Grateful to be alive
Butler Memorial Hospital and Clarion Hospital worked together to save Rick Staley’s life
BHS is focused on your care

2020. What a year it’s been. I was speaking to a physician the other day, and she described the overall environment as “unsettled.” That’s a pretty good description of life as we know it these days.

Throughout the pandemic, Butler Health System has been in very close contact with national, state and regional medical leadership. We pay very close attention to best practices, with an ever-vigilant eye on staff and patient safety. Our local physician experts in infectious disease and many other specialties are as good as any you will find, anywhere. We are fortunate to have them at BHS.

Standing strong
Our hospitals, outpatient services and doctors’ offices are 100% open and available to care for you. Talk to your doctor, and do not delay necessary health care. Life goes on, and we are continually focused on your safety and taking good care of you. Out of an abundance of caution, we have certain visitor restrictions in place. Most people understand that we are protecting everybody, and they are willing to accept change and minor inconvenience. When face-to-face meetings aren’t as possible, we challenge ourselves to be sure that we are in communication with patients and loved ones through other means. Phones, tablets, and other web-based devices have proven to be extremely helpful in this “new normal” in which we find ourselves.

Butler Health System continues to stand strong. As we look toward the future, we are focused on excellent acute-care hospitals and a robust ambulatory platform that is high-quality, less expensive and the future of how care will be delivered in the 21st century. I see a future for BHS with a deeper focus on community health, healthy lifestyles, and medical education—that is, the training of future generations of doctors. It will be exciting as all of this develops for Butler Health System, for our community and for you.

We continue to be independent, locally controlled and here for our community. You support us, and we take care of you. That’s a good relationship. As always, thank you for choosing Butler Health System.

Rising to the challenge
In line with the adage “Never let a good crisis go to waste,” the pandemic brought leaders across the system together to plan a comprehensive response (including surge capacity and new guidelines) to protect staff, patients and the community—leading the way in our respective markets. It accelerated assimilation and affirmed our cultural alignment.

To date, integration efforts have included joint physician recruitment, Clarion providers joining The Bridges ACO, PHSO (an accountable care organization focused on population health), consolidation of contracts, materials management, telehealth and progress on a new electronic medical record system that will transform patient care across our expanded network of providers.

In the coming months, as we emerge from the immediate pandemic crisis, you will see more evidence of integration as BHS solidifies its strategy and positions the organization for long-term success by bringing strengths and services together to improve access, convenience and patient experience in the many markets we are privileged to serve.
What we’ve learned from COVID-19

It’s been quite a few months since recommendations to wear masks and make other changes to our lives have been issued because of COVID-19.

While many of us have experienced significant disruptions, there may also be some good things you’ve gained during this time. What new habits or insights can you take with you as you move forward?

Here are a few things you might want to keep in or out of your life now.

OUT: Handshakes. They turned out to be a great way to say “hello” to germs. If you got used to the wave, bow or virtual high five during the pandemic, keep that new greeting going.

IN: Handwashing. Washing your hands well and often is one of the best ways to avoid spreading the coronavirus—and other germs. Make those 20-second scrubs with soap and water a permanent part of your life.

OUT: Going to work or school sick. Many of us—kids included—did our part to slow the spread of the coronavirus by staying home. That’s a good lesson to take back with us into the world. Whenever there’s a chance you’re sick, you can help everyone by keeping your germs at home.

IN: Cooking from scratch. Did you dust off some healthy cooking skills while you were home? When you prepare your own food, you can make your meals as nutritious, fresh and flavorful as you want. That’s definitely worth hanging on to.

OUT: Information overload. There is no shortage of news to consume right now. And sometimes it seems misinformation is spreading as fast as the virus. That might feed into your anxiety about the situation. If you’ve learned how to find trustworthy news sources and set some healthy media limits for yourself, those are skills that can serve you well going forward.

IN: Face masks. Chances are you now have a cloth face mask on hand—or the know-how to quickly make one. Hang on to that. Anytime you’re sick, you can use your face mask to help cover your coughs and protect the people around you.

OUT: Last-minute grocery runs. Wasn’t it nice not visiting the grocery store quite so often? Even if you don’t plan meals in advance, keeping a well-stocked pantry can make it easier to whip up dinner without an extra trip to the store.

IN: Telehealth. Virtual visits with a doctor turned out to be a great way to bypass a waiting room full of contagious people. They can also be a convenient option when you need after-hours care, counseling or help for minor illnesses.

OUT: Smoking. If this pandemic inspired you to quit smoking to protect your lungs, that’s a huge win that can serve up lifelong benefits for your health. Keep tobacco out of your life for good!

IN: Planning ahead for emergencies. It pays to be prepared to shelter in place during situations like pandemics, natural disasters or power outages. If possible, choose a room in your home that can be used to separate sick household members from those who are healthy. Create an emergency contact list. And gather long-lasting supplies you’ll need in case of an emergency.

Sources: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; American Academy of Family Physicians; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; HelpGuide

We offer virtual care so you can stay home

Don’t delay your medical care. We are open and ready to help you to determine if an in-office or virtual visit is right for you. Find the care and provider you need.

Call the BHS Care Center at 833-602-CARE (833-602-2273) today!
One gray August morning in 2019, Rick Staley and his stepson were returning from a rained-out job site near Warren when Rick began to have what he thought was bad indigestion. “I felt it in my sternum,” recalls Rick, who owns a heavy-construction company and lives in Clarion. “Pressure, like I wished I could burp.” But when his jaw started hurting, Rick began to suspect he was having a heart attack. (Luckily, his wife, Cindy, had taught him the signs.) In fact, Rick was having a severe type of heart attack nicknamed the “widow-maker.”

Rick had his stepson drive him to Clarion Hospital, where Rick went into cardiac arrest shortly after arrival. The emergency department team, led by Michael Hoh, DO, worked quickly. They used a defibrillator to restart Rick’s heart. “We had to shock him numerous times,” Dr. Hoh says.

Rapid care and a tiny heart pump

After Dr. Hoh’s emergency team stabilized Rick’s condition, a helicopter rushed Rick to Butler Health System (BHS). BHS is capable of performing emergency cardiac catheterization to treat heart attacks.

Interventional cardiologist Sunder Rao, MD, determined that Rick’s left anterior descending coronary artery was 100% blocked. That type of blockage can cause the heart to stop very quickly, which is why it is called the widow-maker.

Dr. Rao used a catheter to open the artery so that blood could flow freely. Then he placed a stent in the artery to help keep it open.

But now Rick faced another life-threatening problem. His massive heart attack had led to cardiogenic shock—his heart couldn’t pump enough blood to his critical organs. So Dr. Rao temporarily placed a tiny pump, the Impella, in Rick’s heart. The device helped Rick’s heart pump efficiently while his heart recovered. “It’s an amazing device—it’s lifesaving,” Dr. Rao says. “My impression was that he would do well with it. And he did.”

In fact, Rick went back to work a month after his heart attack “and had absolutely no trouble,” he says. It helped that he received rapid treatment and access to the best heart technology. “It was a good team effort,” Dr. Rao says.

Heartfelt thanks

Rick and Cindy are grateful to the medical teams at both hospitals. “They saved my life—no doubt,” Rick says, without hesitation.

A safer way to prevent strokes

The Watchman procedure allowed Jim Chiprean to avoid a serious side effect of his medicine

Jim Chiprean went on blood thinners in 2019 after he was diagnosed with an irregular heartbeat called atrial fibrillation, or AFib. As a result, he needed to be placed on blood thinners to prevent blood clots and strokes, which occur more frequently among people with AFib. But Jim started having severe nose bleeds, even once in the middle of the night. “He couldn’t take the blood thinners,” says Madelyn, Jim’s wife.

Jim’s doctors at Butler Health System (BHS) recommended the Watchman procedure, which helps prevent strokes without the need for blood thinners.

A safer alternative treatment

AFib makes it more likely for blood clots to form in the heart. If a clot travels to the brain, it can cause a stroke. Blood thinners are very effective at preventing these clots and strokes, says Brian Carey, MD, an interventional cardiologist at BHS. Most people take the medicines without any problems. “But a significant percentage of patients have tried them and have had trouble with them, which was the case with Mr. Chiprean,” Dr. Carey says.

The most common side effect is bleeding, which can also occur in the GI tract. Stopping the blood thinners
Telehealth is here to stay

Richard J. Begg, MD, FACC, FSCAI, Interventional Cardiology Medical Director, BHS Cardiovascular Service Line

The concept of telehealth, or virtual visits, is not new. In 2020 so much of our daily lives is affected by the use of cyber communications that there is little reason to suspect that this would not extend into health care. Changes here are generally slow. However, the COVID-19 crisis has launched us headlong into the development and improvement of these virtual services.

Virtual visits offer easier access

Cardiovascular disease remains one of the most prevalent conditions afflicting our country. Patients often require intensive and frequent care. Access remains an issue. Butler Health System covers a large geographic area, much of which is rural. Access to cardiologists remains problematic. Telehealth is just another tool that helps us to provide improved access to all of our patients. To date, we as health care providers have learned that given the right set of circumstances, virtual visits work.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, our cardiology office performed only infrequent and isolated electronic visits. Within two weeks, however, we were able to establish a telehealth service that was able to offer 70% of the normal number of office appointments. Our satisfaction survey suggests that, for the majority of patients, this was technically possible and represented an acceptable alternative to face-to-face visits.

‘Here to stay’

Telehealth does not replace the traditional approach to seeing patients in an office setting. It merely supplements it. Not all patients are candidates to be seen remotely—some need hands-on evaluation. Early experiences suggest that virtual visits can be as effective as those performed in person. This is obviously most important for patients for whom the alternative would be no care at all. The remainder of the story, clearly, has yet to be written. But I suspect that here at the Butler Heart Team, telehealth is here to stay.

A quick return to the life he loves

Jim went home the day after his Watchman procedure and was able to stop taking his blood thinners after about 45 days.

The retired business owner of Miller Shoes is 87 years old and looking forward to spending more time with Madelyn, playing the saxophone, and supporting Jim Jr. to carry on the family legacy at the store on Main Street.

“From start to finish, they took extremely good care of me,” Jim says. “I couldn’t ask for any better care than what I got.”

Keep your heart strong. For an appointment, call BHS Cardiology at 866-620-6761. We accept most insurances, including Highmark and UPMC health plans.
It’s all about family for Chrissy Baumcratz and her husband, Eddie. And that family includes the people of Clarion Hospital, where all three of their children were born: Noah, 12; Sydney, 11; and baby Olivia.

“Every delivery there has been a wonderful experience,” says Chrissy, who is a registered nurse and serves as the clinical coordinator for the hospital’s Med/Surg Unit. “The staff was so attentive to my needs and answered all of my questions. They always went above and beyond the call of duty. That’s the way they treat every expectant mother.”

Chrissy’s care team included two OB-GYNs with Clarion Hospital: Anie Perard, MD, and Bryan Doverspike, DO. Dr. Perard was with Chrissy during all three of her pregnancies, and Dr. Doverspike was with her through her most recent pregnancy and delivered Olivia.

Olivia was born a couple of weeks before her due date via a scheduled C-section. “I remember that day; I worked my shift and went in for my scheduled appointment,” Chrissy says. Dr. Doverspike had noticed that Chrissy’s blood pressure was high and suspected that Chrissy was experiencing preeclampsia, a pregnancy complication that, if left untreated, can be fatal.

The only cure for preeclampsia is to give birth. So, Dr. Doverspike checked Chrissy into the hospital, and Olivia was born that day, April 2, a healthy six pounds, three ounces. “Dr. Doverspike was very reassuring,” says Chrissy. “He gave me the confidence that everything would go well. I feel like everyone at Clarion Hospital is family.”
The BHS Foundation’s 19th annual Crystal Ball event was held on Saturday, March 7, at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel in Cranberry Township. The event theme was “Rustic Elegance.” Over 400 guests enjoyed all of the themed activities, fundraisers, dinner stations and dancing to the sound of Tuesday Night Big Band.

More than $150,000 was raised to support the purchase of an automated breast ultrasound unit for the BHS Women’s Imaging Center, located at the Crossroads Campus. This latest state-of-the-art automated ultrasound technology is a supplemental screening tool used in the detection of cancer in dense breasts, and it has demonstrated a significant increase in cancer detection over mammography alone. It is a safe, painless, radiation-free and noninvasive 3-D ultrasound.

Also featured at the event was the presentation of the Women of Legacy award to Amy Hammonds and Sharon Schneider. Both women were recognized for their efforts in making a difference in their community.

Amy was honored for spearheading the effort to keep the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team in Butler after the program was being discontinued. The ACT Team assists behavioral health patients with various activities as they live their daily lives. Sharon was honored for implementing and leading the Hang Tough: Stockings Stuffed With Love and Care Program. The program coordinates volunteers to fill and deliver more than 2,300 Christmas stockings with items for patients undergoing cancer treatments throughout Butler County and beyond. Sharon is known as “Mrs. Claus” because she dresses in a red cape to deliver the stockings and listen to patients’ personal stories. The BHS Foundation was honored to offer the award to both of these amazing women.

COVID-19 Heroes campaign update

The BHS Foundation would like to extend a warm thank-you to everyone who has contributed to the Coronavirus Response Fund and the Support Our Heroes Campaign. Our generous donors have contributed over $280,000! These donations helped to provide much-needed personal protective equipment, such as masks, gowns, face shields and gloves, to help keep our staff and patients safe at both Butler Memorial and Clarion hospitals. In addition, funds were used to support the purchase of laboratory instruments, COVID-19 and infectious virus tests, and serum antibody tests.

For information on BHS Foundation’s upcoming events and activities, please visit our website at BHS-Foundation.org.
Clarion Hospital, which recently joined Butler Health System (BHS), brings a long and rich tradition of teaching and education. Since 1989, it has had accredited programs in family medicine and transitional year residencies—and has the distinction of being the only family medicine residency in the U.S. with a 100% medical boards pass rate on the first attempt. Clarion Hospital serves as a training ground for third- and fourth-year medical students, offering multiple rotations from all major medical schools and serving as a core site for Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Recruiting and retaining first-class physicians
This history of educating physicians was a key attraction for Butler Health System in pursuing the partnership. “We believe that graduate medical education is one component missing from our organization which will better position BHS for the future,” says Ken DeFurio, BHS President and CEO. “We anticipate providing enhanced access to specialty rotations while training our next generation of providers.”

A selective program
Rural hospitals are often attractive to prospective residents because they are not competing with residents of other programs for hands-on experience in specialty services. This is sometimes referred to as an unopposed program, and it can lead to a more well-rounded clinician in caring for patients post-graduation. “We never have a problem filling our slots (16 in total) and have been able to select from among thousands of applicants each year,” says Dr. Hoh.

Throughout our history, “we have trained over 68 family medicine residents, many of whom have stayed to provide care to our local communities, with nearly 30% joining the hospital’s medical staff for some period of time post-graduation” says Michael Hoh, DO, the current designated institutional officer and program director.

Currently, there are 12 program graduates within BHS alone. “It has effectively served as a ‘pipeline’ for recruitment of talented physician providers dedicated to the local community, which are often difficult to recruit in more rural settings” says Steven Davis, Clarion Hospital President.

Clarion Hospital shapes the future of care

100%
Clarion Hospital has the distinction of being the only family medicine residency in the U.S. with a 100% medical boards pass rate on the first attempt.