

HEALTHCARE

An Advertising Supplement to the Orange County Business Journal • January 19, 2015



CHOC Children's Is Setting a New Standard for Newborn Care

New parents-to-be will do all kinds of homework leading up to the birth of their baby, from planning for a healthy delivery to researching the safest car seat, and everything in between. Though no parent wants to imagine a baby in need of life-saving care, it's also important to become familiar with the best health care options available for newborns, just in case.

Many hospitals offer a neonatal intensive care unit, but only a select few are rated by the American Academy of Pediatrics as a Level 4 – the highest level available – and even fewer are among the top 20 NICUs in the nation, according to U.S. News & World Report. CHOC Children's NICU is that and more. In the last decade, the Orange County children's hospital has become more dedicated than ever to saving babies' lives and preventing health complications resulting from risky or premature birth. That is made possible by specialized care in CHOC's newest neonatal units, the very latest in life-saving equipment and a trained team committed to setting a new standard of care.

Not Just a Typical NICU

CHOC's 54-bed NICU is much more than the name implies. Within its walls are specialized units staffed with even more specialized doctors and nurses, ready and waiting to care for babies depending on their very unique needs.

In a dark, quiet corner is the Small Baby Unit, the only one of its kind on the West Coast. The smallest and sickest babies are treated here, those who are born prematurely at less than 28 weeks gestation, or who weigh less than 1,000 grams.

time, which is crucial for detecting newborn seizures that are not always physically apparent. Whole body cooling is also important for protecting a baby's brain and is used to prevent neurological disability or death if a baby has been deprived of oxygen. The technology uses a safe, monitored process to lower a baby's body temperature and cool the brain for 72 hours, and then slowly re-warm the baby for an additional four to 12 hours.

"This is one of the many ways the CHOC NICU is improving the long-term quality of life for newborns," says Dr. Vijay Dhar, medical director of the CHOC NICU. "This technology can make a tremendous difference in the lives of children throughout the region, and we're proud to be offering it."

A Supportive Environment for Parents, Too

CHOC understands the fear and anxiety experienced by parents of NICU patients. It's one of the reasons mom and dad are part of the care team, and are encouraged to spend as much time at their baby's bedside as possible. Parents are also encouraged to provide skin-to-skin "kangaroo care" as soon as it's safe for the baby. And, parents are always welcome to participate in rounds, when the infant's team of physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists and others discuss his or her progress.

"We strive to provide a real family environment for our patients and their families," Dr. Dhar says. "Although we take great pride in our expertise and experience, no one knows a child better than a parent."



Special equipment, including long-term video EEG monitoring and a whole body cooling system, are available in the CHOC NICU to protect a baby's brain.



Families are an important part of the NICU care team at CHOC. They are encouraged to participate in discussions with physicians and nurses, as well as spend as much time with their baby as possible.

Babies on this unit lie inside shrouded incubators that keep light away from their underdeveloped eyes. Even a whisper is harsh for these babies' ears, so families and staff members speak in a gentle "library voice." The goal is to mimic the womb's environment as closely as possible so that infants can focus on growing.

Just down the hall, CHOC has created another special unit, called the Surgical NICU. CHOC performs some of the most complex neonatal surgeries, including mandibular distraction and ex utero intra-partum (EXIT) procedures. Because of a baby's small size and complex conditions, surgery can be more difficult than for older children or adults. The Surgical NICU is one of only a handful available in the United States and is a dedicated space for neonatologists and pediatric surgeons to collaborate on care for babies who need surgery. The Surgical NICU team has developed new treatment standards for these special patients, including guidelines around pain management, anesthesia, medication dosing, body temperature, wound care and feeding. The Surgical NICU also has the ability to convert a room within the NICU into a state-of-the-art operating room when the need arises. All surgical equipment, supplies and technology, including extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) and high-frequency oscillation, are readily available, just as they are in CHOC's traditional operating rooms.

A third highly customized area of the NICU is designed for babies with neurological concerns. This unit provides 24-hour coverage by pediatric neurologists and equipment for long-term video electroencephalography (EEG) monitoring and whole body cooling. Long-term video EEG monitoring is used to evaluate a baby's brain activity and behavioral activity for an extended period of

Serving the Region and Beyond

CHOC's neonatal services go beyond the hospital's main campus in Orange. Nearby at St. Joseph Hospital, CHOC has a Level 2, 13-bed NICU just steps away from the hospital's postpartum unit, ready to begin treatment as soon as necessary. It features all private rooms, providing privacy and sleeping accommodations for families. CHOC also offers a Level 3 NICU at CHOC Children's at Mission Hospital, in collaboration with the Mission Viejo hospital's labor and delivery unit. CHOC neonatal care teams are able to be present during high-risk births and can move babies to the NICU within minutes.

CHOC also boasts a highly experienced transport team available at a moment's notice to bring newborns from other hospitals throughout the region to a CHOC NICU for critical care. The team transports babies by road and by air with the very latest in life-saving equipment that can mean all the difference in the minutes during transport. And if prenatal testing has identified issues that will need to be addressed immediately when a baby is born, the transport team can be alerted ahead of time to be on call and move a baby to CHOC after birth.

For more information about CHOC's neonatal services, please call 714.997.3000 or visit choc.org/nicu.



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How to Maximize Your Practice's Financial Health

by Steve Williams, CPA, Managing Partner, HMWC CPAs & Business Advisors

Imagine your practice functioning at peak performance. Its work processes are systematic, streamlined and thorough. No-shows have been reduced to a bare minimum. Claims spend less time in accounts receivable and a higher percentage of total charges are paid. Thus, your practice generates more revenue with fewer hours of work.

To reach this idealized state requires both dedication and expert assistance. You should try to continuously track, benchmark and improve overall performance while always looking for ways to re-engineer work processes to free up time for revenue-generating activities. Doing so can help your practice to be more nimble and profitable. Here are several ideas:

Details Make a Difference

In collaboration with your CPA firm, your practice can establish key finance-related initiatives, such as adopting measures to minimize billable time lost to patient no-shows. This includes matching appointment capacity to patient demand to reduce backlog and schedule "churn."

You can also grow your patient panel through referrals and direct marketing. And scheduling appointment requests within a week can reduce the likelihood of no-shows.

Your practice must establish patient eligibility in advance to maximize time spent during an appointment. For instance, contact ineligible patients ahead of time so they can check with their insurers about eligibility. Facilitate a smooth flow of

information between the front desk and the billing office to help minimize denials, maximize point of service collections and avoid registration errors. Cross-train staff to perform critical tasks during busy periods.

Master Patient Appointments

Inform patients before appointments of the payment amounts they owe and their payment options. Collect copays/deductibles (current and overdue) to avoid the cost, unreliability and delays associated with billing via mail. Allow patients to make automatic monthly bill payments using their credit cards.

Bill appointments immediately and follow up to ensure claims are received by the payer and subsequently paid. Be sure to review and appeal denials and underpays quickly. Follow-up on uncollected self-pay balances to determine whether patients understand their obligations, then review overall billing and collection performance monthly.

Steve Williams

Steve Williams is the managing partner of HMWC CPAs & Business Advisors and heads the firm's Healthcare Practice. For more information, please contact him at 714.505.9000 or visit www.hmwc CPA.com.



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UC Irvine Health

UC Irvine Health Branches Out

UC Irvine Health is on the move in several communities in Orange County and beyond. Nationally recognized for its premier physicians and healthcare services, the healthcare enterprise recently opened new outpatient care locations near Newport Beach, Orange and Tustin and announced an affiliation with Corona Regional Medical Center that will extend UC Irvine Health specialists to Corona and nearby communities.

The expansion of services to settings beyond the hospital's primary Orange medical center is a move to increase residents' access to exceptional and affordable care, a concept at the heart of healthcare reform, says Teresa Conk, UC Irvine Health's chief strategy officer. By opening outpatient centers and developing strategic partnerships with other organizations, UC Irvine Health is

redesigning the delivery of primary care and improving the coordination of care, especially for people with chronic disease.

"Over time, that's going to reduce the cost of care and keep people healthy," Conk says.

"Innovative and unique aspects of Orange County's only academic medical center are being pushed out into the community," she says. For example, Google Glass technology, already in place at the hospital, will be piloted at select community sites in upcoming months. "We're offering the most advanced, comprehensive and coordinated care at convenient locations," Conk adds.

Learn more about UC Irvine Health at ucirvinehealth.org

Primary Care Centers in Orange and Tustin

Primary care (family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics), has never been easier to access for residents near Orange and Tustin who seek the high-quality, world-class care provided by UC Irvine Health. Two new primary care centers have opened in those cities staffed by the UC Irvine Health Medical Group.

Primary care physicians focus on partnering with patients to prevent illness, effectively managing their current health conditions, and keeping small health problems from becoming more serious. Patients who need referrals to specialists will be connected to a system of more than 500 specialty physicians, many of whom are nationally recognized experts in their specialties.

The Orange and Tustin centers include on-site laboratory services for expedient processing of test results. The Tustin location also provides after-hours urgent care on evenings and weekends. Plans are already underway to bring renowned UC Irvine Health physicians from nearly a dozen specialties to Tustin. This is an extraordinary convenience for patients who can now see their primary care physician and specialist physician at a single location.

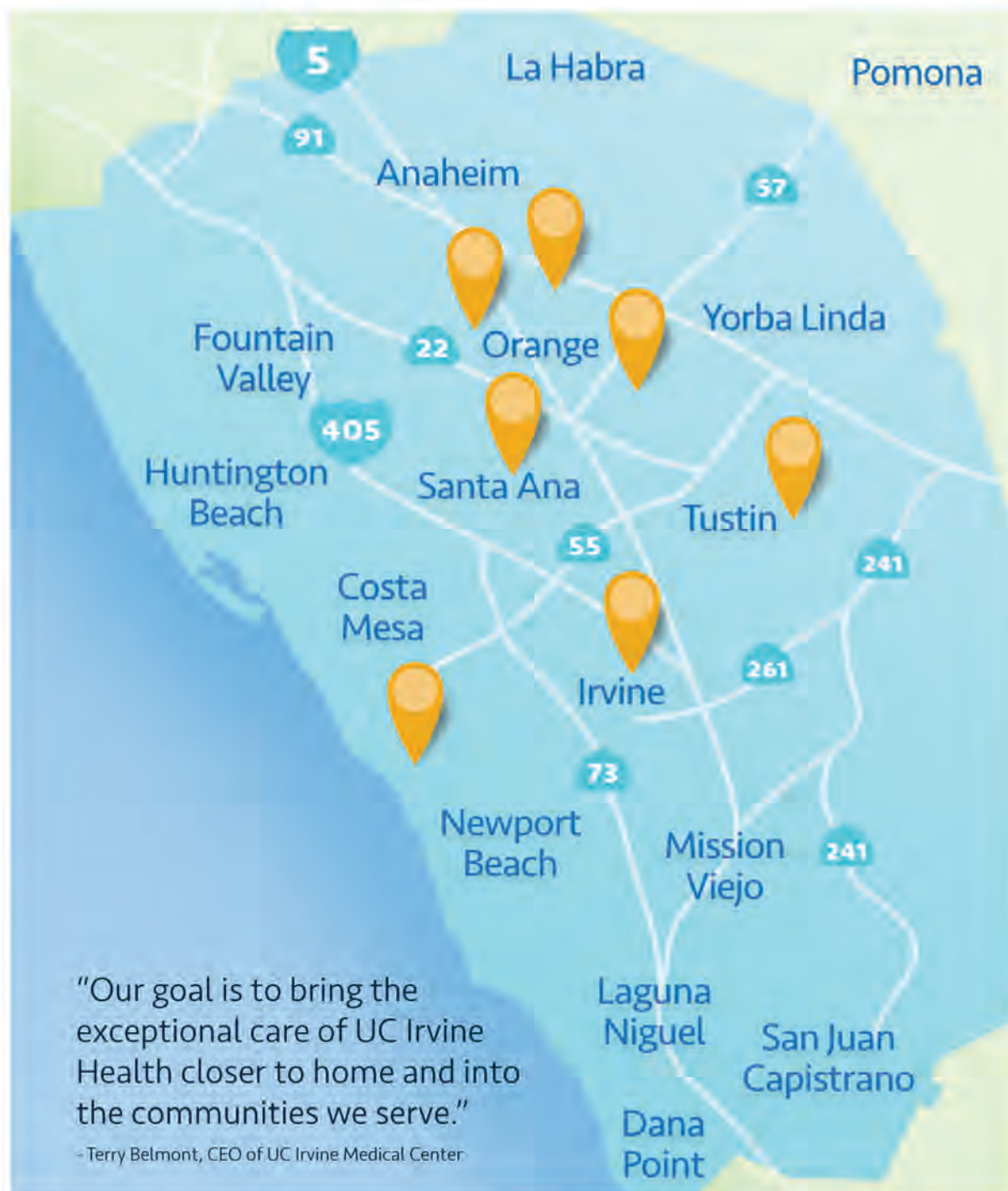
"Consumers today are seeking convenient and affordable high-quality healthcare services. We're building comprehensive centers that are a one-stop shop: primary care, specialty care, laboratory, diagnostic imaging and after-hours urgent care — all in an integrated setting," Conk says.

UC Irvine Health Cancer Center—Newport

The UC Irvine Health Cancer Center—Newport is staffed by highly trained hematologic oncologists offering the latest treatments to battle cancer. With laboratory, pharmacy and infusion services conveniently on site, the center provides a tranquil, spa-like and healing environment for patients undergoing chemotherapy. Patients have access to the expertise of the UC Irvine Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, one of only 41 National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer centers in the country. These centers provide the highest quality cancer care and advance medicine through research and clinical trials.

The Newport medical office building is also home to other UC Irvine Health services:

- Pacific Breast Care Center
- Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Center
- Pacific Coast Plastic Surgery
- Specialists' offices for women's health, neurosurgery, and gastroenterology



"Our goal is to bring the exceptional care of UC Irvine Health closer to home and into the communities we serve."

— Terry Belmont, CEO of UC Irvine Medical Center

For a complete list of UC Irvine Health locations, visit ucirvinehealth.org/locations

Affiliation with Corona Regional Medical Center

Corona Regional is a 238-bed community hospital providing healthcare to approximately 275,000 Inland Empire residents. Under the agreement with Corona Regional, UC Irvine Health will extend a number of its specialty services to local residents including:

- Fellowship-trained stroke neurologists and surgeons and stroke telemedicine services
- Maternal-fetal medicine experts for high-risk pregnancies
- Cancer care affiliated with UC Irvine Health's NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center

The affiliation with Corona Regional "allows us to extend our expertise for the benefit of the residents of Riverside and San Bernardino counties," Conk says.

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UC Irvine Health

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Health Care Transformation Begins in the Workplace

One of the most important transformations underway in health care today is the move towards prevention and wellness. Chronic diseases are the number one cause of death and disability in the US. Every year 1.7 million Americans die from a chronic disease — accounting for 7 out of every 10 deaths in our country. As one of California's leading health systems and one of Southern California's largest employers, MemorialCare promotes employee wellness to reduce risk for lifestyle-related chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension.

"One of the best places to transform health care is in the workplace," says Tammie Brailsford, RN, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. "That's where most people spend the majority of their waking hours. So, that's where we began our employee wellness journey. Six years ago MemorialCare implemented an award winning prevention and wellness program, known as The Good Life, for its 11,500 employees."

Fork, Feet and Fingers

There are three key areas to focus on in order to improve health. Dr. David Katz, Director of Yale University Prevention Research Center stresses that what we do with our fork, our feet and our fingers determines what we do to our future health. To that end, MemorialCare has created a work environment that supports healthy food choices, creates opportunities to keep active and is smoke-free. With fitness challenges, onsite gyms and walking trails, nutritious cafeteria offerings, weight loss reduction programs and more, over 77 percent of MemorialCare's employees report that their organization makes an effort to help improve their health. In a recent renovation of MemorialCare's 15-acre, 300,000 square foot property in Fountain Valley, the health system included walking workstations and sit-stand desks to help keep employees active.

Knowledge is power, so MemorialCare also offers employees annual opportunities to learn important biometric numbers like blood pressure, blood glucose and cholesterol, as well as confidential personal health assessments. Using a personalized, confidential online portal, employees can access health resources including a personal scorecard, exercise and nutrition planners, wellness coaching, wellness challenges and more.



MemorialCare has created a well workplace characterized by extraordinary employee engagement. They show employees how to take a holistic approach to wellness by increasing physician activity, focusing on healthy eating, supporting smoking cessation and promoting work-life balance.

Success in Managing Chronic Conditions

Chronic diseases like hypertension, diabetes, asthma and depression are responsible for more than 75% of health care costs, so addressing these conditions can help lower health care expenses. MemorialCare partners with employees who have chronic conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes and hyperlipidemia to make long-lasting lifestyle changes, lessen complications, improve outcomes and lower medical and pharmaceutical costs through an innovative program, The Good Life – In Balance. With 87 percent participant retention, the In Balance program has led to clinically significant improvements in participants' blood glucose and blood pressure levels. These include a 0.9 average reduction in participants HgA1c in year one and an additional 0.4 reduction in year two. Participants experienced an average reduction of 20/13 in blood pressure in year one, and an additional 16/5 average reduction in year two.

Linking Benefits to Behavior

As a partner in health of more than 18,000 employees and dependents, MemorialCare designs health care benefits that are financially sustainable for families and for the organization. Employees are able to qualify for lower cost Good Life Medical Insurance plans by completing a confidential personal health assessment and biometric screening, and participating in wellness related activities or self care. Since its launch in 2013, more than half of MemorialCare's employees have taken the steps needed to qualify for these plans.

Managing Employer-Sponsored Health Care Spending

"Wellness solutions can improve employee health and well-being, increase employee engagement and decrease absenteeism," according to Brailsford. "And MemorialCare's commitment to employee health and wellness has resulted in significant reductions in its health care spending rate, dramatically below the national average." A recent nationwide survey conducted by Mercer revealed the national average increase in the employer-sponsored health care spending rate was 8.5 percent over the past 5 years. MemorialCare's annual increase was 4.9 percent. Normalized for one year when the health system, a self-insured employer, experienced several outlier cases, the system's average rate increase over the 5 years was 3.5 percent, just above annual CPI. A combination of The Good Life health and wellness initiatives linked to benefit design and strong rate negotiations led to the results.

For more information on how MemorialCare partners with employers or for a copy of a white paper on The Good Life, call (714) 377-2960.



MemorialCare Health System is a nonprofit integrated delivery system that includes:

Hospitals

- Long Beach Memorial
- Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach
- Community Hospital Long Beach
- Orange Coast Memorial
- Saddleback Memorial in Laguna Hills
- Saddleback Memorial in San Clemente

Medical Groups

- MemorialCare Medical Group
- Greater Newport Physicians

Outpatient Health Centers

- MemorialCare Imaging Centers
- MemorialCare Surgery Centers

memorialcare.org

Myth:

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Truth:

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It's important that as many children as possible are up to date on their vaccinations to ensure those children who can't be vaccinated are safe. During recent whooping cough epidemics, it was shown that there were higher rates of disease in geographic pockets where there were lower rates of vaccination. Now more than ever, keeping our kids healthy is up to all of us.

Get the knowledge you need about the safety of vaccinations at choc.org/health

 **CHOC Children's**
together the future's bright

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Expect More From the St. Joseph Hoag Health Alliance

Southern California has so much to offer, including the combined health care expertise of St. Joseph Health, Hoag and CHOC Children's. As trusted names in our community, we're pleased to come together as the St. Joseph Hoag Health network of dedicated health care professionals with one big vision — making our community its healthiest.

Our physicians and hospitals are working together to transform the way medical care is provided at home, in the hospital and across the life span. The goal of the unified network is to attend to the body, mind and spirit of each person and build communities that remain vital and healthy. Most people know us for our excellent hospitals and physicians who care for patients when they ill or injured, but our work goes even deeper. Together, we are seeking new ways to provide preventive care and help those with chronic conditions manage their health beyond the acute hospital setting.

The St. Joseph Hoag Health network has come together to intensify our commitment of bringing together the best minds and biggest hearts. We know good health is something local residents cherish every day, and we're here for those in our community, all across this great county. It all adds up to more for Orange County.

With the St. Joseph Health Hoag alliance, local residents enjoy so much more:

► **More access to care:** Our network of care spans all across greater Orange County, and includes widely respected hospitals, medical groups, affiliated physicians and urgent cares. And, through our virtual network, patients are connected to their physicians even without leaving home.

► **More doctors:** With eight highly regarded medical groups and affiliated physician networks all over the county, St. Joseph Hoag Health makes it easy for individuals and families to select the physicians who best meet their needs. Our combined network includes more than 1,700 of the county's outstanding doctors who work together to provide excellent health care. Additionally, because St. Joseph Hoag Health offers a network of health providers all collaborating together, patients can see a specialist anywhere within the network — from Northern to Southern Orange County, even if they are covered by an HMO plan.

► **More hospitals and health services:** St. Joseph Hoag Health is the only network that includes all of these trusted area hospitals: CHOC Children's (Orange), CHOC Children's at Mission Hospital (Mission Viejo), Hoag Hospital Irvine, Hoag Orthopedic Institute (Irvine), Hoag Hospital Newport Beach, Mission Hospital Mission Viejo, Mission Hospital Laguna Beach, St. Joseph Hospital (Orange) and St. Jude Medical Center (Fullerton).

► **More convenience:** Because injuries or illness can happen any time of day, St. Joseph Hoag Health has 29 urgent care centers conveniently located

throughout greater Orange County. These centers are available for treating conditions that require immediate medical attention but are not life-threatening.

► **More innovation:** By selecting our network, patients have access to the most advanced specialized services and technology in the fields of cancer care, heart and vascular services, orthopedics, neurology, women's health and more. Our clinical teams are also experts in preventative medicine and services that help keep our community healthy and out of the hospital whenever possible.

► **More peace of mind:** From the numerous community education classes available throughout the year, to prevention and wellness programs and our conveniently located facilities, St. Joseph Hoag Health makes your health and your time a priority, giving you and your family more opportunity for enjoying life and all that our region has to offer.

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Hoag Mission St. Joseph St. Jude

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It's easy to enjoy all the benefits of the St. Joseph Hoag Health network. Simply choose a health plan that

includes St. Joseph Hoag Health hospitals and participating medical groups and affiliated physicians. For more information on the plans contracting with our network, go to stjosephhoaghealth.org where we're always updating our list of contracting health plans. Just to make sure, double check with your health plan as well.

Also, you'll need to select a primary care doctor if you are in an HMO plan and it's always a good idea for PPO patients as well. Make sure that physician is in one of the eight medical groups and affiliated physician networks that are part of St. Joseph Hoag Health:

- Hoag Medical Group
- Hoag Affiliated Physicians
- Mission Heritage Medical Group
- Mission Hospital Affiliated Physicians
- St. Joseph Heritage Medical Group
- St. Joseph Hospital Affiliated Physicians
- St. Jude Heritage Medical Group
- St. Jude Affiliated Physicians

Many times, you can still select St. Joseph Hoag Health even if it's not time to enroll in a new health plan. If you're in an HMO, for example, members are permitted to change their primary care physician within their plan anytime throughout the year. The effective start date will be the following month.

If you need additional help becoming part of the St. Joseph Hoag Health network, call 877.459.DOCS (3627) for more information or go to www.stjosephhoaghealth.org. Welcome to the St. Joseph Hoag Health experience. Welcome to more.

Managing Stress in Today's Fast-Paced Culture

Stress is an emotional and physical reaction that we are all a little too familiar with. We tend to work too hard, have too many responsibilities, and so many people to please that it can be difficult for us to manage the stress that comes with our lives. Being overwhelmed, overworked, and depended upon too much can cause stress to develop into a normal feeling and reaction. Stress is such a prevalent factor in today's fast-paced world that many of us go through our daily routine ignoring the psychological and physical effects that it may have on us. Stress is a major setback in how we live our lives to the fullest. We need to shift our attention to how we can better manage stress and our overall wellness.



receiving a massage is one of the top three most effective stress management techniques. Massage therapy can significantly reduce stress on both psychological and physical levels. A therapeutic massage can relax and rejuvenate. There are many options for massage in Orange County but none compare to Elements Massage™, the highest-rated massage studio* — guaranteed to be the BEST in Orange County. With locations throughout Orange County, Elements Massage™ is a world-class studio with a mission to provide clients with a relaxing massage that will relieve stress and provide a calming experience. Massages range from Swedish to sport and deep tissue, with Element's professionally trained therapists able to offer a handcrafted

Anxiety, neck and back pain, and increased or decreased appetite are some of the major symptoms of stress. To rid yourself of stress and its symptoms, one must be active in stress management techniques: eating a healthy diet, exercising and meditation. There are many ways you can manage stress and one of the best solutions is to get a massage!



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For more information on how to manage stress or to book an appointment at Elements Massage™, please visit www.elementsmassageoc.com for a list of studios.

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According to the American Psychological Association,

5 Things to Consider When Merging a Medical Practice

The Affordable Care Act has imposed some major challenges to physicians. Many physicians are considering a merger of their medical practice into a larger medical group or a hospital system. There are a number of issues that need to be considered. Below are five issues that should be addressed.

- 1. Culture:** Every medical practice has its own culture and, while evaluating a merger, one has to review the culture in both of the practices and make sure the merging practices will be able to adjust to a new culture over a period of time and thrive.
- 2. Valuation of the practice:** One should use an experienced valuation professional to determine the estimated fair market value of the practice. This valuation will be used as the basis for negotiation between the parties.
- 3. Compensation Structure:** Physicians are accustomed to receiving compensation based upon their production and collections from the medical services they have performed. In joining a larger group, the compensation formula may include other factors. Accordingly, physicians should address and document a clear understanding of the compensation formula so there are no misunderstandings. A new employment agreement should be drafted for the physician so the terms of the agreement are documented.
- 4. Staffing:** After a merger, some staff positions may be eliminated. This issue should be discussed in advance so staff can be informed as to what employment opportunities are available.
- 5. Liabilities:** One should determine if the existing malpractice insurance policies will be continued after the merger. If not, necessary arrangements need to be made for tail coverage, which may be expensive and should be a consideration when evaluating the merger.



Lewis



If a new employment agreement is made after the merger, special attention should be given to documenting revenue allocation, malpractice insurance coverage and who will be the responsible party.

Above all, if due to unforeseen circumstances, the merger is not successful, there should be clauses in the merger agreement on the rights and responsibilities of the parties concerned and how the assets/liabilities of the practice will be handled.

For more information about medical practice mergers, contact Gregory Lewis at ELLS CPAs & Business Advisors at 714.569.1000 or visit www.ellscpas.com.

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