

## QUALITY OF CARE

ECH has many established procedures that enhance the quality and speed of patient care. One of those procedures, the hospital's stroke protocol, ensures that patients receive medical care as quickly as possible.

A stroke is one medical emergency for which, quite literally, time is of the essence. The sooner the patient receives specific medications and surgery, the better the outcome. A stroke must be suspected, identified, diagnosed and treatment initiated as quickly as possible.

There are two types of strokes – one that is caused by a clot (ischemic) that creates a blockage in the brain's network of vessels; and another caused by a broken blood vessel that causes bleeding (hemorrhagic).

Patients who suffer an ischemic stroke typically have 3 hours to receive the appropriate medication treatment, while patients who suffer a hemorrhagic stroke have a similar amount of time to have surgery. In either case, the sooner the patient gets to a stroke center, the better the outcome.

In 2009, ECH ED Manager Meredith King and Dr. Mark Gorman (neurologist at Fletcher Allen Health Center) developed a plan for working as quickly as possible with those who've suffered a stroke. The plan requires the collaboration of:

- Local EMS
- ED staff at ECH
- Radiology staff at ECH
- The telemedicine link between Fletcher Allen and ECH
- Air transport teams
- The stroke center at Fletcher Allen

Initial responsibility lies with EMS staff – they assess the patient at the scene and during transport to ECH. If a stroke is suspected and within acceptable time limits, the EMS informs ECH via radio and the hospital begins to assemble essential personnel and services.

### The two primary goals of the hospital's stroke protocol are:

- Ensure that the patient receives a CT scan within 15 minutes of arriving at the hospital
- Transport the patient to Fletcher Allen within 60 minutes

ED staff informs the radiology department so that the CT scanner is kept clear (CT scans are used to look for evidence of a stroke), and to ensure that a radiologist is on standby to immediately read the CT scan.

The patient is assessed upon arrival by the triage nurse – literally, right at the door. If this assessment also indicates symptoms of a stroke, the patient bypasses the ED and is sent directly to the CT scanner. Time is so critical that the patient isn't even removed from the EMS stretcher.

After the CT scan, digital images are sent to the radiologist who immediately communicates the findings with the ED. ECH arranges air transport, based on the results of the CT scan and ED staff assessment.

ECH establishes its telemedicine link with Fletcher Allen; allowing staff to confer with a neurologist as soon as the patient returns from radiology. The telemedicine link enables the neurologist to visualize the patient; offering an opportunity to see and hear how the patient is responding to testing and initial treatment.

ECH must often manage initial, life-saving care as quickly as possible. Its established procedures, combined with the cooperative effort of EMS, other hospitals and air transport teams help to ensure the best possible outcome, when time is such a critical factor.



*ECH staff prepare a patient for a CT scan; a diagnostic test used to confirm evidence of a stroke.*

## BREAKING NEWS

Notes are made in patient charts many times a day to help communicate with nurses and physicians; while fulfilling regulations and recording that standards of care are being met.

Chief Nursing Officer Bonnie Rata has developed and designed a new system (the first of its kind anywhere) that allows nurses to dictate their notes using templates and voice-recognition software. The system is being tested this summer and is on track to be integrated into the hospital's electronic medical record system this winter.

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## 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT TO BENEFIT TELEMEDICINE PROGRAM AT ECH

Elizabethtown Community Hospital is accepting registrations for its Annual Golf Tournament. The event takes place on Tuesday, August 10 at the Westport Golf and Country Club.

The golf tournament is one of the hospital's most popular fundraising events. Each year, proceeds from the tournament are used to support the hospital and its services; and many of the tournament's 180 participants take part year after year.

This year, tournament proceeds will purchase an additional telemedicine unit for the hospital. Telemedicine units consist of a high-definition television and camera that links patients at ECH with a specialist – who may be hundreds of miles away. Many pieces of medical equipment can also be used in conjunction with the television units – the hospital has begun to invest in those pieces of equipment, as well.

Telemedicine capabilities are virtually endless and can be used for a variety of specialties. The hospital plans to offer dermatology, ophthalmology, otolaryngology (ENT) and cardiac rehabilitation at its main facility and its three community-based health centers, via telemedicine.

According to Jane Hooper, community relations director at ECH, the golf tournament has also reached a milestone. "This is the tenth year that the hospital has hosted the tournament," she said. "We're delighted that both the local and extended communities have been so supportive over the years."

Tournament sponsors include CVPH, Grand Union Family Markets, Hulbert Bros., Pizzagalli Construction, NYCO Minerals, ADP, Medical Liability Mutual Insurance Company, Fust Charles Chambers, ECH Auxiliary, and Lake Placid Sports Medicine.

The event features various contests and prizes donated by sponsors. According to Hooper, since this is the tenth annual tournament, the hospital is planning some significant prize options. "The golf committee has a lot of ideas, and we're working hard to put them in place. It should be a really exciting day for the participants."

Among the prizes is a car, generously donated by Adirondack Auto. This car is part of a hole-in-one contest; and will be given away if a golfer can hit that perfect shot. Raffle items include gift certificates from Old Adirondack, Bluff Point Golf Course, Gore Mountain, Bub's Pizza and the Depot Theater.

**The cost is \$85 per golfer and includes greens fees, cart and lunch. Contact the hospital's community relations office (873-3003) for registration forms or sponsorship opportunities.**



*Matt Nolan, Terry Lamb, Dr. Rob DeMuro and Rod Boula prepare for the hospital's 10th annual golf tournament.*



**Yes!** I want to contribute to ECH



**Donor Information**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Enclosed is my gift of:**

\$25    \$50    \$100    \$250    Other \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to Elizabethtown Community Hospital

**Thanks for your kind support!**



# COMMUNITY CONNECTION

ELIZABETHTOWN COMMUNITY HOSPITAL  
*A not-for-profit charitable organization*

NEWS FROM YOUR COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

## ELIZABETHTOWN COMMUNITY HOSPITAL WELCOMES NEW PHYSICIANS

Pediatrician Michael Celotti will establish a practice at the Elizabethtown Community Health Center this August.

Dr. Celotti, who originally hails from the Port Henry area, is excited about returning to the place he calls home. "I'm very excited to begin working at ECH," said Celotti. "It's a very nice feeling, as a professional, to return to the area and offer my expertise to the children and families of the region."

Dr. Celotti believes that the very thing that drew him to pediatrics is what brings him back to the region. "It's all about making sure that families are healthy and strong. I have a genuine interest in helping children and genuine compassion for their families," he said. "My extended family lives in the area; I want to be nearby for them, too."

Dr. Celotti is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University, and the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine. He is board certified by the American Board of Pediatrics and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics. He has been working with Community Care Pediatrics of Saratoga since 2004.

Family Practitioner Tracie DiMarco will also establish a practice at the Elizabethtown Community Health Center.

Dr. DiMarco, who hails from the Hudson Valley region, has been working as a solo family practitioner since 2004. "I'm excited about becoming an integral part of the Elizabethtown health center and the hospital, using my training and expertise to assist families in the region."

Dr. DiMarco will be accepting patients of all ages, as she believes that it's important to provide "family" care. "As a family practitioner providing primary care and GYN services, I work with men, women and children," she noted.

She has particular expertise in women's health and nutrition issues. "Women have unique challenges in terms of illness, hormonal issues and weight control," she said. Her training allows her to help women develop a balance of proper medical care, nutrition and health education.

Dr. DiMarco is a graduate of Marist College and the SUNY Buffalo School of Medicine. She is board certified by the American Board of Family Medicine.



*Dr. Celotti and Dr. DiMarco will begin working at the Elizabethtown Community Health Center this summer.*

### Inside this Issue:

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ECH events • 10th annual golf tournament**



## ECH MISSION

TO PROMOTE WELLNESS IN THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE BY PROVIDING QUALITY HEALTH CARE WITH SKILL, COMPASSION AND DIGNITY.

# Meet and Greet

An ability to remain calm and thoughtful under pressure, combined with medical education, skill and a sense of compassion makes Physician Assistant Nicole Conger a key part of the hospital's busy emergency department.

Physician assistants must be able to manage emergencies, determine treatment options and communicate effectively with physicians, nurses, patients and their families.

Nicole's B.A. in medical studies, along with clinical training in emergency medicine, surgery, orthopedics and internal medicine provides a solid foundation of knowledge and skill; training that serves her well at ECH.

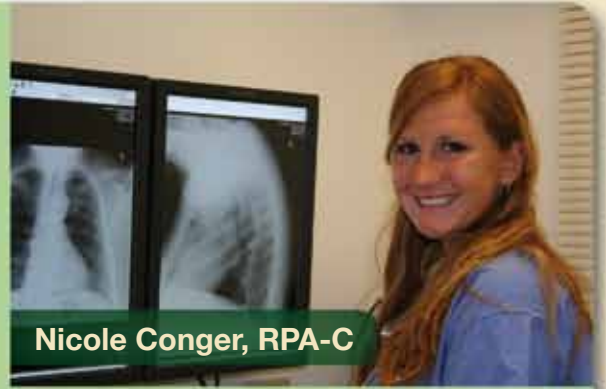
Working at a rural hospital provides unique challenges. ECH is faced with a wide variety of situations – everything from broken bones to trauma situations.

Nicole's ability to remain focused enables her to effectively care for patients. "Since this is a Critical Access Hospital, we see a variety of medical situations," she said. "It's imperative that we act quickly and confidently to ensure the best possible outcome."

Physician assistants attend many of the same classes as medical students. The main difference between P.A. education and physician education is not the core content of the curriculum but the amount of time spent in school. Another difference is that a doctor has complete responsibility for a patient's care; physician assistants share that responsibility with the doctors. Additionally, physician assistants must complete ongoing medical education classes and have their clinical skills tested on a regular basis.

When asked why she loves her job, she responded enthusiastically. "When people need the ED, they're scared, injured, in pain, upset and extremely emotional," she remarked. "I love being able to help them through a scary experience; ensuring that they get medical care as quickly as possible."

**Rurally-located EDs like the one at ECH are faced with a variety of emergency situations. Nicole's training, skill and desire to keep learning ensures that her patients are in good hands.**



**Nicole Conger, RPA-C**

## PICTURE ARCHIVING & COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (PACS) AT ECH

Elizabethtown Community Hospital's picture archiving and communication system is used to manage images from its all-digital radiology department.

Emergency care is improved, since time-sensitive x-ray and CT images can be viewed by the hospital's ED staff quickly; allowing for fast treatment. Physicians can access these images from the radiology department in a split second.

PACS helps to improve non-emergency care as well by significantly decreasing the time it takes for a radiologist to view and interpret images, meaning quicker results. The system allows radiologists to view x-rays, CT scans, mammograms, MRI and ultrasound images over a secure high speed connection from their office or home miles away; so travel is virtually eliminated.

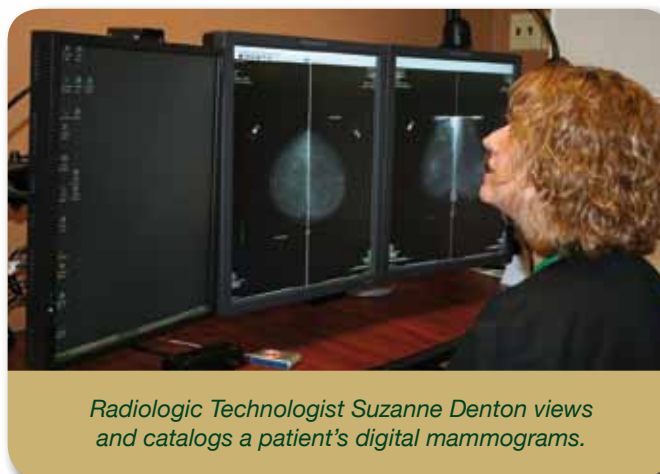
Due to the nature of an all-digital radiology department, the hospital no longer produces images on film – reducing storage requirements and eliminating dangerous chemicals from the hospital environment. Digital mammograms, CT scans, x-rays and MRIs can be transmitted to the patient's physician, no matter where he or she is located.

Images can be transferred to a CD if necessary; and, if required, traditional x-ray, CT and MRI image films can be produced by using the hospital's DRYPIX 700 laser imaging unit.

According to Matt Nolan, director of facilities, an ongoing and significant investment in advanced technology contributes to the hospital's capabilities. "The hospital has made a commitment to be an early adopter of technology to help ensure that people who utilize the hospital's services receive the best possible care," he said. "The equipment is remarkable – it allows the hospital to actively participate in the future of medicine."

ECH has instituted many technological initiatives within and among its departments – from requiring a fingerprint to allow computer system access and computerized medication

dispensing to voice-recognition software and telemedicine capabilities. Each of these technologically-driven initiatives ensures that the hospital can provide patient care, close to home for residents and visitors of Essex County for years to come.



*Radiologic Technologist Suzanne Denton views and catalogs a patient's digital mammograms.*

## SERVICE LINE SPOTLIGHT

### Emergency Department at ECH

Most area residents are familiar with the Elizabethtown Community Hospital's emergency department but may be unaware of the scope of services; or with the coordination required to provide those services.

The ECH emergency department offers state-of-the-art equipment, along with a highly skilled staff, poised to handle any situation at any moment, 24 hours a day, treating over 5,000 patients each year.

The hospital's emergency department cares for trauma patients, critical care patients, individuals involved in accidents, stroke victims, heart attack victims, those with broken bones and sick children in the middle of the night. Staff is well-trained and prepared to handle it all – and sometimes, simultaneously.

Many patients can be treated and then released; but some require additional, specialized and immediate medical care. For those patients, ECH is in a unique position with a very unique and critical role: to assess and stabilize the patients so that they can survive transport to a trauma center or other facility that can provide the specific type of care required.

#### Critical Access Hospital

ECH is designated as a Critical Access Hospital (CAH) by the federal government. This designation is given to small hospitals located over 35 miles from another hospital. The CAH must also have agreements in place with other hospitals that are willing to accept patients requiring additional and immediate care. Those hospitals must trust the abilities and capabilities of the CAH to effectively manage initial patient care. There are 1,300 CAHs across the United States; 13 of those are in New York state.

Patients frequently arrive in unstable condition; they may be unconscious and key information such as medical history, underlying conditions and allergies is unavailable. Regardless, the patient's situation must be assessed and stabilizing treatment initiated quickly.

The staff is accustomed to dealing with a variety of serious situations. In fact, the ED handles life-threatening, critical care and trauma on a regular basis (roughly 900 per year; 1/3 of which are trauma cases). ED staff assesses and manages patient care when there is limited time to treat.

ECH is linked to Fletcher Allen in Burlington via its high-tech telemedicine capabilities. During a trauma, pediatric emergency, stroke or other critical care case, the physicians at ECH confer with trauma teams at Fletcher Allen (a level I trauma center). When the patient is ultimately transported, the waiting trauma team is prepared, with all background information needed.

#### Why does ECH transport?

ECH's role is to provide initial, life-saving care that offers patients time to get to a trauma, heart, burn or stroke center. Patients with significant illness or injury have limited time to receive treatment – it's an amount of time known as the "golden hour."

Critical access hospitals serve to extend that hour by treating and stabilizing the patient, so that there is more time to get to a larger facility. ECH's role is to provide initial life-saving care, stabilize for transport, and arrange the most appropriate transport method.

According to Bonnie Rata, chief nursing officer, ECH transports via ambulance and helicopter; and the method chosen depends on patient condition. "In critical situations, medical staff prefers that the patient be out of a hospital environment for the shortest



*Meredith King, RN, during a recent training exercise in the hospital's emergency department.*



### DID YOU KNOW?

*That the ED staff is able to manage a variety of traumatic and critical care situations? In addition to a secure video connection with one of the region's level 1 trauma centers, the staff has specialized training that includes:*

- ACLS** - advanced cardiac life support
- PALS** - pediatric advanced life support
- ATLS** - advanced trauma life support
- TNCC** - trauma nurse core course
- ENPC** - emergency nurse pediatric course
- ABLS** - advanced burn life support

time possible,” she said. “While in the hospital, the patient can be managed and stabilized – during transport, resources are much more limited.”

Trauma and critical care patients are usually transported via helicopter to Fletcher Allen or Albany Medical Center – both level I trauma centers; Fletcher Allen is 16 minutes away via helicopter. Less severe trauma or critical care patients are transferred to CVPH (a level II trauma center) via ambulance.

### Support

The emergency department is one of the hospital’s busiest areas, utilizing the resources of the entire hospital. Staffed with doctors, nurses, physician assistants, ER technicians and registration personnel it also receives an incredible amount of support from radiology, laboratory, phlebotomy, nursing, maintenance and information technology staff.

Because time is such an essential factor in emergency medicine, the hospital has specialized equipment, built on its advanced technology, to provide rapid results:

- Portable x-ray unit
- Screens in ED for viewing digital CT scans, x-rays, ultrasound images, etc. within minutes
- Pyxis (medication dispensing) unit in the ED, for quick access to life-saving medications
- CT scan – radiologic technologist on-site or on-call (must arrive within 15 minutes)
- Essential lab results quickly – laboratory technician on-site, 24 hours/day
- Telemedicine capabilities – linked with Fletcher Allen

The ED constantly communicates with local EMS – it’s how the department knows that there are ambulances on the way. While EMS is providing care at the scene, they communicate patient information to the hospital’s ED. As hospital staff members receive information from EMS, they prepare by



*North Country Life Flight provides rapid air transport from Elizabethtown Community Hospital to the region’s level I trauma centers.*

informing the hospital’s various departments: lab, radiology, nursing, maintenance, etc. and by bringing in additional staff, if necessary.

The emergency department at Elizabethtown Community Hospital may be familiar to people but it’s hardly routine. The staff’s ability, the coordination of facility resources, ongoing training and outstanding technology combine to ensure that residents of the area, along with visitors through the region have access to a facility ready to help them through any emergency situation, 24 hours a day.



*ECH is in a unique position with a very unique and critical role: to assess and stabilize the patient so that he or she can survive transport to a trauma center.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS


**New physicians begin  
August 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**ECH auxiliary meeting  
August 5<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm**

**10th Annual ECH Golf Tournament  
August 10**  
Westport Country Club

**Healthcare Environmental  
Services Week  
September 5-11**

**Blood drive  
September 21<sup>st</sup> 4-6 pm**

 **October**  
Schedule your digital mammogram at ECH: 873-3036