supportive of Community Health Centers in reducing the cost of health care, reducing disparities, managing chronic diseases, and improving health outcomes for medically vulnerable populations.

### HopeHealth Pharmacy Team Earns CIMS Storyboard Award

Each year community health centers in South Carolina participate in sharing best practices with their peers at the CIMS Annual Partners Conference. This year, HopeHealth was awarded second place for their performance improvement initiative storyboard. This storyboard detailed an initiative to reduce the financial burden of purchasing prescription medications for patients using our sliding fee scale.

CIMS, or Community Integrated Management Services, is an independent physicians’ association that partners with health centers to promote financial and clinical integration across the state in terms of the services health centers provide. Fourteen of South Carolina’s 22 centers are partners.

Stephen Orander, HopeHealth director of pharmacy, said the goal of the program was to reduce the financial burden of purchasing prescription medications for our scale patients. Orander, Andrew Lynch, business intelligence manager at HopeHealth, and Vermonica Harrell, a pharmacy patient advocate, partnered with Longs Drugs to do just that.

The team determined that more than 12 percent of prescriptions filled every month were never picked up. The goal was to reduce this number to below 8 percent by reducing the financial burden of out of pocket expenses.

“Cost is the number one barrier to care when it comes to getting prescription medications for the indigent population,” said Lynch. “Insurance can be helpful, but many times, even with insurance, patients can’t afford their co-pay.”

“By identifying patients with financial need and providing assistance, we were able to increase medication adherence and reduce the financial burden for an already burdened patient population,” he said.

Harrell, who works directly with patients to get their medications, noted that the Medication Assistance Program enables all HopeHealth patients to receive assistance with their medication if a sliding fee scale application is pending or approved.

“This helps patients who have high co-pays or financial distress to get their



*Clockwise from top left: Stephen Orander, director of pharmacy, Andrew Lynch, business intelligence manager, and Vermonica Harrell, pharmacy patient advocate.*

medication for chronic conditions and some acute conditions,”

The success of the program saved 985 HopeHealth patients \$179,312.79 between February and December 2019. “And that number is only increasing every month,” said Lynch.

Visit [hope-health.org/financial-services](https://hope-health.org/financial-services) for more on our financial services.



# COVID-19 Strategy Team Leads HopeHealth Through Pandemic

In the early days of coronavirus outbreak HopeHealth assigned 10 key staff members to a COVID-19 strategy team and tasked them to address potential needs.

By March 12, when South Carolina only had six confirmed and six presumptive cases, the decision was made to cancel all upcoming HopeHealth social and education events, including the April All Sites staff meeting and the annual 50+ Senior Life Expo.

Originally meeting weekly, the team quickly moved to daily briefings and developed a flexible plan to address patient screening, supplies, staff awareness, cleaning schedules and routines, and other potential changes to the daily HopeHealth workflow as the pandemic spread.

These plans included not only refresher training on the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and FIT testing of N95 masks for employees assigned to response teams, but also identifying spaces for isolating potential cases, providing guidance for staff, TeleVisit implementation and training, and the preparation of outside testing for COVID-19.

The team continues to meet daily and updates clinical and administrative processes as needed. For a timeline of HopeHealth's response, visit the HopeHealth blog at [hope-health.org/blog](https://hope-health.org/blog).

