

Our People Story

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Spring 2020





Together, we do amazing things every day

For the third year in a row, we've been named one of Canada's Top 100 Employers, one of Alberta's Top 75 Employers and one of Canada's Top Employers for Young People. And we're honoured that for the second year, we've been named one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers.

We're a team of more than 125,000 staff, physicians and volunteers working together to deliver quality healthcare to Albertans.

To learn more about how we serve Albertans, visit ahs.ca.



Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities
Together.



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This Alberta Health Services document
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ON THE COVER (clockwise from top): See pages 7, 9, 13



Dr. Verna Yiu is President and CEO of Alberta Health Services.

We're meeting challenges and embracing change

First, a word to all: This edition reflects the work and stories of our people for the year leading up to March 31, 2020. Before Alberta's first case of the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, was announced on March 5, we already had our response framework in place, and a lot of important work was well underway. As we respond to this pandemic, we're very much in the early stages and the situation will continue to evolve in the weeks and months ahead. But whatever comes our way, I have absolute faith Alberta Health Services will rise to meet these challenges.

I am proud and honoured to lead extraordinary teams during extraordinary times.

We continue to meet the challenges we face through teamwork, innovation and resilience, and with compassion and composure. As Canada's first and largest provincewide health system, we've emerged as a national and international leader in many areas of care, including stroke treatment and broad scale

implementation and system integration.

We were the first province in Canada to launch a COVID-19 assessment tool. We are also a national and global leader in per capita COVID-19 testing rates.

We do great things every day, and we couldn't have done it without our people.

Every day, I see our people living AHS' values of compassion, accountability, respect, excellence and safety. From taking the extra time to listen to a

Verna's words

"Our accomplishments do not come without huge effort. I encourage you to take a much-deserved break to recharge and spend some time with your loved ones. To those of you who continue to care for our patients and their families over the holidays—thank you. Delaying your time off to benefit others is truly appreciated by our patients, our leadership teams and everyone across AHS."

—Thanking staff and wishing everyone happy holidays

"I'm sure you remember how exciting it was to turn 10 years old. I do. We've come a long way in 10 years, and I know there is still more work to be done as we strive to fulfil our mission to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans. As I reflect on my time at AHS and on the achievements of the past decade, I couldn't be more proud. I hope you are, too."

—Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the formation of Alberta Health Services

"We have an opportunity to continue to learn and evolve as an organization and find ways to better serve our patients and families. High-performance healthcare organizations that are efficient also deliver excellent care. The dedication and skill of our people will be what makes this possible and I'm thankful to be working together with you as we move forward."

—Responding to the release of the Alberta Health Services review conducted by Ernst & Young for the Government of Alberta

patient's story, to helping cover a shift for a colleague, we support Albertans and each other.

We know that when our people are engaged in the work they do, patient care improves. We continue to listen and respond to the diverse voices in our organization to create a workplace where everyone feels safe, valued and included. We continue to develop innovative programs and resources for our people to access, including the technology, tools and research needed to do our best work. We care and we grow, together.

In my travels, I've met with many healthcare leaders who've told me they marvel at what we've achieved in Alberta. And they are right; we've achieved many great things. But we are just getting

started—and we will adapt and rise to the challenges facing us.

I encourage you to take some time to read the stories here of the great care our people provide to Albertans and each other.

To everyone with Alberta Health Services: I thank you for everything you do each and every day. I look forward to leading us into the future.



—Dr. Verna Yiu
President and Chief Executive Officer

“As we reflect on another challenging week due to wildfires in northern Alberta, I want to express my support and gratitude to all of our staff, physicians and volunteers who have helped lead our response to this harrowing situation. To those of you who have been personally impacted by the wildfires, including those of you who have been forced to leave your communities, know that our thoughts are with you. We are here to support you now, and will be there to help you when you can safely return to your homes.”

—Offering support to staff in northern Alberta during the spring wildfires

“In the early morning hours, we launched Wave 1 of Connect Care. It really is a milestone in Alberta's and Canada's healthcare history. It's going to help physicians and clinicians do their best possible work, providing improved quality and safety of care. It's going to enable Albertans to be at the centre of their healthcare team. So congratulations to everyone in Wave 1 and to those across the province who have helped us be successful in this launch.”

—On Edmonton's Nov. 3 Wave 1 launch of Connect Care—a shared clinical information system that will be rolled out across the province in nine waves

AHS Vision

Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.

AHS Mission

To provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

AHS Values

compassion accountability
respect excellence safety

AHS Foundational Strategies

AHS has four foundational strategies supporting our efforts to deliver safe, high-quality, patient- and family-centred care to Albertans:

- **Patient First Strategy** strengthens AHS' culture and practices to ensure patients and families are at the centre of all healthcare activities, decisions and teams.
- **Our People Strategy** is about how we support each other and create a culture in which we all feel safe, healthy, valued and included, and able to reach our full potential.
- **Strategy for Clinical Health Research, Innovation & Analytics** generates, shares and uses evidence in the delivery of care to improve patient outcomes and to solve the complex challenges affecting the health system.
- **Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) Strategy** focuses on making the right information available to the right people at the right time across the health system, so that providers and patients have access to complete information at the point of care and to learn from in the future.

Who we are

At Alberta Health Services, we are doctors and nurses. We are paramedics and porters. We are environmental experts, social workers, cooks and cleaners, volunteers and much, much more. And together, we work with one goal in mind: to keep Albertans healthy

We do incredible life-changing work every day to improve the health of Albertans.

Our people deliver services to those in our communities with knowledge, care and compassion.

Whether it's helping rehabilitate a father after a car accident, or providing treatment to a child with cancer, Alberta Health Services (AHS) is there for you.

As a high-performing healthcare organization, we dedicate ourselves to delivering safe, quality, patient- and family-centred care to 4.4 million Albertans in communities throughout our province.

We live in various rural and urban communities, working 24 hours a day,

seven days a week, 365 days a year.

We are comprised of more than 103,000 employees, 14,000 volunteers and almost 8,600 physicians.

We are physicians and nurses, researchers and innovators. We are paramedics and ambulance drivers, social workers and administrators. We are healthcare aides, volunteers, porters, cooks and much, much more.

We work at 850 facilities in 145 communities across the province, including hospitals, urgent care centres, clinics, continuing care facilities, cancer centres, mental health facilities and community health sites.

We have an extensive network of community-based services designed to

assist Albertans in maintaining and/or improving their health.

We share our knowledge with students from universities and colleges across Alberta and Canada who choose to receive their clinical and practical education alongside us.

We're in this because we have a passion for health in all its forms.

And of all the things we do, our priority is to take care of our patients and each other.

From the clear waters of Lake Athabasca to the majestic mountains in Banff National Park, from north to south and east to west, we are here and together, we continue to provide the best possible care to Albertans.

Our words



"Healthcare is what I love. In Nigeria, I used to take care of seniors. It's fulfilling; everything has its own challenges and it all depends on how you handle it. Patients are going through so many things, but when you sit down, talk to them and give them support, you gain lots, too."

—Oluseye Shonibare, nursing attendant at the Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary



"I got into healthcare to help people and because I find the technology of taking pictures fascinating. I got my license in Jackson, Tenn., and then moved to Canada. Then the technology changed from film to digital and I had to relearn everything. The most satisfying part about my job is seeing the work I can accomplish in a more efficient time frame."

—Tina Kernick, medical radiation technologist at the Airdrie Community Health Centre



"I have been through the system as a patient, having gone through two spinal surgeries and many doctors and nurses. They made me whole. I felt it was time to give back to the system that made me whole again."

—Joel Bermack, patient advisor who sits on the AHS Provincial Patient and Advisory Group



Alberta Health Services is made up of faces and places—people with a passion for healthcare who work in five zones across the province.

OUR PRIORITY IS THE HEALTH OF ALL ALBERTANS

- AHS has five geographical zones of care—South, Calgary, Central, Edmonton and North.
- These zones help AHS provide decision-making at a local level, and enable AHS to listen to and respond to local communities, local staff, and patients and clients.
- Provincewide services—including emergency medical services; population, public and Indigenous health; diagnostic imaging; and quality and safety—work in cooperation with the zones to deliver care.
- AHS works at providing more community-based resources and services for Albertans, including long-term care, supportive living, palliative care and home care.



"I have always worked with cancer patients. I'm giving back because I'm a cancer survivor. I always feel that there could be someone who is having a down day;

maybe it's their first time here for radiation or chemo. If I can say I'm a survivor, that gives courage. I'm just giving back."

—Ella O'Donnell, 88, a volunteer at the Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary for 20 years, who takes files into the radiation and bone marrow transplant clinic



"My mother is a nurse and so are many of my aunts. I grew up immersed in their conversation, hearing about the care and compassion they were able to offer—

and it really aligned with who I am and what I'm about. Studying health was a tie-back to my mom. I knew at a very young age that healthcare was going to be my career path."

—Mishaela Houle, executive director, Cardiac Sciences, Edmonton Zone



"I started out working for Canadian Pacific Railway. One day I burned my hand on some hot steel and had to visit the first aid room. He fixed me up and

I thought, 'How great is that to be able to help people like that?' So right then I decided to sign up for a St. John's Ambulance Course. A good paramedic is humble; you have to go in with respect and treat people with dignity."

—Rajnikant 'Raj' Dattani, an advanced care paramedic for more than 41 years

What we do

Healthcare is what we do. It's treatment, surgery and emergency services. It's research, innovation and diagnostics. It's preventive care and environmental services and much, much more. And in Fort McMurray, passion for healthcare is a family affair

While '10 Together' is the theme for Alberta Health Services' (AHS) 10th anniversary, members of the Therrien family could call their own celebration '6 Together' at the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre in Fort McMurray.

For six years, a family foursome—Cora and Michel Therrien, who both work in diagnostic imaging, and her parents Jack and Rhoda Keating, who work as an electrician and file clerk—have worked at the centre.

"Sometimes people don't realize that we're all related, and all work together here," says Cora, manager, Diagnostic Imaging (DI), North East.

"Even some of our colleagues are only now realizing that Cora and I are married,"

adds Michel, a clinical educator and medical radiation tech supervisor.

Married for almost 17 years, Cora and Michel met while working in diagnostic imaging at New Brunswick's Bathurst Regional Hospital in 1999, and have worked together in DI ever since.

In October 2008, the couple moved with their three children to Fort McMurray.

"Fort McMurray has been a great place to raise our family," says Michel.

"It's also such a supportive environment here at the hospital," adds Cora. "We all really like coming to work every day. Michel and I were both here when Alberta Health Services was established in April 2009 — and it's been exciting to watch AHS grow."

Jack and Rhoda moved to Fort

McMurray in the fall of 2013. Prior to his arrival, Jack spent six years travelling between Fort McMurray and New Brunswick for work.

"It's neat that we're all able to work together now. It's also funny in a way, because when Cora was younger, we didn't get to see her as often after she left for college. Now, we've seen her more in the past six years than we ever have."

Jack was eventually hired on as a hospital electrician. A few months later, Rhoda came aboard as a file clerk.

Rhoda says she's grateful for the opportunity to be surrounded by family.

"We live in Cora and Michel's downstairs apartment, so we get to see our grandchildren a lot more," says Rhoda.

Our words



"I feel humbled having the opportunity to help people after a traumatic injury, or a really big change in their life—to be their advocate and say, 'OK. What do you need to be independent, with quality of life—to get back to your job, get back to the sports you love, and get back home to your loved ones?' I help people get back to their lives."

—Jacqueline Rowley, physical therapist at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton



"There are parts that are sad. But I also get to see so much kindness and love and compassion, in circumstances most of us can't even imagine. It's a real privilege, an honour to get to work with people during the final stages of their life. Part of my role is to help people access services they need—helping people live the best life they can for as long as they can."

—Melissa Wilde, AHS social worker specializing in palliative care at the Chinook Regional Hospital in Lethbridge



"What most people like are routine and regularity. I love that it's not that. I like the fact that, being rural, you get more time with your patients. You have to do a lot more treatment than you would if you were five to 10 minutes from a major urban hospital."

—Jonathan Van Sickle-Kope, advanced care paramedic in Viking



John and Rhoda Keating, left, and Cora and Michel Therrien strike a family pose. All four have worked together for six years at the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre in Fort McMurray.

Even though they all see each other every day on the job, they never run out of things to talk about.

“It’s really special to be together as a

family and doing work that we love,” says Cora. “Being able to work together and live together has really brought us even closer as a family.”



“On a personal level, I measure success on how fulfilled I feel when I come to work. Success to me looks like having a job well-done, having a quality outcome in projects that I lead or participate in.”

—Melody Henriksen, area manager, acute care, Daysland, Hardisty, Tofield and Viking



“It could be anything from moving patients to blood products. On a busy day, we can walk 20 km or more. A slow day is 10 km. It’s very meaningful. It’s important to have that sense of meaning at work. You can really feel good about what you are doing. We are all contributing to the bigger picture.”

—Lucky Nghi, porter on the distribution team at the Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary

WE PROVIDE PATIENT- AND FAMILY-CENTRED CARE

We provide comfort and caring, perform life-saving surgery and conduct groundbreaking research.

We welcome babies into the world, help people recover from serious injuries and illness, and support them through physical, emotional and mental health challenges—at every stage of life. And, when healing is no longer possible, we provide compassionate care and support.

We promote healthy living in communities. We immunize, and prevent disease, disability and injury.

We teach, learn from our colleagues and mentor and train students from universities and colleges within Alberta, across our nation and many other countries.

We engage with people, patients and families to gain meaningful input. We work at 850 facilities located in 145 small and large communities across Alberta providing care in:

- Emergency departments
- Urgent care centres
- Acute care hospitals
- Mental health/addiction centres
- Corrections centres
- Cancer care facilities
- Continuing care centres
- Outpatient clinics
- Public health clinics
- Schools.

In 2019, AHS staff:

- Assisted in 50,973 births
- Answered 694,313 Health Link (811) calls
- Attended 560,434 EMS events
- Administered more than 1.3 million seasonal influenza vaccinations
- Conducted 65,560 food safety inspections
- Saw cancer patients during 668,817 visits
- Conducted 6.62 million outpatient visits
- Conducted 127,214 individual home care visits
- Oversaw 2.1 million ED visits.

Why we care

Healthcare is a demanding profession. But when AHS staff and physicians describe their work, the words they use most often are ‘rewarding,’ ‘satisfying,’ ‘a calling.’ Here, a Beaverlodge nurse and quilter team up for a toddler in a project they call ‘heart-warming’

Sometimes the tiniest of things make the biggest difference.

This thought struck home care nurse Jennifer Mickanuk this past fall.

Based in Beaverlodge, the Alberta Health Services (AHS) employee has been working with three-year-old Arizona and her family at Horse Lake First Nation, west of Beaverlodge, for the past two years.

Arizona lives with a rare congenital disorder called CHARGE syndrome, which involves extensive medical and physical difficulties, from life-threatening birth defects to vision loss, as well as swallowing and breathing problems.

To help Arizona gain weight in order to undergo surgery for a heart defect, a G-tube (gastrostomy tube) was placed

in her belly to ensure she receives the nutrition she needs—and Mickanuk says she’s been doing better.

The procedure was performed in Edmonton and, when Arizona’s family left the hospital, they were given a G-tube button made of flannel to protect the toddler’s skin around the tube site.

“Unfortunately, between coming back from Edmonton, mom having a new baby and moving into a different home—the small G-tube button was lost,” says Mickanuk.

Knowing how useful the G-tube buttons are, she looked into getting replacements for the family. She did find some online, but there were expensive.

After mulling it over, Mickanuk called

Erin Kyle, owner of the Around the Block quilting shop in Beaverlodge, to see if she could help.

“I went home that night, found a pattern on Pinterest, grabbed some flannel and it worked,” says Kyle.

While the G-tube buttons aren’t difficult to craft, it’s intricate work due to their wee size.

“I love heartwarming projects like this,” she adds.

Kyle made about 20 G-tube buttons for Arizona, and has continued to make more, putting the call out to a local quilting group.

When Mickanuk saw the G-tube buttons Kyle had created, she says she felt overwhelmed.

Our words



“The best part of my job is seeing people who you don’t think are going to survive actually walk out of the unit. You’re almost certain they’re going to pass and then, a few weeks later, they go home. That’s pretty neat. To be able to help them makes a really tough career rewarding.”

—Sara Mandryk, registered nurse at the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital



“Like my career in healthcare, my interest in pediatrics caught me by surprise. When I was doing my bachelor of science in nursing at the University of Alberta, my practicum had two pediatric sessions. I ended up appreciating how genuine and authentic children are—they remind us what matters most—comfort, loving support, and popsicles. Children are unbelievably resilient and inspiring.”

—Shawn Hillhouse, Operative & Surgical Programs, and site lead, Stollery Children’s Hospital in Edmonton



“The most rewarding part about my job is being able to make somebody feel happy in any way ... little or big. When you work with elderly people, sometimes they tell you stories from their past that you can relate with. They make you think back. I love that aspect. I love doing what I do.”

—Grace Omosomwan, licensed practical nurse at the Brooks Health Centre



Strawberry Shortcake is just one of the colourful flannel patterns used by quilter Erin Kyle to create special G-tube buttons.

"I just started to cry, they were so beautiful," she says. "The colours and the patterns ... they were bright and they were soft."

When Mickanuk brought them out to the family on her next home visit, she subtly laid them out on the bed next to Arizona where mom Trina would notice.

"Her eyes just got huge and she says 'Are those all for us?'" says Mickanuk. "She was so grateful."

"It's just a little piece of flannel, but it's made an impact for this family. I can't even put into words and can't measure how much this little act made such a difference for this family. Kindness really counts."

THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE SHAPE OUR ORGANIZATION

We are driven by hope, compassion and a desire to help.

Our interactions with patients, clients and their families are meaningful and rewarding in countless ways. The importance of what we do is reflected in their voices:

- **Thanks For Caring:** a website featuring posts of online messages of gratitude for care or support received from any person working in any role at any AHS site.
- **Because You Cared:** a video series in which Albertans thank their care providers.

We are fuelled by knowledge, discovery, science and evidence.

AHS is shaped by the health needs of individuals, families and communities, and with the input of patients and families, as well as local, provincial and Indigenous advisory councils.

Our roots can be traced to the first clinics and hospitals in the province. We stand on more than 150 years of advances and innovations in caring for people.



"It's the project of a lifetime. Why not dive into it? I'm a patient of the Alberta healthcare system, too, and I could see we were going to

make a difference working on this project. It's a new era for AHS and Albertans receiving healthcare in the province. It's really a privilege to be part of this change."

—Jon Sloan, senior information analyst, on being part of the Connect Care development team



"It was like a calling and I knew this is exactly where I needed to be. That's the beauty of nursing. You can go and spread your wings in many ways and still feel like you're making a difference. What I've learned is you can always learn. And you can always create change, no matter how small. How you can enrich other individuals' lives is probably the most rewarding thing in being a nurse."

—Roberta Corea, program manager for Mental Health Services at the Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary



"My job is a crossover between prevention and treatment, so it has both a public health arm to it in terms of preventing people from getting sick, and a treatment arm. The treatment side can be more exciting because you're taking sick people and curing them. But the public health side is nevertheless extremely important to keep people well. So it is similarly very satisfying."

—Dr. Geoff Taylor, senior medical director of Infection Prevention and Control

We rise to a global threat

COVID-19 is an invisible and implacable enemy. But it is one that can be held back. And every department in AHS has stepped up to help hold the line against this virus

Alberta Health Services (AHS) has faced changes and challenges over the years. But we are facing our greatest test yet—the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19. Although we are in the early stages of our pandemic response, the determination, bravery and generosity of our healthcare workers continue to shine through. They show up every day with a passion that drives us to do our very best for all Albertans.

Thanks to our many hardworking teams, we have been able to do many great things. We've planned and prepared to ensure we can meet capacity needs based on peak infection projections, have more than enough personal protective equipment on hand, continue to increase our already impressive rapid testing, and have a robust and comprehensive contact

tracing system in place.

Alberta was the first province in Canada to launch a COVID-19 assessment tool. We are a national and global leader in per capita COVID-19 testing rates. Our teams have been able to process 7,000 tests daily. Yes, that's more than four tests per minute. And if that's not impressive enough, we will be using new technology to increase this to 16,000 tests a day.

This is no easy feat, but our people are doing it, together.

We are keeping Albertans and our healthcare workers safe, too. In January, when the World Health Organization officially announced the first COVID-19 case, we quickly responded and significantly increased our stockpiles of masks, gloves, gowns and N95 masks to ensure our people had what they needed

to protect themselves and others.

All AHS staff, physicians and contractors at clinical sites are screened for fitness for work when they arrive. If they aren't fit for work, they are required to stay home. These are just some of the ways we are keeping people safe.

As well, we ramped up capacity at Health Link, a telephone service that provides free 24/7 advice and general health information for Albertans. In 2018-19, Health Link took an average of about 1,900 calls per day. But there were days in March when the service was fielding more than 7,000 calls. And we were able to handle it thanks to effective coordination and communication across the organization.

We set up 30 assessment centres across the province where testing can be

Our words



"I just want to say thank you for everything you're doing ... At the end of the day, it takes all of us to be part of the AHS team and the AHS family to make

sure we can actually beat this COVID. Moving forward, we know that life is very different for us now than it was before. I hope that you can stay safe, yourself; stay well, yourself. Remember to stay physically distant, but socially connected."

—Dr. Verna Yiu,
AHS President and CEO



"Protecting our staff is our No. 1 priority. We want to be sure that our healthcare workers have what they need at the front lines, at the bedside. And we will do

everything we can to ensure our healthcare workers have what they need to protect themselves."

—Dr. Mark Joffe, vice president
& medical director of CancerControl
Alberta, Clinical Support Services
& Provincial Clinical Excellence with AHS,
on personal protective equipment
to protect staff from contracting viruses
such as COVID-19



"Thank you to all who have been and will be involved in Alberta's response to COVID-19. Your care and engagement exemplifies our values of compassion,

accountability, respect, excellence and safety. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant efforts made by our Health Link and Alberta Precision Lab staff, as they have ramped up to meet unprecedented demand.

Dr. Laura McDougall,
senior medical officer of health



In every one of our departments and in every zone in the province, AHS has stepped up to fight COVID-19.

performed safely, in a way that minimizes risk of further infection. AHS has provided COVID-19 outbreak support where needed, taking over operations of some continuing care facilities and working with businesses to improve their infection prevention and control measures for the safety of workers and people in the community.

We postponed all scheduled and

elective surgeries as part of a larger strategy to create acute care capacity. We also added intensive care unit (ICU) beds to existing ICU rooms, converted operating rooms and recovery rooms to ICU capacity, and converted procedure and treatment rooms to ICU capacity.

Our initial modelling showed we needed to more than double our 314 ventilators. So we purchased and acquired ventilators

from various agencies and facilities.

These are just some of our successes to date.

We are so grateful for our healthcare heroes. They have shown courage and they have been selfless. And thanks to them, they have given us hope. Hope for a better tomorrow; hope that we will win this fight. We thank them and all Albertans for helping us to continue to flatten the curve.



"Think of a line of dominos—one push and the whole row goes down. To stop that from happening, you have to remove one or two of the dominos. Contact

tracing is the same thing. If you think of people as dominos, and all those people are in a line, if we can remove a few of those people that might be infected or potentially capable of passing that infection along, we stop that falling down or that infection, as it might be."

—Angela Jacobs, associate manager for AHS Notifiable Diseases



"There are a lot of people suffering emotional distress as a result of being socially isolated, of being lonely, being unemployed, being worried. Kindness

is a really, really powerful medicine that doesn't require a prescription; that anybody can dispense. It's said that a health system is just people looking after people. And an act of kindness is just a person looking after another person.

—Dr. Richard Lewanczuk, senior medical director, Health System Integration



"Probably the biggest impact that COVID-19 has had on our chronic lung disease patients is on their mental health. There's a lot of anxiety. I think it's really

important to remember that the vast majority of people that get COVID-19, in general, have mild symptoms and recover just fine without requiring a hospitalization at all. And that is possible for someone who has chronic lung disease."

—Rena Sorensen, respiratory therapist and professional practice lead, Allied Health, Central Zone

We support our people

There's a saying: A company is only as good as its people. Well, AHS is a great company. And that's because not only do we look after Albertans, we look after each other. Here is one terrific example of how a boss helped a struggling employee

Roger Marple was getting worried about himself. He'd been feeling out of sorts for quite some time and was forgetting things. While he hoped his colleagues wouldn't notice, his director Ryan Thomson had definitely begun to wonder about missed deadlines and puzzling incidents. It wasn't like him, Thomson thought, but he put it down to a bit of forgetfulness.

But then ... things got worse.

By 2015, Marple had been working for Alberta Health Services (AHS) for two decades. That's when he got his diagnosis—early-onset Alzheimer's disease—at age 56. Marple, the site services supervisor for Stores at Medicine Hat Regional Hospital, feared he'd be forced to stop working.

"Leading up to the diagnosis, I was having some trouble with memory," Marple

says. "One day, my boss asked me to send him a spreadsheet and I looked it over three times before I sent it. Ninety seconds later he sent it back in an e-mail, asking, 'What the heck is this?'"

Marple re-opened the document and was baffled by what he saw. "It didn't make any sense to me at all, and yet a minute before that it had looked perfect. I'd just sent it. What was I going to say?"

After his diagnosis, he dreaded revealing it. But when he shared the news with Thomson (director of Contracting, Purchasing and Supply Management) his boss's reaction took him by surprise.

For Thomson, the diagnosis came as a relief. "It explained everything—just like that. It changed my perception of what he was or wasn't doing."

Together, they devised systems for success. They used sticky notes, phone reminders, alarms and other memory techniques to remind Marple of meetings, names and procedures. It worked well until early December 2016, when Marple's condition worsened—and his physician declared him unable to work.

"I wrote a note of support to say it was in Roger's best interest to allow him to complete some things he wanted to finish," says Thomson. "Roger and I worked together for the remainder of that month—and he got to finish on his own terms."

Supporting an employee with Alzheimer's is fairly new ground, so Thomson sought guidance from the Alzheimer Society and First Link, an early intervention program that connects people

Our words



"I work with an incredible team. We talk to each other and sometimes our team disagrees with me. We can argue and they can also come up with suggestions. The team is part of the decisions. As a doctor, you're not isolated anymore."

—Dr. George Charles Stewart-Hunter, who has practised medicine since 1946 in countries around the world before coming to Vermilion in 1968. He is a Long Service Award recipient in Central Zone and now specializes in geriatrics



"Everything is accessible in one spot, so I don't have to flip through charts anymore. The whole team has really stepped up to be there for each other and to help each other."

—Kiran Ghuman, registered nurse at the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton on the Wave 1 launch of Connect Care, which connects healthcare systems across the province



"This job allows me to go into schools, homes and communities, to see these kids working in different ways. I can see where their challenges and strengths lie. A plus has been my amazing coworkers. Everyone's willing to help everyone else. Being able to wander over to someone's desk and ask questions or have them pop in for a clinic visit to see a kiddo is awesome. I feel very supported."

—Kelsie Enright, occupational therapist for Children's Allied Health Services in Lethbridge



Roger Marple, left, who lives with early-onset Alzheimer's disease, worked with his former director Ryan Thomson to develop a system that allowed Marple to finish projects that meant a lot to him prior to retiring from Alberta Health Services.

living with the condition to the society for services and support.

"Look for the positive things people can do, and have a plan," Thomson says. "And you have to agree there will come a point where you will say, 'We've reached that point' and no one is caught by surprise."

Marple recalls his first day at home after he left his job at AHS. "I got up in the morning and sat on the couch petting my

cat. The job is 110 miles an hour and all of a sudden you're at a dead stop. So from there, I just totally reinvented myself."

Since then, Marple was invited to speak three times by Campus Alberta Neurosciences. The Alzheimer Society of Canada invited him to sit on an advisory board, which he says has changed his life.

"They wanted to hear from someone with Alzheimer's. I had a lot to say."



"After being laid off, and experiencing other losses in my life, I felt that I had to find a new purpose. I landed here in the flower shop at the Red Deer

Regional Hospital. I love working with the staff and volunteers because we're all interested in each other's lives, we have fun together while we're working and we love what we're doing for the hospital. I'm so fortunate that I get to volunteer in such a positive, supportive environment."

—Joy Desmond, volunteer at the Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre



"I'm very proud of the team that I help lead. I manage the research team here that supports our whole program by opening up more and more standard-

of-care studies, so that every child who comes to us for treatment has access to the best care every time. We see our chemotherapy protocols changing and our survival rates improving every year. I see innovation daily in my job."

—Krista McIntyre, unit manager at the Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary

HERE ARE A FEW OF THE MANY RESOURCES GUIDING HOW AHS SUPPORTS OUR PEOPLE

Front-line Leader Advisory Council

This group of front-line leaders from across AHS zones and programs provides feedback on corporate initiatives, as well as input on issues concerning front-line leaders.

Our People Strategy

This strategy is about creating a culture at AHS in which all employees feel safe, healthy, valued and included and able to reach their full potential.

Our People Survey and Pulse Survey (interim followup)

These two surveys help AHS leaders gauge, assess and continually improve workforce engagement.

Joint Workplace Health and Safety Committees

Committees of managers and workers from local AHS sites and programs promote health and safety.

Confidential reporting line

This is an external 24/7 confidential reporting and disclosure service to receive reports of improper activity.

Human Resources Contact Centre

In-house team providing support for HR inquiries by phone and through an online portal. Includes a team dedicated to resolving management-related issues for leaders.

10 Together

Celebrating our most valuable asset, our people, acknowledged AHS' 10-year anniversary. This included celebrating our people in AHS Fit Fam (fitness movement), long service awards, sharing thanks on our gratitude wall, e-cards, sharing our diversity in a global story map and wellness challenge, and more.

We are diverse and inclusive

Take a look at AHS staff, physicians, volunteers and patients and you'll see all ethnicities, religions, ages, genders and sexual orientations. We all have stories to tell, including the one here of Waylon Morning Owl, who found his voice—and learned to SOAR

The first time Waylon Morning Owl dropped by a special art session at Chinook Regional Hospital in Lethbridge, he did so with reluctance. Sure, he'd been feeling bored and wanted something to do, and yes, he was a creative man—but writing, not art, is more to his liking. Still, the 26-year-old decided to give it a whirl.

The Spirit of Art and Reconciliation (SOAR) sessions—held every Thursday in the hospital's Ceremony Room—turned out to be just what Morning Owl needed.

A smudge ceremony begins each session as soft music plays and

participants—mostly patients—receive guidance on how to create Indigenous-themed artwork. SOAR, a partnership between Indigenous Health and Therapeutic Recreation, delivers art programming with an Indigenous focus.

Morning Owl, originally from Kainai Nation, became a regular starting in June 2018. He began to develop his painting and drawing skills, but it was his storytelling and poetry that soon captivated staff and patients alike.

One volunteer in particular, Corinne Thiessen, found herself so impressed that

she took one of Morning Owl's notebooks of stories and prose—and had it printed and bound—as a surprise for him.

"We just encouraged Waylon to write because his stories were so funny," says Thiessen, an artist, art teacher, and SOAR volunteer. "He makes people laugh—this one fellow who came was laughing so hard he was crying."

Morning Owl says he loves the book.

"It was really nice of her to do that. I've been writing ever since I was 10 years old. Journaling. The stories just come to me. Whenever it comes in my mind, I just write

Our words



"For 40 years of my life, it's like I've been a flickering ember—and all of a sudden I was given this oxygen that has turned into a bonfire—and I've been really

able to shine. And that's what I've felt in recent years at AHS since my transition. I've been able to accomplish the things I have because I work in an environment that gives me the oxygen to do that. To breathe."

—Marni Panas, Diversity and Inclusion program manager, and a transgender woman



"When something's not going well for someone, I tell them, 'Kiyam,' which is a Cree word that basically means, 'It's OK. Things will work out.' It's how

you choose to address challenges that matters."

—Shannon Dunfield, manager, Indigenous Health & Diversity



"One of the overriding goals of Our People Strategy is a workplace where people feel safe, healthy, valued, included and able to reach their full potential. People

need to feel not just physically safe, but psychologically and emotionally safe to be able to bring their full selves to work. When we have that level of inclusivity, then we can actually benefit from the value of our diversity because then we hear all of the varied viewpoints that make our organization stronger and richer."

—Todd Gilchrist, vice president, People



Waylon Morning Owl and Corinne Thiessen share a laugh in the Ceremony Room at Chinook Regional Hospital in Lethbridge.

it down. It's good to laugh. It's healing."

Morning Owl's work isn't always comedic. When a beloved Elder recently passed away, his prose imagined her waving at him from the clouds and

dancing in the sky.

"People were wiping their eyes," says Heidi Davis, a recreation therapist who helped create SOAR. "It was powerful. Waylon is a gifted storyteller."



"I get to work with people from different walks of life: from different countries to distinct parts of Canada.

I think it's important to celebrate Pride to recognize that everyone is welcome here at AHS."

—Jay Alkassab, service worker and stores attendant at South Health Campus in Calgary



"Orange Shirt Day is a day to honour residential school survivors and those who never made it home. It celebrates our children, as well as our ancestors who went without.

It's a reminder that every child deserves a proper education and basic human rights. But every Canadian can play a role in the reconciliation process, as it is an integral step for us to move forward together as a nation."

—Blue Cloud Williams, AHS project coordinator for Honouring Life, a provincewide Indigenous youth suicide prevention strategy

AHS HAS CREATED A CULTURE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We have a dedicated diversity and inclusion centre of expertise that offers culturally sensitive education and resources to physicians, staff and volunteers on:

- Unconscious bias
- LGBTQ2S+ community
- Intergenerational relationships.

We have implemented initiatives to reduce barriers for marginalized populations to access care and services, including:

- Resources and education to support more inclusive spaces for LGBTQ2S+ people
- Gender-neutral washroom and change-room standards
- Reflection rooms, which provide quiet space for staff to pray, meditate and reflect.

We offer resources to support, develop and grow our Indigenous workforce and ensure appropriate and innovative health service delivery for Indigenous Peoples. We have a **Diversity & Inclusion Council** whose purpose is to help create safer, inclusive environments for everyone who is part of and interacts with AHS.

In 2019, AHS developed the **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Gender Expression (SOGIE) Provincial Advisory Council (PAC)** consisting of patients and families with experience in sexual and gender minority healthcare issues. They provide advice and recommendations to the AHS Board and leadership on strategies, policy, planning and service delivery. This past year, we also created other workforce resource groups including **LGBTQ2S+** and **Women in Leadership in EMS**.

We won the **2019 Canadian College of Health Leaders Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion Award**, in addition to being recognized as one of **Canada's Best Diversity Employers** in 2019 and 2020.



Our Alberta Health Services (AHS) vision—Healthy Albertans. Healthy Communities. Together.—and our core values, AHS CARES, are at the heart of everything we represent. They inspire, empower and guide how we work together to build healthy communities and support Albertans in leading healthy lives. We live our values together, because we are stronger together.

We live our values

compassion

accountability

We show kindness and empathy for all in our care, and for each other

“The ability to come along-side somebody is what Spiritual Care practitioners do. We’re not preachers. We’re here to help you figure out what makes you strong and access that so you can go through the experience that you’re going through. So that suffering doesn’t have to be wasted—in a sense—if you can make meaning through it. For me, I can’t imagine anything more fulfilling.”



—Joanne Macen,
Spiritual Care practitioner

• • •

“When I was a unit clerk, there was a patient who would sit beside my desk, so I entertained him. If I had a night shift, I would walk around the unit with him and just talk. You’re making a difference in their lives—even though it’s a small difference, like saying, ‘Hi,’ helping them find their way, or getting them some water.”



—Christine Horton, administrative support
at the Airdrie Community Health Centre

• • •

“I’m most proud of the times when my client feels more in control of their healthcare and their recovery than they did before they interacted with me. It really is an honour to earn their trust.”



—Jayelle Warken, peer support worker
with an opioid dependency program in
Edmonton

We are honest, principled and transparent

“I think success should be measured by the impact that we make in the lives of others. To me, it’s not enough to just come in and do your job to the best of your abilities. As a front-line staff pharmacist, you try to create the best outcomes you can for your patients. But sometimes I think your intentions are good, but your impact can be off. If we focus on measuring our success based on our impact, I believe we will create a more sustainable healthcare system as well as more sustainable relationships.”



—Megan Wisnowski, director,
South Zone, Pharmacy

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“You can’t check something too many times. I think I tend to be more of an idea person as opposed to a detail person. And sometimes, when you’re enmeshed in an idea, you miss some of the really important detail. I think that comes back to bite you. You have to have both. It’s good to think broad, but it’s just as important to have that minutiae that makes something work. It’s a tough lesson.”



—Debbie Leitch, executive director,
Maternal Newborn Child and Youth
Strategic Clinical Network

respect

We treat others with respect and dignity

"I don't think you can empathize with Indigenous people until you understand what happened to them at these residential schools. If we are ever going to move forward with real reconciliation, everyone needs to acknowledge Canada's dark past. Wearing an orange shirt on Sept. 30 means you recognize and understand what happened to those children."



—Randal Bell, senior advisor on Indigenous populations

• • •

"My only life goal these past few years has been to help end stigma of mental illness, suicide, addictions and self-harm for all our vulnerable LGBTQ2S+ children, teens and young adults."



—Lyndsay Breadner, volunteer

• • •

"I've learned everybody has their own personality. There's a person behind every diagnosis and you just have to dig a little to get there."



—Taylor Myshak, recreation assistant in continuing care at the Vermilion Health Centre

excellence

We strive to be our best and give our best

"We see such potential to help people do their work efficiently and effectively toward what we all hope for: better patient safety. I'm excited to hear about all the Connect Care success stories—that a backlog has been reduced, or that someone can sit with a patient a little longer, or that they can go home and feel like they've actually accomplished everything they needed to do."



—Janelle Jubienville, Connect Care Clinical Informatics Education lead

• • •

"I think a lot of teams are surprised at the amount of work that's involved in undertaking a research project, but after they acquire the new skills and better understanding of the research process, they say it's well worth it. Presenting your topic at a conference or seeing your name on a research paper in an academic journal is a great achievement."



—Katie Churchill, senior practice lead with Health Professions Strategy and Practice, and Research Challenge lead

safety

We place safety and quality improvement at the centre of all our decisions

"Patient safety is about paying attention to the details while seeing the big picture. Being attentive to the needs of patients and their families, anticipating potential risks and preventing harm, being focused and excellent at multitasking while remaining vigilant at asking oneself why we are doing what we are doing."



—Alana Van Middlesworth, registered nurse at the Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary

• • •

"We're the medication experts. One thing that's different about rehabilitation is that you see your patients for an extended period of time When you prescribe a medication, you have the opportunity to observe the results over a longer period of time. See, in person, how the medication is working, and if we need to increase or reduce the dose."



—Don Ridley, operations manager, Pharmacy, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton

• • •

"We clean and disinfect and we make the beds, getting everything ready for the next person. It's about safety."



—Sita Prasad, housekeeper, on the discharge team at Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary

We strive to be healthy

We believe that if we are fit—strong in both mind and body—we are better equipped to look after those in our care. In the case of this AHS volunteer, an active retirement meant ‘helping people live a fuller life as they deal with their chronic pain’

After retirement, Larry MacKay wanted a meaningful way to give back to the community. For more than a year, he’s been a volunteer with Better Choices, Better Health, a chronic-pain workshop that provides a caring, welcoming environment to help individuals cope with their health issues.

“I wanted to help people live a fuller life as they deal with their chronic pain,” says MacKay. “I like getting to know new people and helping them on their journey.” And MacKay has walked in their shoes.

McKay, 73, became familiar with chronic pain after his wife’s hospitalization in 2015 due to a fall. She was diagnosed with myotonic dystrophy—a form of muscular dystrophy—seven months into

her hospitalization, which helped MacKay realize the things she was dealing with.

“For years she dealt with back pain and wasn’t able to do anything about it,” he adds. “If I knew then what I know now, I might have been able to help my wife with what she was dealing with.”

Better Choices, Better Health empowers individuals who live with long-term health issues such as chronic pain and diabetes.

This Alberta Health Services’ (AHS) program runs over six weeks with a series of workshops led by trained leaders, many of whom live with long-term health issues themselves, or who have experience supporting others with such issues.

Workshop topics include: managing pain, better sleep, increasing flexibility,

breathing techniques, dealing with stress, and communicating effectively.

The program’s group setting also sees class members encourage one another as they make connections.

Sue Goss, who attended the chronic-disease workshop last fall, says she heard about the workshop through a Primary Care Network caregiver.

“I really enjoyed the facilitators,” says Goss. “They participated in all the activities, sharing their own successes and hurdles and encouraged the whole group to open up and share.”

Making action plans—where participants share their goals and report their progress weekly—proved a helpful tool for Goss.

“The action plan gave me the motivation

Our words



“What I have learned is the importance of living life in the present. They say that if we’re not living in the present, we’re either living in the past, which is a life of

guilt, or we’re living in the future, which is a life of worry. So now when I come home, I redirect myself to the present, so I’m actually enjoying the moment I’m in. When I get home to my kiddies, I can bring myself back to where I need to be.”

—Dr. Jennifer Bestard, neurologist, associate zone medical director, Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre



“To me, wellness focuses not just our physical selves, but also how we are doing emotionally, socially, and spiritually. I recently started to bike to and from work

and am also finding it is good for my mental health. It gives me a chance to reconnect with nature and decompress from my day. I’m an avid fly fisherman, too. It helps put me in a calm, clear state, and gets me to that headspace where I can come up with ideas for work.”

—Derek Bley, manager, Surgical Services, Rockyview General Hospital in Calgary



“The Pulse Generator has had such a positive impact on my life. Since it’s so convenient with my crazy nursing schedule, I go almost every day. I have lost nearly

30 lb. since I first joined. I went from having a sedentary lifestyle to being a marathon runner. It’s made me a better nurse. My 12-hour shifts ... don’t take the same physical and mental toll on me now.”

—Brittany Tyerman, registered nurse, who attends the Pulse Generator fitness centre at the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton



Larry MacKay is a volunteer with the Better Choices, Better Health chronic-pain workshop in Edmonton. It's his way of giving back to the community as he empowers individuals to live their lives to the fullest.

I needed to make some big life changes. I've already seen instant results—and will definitely incorporate action plans in all aspects of my life.”

“Usually, after a couple of weeks,

participants really start to get into it,” says MacKay. “They latch on to the concepts and become diligent in trying new things. It's great to watch as they get to know each other and encourage each other.”



“I find balance by focusing on my family—my wife, daughter and son. When you do that, the rest of life falls into place nicely.”

— Tony Bennett, director,
Human Resources Analytics
& Planning



“I think wellness is about balance. Being able to take care of yourself while still being able to take care of those who need your attention, and not being pulled in too many directions at once. I take care of myself through physical activity. Whether it's running or biking, I try to do something active every day. It hits all the big wellness areas: physical, mental and emotional.”

— Lisa-Marie Trites, program manager,
Acute Geriatric Unit, Rockyview General
Hospital in Calgary

RESOURCES HELPING IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE

AHS Fit Fam

Fit Fam focuses on physical, mental, spiritual and social health. It includes:

- Monthly resources and activities, as well as site challenges
- Ways for people to get engaged and active in their communities
- External event Fit Fam discounts and event opportunities
- A Fit Fam Champion video of an employee who inspires others by sharing their wellness passion.

Wellness Champion Network

Staff can lead change for better health by being a Wellness Champion. The network now has more than 400 members. The objectives are to:

- Promote overall well-being
- Inspire people to stay active and make healthy choices
- Plan local wellness initiatives.

Psychological safety

The Employee and Family Assistance Program is a 24/7 confidential, free service for issues including mental health and addiction, workplace violence and domestic abuse.

Work Safe blog

This blog shares personal stories, ideas and concerns about workplace health and safety.

Getting immunized

AHS holds an annual campaign urging staff to get immunized against influenza. Over the 2019-20 flu season, 67.2 per cent of our workforce were immunized.

Health promotion

AHS offers more than 160 employee fitness discounts to recreational facilities.

Respectful Workplaces and the Prevention of Harassment and Violence

A full range of resources, supports and training create a safe work environment, and promote respect and inclusiveness.

We are constantly learning

Through research and innovation, AHS pushes the frontiers of medicine, including in clinical trials such as this one, where a Calgary man says he was given ‘a new lease on life’

To try to stop a debilitating migraine from coming on, Calgary man Greg Smith has learned to avoid triggers such as strong fragrances.

Even the smell of red wine, hard liquor or perfume can be enough to set him off. Other triggers, such as Calgary’s chinooks, are unavoidable.

Participating in a research study, however, has given Smith his life back.

Thanks to a special exemption, Smith has been receiving a new drug that’s still awaiting Health Canada approval. It’s the same drug he received when he participated in a research trial in Calgary in 2017 that looked at the effectiveness of different doses of the drug.

“I’ve tried numerous medications before and this is the only thing that comes close to keeping the headaches in check,”

Smith says. “I’ve been getting involved in research studies for a long time as a way of paying it forward; this study has really changed my life.”

Every day, research participants in Alberta help advance patient care. Some—like Smith—may benefit directly, but all help advance treatments for the patients who come after them.

Alberta Health Services (AHS) supports thousands of new and ongoing studies that use AHS facilities and systems and utilize robust data.

“Research studies give us the evidence we need to make decisions around patient care,” says Dr. Farnaz Amoozegar, an AHS neurologist and the migraine researcher who was the site lead for the study Smith became involved in. “Migraine is a common and disabling condition and there

is a significant need for new medications,” she says. “The only way we can test those is through clinical trials.”

There are currently more than 3,500 active clinical research studies across the province; last year alone, research ethics boards in Alberta approved more than 1,400 new studies requiring involvement by AHS. Through clinical trials, researchers have discovered less-invasive surgical techniques, drugs with fewer side effects, and treatments that improve patient outcomes.

“Another advantage to research activity and innovative thinking,” says Dr. Kathryn Todd, vice president, Provincial Clinical Excellence, “is that all our patients and clients benefit, even those who did not directly enrol in a study. Health systems with active programs of clinical research

Our words



“The goals of this exercise are to better understand and empathize with the patient, and to change the staff’s perspective around mealtime.”

—Stephanie Cox, clinical dietitian at Rocky Mountain House Health Centre, on the Meals Matter program, part of which involves ‘lived experience’ staff training, in which staff learn the barriers patients may encounter when trying to eat a meal in hospital. Barriers include trying to eat a meal while lying down, opening packaging, staff interruptions and maintenance noise



“I originally decided to volunteer in the emergency department because I want to be a practising physician. Volunteering at AHS gives me a real-world application

to help support my future career goals, but it also leaves me feeling satisfied knowing that I’ve made a difference in someone else’s day.”

—Justin Miller, volunteer at Chinook Regional Hospital in Lethbridge



“I’ve always wanted a chance to get into the health field, but never knew how to. My daughter is actually in a healthcare aide training program right now, and she told me ‘Oh Mom, you’re going to do well; you’re going to know so much!’ So I thought, ‘Yay! I’ve got my foot in the door and I’m going to be to do able this.’ Everything I’ve wanted to achieve, I have.”

—Doreen Campbell, graduate of the Health Careers Training Program—a pilot partnership between AHS, the Western Cree Tribal Council, Grande Prairie Regional College and Alberta Labour



Calgarian Greg Smith got involved in an Alberta Health Services-supported research study led by neurologist Dr. Farnaz Amoozegar. As a result, he's now receiving new migraine medication that's changing his life.

are known to achieve better outcomes for all.”

For Smith, participating in a research study has reduced the number of migraines he has in a month from 10 to 12, down to only one or two.

“At its worst, and without medication, migraine can be absolutely devastating,” Smith says. “The medication I’m on now, though, is revolutionary and has given me a new lease on life. It wouldn’t have been possible without research.”



“Exercises of this scale don’t happen often, but they are important as the end point of an education process because that’s where everything comes

together.”

—Jeff Dutton, director of Emergency Disaster and Management in AHS South Zone, on a simulated disaster involving a truck carrying liquified gas that collided with several vehicles. The exercise partnered AHS’ Medicine Hat Regional Hospital, EMS, public health, the City of Medicine Hat, police and fire, and more than 600 people



“We are looking for front-line care providers—doctors, nurses, healthcare aides and technologists—to tell us what’s working in their departments and what isn’t.

The goal of IHOT is to make sure our people have the supports and information they need to improve health outcomes and ultimately improve our patients’ experiences.”

—Michael Sidra, senior program director for Improving Health Outcomes Together, Process Improvement, eSIM

EDUCATION HELPS US IMPROVE OUR WORK AND OUR LIVES

President's Speaker Series

These are discussions led by international experts and innovators in healthcare with AHS leaders, physicians, clinicians, staff and partners on a variety of topics.

Telehealth

This videoconference technology enables our workforce to connect across the province and helps us deliver information on health-related services.

Certificate programs

Certified instructors deliver a variety of courses such as basic and advanced cardiac life support, and neonatal resuscitation to specific groups of staff.

MyLearningLink

This is a 24/7 online learning and content management system that provides a single point of access to 2,000 AHS learning opportunities on a variety of provincial or zone-specific topics.

Clinical educators

Healthcare providers are supported in their professional development with learning opportunities provided by clinical educators, certificate course instructors and clinical practice leads.

Simulation training

eSIM (educate, simulate, innovate, motivate) uses simulation to give healthcare teams the opportunity to practise a wide range of medical procedures on high-tech adult and child simulator mannequins, that breathe, blink, talk, and have pulses and vital signs.

Your Learning, Your Way

This advanced tool allows our people various flexible multimodal educational opportunities from beginner to master level.

We continuously improve

AHS advances treatments, enhances processes and, in the case of Connect Care, begins to take more than 1,300 health information systems across Alberta and turn them into one common system, accessible to healthcare providers and patients alike

After years of planning and preparation, Connect Care launched in the wee hours on Nov. 3. With this first step, more than 20,000 Alberta Health Services (AHS) staff and physicians started using the Connect Care's clinical information system instead of myriad health-record methods used previously.

The Nov. 3 launch was not only a milestone for the Connect Care program, but also a truly historic moment in the story of healthcare in Alberta.

"You should be very proud of what you've done to make this a reality," staff were told in a congratulatory launch-day message from Connect Care project sponsors—Deb Rhodes, vice president, Corporate Services, and chief financial

officer; Sean Chilton, vice president, Health Professions and Practice; and Francois Belanger, vice president, Quality, and chief medical officer.

While the launch was a huge step forward, it's also one that was taken cautiously, due to the sheer magnitude of change it brings.

Rather than launch Connect Care across AHS provincewide all at once, the system was rolled out in only the first of its nine phases, referred to as waves. Wave 1 was primarily concentrated in Edmonton's Walter C. McKenzie health campus and laboratories, which includes the University of Alberta Hospital, Stollery Children's Hospital and Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute, among others.

This succession of launches will take place over different regions of the province over the next three years, which gives IT developers the opportunity to fine-tune the system in practice, and also gives end users the same opportunity as they adapt to new workflows.

The preparation and attention to setting up support options for staff appear to have made the launch and its accompanying cutover—the moment new software is engaged—a relatively smooth and positive event.

Bryce Jones, an informatics manager, led cutover rehearsal for months in preparation for the launch.

Given that the latest rehearsal was completed in October during the site's

Our words



"For our residents, simply smelling fresh foods cooking can be incredibly therapeutic. In early 2019, we began piloting a project that allows fresh ingredi-

ents to be assembled and cooked from scratch here on site. Something as simple as roasting chickens or grilling pork or making our own tomato soup—residents tell me it 'tastes like home.' We worked with the AHS Design Lab to help support this initiative and provide transparency."

—Robb Allen, Food Services manager at Carewest Garrison Green in Calgary



"The addition of the Firefly allows surgeons to reduce the number of lymph nodes to remove, which results in less-invasive procedures, faster recovery times and, ultimately, less pain and discomfort for patients. This enhancement is significant for patient recovery and outcomes."

—Dr. Helen Steed, gynecological oncology surgeon at the Lois Hole Hospital for Women in Edmonton, on a new state-of-the-art attachment to the da Vinci surgical robot



"When mothers go through long pregnancies and complicated deliveries, they expect they will be able to hold their babies afterwards, but when their baby is in the intensive care unit, they can't. They're missing a big part of the delivery process; they want to see their child. I wanted to fill that gap for them."

—Dr. Sharif Shaikh, faculty chief of Child Health at Misericordia Community Hospital in Edmonton. He helped create NowICU, technology that uses an iPad to connect mothers with their infants when they are separated at birth for medical reasons

INNOVATIONS HELP US DO OUR JOBS BETTER

Connect Care

Connect Care is the bridge between information, healthcare teams and patients. Through a common provincial clinical information system, Connect Care allows the healthcare team and patients to have consistent information across the province and throughout the care journey. Once fully implemented, it will impact everyone who provides care within AHS, the non-clinical areas that support the front line, and will transform how we provide care.

InfoCare

InfoCare is AHS' online resource for information privacy and security matters. Resources include education and interactive tools, an easy process for reporting security incidents and privacy breaches, and a volunteer network of InfoCare Coaches to help mentor skills.

e-People

This centralized resource is available online to all employees. It supports Human Resources functions such as payroll, HR administration, time entry and approval, as well as pension and benefits administration.



Emergency department nurse Jesse Alook, left, and third-year resident Raymond Chu admit the first patient under the Connect Care system at 4:31 a.m. Nov. 3—launch day at the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton.

wireless outage—considered a worst-case scenario—participants got through it.

“You’d be hard-pressed to find a more difficult scenario,” Jones says of the outage. “A rocket launch is dull by

comparison. The dedication and focus at getting this job done is a testament to the work done up front by the clinical team.... (And) the launch was on time, which is unusual for one of this size.”



“Tracking data across the province benefits our care teams and, ultimately, our patients. We review data for quality, performance and benchmarks, which then

enables us to improve in all levels of care and standardize our practices. Because we measure it, we can improve it.”

—Rosmin Esmail, provincial trauma epidemiologist on Alberta's Trauma Registry. The registry captures data from every patient who goes through the system, from ambulance to rehabilitation



“Music has the ability to improve our well-being. It can bring a renewed meaning and connection to our lives. We also know music has the ability to decrease agitation

and restlessness, calm chaotic brain activity, and increase and improve our concentration and mood. These pianos have the ability to improve our clients' overall health and wellness.”

—Thomas Kannumkulabil, manager, Addictions & Mental Health, Fort McMurray, on the Fort McMurray Recovery Centre, which received two pianos courtesy the Northern Lights Health Foundation



“I really love the integration of every aspect of the patient's care. Whether it's their demographics, their goals of care, their medications, their consultations, everything's all in one place.... That's really going to change the way medicine's practised in all of Alberta.”

—Dr. Neal Chatterjee, physician at Grey Nuns Community Hospital in Edmonton, on how Connect Care will revolutionize healthcare. Chatterjee is a Connect Care Super User, and has long hoped the entire system would become electronic

We pursue excellence

What does it mean, to be the best? It means never accepting the status quo, always striving to improve and to move forward. AHS EMS has taken these qualities to heart, and is leading the nation in the evolution of safer ambulance design

Ian Blanchard remembers his final shift working in an ambulance—it was the day his career caring for patients one-on-one came to an early, unplanned end.

“I was stepping over some cables that ran from the stretcher to a monitor on the side counter, and I grabbed onto the stretcher for support, but the mechanism broke and I started to fall,” Blanchard says. “I landed on the floor in a small stairwell.”

Blanchard already had back problems, and this dramatic fall re-injured him, leaving him unable to perform the physically demanding duties of a paramedic.

But with years of valuable experience, and with formal training, he took a new path to continue his career.

Blanchard began building a formalized

plan to put research into practice at Alberta Health Services Emergency Medical Services (AHS EMS), culminating in his new role as provincial research lead, attached to the Office of the Chief Paramedic.

Blanchard is working with EMS and the University of Calgary, as well as Canadian ambulance manufacturers, to redesign the interiors of ambulances.

“When we’re able to reduce the likelihood of the paramedic needing to—even carefully—navigate around in a moving vehicle, there’s less risk of the paramedic being hurt during a sudden stop or evasive manoeuvre, and thus less risk to the patient,” says EMS chief paramedic Darren Sandbeck. “It’s a win-win situation.”

Funded by the AUTO21 Network of

Centres of Excellence, the University of Calgary W21C Research and Innovation Centre and AHS EMS, the study—

The evaluation of an ambulance rear compartment using patient simulation: Issues of safety and efficiency during the delivery of patient care—was published in 2019 in the *Applied Ergonomics* journal.

Over 18 months, the study observed close to 50 paramedic teams during a simulated scenario in the back of a moving ambulance. The resulting changes recommended by the AHS team are already being seen in new ambulances.

They include the introduction of new Stryker power cots and power-load systems. A specially designed arm, called a Technimount, allows the heart monitor-

Our words



“In a pilot study, about 70 per cent of those on one popular recommended single tablet, which contains three different drugs, agreed to take exactly the same

medications but packaged as two pills instead of one. This minor adjustment has generated significant savings to our healthcare system.”

—Dr. John Gill, medical director of the Southern Alberta Clinic in Calgary and the originator of a new voluntary program for patients with HIV at the clinic, which is saving the health system roughly \$4 million annually in drug costs



“It’s critical that we have accessible, up-to-date resources to help patients and families, especially in times of crisis. Oncology patients contact us by

phone to help with navigational and symptom issues—and having these resources available helps them to have current information at their fingertips.”

—Eileen Wagner, a clinical educator with the Central Alberta Cancer Centre, on the launch of CancerControl Alberta’s new web pages to better support patients, families and staff



“Bringing the former health regions together to speak the same language, in that ongoing quest to provide quality patient care, has made a huge difference.

Our healthcare world has become smaller. More and more often, I’m speaking to people across the province to access their knowledge and expertise. I think that connectedness is the biggest value I’ve seen in becoming one health system.”

—Josh Bashow, manager, Gastroenterology, Hepatology, Endoscopy at Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary



Ian Blanchard, a former paramedic and now provincial research lead, helped spearhead a two-year AHS EMS study that observed paramedics at work in a moving ambulance to help design a safer interior for both patient and caregiver.

defibrillator unit—which typically is secured on a counter inside the ambulance—to attach directly to the stretcher. This means there are no trailing wires that paramedics have to step over, thus eliminating a trip hazard.

This innovation might well have

prevented Blanchard's fall.

"This study is an important example of how research and knowledge translation can inform tangible changes," he says.

"Hopefully it can prevent one of my coworkers from experiencing the same type of injury that took me off the street."

WORKING TO BE THE BEST IN HEALTHCARE

Strategic Clinical Networks (SCNs)

AHS continues to develop networks of people who are knowledgeable about specific areas of health, challenging them to find new and innovative ways of delivering care that will provide better quality, better outcomes and better value. To date, there are 16 SCNs focusing on a range of conditions from cancer to addiction and mental health.

Research challenge

This is a professional development opportunity for nurses, Allied Health professionals and other care providers to increase knowledge and skills to access, conduct and apply best-practice research. In it, teams work together for two years to design and conduct a small-scale study.



"If someone is coming in with a lot of pain, they are not even able to do basic everyday activities. But as you work on them, slowly, you see the improvement in

front of your eyes and how they get more independent—from not being able to do much to going back to school and playing sports. It's awesome so see that transition."

—Harshini Sasidharan, physiotherapist at the Drumheller Health Centre



"These newly renovated rooms are going to help in so many ways. It's a terrific family-centred space and a state-of-the-art pediatric intensive care unit (PICU).

We have patients who come in from all over Western Canada for specialized treatment and we are now able to provide a comforting space for patients and families and also allow the multidisciplinary critical care team to do great work."

—Dr. Laurance Lequier, pediatric intensivist and medical director of the PICU at the Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton



"Newborn blood spot screening is the best way to find out if a baby has a certain condition. When we find conditions like sickle cell disease early, treatment

can begin sooner. As a result, we positively impact babies and their families by improving the health of newborns, preventing potential health problems and even save lives."

—Dr. Huiming Yang, provincial medical officer of health with Healthy Living, and medical director of Screening Programs, on the expansion of Alberta's Newborn Metabolic Screening Program

We're in our communities

Providing great healthcare doesn't just mean looking after patients in hospitals or urgent care centres. Great healthcare also supports caregivers and the communities in which they live—in this case, helping Barrhead seniors live at home longer

For Ken McLeod, a day program for his wife Ann didn't just give him a break. It's also helped keep them at home together.

Ann, 90, attends the Enhanced Respite Day Program three days a week at the Dr. W.R. Keir-Barrhead Continuing Care Centre.

"She loves the people and the activities," says Ken. "When they go out on day trips, she loves watching out the window."

Enhanced respite is an out-of-home day program for medically stable clients. It offers recreational activities such as music, art, crafts, games and exercise, as well as basic personal care. Respite decreases social isolation and keeps clients engaged, allowing them to live at home longer. It also provides a break for caregivers.

"We go up across the river to Fort

Assiniboine where I grew up," adds Ann.

The Barrhead Enhanced Respite Day Program, which opened in 2018, is offered Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday every week from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The cost is \$10 per visit to cover meals.

"Our goal is to provide clients the right care, in the right place at the right time, and for some individuals that means having home care assistance at their house while leaning on community supports," says Jenny Nanninga, Alberta Health Services (AHS) Seniors Health manager.

At one point, Ken and Ann discussed moving into a continuing care facility.

"She likes to be in our own home, so we decided to stay a bit longer. Without this program, I don't think we could stay as long as we have," Ken adds.

With Ann at the day program, Ken has also been able to take up old hobbies again, including bowling, going for walks and curling.

"It's a huge help and it gives me a little freedom," he says.

The Enhanced Respite Day Program in Barrhead is one of six that have opened across the North Zone in the past year, in communities including Athabasca, Fairview, La Crete, Lac La Biche and High Prairie.

"Caregivers are an essential part of our society and sometimes they need a break," says Nanninga.

"We care for clients in their communities, while their caregivers get support and peace of mind that their loved ones are with AHS staff."

Our words



"Moms have come into the prenatal consult and expressed the fact they really felt not judged—but actually embraced. These moms are on an opioid replacement therapy program and they are motivated, they're working, they're here for a reason. These moms will do what it takes to keep their babies with them."

—Michelle McCutcheon, manager of Women's & Children's Health at Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre, on EMBRACE, a program that teaches new moms who have used opioids during pregnancy how to care for their newborns



"We all have a role to play in suicide prevention. Talking about suicide doesn't cause someone to think about it—asking about suicide can help someone who might be struggling. There is still a stigma that surrounds suicide. By talking about it and bringing awareness to the issue, we're breaking down that stigma."

—Kristin Pilon, health promotion facilitator with the Provincial Injury Prevention Program. She spearheads community-based suicide prevention programs across Alberta



"I live on a farm just about 15 minutes west of here. I grew up in the area, went to school in the area, know the community. I'm not a fan of big cities. I like the small towns, so it's nice staying local. I didn't want to work in a hospital. I wanted to be more diverse and in the field where you don't know what's going to happen and everything changes all the time. Every day is different. Overall, it's just a fun career."

—Kimberly Hrabec, primary care paramedic in Viking



Ann McLeod, 90, attends the Enhanced Respite Day Program three days a week at the Dr. W.R. Keir – Barrhead Continuing Care Centre. The day program gives her an opportunity to socialize and affords her husband and caregiver Ken a chance to take up old hobbies again.



"I like helping people be active—painting, building birdhouses, working with clay, getting their hands going. The mental stimulation is really good for

patients—they start to talk and share their stories. The greatest part is that when they get out into the community, they're actually continuing with some of the things they've done in the art room here—they're creating portfolios with paintings and stuff like that. It's very inspiring."

—Renae Krushinsky, recreation therapy assistant at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton



"If the physician orders bloodwork, we can run it right there on scene and give the physician immediate answers. It really equips us with better clinical

decision-making right there. In this area, we really try to speak to that homebound client who, for whatever reason, can't get to the physician in an easy manner—and often ends up accessing an ambulance to get to the hospital."

—Amy Benson, team lead for North Zone Mobile Integrated Healthcare, on the iStat Alinity devices—a handheld lab for on-the-spot bloodwork testing for patients

WE ARE IN COMMUNITIES AROUND THE PROVINCE

ENHANCING CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

AHS has enhanced care so it is provided in a person's home or community to the greatest extent possible, reserving emergency departments and hospital care to address needs that cannot be met closer to home. By meeting the health and social needs of people in their communities, AHS has supported them to improve their wellness, independence and quality of life.

HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCILS

There are 12 Health Advisory Councils (HACs) across the province comprised of voluntary members who support the strategic direction of AHS by getting local feedback from community members on what is working well in the health system and areas in need of improvement.

PROVINCIAL ADVISORY COUNCILS

There are four Provincial Advisory Councils (PACs), including Addiction and Mental Health, Cancer, Seniors and Continuing Care, and Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity & Expression. PACs are made up of volunteers, subject matter experts and leaders. They consider and provide evidence-based suggestions to AHS, identify existing and emerging issues, and advise on ways to improve quality, access and sustainability of services.

THE WISDOM COUNCIL

The Wisdom Council provides guidance and advice on health service delivery, program design and evaluation for Indigenous Peoples in Alberta.

AHS FOUNDATIONS AND TRUSTS

AHS partners with 69 foundations and trusts in Alberta, whose work makes a significant impact on local health delivery by funding needs, programs, renovations, research and education.

AHS UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN

This campaign occurs each fall and offers employees, physicians and volunteers an opportunity to raise funds to help families in Alberta.

We help beyond our borders

For some AHS staff, the world is their healthcare centre and its people, their patients. To them, borders are merely doors to be opened, as in the case of this paramedic who headed to Uganda to provide an ambulance—and teach its new EMS responders

Hythe resident Paul Godel headed to Uganda for the third year in a row in February. By the time the Alberta Health Services (AHS) primary care paramedic and his fellow volunteers with the Canada Uganda EMS Society (CUES) returned home, they had established a ambulance service in Kawempe, a low-income area in Uganda's capital city of Kampala.

The society's mission was to develop a grassroots Emergency Medical Service (EMS) program in Kampala, forming a registered Ugandan non-profit organization to operate the no-cost service.

"The plan was to raise enough money to purchase a used Japanese ambulance, outfit it and staff it, and run it for at least a year," says Godel, also the founder of CUES. "It's dirt cheap compared to here," he says. "For \$100,000 we did it easily."

Godel says Kawempe is in dire need of such a service.

"In Uganda, many of the ambulances are a for-profit operation and for those who live in the poor areas, it can cost them three or four months of wages or more to pay for one ambulance service," he explains.

Godel's work began three years ago

when he began looking at volunteering overseas and turned to Uganda, where his father had spent time as a volunteer.

"He was a pediatrician and he started a string of mother and child health clinics in the northwest area of Uganda," Godel says. "So Uganda was kind of a natural for me."

Godel contacted the non-governmental organization Hapa Resources with the intention of helping with some health outreach. As he learned more about the terrible condition of the EMS system in the country, his plan changed.

"I told my contact at Hapa, 'Look, I can

Our words



"This year, we did 42 surgeries in five days. It's very exhausting work. But it's also extremely rewarding seeing patients go from being broken to getting

them back to their baseline, or close to their baseline, before they broke whatever body part they broke. I love being a nurse to help people and get them to whatever journey they are making at the time."

—Kelly Kovacs, registered nurse at the Vulcan Community Centre who, in 2019 visited Ecuador as an orthopedic travel nurse



"When we're there, we have teaching at every level: nursing, physiotherapy, orthopedic surgery. We have classes, with a translator. We also get

together with the local orthopedic surgeons and residents for a morning of interactive sessions. One year, we talked about bone tumours. Last year, we talked about total hip replacements."

—Dr. Marc Moreau, a pediatric orthopedic surgeon at Stollery Children's Hospital, on working in Ecuador for two weeks every year to perform life-changing orthopedic surgeries for adults and children



"AHS gives me the opportunity to pursue my part-time military training commitments that develop my skills in leadership, planning and critical

thinking. I have an opportunity to accomplish a personal goal, the army gets to train and employ me during exercises or operations, and AHS gets a better-trained, experienced employee."

—Maj. Drew Beauchamp, member of The Calgary Highlanders, an Army Reserve infantry regiment. He also serves AHS as Human Resources team lead with HR Business Partnerships



Paul Godel (centre front in black T-shirt) an AHS primary care paramedic, joins Canada Uganda EMS Society volunteers and EMS graduates in Uganda in 2019.

do some first-responder courses when I'm there.' Twenty-four hours later, he sent me a message saying he had 40 people registered."

In 2018, 2019 and in February, Godel recruited volunteers to teach beginning and advanced first-responder courses.

"The entire beginner class passed their exams and received their completion certificates," Godel says of this year's grads. "And the advance class finished up their final week. We are looking forward to returning in the near future to keep this incredible society running."



"I've volunteered on projects in Zimbabwe and Kenya, alongside African Wildlife Services rangers, registering wildlife sightings including elephants, buffalo, giraffes, zebras, antelopes, cheetahs and sometimes even lions. When not on patrol for poachers and snare traps, myself and the other volunteers provided maintenance of the protected area and helped build a new ranger's post."

—Elaine Benoit, occupational hygiene advisor with Workplace Health and Safety



"AHS has been incredibly supportive in providing time and flexibility to help with both training and deployment opportunities. When the opportunity to deploy to Kosovo came about in 2016, AHS was critical in being flexible to provide eight months of leave on very short notice."

—Maj. Steve Ball, AHS senior advisor in labour relations, currently serving as an officer with 41 Service Battalion, a combat service support battalion with sub-units in Calgary and Edmonton

WE MAY BE A PROVINCIAL HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATION, BUT WE HAVE A WORLD VIEW

We support the Canadian Armed Forces

AHS staff in the Reserve Force of the Canadian Armed Forces enjoy the flexibility of AHS, which gives them time off for courses, field exercises and overseas deployments to grow their careers and military expertise. Current Reserve Force members have seen action in Afghanistan, the Golan Heights, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Egypt, along with peacetime training exercises around the world. We support our armed forces with experience that maintains their clinical competence.

Our physicians and staff volunteer around the world

Quietly and without fanfare, many AHS employees and physicians volunteer their skills and time to work with humanitarian organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) and the World Health Organization, both of which deliver medical aid to people worldwide.

We celebrate our people

Our people are our strength. They are professional, skilled, compassionate and always willing to go the extra mile. Those qualities deserve recognition. At AHS, we make it a point to recognize the exceptional among the excellent

Most people retire and choose a little rest and relaxation.

Not Vera Lacey. The volunteer at the Lacombe Hospital and Care Centre has kept working.

And working. And working.

"I'm 94 years old and I've been volunteering at the Lacombe hospital for 58 years," says Lacey, winner of an Alberta Health Services Lifetime Achievement (Volunteer) President's Excellence Award.

The annual President's Excellence Awards celebrate AHS staff, doctors and volunteers who demonstrate the highest standards in innovation, collaboration and patient-centred care in the community.

And Lacey exemplifies those standards. She has volunteered with birthday parties

on long-term care, bake sales, fundraising events, casinos and community flu clinics—anywhere a helping hand was needed.

"I've enjoyed what I'm doing. It's nice to belong to something," says Lacey, who now works in the centre's gift shop. "You get in with different people who you wouldn't meet otherwise. I've met a lot of good friends through the auxiliary."

The hospital has a good friend in Lacey, as well.

Looking around the gift shop, she points out a display case full of colourful knitted goods for infants.

"For just under 20 years, I've looked after two display cases where I bought wool and gave it to people who wanted to knit."

Those people returned the favour by knitting the baby bonnets and sweaters that are on sale in the shop, with proceeds going to the auxiliary.

And that, says Lacey, is the bottom line.

"I feel what we're doing is worthwhile."

As for pay? A simple thank you is enough.

"This man came in on Thanksgiving, and he said, 'Are you a volunteer, or are you getting paid?' " Lacey recalls. "I said, 'Oh no. I'm a volunteer.' And he said, 'Well I want to thank you very much for taking time off on your holiday to work, to be a volunteer here.'"

"And you know? That meant a little bit, too," she says.

"Then I thought, 'My day was worth it;

Our words



"I have enjoyed being a nurse my whole life. I love everything about it, right from when I was training."

—Margaret Trentham, who received a Long Service Award in Central Zone for working 50 years in healthcare, primarily as a licensed practical nurse and a home care nurse. (Ed. note: Sadly, Margaret passed away in November 2019)



"Hospitals can be a tough place, and when patients see Loki, it's just like a big exhale. It's light and it's fun, and it's nice to bring people smiles

when they're not at their happiest."

—Shannon Lane, on Loki, her Rottweiler-Doberman mix, who volunteers with her at the mental health and intensive care units at Calgary's South Health Campus. The two were celebrating National Therapy Animal Day



"Providing care and helping others is what motivates me. I'm most proud of achieving good results, developing new initiatives in the community and expanding opportunities for new processes, including the women-only clinic. It's humbling for me to see the appreciation for care in this community. You'll be shopping for groceries when a stranger walks over and thanks you for helping their relative."

—Dr. Oyekunle Oyeboode, family physician in Elk Point, who was AHS Doc of the Week in May 2019



Vera Lacey, left, receives an AHS President's Excellence Lifetime Achievement (Volunteer) Award from AHS President and CEO Dr. Verna Yiu.

somebody appreciated me being there.' ”
This year, 23 President's Excellence

Award recipients were selected from a record 153 nominations.



“Some children will have relatively few problems, but others will have many complications affecting many different parts of their body. And so to develop a centre of excellence to look after them properly, to minimize the burden of illness on families, is very important.”

— Dr. Michael Leaker, winner of a President's Excellence Award in Outstanding Achievement in Patient- and Family-Centred Care, for spearheading a multidisciplinary clinic at Calgary's Alberta Children's Hospital for pediatric hemoglobinopathy patients and families



“She had come to me to let me know that she is a transgender woman and this was pre-transition for her. And she had come to a) let me know that, and b) ask about how she could transition in the workplace. The role of the supervisor is to support your staff and to make them feel comfortable and do the best job they can do when they're here at work.”

— Heather Doyle, EMS operations supervisor and winner of a President's Excellence Award in Outstanding Achievement in People Excellence, for helping a transgender staff member

WE CELEBRATE THE AMAZING WORK OUR PEOPLE DO, EACH AND EVERY DAY

President's Excellence Awards

Every year, the President's Excellence Awards recognize AHS employees, physicians and teams who demonstrate innovation, collaboration and patient focus, and who exemplify the AHS values of compassion, accountability, respect, excellence and safety.

Doc of the Week

This online feature on the AHS external website showcases the people, faces and stories of physicians caring for patients across the province.

We are AHS

A digital celebration of our people where we share their stories and photos from the front lines and behind the scenes.

Long Service Awards

We recognize and celebrate our dedicated 40-, 45-, 50- and 55-year employees with an awards ceremony, feature videos and other online features.

Annual photography contest

E-card and print card collections are created from photos submitted by employees, physicians and volunteers and selected through employee voting. Submissions cover themes such as health, nature, landscapes and wildlife, flowers, seasons and travel.

We are AHS

We are different professionals from different backgrounds with different skills. But our passion for healthcare binds us, because together, we are Alberta Health Services



"It's important to choose a career because you enjoy it. Don't go into it for money; there's much more to life. I'd rather do dentistry than cut the lawn at home."

—Clifford Tym, a dentist and Long Service Award recipient in Central Zone



"Patient- and family-centred care means the world to me. I've been doing this here for 14 years and it's my dream job. I come to work to play. One day I was sitting down and I heard a squeal and this little boy came out of the elevator running towards me. Kids run into my arms and we twirl. Making them happy and joyful is everything. That's what makes my job worthwhile."

—Cheryl Ann Oberg, a.k.a. Sparkle the Clown, volunteer at Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary



"I wanted to work at a hospital because I want to serve people. This is a noble job for me. This is my passion. I like to talk to the patients and know that my work to keep things clean helps to keep them safe."

—Ronnie Morines, housekeeper with the Environmental Services Team at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton



"My mother inspired me to become a nurse. My mother's passion and dedication to the profession is captivating. When I was a child, I didn't even realize my mother worked. She seamlessly transitioned from night shifts to taking care of my sisters and I, and somehow found rest in between. I thought how rewarding and passionate she was toward the profession and how good it was to her in return. She now inspires me every day to become a better nurse."

—Laura Dunbar, left, a clinical nurse educator on the Short-Stay Surgical Unit at Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary, on her mother Michelle Dunbar, right, a clinical nurse educator and registered nurse with Adolescent Inpatient Mental Health at the Foothills Medical Centre



"Communication is a part of healthcare that is sometimes overlooked, but it's so important. If you were to ask patients, 'What is one skill you wouldn't want to lose?' it would likely be communication. A lot of people don't consider communication as part of rehabilitation, but rehab is more than just walking and moving. It's also being able to connect, communicate and be included in your school, your home and your community."

—Amber Michaud, manager of Communications Disorders at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton



"That must be the best job ever—child life specialist—I've just always wanted to just play with children."

—Dr. Verna Yiu, AHS President and CEO, joking with a child life specialist during the Wave 1 launch of Connect Care at the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton



"Wound care is always evolving and changing. This little device, called e-Stim, imparts a net charge in the tissue and stimulates healing by increasing blood flow and cellular activity in the wound. The e-Stim program is great because patients can provide their own treatments at home with supervision from home care."

—Kelly Sair, a physiotherapist at Calgary's Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre, with patient Lorne Arnholtz



"Personally, I get my shot for others first—my patients, family, coworkers and people I may not know but could come into contact with. My own health history—a heart attack six years ago—increases my vulnerability to the flu. Herd immunity offers extra protection to people like me."

—Jeff Lanz, pharmacy site lead and pharmacist in Ponoka's Centennial Centre for Mental Health and Brain Injury



"I work in the healthcare field as well, so I know the benefits of being able to give the kids a brightening moment in their day. You see them and the hospital disappears and the child in the moment appears. For some kids, Flynn will cuddle right up to them. For other kids, he plays with them."

—Linda Shaw, who volunteers with her Australian labradoodle Flynn at the Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton



"Asking clients, 'What matters to you?' can be empowering. A client's request can be visiting family, sitting up on the recliner,

having coffee on the deck, wanting to get better and go home, wanting to see or visit pets. Whatever it is, it matters to them, and it's about that human connection."

—Emma Currie, care manager for Sylvan Lake and Eckville Home Care in Seniors Health



"It's my free dose of oxytocin. I used to be here for the babies .. but now I do everything that I can to be here for the parents as well. When I see the parents worry, I tell them my story."

—Lucette Little, volunteer baby cuddler at Calgary's South Health Campus. Little's teenaged grandson, who spent time in the neonatal intensive care unit at Calgary's Foothills Medical Centre, is now a strapping 6-ft.-2-in. hockey player



"I enjoy teaching new mothers how they can care for their babies and helping them cope through delivery. What I like the most about my job is when babies come out. The excitement and the energy in the room is really cool."

—Kendall Suntjens, registered nurse at the Drumheller Health Centre



"This award is based on leadership in resource and patient coordination clinical care and outstanding aviation safety. We couldn't have done it without the collaborative support of everyone on our air medical team. It just goes to show the strength of our team and that their hard work is being recognized internationally. I couldn't be more proud."

—Darren Sandbeck, chief paramedic, on AHS Emergency Medical Services winning the Fixed Wing Award of Excellence for air medical services



"I had a lady who was having a very frantic moment and I walked by her and thought, 'Let's get her some Kleenex,' and I just stopped by and put some on her lap. Twenty minutes later, I'm putting water in glasses and this lady is pouring ice water for herself and said, 'Thank you so much for earlier.' I wasn't sure what she was referring to. She added, 'You gave me Kleenex.'"

—Sheryl Van Otterloo, who has been volunteering with AHS since 1996, now a volunteer at the Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary



"When I first started, healthcare was more regimented. We chose what we thought was best for patients, but now, I like the way it's changing because patients can pick what's best for them and we have much more family involvement. When we're working with patients who have dementia or are unable to communicate, their families can tell us their likes and dislikes, so we can give them better care."

—Rita Johnston, a 30-year healthcare aide at the Drumheller Health Centre



"At every table, the conversation begins with, 'Have you heard about the goose family?' It just brightens everyone's day and it gives us a warm springtime feeling. The RAH is all about providing compassionate care to all—and the goose family has become part of that. They chose to make the RAH their home. We want to make it as welcoming and safe as possible."

—Janie Clink, site executive director of the Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH) in Edmonton, on a mother goose who chose the Ted and Lois Hole Healing Garden as home



"We were able to take so many different entities and successfully merge them into one organization. I know we have our glitches, but to be able to get 100,000 people to gel together and all move in the same direction is amazing."

—Una Quinsey manager, Allied Health, Fort McMurray, on AHS celebrating its 10-year anniversary



"Humans are innately drawn to nature for peace, healing, to get balance and reconnect with who we really are. I want to help provide an atmosphere of wellness to our patients and families from the moment they arrive. This entrance has been transformed into a beautiful, welcoming and healing space."

—Julie Billo, horticultural therapist at the Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary



Together, we do amazing things every day

We proudly deliver quality healthcare services and programs to Albertans every day. Learn more about us at ahs.ca



Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities
Together.



