

Choices

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 ENGLEWOOD
HEALTH

Institute for Patient
Blood Management and Bloodless
Medicine and Surgery

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Heather Christensen

The Right Care at the Right Place— *Even During a Pandemic*

Because her brother had undergone bloodless surgery several years earlier at the Institute for Patient Blood Management and Bloodless Medicine and Surgery at Englewood Health, Heather Christensen already knew she could trust The Bloodless Institute for her own care. She didn't realize at the time that the safety precautions put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic would make her trust it even more.

HOPE FOR HEATHER

Before turning to The Bloodless Institute for help with her gastrointestinal issues, Heather Christensen consulted several healthcare providers near her home.

Though Heather suspected she had an intestinal blockage, she didn't get much help. An urgent care provider suggested an at-home remedy that didn't offer relief, and doctors at her local hospital performed tests and told her she was constipated. When she returned to the hospital the next day with worsening symptoms, she was told the same thing.

Finally, when she could barely sip water and was so bloated that she couldn't put on her socks, Heather decided that enough was enough. Her sister, a doctor, called ahead to the local hospital to let them know that Heather had an obvious blockage and was on her way back in. This time—on Heather's third visit—tests revealed that she had a blockage and needed surgery. Knowing that she wanted bloodless surgery, Heather reached out to The Bloodless Institute. They sent an ambulance to transport her the two and a half hours from Cape May to Englewood.

Heather was admitted to Englewood Hospital that night, and was in surgery by 9 a.m. the following day.

Heather learned her blockage was caused by endometriosis, a condition that causes tissue similar to uterine lining to grow outside of the uterus. In severe cases such as Heather's, that tissue can cause intestinal obstructions. Without The Bloodless Institute's diagnosis, Heather says she would never have known she had endometriosis.

"I got a lot of information, and I felt very looked after," Heather says. "I still have some small issues, but I know that the capable, warm and compassionate team at The Bloodless Institute is always here to help."

When Heather first traveled from her home near Cape May, New Jersey, to The Bloodless Institute for surgery related to an intestinal blockage in February 2020, most people in the country were just learning about COVID-19. During her inpatient hospital stay, however, the respiratory infection began impacting the U.S., and everything changed. Before Heather was discharged, Englewood Health began implementing policies and procedures designed to keep the hospital, its patients, and its staff as safe as possible.

"As I left the hospital the first time, I noticed that COVID-19 precautions were already being taken," Heather remembers. "These precautions—together with my experience and the thoughts I already had about the quality of the hospital and the staff—made me trust the hospital even more."

Feeling Confident

New Jersey was hit hard by the pandemic, and COVID-19-related hospitalizations were high. Heather wanted to ensure that the hospital beds went to people with COVID-19, so she delayed her follow-up surgery by a month.

"When things calmed down, I felt totally comfortable returning to Englewood Hospital in the middle of the pandemic," Heather says.

Before her surgery, Heather had a COVID-19 test, and she regularly saw Englewood Health staff wearing personal protective equipment, checking temperatures of patients and other staff members, and using specialized UV machines to sanitize patient rooms.

"The level of care the staff took was amazing," Heather says. "I wouldn't necessarily trust every hospital, but I had complete trust in Englewood."

Visit www.bloodlessmed.org to learn more about The Bloodless Institute. For a referral to a bloodless physician, call 888-766-2566.



Heroic Efforts

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Englewood Health employees have gone above and beyond to keep patients safe and update family members of hospitalized patients about their status. A leading healthcare quality organization noticed.

Last December, The Leapfrog Group—a national nonprofit organization that promotes and seeks to improve quality and safety in health care—honored Englewood Health with its Leapfrog Pandemic Hero of the Year award in the category of teams of heroes. Englewood Health earned the award for its multifaceted response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, which included:

- Calling hospitalized patients' families multiple times each day to answer questions, provide support, and connect them with their loved ones. Families were not allowed to be in the hospital due to coronavirus safety protocols.
- Emphasizing best practices to stop the spread of the coronavirus, such as social distancing
- Supporting the needs of employees with mental health and financial assistance
- Working closely with first responders

Englewood Health was the nation's only winner of the Leapfrog Pandemic Hero of the Year award in the teams category.

"It's extremely gratifying to win this award," says Sherri Ozawa, RN, Advisor in Patient Blood Management and Bloodless Medicine and Surgery to Englewood Health and President of the Society for the Advancement of Blood Management. "The work that helped us earn this honor reflects the values of Englewood Health and, especially, the Institute for Patient Blood Management and Bloodless Medicine and Surgery at Englewood Health. The high

value that The Bloodless Institute puts on interacting with and supporting patients and families was reflected in the way Englewood Health approached communicating with patients and families during the pandemic."

Keeping Connections Strong

A key factor that earned Englewood Health the Leapfrog Pandemic Hero of the Year award was the work of its Patient and Family Engagement team—joined by Bloodless Institute staff members—and physician-family liaison teams to advocate for hospitalized patients and keep their families informed about their care and condition. These teams expanded with the additions of social workers, physicians, and others who were eager to boost communication with—and between—patients and families during an extraordinary time. The Bloodless Institute played a major role in the effort.

"The Bloodless Institute modeled the best way to make daily communications with families, which could no longer take place in person—they were supportive and informative," Ozawa says. "The Bloodless Institute team joined the Patient and Family Engagement team to train others in patient and family communication because they're so skilled at it."

To stay up to date with news from Englewood Health and find information about COVID-19 vaccination, visit www.engagewoodhealth.org.

"WHAT MAKES ME THE PROUDEST ABOUT OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE IS THAT OUR TEAMS WORKED TIRELESSLY TO CONTINUE COMMUNICATING WITH PATIENTS' FAMILIES, EVEN ON WEEKENDS. I'M SO PROUD OF THEIR SELFLESSNESS."

—Sherri Ozawa, RN, Advisor in Patient Blood Management and Bloodless Medicine and Surgery to Englewood Health and President of the Society for the Advancement of Blood Management





Lessons Learned in the Midst of a PANDEMIC

Nobody could have predicted the COVID-19 crisis, but the team at Englewood Health acted fast to create lifesaving protocols for the community.



Hillary Cohen, MD

One year after COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, the world is still learning about the disease that has upended life on every level. However, healthcare providers have also learned valuable lessons about how to manage COVID-19.

The medical professionals at Englewood Health have led the way in the fight against COVID-19. Together, they are committed to providing robust support to patients, families, and providers on every level.

“Englewood Health is a very close-knit community where our physicians talk to each other on a regular basis, which has been very beneficial since the pandemic began,” says Margit Kaufman, MD, Medical Director for The Bloodless Institute at Englewood Health. “We already had the infrastructure in place where we had good working relationships across multiple subspecialties. That helped create very strong teams to create effective COVID-19 plans for our patients.”



Srikant Kondapaneni, MD

A Strategic Response to a Mysterious Illness

During the first days and weeks of dealing with COVID-19, our clinicians had limited information about the mode of transmission, the clinical course the disease would take, and therapeutic options available to help patients.

“Last spring in Bergen County, we quickly became the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Hillary Cohen, MD, Vice President of Medical Affairs and Chief of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Englewood Health. “Over a period of a few weeks, we went from having never cared for a patient with COVID-19 to having our Emergency Department and hospital floors filled with patients requiring treatment for COVID-19. But collectively, we were able to share knowledge, communicate, and work together, and we quickly became experts at managing this novel disease.”

During this time, the Englewood Health team was able to direct laser-like focus on designing treatment protocols to meet the immediate needs of COVID-19 patients while also strengthening the hospital’s ability to safely address the medical needs of patients.

Specifically, we were diligent about keeping our team and our patients safe. We were able to acquire adequate personal protective equipment, we instituted vigorous cleaning regimens throughout our facilities, and we constantly updated our procedures based on the latest and best available evidence.

We also streamlined our testing procedures, which have greatly improved since spring of 2020 when very strict requirements were associated with testing. Today, anyone who is admitted to the hospital is tested, even if they do not have symptoms. If a patient tests positive, we direct them to a central location for the management of COVID-19 patients, which keeps our offices infection-free.

In the Case of COVID-19

When a patient with COVID-19 comes to Englewood Health, our clinical team launches into a purposeful plan of action tailored to meet individual needs while also using proven methods of COVID-19 management. This treatment plan may include administration of steroids, as well as an anti-viral medication and a high dose of preventive medication to reduce blood clots.

“At Englewood Health, we were among the first people to notice the increasing prevalence of blood clots in COVID-19 patients,” says Srikant Kondapaneni, MD, Section Chief of Pulmonary Medicine at Englewood Health. “We were the boots on the ground and were able to act quickly to address this condition by administering higher doses of prophylactic [preventive] blood thinners.”

The timely response was made possible by the coordination of care that has been consistent throughout the pandemic.

“A team, including our Vice President of Medical Affairs, department heads, infectious disease specialists, nurses, and pharmacists, met on a call every day at the beginning of the pandemic. If there was a problem or a need, it was addressed immediately,” Dr. Kondapaneni says. “We talked about what each person was seeing, looked for patterns, and adjusted protocols.”

Looking Ahead

During the initial COVID-19 surge, 95 percent of patients receiving care at Englewood Health were COVID-19 patients. During the second surge in early 2021, that percentage dropped to roughly 15 percent to 20 percent.

“We encourage everyone to continue vigilance to minimize risk with mask wearing, social distancing, and thorough hand washing,” Dr. Kaufman says. “Also, talk with your doctor about when the COVID-19 vaccine will be available to you. This vaccine is the scientific discovery of a lifetime, and it is a way for us to get back to our lives and bring health back to our community.”

To learn more about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine at Englewood Health, visit www.engagewoodhealth.org/covid-19-information-and-updates/covid-19-vaccine.



Steven Brower, MD

PRIORITIZING COMMUNICATION

One of the most difficult realities of COVID-19 is the isolation. To ensure that the people we care for never feel alone, Englewood Health has cameras in each patient's room so that our clinical team can monitor breathing 24/7. We also have iPads for our COVID-19 patients so families may FaceTime with their loved one and his or her care team.

In addition, a group of our doctors who were not serving on the front lines when the pandemic began formed a physician liaison group to keep families informed.

“We identified a need for communication with families for our patients in the Intensive Care Unit [ICU], because communication was limited and there was no visitation,” says Steven Brower, MD, Director of Lefcourt Family Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center at Englewood Health, Director of Surgical Oncology and Hepatopancreaticobiliary Surgery, and Professor of Surgery. “Because our experts in the cancer center are particularly well-versed in talking to families during critical times, we formulated a team that was responsible for communicating with families of ICU patients with COVID-19 from March through June of 2020. It was tremendously helpful.”

“OUR EXPERIENCE WITH TAKING CARE OF BLOODLESS PATIENTS HAS MADE US HUMBLE AND HELPED US REALIZE THAT WE ALWAYS HAVE MORE TO LEARN. WE CAN ALWAYS BE OPEN TO NEW IDEAS AND NEW CONCEPTS, WHICH ALLOWED US TO BE VERY PROACTIVE AND ALSO REACTIVE TO NEW INFORMATION ABOUT THIS DISEASE.”



Margit Kaufman, MD

—Margit Kaufman, MD, Medical Director, The Institute for Patient Blood Management and Bloodless Medicine and Surgery at Englewood Health

Live Life to the Fullest with Palliative Care

PALLIATIVE CARE DURING COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, palliative care providers have taken on an important role for hospitalized patients. Because families can't be present to help their loved ones, palliative care providers spend time with patients, helping them better understand their diagnosis so they can make complex decisions about treatment. The team also helps patients with anxiety and loneliness—serious concerns for inpatients isolated because of their COVID-19 diagnosis.

While most patients recover from COVID-19 and are released from the hospital, some continue to experience symptoms, such as shortness of breath, body aches, and joint pain, that linger for months. These patients, known as “long haulers,” have created a new challenge for palliative medicine specialists. Because COVID-19 is still relatively new and little is understood about the long haulers, palliative care providers can play an important role in their longer-term care.

“Some patients have significant symptoms that don't necessarily go away after they're discharged,” says Vinnidhy Dave, DO, Director of Palliative Medicine for The Bloodless Institute. “We can see these patients on the outpatient side to help them manage symptoms as they continue to recover from COVID-19.”

Patients with long-term, complex health issues often find that their condition—as well as the side effects from their treatment—limits their quality of life. Palliative care addresses those challenges.



Vinnidhy Dave, DO

Many patients mistakenly believe that palliative care is the same thing as hospice care, but that's not the case. Hospice care is traditionally offered when curative treatment has stopped and patients have a life expectancy of six months or less. It's designed to make the end of life as comfortable as possible. Palliative care, on the other hand, is used at any stage of disease or illness. It complements ongoing curative treatment by providing symptom management and an understanding of the illness to help patients live life to the fullest.

“Patients may be scared when they hear the words ‘palliative care’ for the first time,” says Vinnidhy Dave, DO, Director of Palliative Medicine for the Institute for Patient Blood Management and Bloodless Medicine and Surgery at Englewood Health. “But after they talk with us, they're really appreciative and happy they get to see us.”

Providing Symptom Relief

Palliative care can be valuable for patients of any age with any number of medical conditions, including cancer, heart disease, kidney failure, liver disease, lung disease, and stroke. Palliative care providers work alongside the patient's other specialists or primary care providers, offering an additional level of care that can help with symptoms such as:

- Anxiety
- Breathing difficulties
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Depression
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Pain
- Sleeping issues
- Stress
- Vomiting/nausea

“Sometimes people are so focused on their treatment that they forget about living day-to-day and enjoying every day,” Dr. Dave says. “So our focus is to try to help patients enjoy their time outside of treatment, whether they are spending time with their loved ones or enjoying their favorite hobbies.”

Help for Bloodless Patients

Because the palliative care team at Englewood Health works regularly with bloodless patients, they understand their unique needs. They're adept at identifying and recommending innovative treatments that may not be available at hospitals that don't specialize in bloodless medicine.

“I think a big part of palliative care is understanding people's cultures, religions, and beliefs,” Dr. Dave says. “We're able to use that understanding about our patients to help guide them to make the right decisions for care that match their needs.”

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Advance Care Planning— Benefits and Considerations: Part One



By Ashlee P. Howard, RN, BSN
Patient Blood Management
Navigator

In this first article in this series, we are excited to provide some considerations for executing and maintaining advance directives. By taking full advantage of this incredibly powerful tool, you can protect your wishes and rights—regardless of your ability to advocate for yourself.

Patient-centered decision making is one of the guiding principles on which the Institute for Patient Blood Management and Bloodless Medicine and Surgery was founded, so we are proud to work closely with our Hospice and Palliative Care team as they assist patients in making complex decisions regarding treatment options.

How, though, do we stay true to this commitment if a patient is unable to communicate or make decisions—either temporarily or permanently—due to incapacity caused by illness, injury, or advanced age? If we know that a patient in this situation would likely decline certain medical treatments for reasons of faith, conscience, health, or simple preference, how do we ensure the patient's wishes are respected?

Advance care planning is one of the most important things a person can do to address these concerns, and here at The Bloodless Institute at Englewood Health, we make it easy for patients to take full advantage of their rights guaranteed by the Patient Self-Determination Act of 1990, which includes the right to accept or refuse medical or surgical treatment and the right to formulate an **advance directive**.

Simply put, an advance directive is a written document that states a person's decisions regarding healthcare treatments or procedures, and these documents only go into effect when a person is not able to speak for himself or herself. Advance directives fall into three main categories:

- **Instruction directives** provide instructions regarding specific healthcare procedures and treatments that a person may choose to decline, such as blood transfusions, and can also include general statements about a person's beliefs, values, and general preferences for care and treatment.
- **Proxy directives** allow individuals to designate healthcare representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Proxy directives are used only in the event that individuals are unable to make decisions for themselves.
- **Combined directives** provide instructions regarding specific healthcare treatments AND allow individuals to designate healthcare representatives. A combined directive is the type of directive most patients coming to The Bloodless Institute choose to execute. Laws applicable to advance directives can vary slightly from state to state, so it is wise for individuals to become familiar with the laws in the state where they reside to ensure any directives they execute are sound and legally defensible.

The importance of having a properly executed advance directive is certainly not a new concept for patients choosing to avoid blood transfusions, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only served to further emphasize the value of this type of planning.

To learn more about advance directives from the team at The Bloodless Institute, call 888-766-2566.

(Part two of this series will appear in the next issue of Choices).



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The Stress of STRESS



By Ramon Correa
Manager, The Institute for
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At various points in their life, everyone experiences some level of stress. During the pandemic, you may find that your stress level is through the roof—especially if you're facing a loss of employment, financial hardships, kids

learning from home, or the death of a loved one. Simply explained, stress is the way your brain and body react to a situation. When stress is present, your whole body—including your cardiovascular, endocrine, gastrointestinal, musculoskeletal, nervous, reproductive, and respiratory systems—is impacted by stress hormone-related chemical changes.

Short-term stress, known as acute stress, can be beneficial and motivating. Acute stress is

helpful when it gives you the focus you need to get out of a dangerous situation or complete a big project at work. Long-lasting stress, known as chronic stress, can become overwhelming and cause anger, anxiety, or frustration. This type of stress is dangerous, because it can affect more than just your mental health; it can cause physical health issues, too.

Everyone has different physical and mental reactions to stress. Some will have digestive issues, such as diarrhea, constipation, or stomach pain, while others might become forgetful, lose or gain weight, or develop sleep issues. Some people may also have headaches, neck and jaw pain, or lack focus. Symptoms usually disappear once the stressful situation is over.

However, when stress lingers and becomes chronic, the body is unable to relax. This constant state of alertness puts you at risk for other health issues, some of which are potentially deadly:

- Anxiety or depression
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Menstrual issues
- Obesity
- Skin issues

3 Ways to Find Stress Relief

Learning to manage the stress in your life can help you mentally and physically feel better. Try some of these tips:

- 1. Get active.** Take a walk or play a sport like tennis or golf. You can stay socially distant, be outside in nature, and separate yourself from the stress you might experience at home or the office.
- 2. Relax.** Read a book or listen to music or a podcast you like. Choose options that are calming, rather than stressful, and enjoy the moment.
- 3. Walk away.** If you find your stress level building, remove yourself from the situation for a few minutes. Take a quick walk, or even just go into the restroom. Compose yourself so you can respond appropriately.