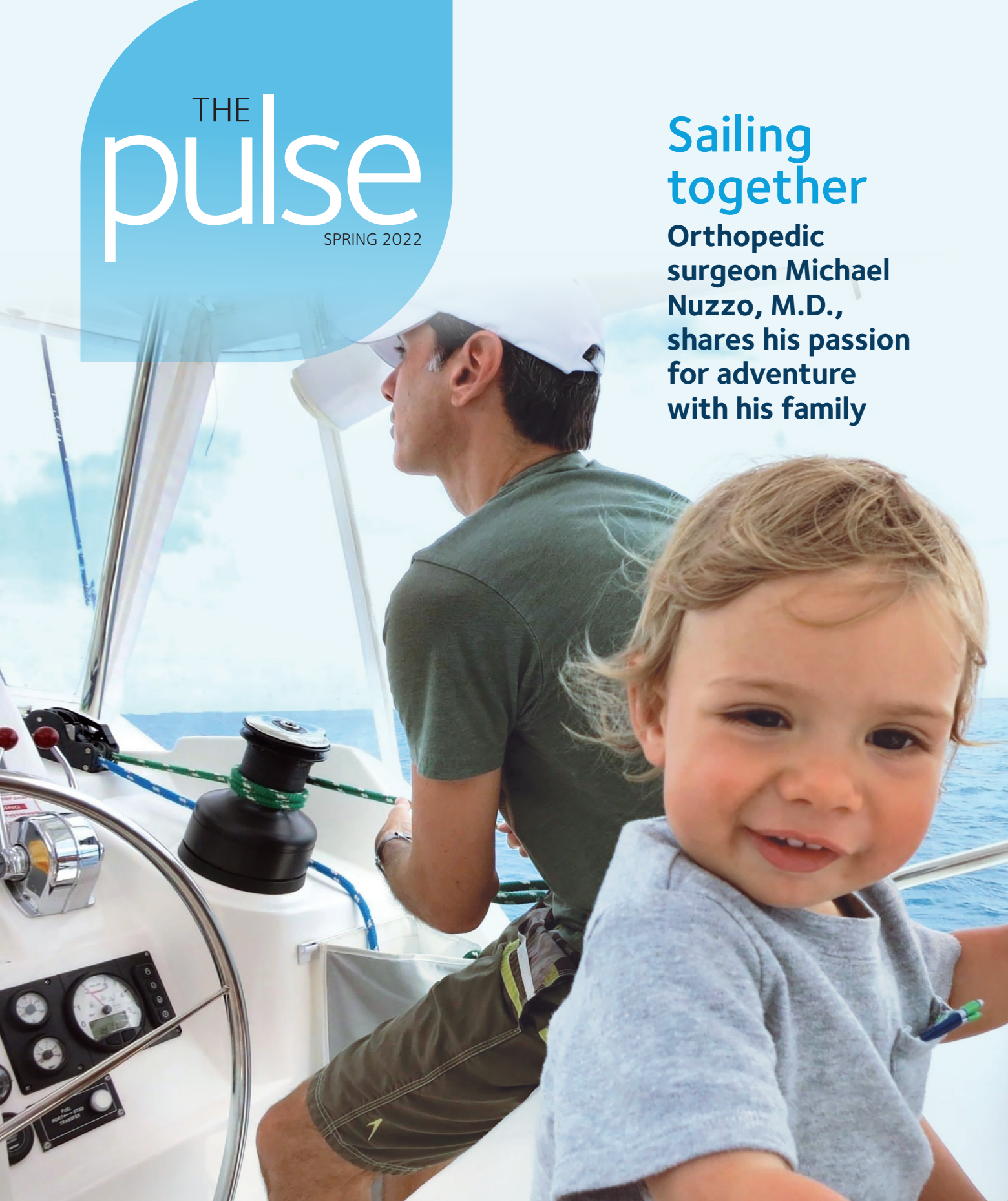


THE pulse

SPRING 2022

Sailing together

**Orthopedic
surgeon Michael
Nuzzo, M.D.,
shares his passion
for adventure
with his family**



A WARM WELCOME to our new providers



Blair Feldhaus, P.A.,
Urology



Jennifer Hamblin, P.A.,
Orthopedics



Michael Nuzzo, M.D.,
Orthopedic surgery



David Row, M.D.,
General and colorectal surgery

WE'RE HIRING!

If you have someone you'd like to recommend for any of the positions below, please contact our senior physician recruiter, Tyler Brewer, at **509-301-0800** or **BrewerTS@ah.org**.

Physicians

- ✓ Addiction medicine specialist for medication-assisted treatment program
- ✓ Endocrinology
- ✓ Family medicine
- ✓ Internal medicine
- ✓ Interventional cardiology
- ✓ Medical director for rural health clinics
- ✓ Neurology
- ✓ Pediatrics
- ✓ Psychiatry
- ✓ Pulmonology/critical care
- ✓ Rheumatology
- ✓ Urology

Advanced practice providers

- ✓ Occupational medicine
- ✓ Urology



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Michelle Fuentes
President

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Director of RHC Operations

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What's a Blue Zone?

Blue Zones are communities around the world where people commonly live to be centenarians. Blue Zones communities share several similarities, including:

- Daily exercise.
- Plant-slant diets.
- Social connections and friendships.
- Purposeful living.

Blue Zones Project poised to engage the public

It's still early days for the Blue Zones Project, which seeks to help Tuolumne County become a place where folks can live longer, healthier and happier lives. And that means it's not too late to get interested or even involved.

"We are crouched and ready to spring out of the starting gate," says Tyler Summersett, Director of the local Blue Zones Project. "It's a perfect time to become aware of the project."

In 2020, Adventist Health purchased the Blue Zones Project, a community health and well-being initiative based on research done by longevity researcher and author Dan Buettner. Sonora is one of several Adventist Health sites poised to become a Blue Zones pioneer site.

In Blue Zones areas, communities work together to support changes that make it easier for people to make healthy choices in their everyday lives. The efforts focus on places where we spend most of our time—such as workplaces and neighborhoods.

For example, a Blue Zones change could be anything from increasing safe access to places where people can be active (like walking routes, bike lanes and "pocket parks") to providing easier access to healthy food options.

The hope is to improve health and well-being—for instance, by lowering rates of obesity, smoking and chronic disease.

From walking groups to workshops

Efforts began last fall to draft a master plan and project targets, with input by a local steering committee. Blue Zones leaders in April held a public meeting that signified a switch from planning and setting targets to actively engaging the community.

The Blue Zones Project team is looking to connect with community members through small-group

activities such as moais. *Moai* is a Japanese term that refers to a kind of social support group. For instance, people can form walking moai groups. Other events might include potlucks, cooking demonstrations and purpose workshops.

At the same time, Blue Zones team members will continue to work with local governments, schools, parks, businesses and others to develop small but meaningful changes through the three key pillars of people, policy and places. But it starts with community partners.

"We are working with a lot of stakeholder teams to identify those opportunities," Summersett says. "Blue Zones is a whole-health initiative. My hope is that providers will see us as helping them to achieve a whole-health message for folks in Tuolumne County."



Learn more about the Blue Zones Project

- On the web: tuo.bluezonesproject.com.
- Via email: BZPTuolumneCounty@sharecare.com.
- By phone: 209-694-3217.



Captain of the CATAMARAN

This orthopedic surgeon enjoys island hopping with his family



Imagine: With a Caribbean wind at your back, you sail through turquoise waters. You're headed for white-sand beaches and palm trees under the bluest skies. A 50-foot sailing vessel will be your home for the night.

Does that sound to you like a pretty awesome vacation? It does to orthopedic surgeon Michael Nuzzo, M.D., who is an avid catamaran sailor.

A voyage began down the shore

As a boy growing up in New Jersey, Dr. Nuzzo would go on family trips to the shore. That's where he learned to use a small Sunfish sailboat, which sparked his interest in his current hobby.

In 2010, Dr. Nuzzo spent a week in the British Virgin Islands learning from a charter boat company the necessary skills to sail and navigate catamarans. (Such companies exist all over the world.) He then passed a test and became certified through the American Sailing Association, which allows him to charter his own catamarans.

Dr. Nuzzo and his family have chartered catamarans in places like the Exuma Island chain in the Bahamas; the remote Southern Caribbean; and Bora Bora, an island northwest of Tahiti in French Polynesia.

High-tech sailing and family fun

Captaining a catamaran isn't as intimidating as you might think, thanks to GPS navigation and autopilot, Dr. Nuzzo says.

"The boat will adjust for wind and tides and sail you to that spot," he says. "And if there's no wind, you have backup diesel engines."

Dr. Nuzzo's excursions are safe and family-friendly, since they never stray far from the coast.

"I can see land when I'm navigating," he says. "Occasionally, we'll get away from land for no more than a couple hours before we see the next island on the horizon."

The catamarans Dr. Nuzzo pilots are more like floating RVs, each with four cabins, cooking amenities, TVs and other creature comforts.

Many of the islands the Nuzzos visit have wind-sheltered coves where they can tie off their boat and spend the night. Some of the developed islands have nightly entertainment—cue the Jimmy Buffett tunes. Other islands feature luxurious villas—the private getaways of rock stars and royals. Still other islands Dr. Nuzzo has visited remain pristine and accessible only by boat.

"It's just such a great adventure, and you're in control of it yourself," Dr. Nuzzo says. "Unlike being on a cruise ship, you can decide if you want to change your itinerary."

What started out as a solo adventure has become a family journey.

"That's what it's about," Dr. Nuzzo says. "It's about showing my son and my wife these different places."



Dr. Nuzzo's wife and son love sailing and exploring with him.



Fast fact: He's a retired U.S. Army major

Dr. Nuzzo practiced in Fresno before joining Adventist Health Sonora. He earned his medical degree from Rutgers New Jersey Medical School on an Army scholarship. Dr. Nuzzo then completed orthopedic residency training at William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso, Texas, before serving at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and in Iraq as a combat orthopedic surgeon.

BETTER TOGETHER

A recap of 2021 accomplishments

Each of us at Adventist Health Sonora plays an important part in the transformative healthcare experience we provide to our communities each day. We can all be proud of the exceptional care we continued to provide in 2021, even as the COVID-19 pandemic entered its second year, bringing with it new hopes and challenges.

“I am extremely proud of all the tireless teamwork and constant attention by our medical team,” says Alex Heard, M.D., C.P.E., F.A.A.P., chief medical officer. “Despite the many obstacles COVID-19 threw our way, we were able to provide excellent patient care.”

As we inspired health, wholeness and hope together, we also accomplished a lot in 2021, as evidenced by the implementation of many important projects as well as by our quality indicators.

Take our care transformation projects. In the span of 10 months, we implemented 10 projects—all while juggling the personal and professional effects of COVID-19, Dr. Heard notes. And quality performance measures and ambulatory quality scores also were very impressive, especially given reduced staffing levels.

Those efforts are just a small part of all that we’ve done and will continue to do together.

Here is a quick look at some of our 2021 achievements.

2021 organization volumes

Clinic encounters	205,925*
Acute admissions	4,175
Nursery admissions	507
Skilled nursing or long-term care admissions	56
Emergency visits	32,883
Surgeries	4,056

(*99% of clinics’ budgeted volume for 2021)



“Despite the many obstacles COVID-19 threw our way, we were able to provide excellent patient care.”

—Alex Heard, M.D., C.P.E., F.A.A.P.,
Chief Medical Officer

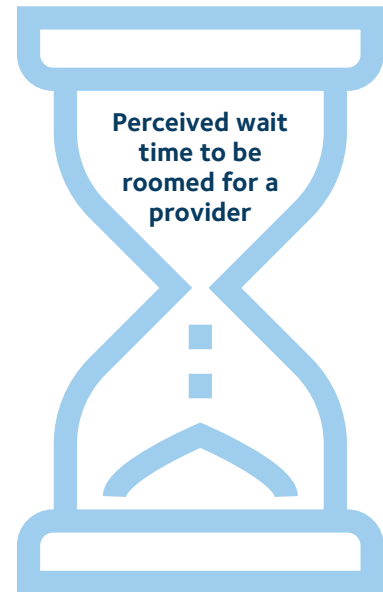
Patient experience scores

System goals for 2021 were set at the 75th percentile of all Press Ganey medical practice clients in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada and Hawaii. Here is how Adventist Health Sonora ranked.

Category	Score (percentile)	Goal
Recommend practice	75th	Goal reached; top box score: 85.2%.
Staff worked together	71st	Less than 1% to goal; top box score: 82.9%.
Nurse/assistant	85th	Goal reached; top box score: 81.7%.
Access	87th	Goal reached; top box score: 77.2%.
Care provider	74th	Less than 1% to goal; top box score: 85.4%.

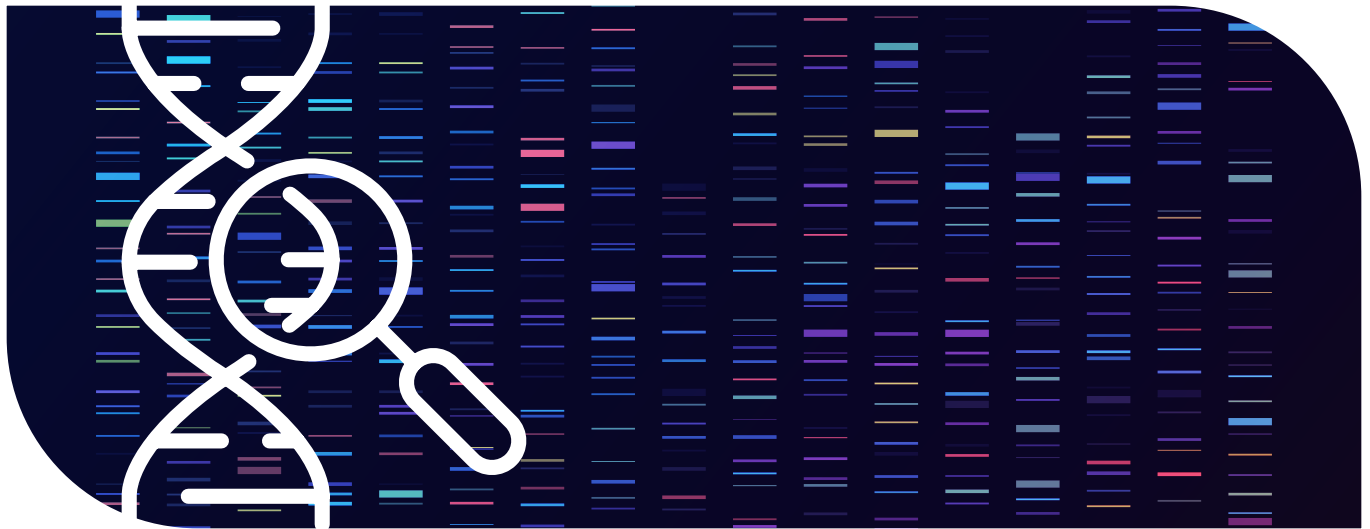
Category	Score (percentile)	Goal
Hypertension—blood pressure less than 140/90 mmHg	50th	75th
Diabetes—poor control/ greater than 9% of Hb A1C	86th	75th
Influenza vaccination—current season	85th	75th
Breast cancer screening	79th	75th
Cervical cancer screening	82nd	75th
Colorectal cancer screening	93rd	75th
Pneumococcal vaccination—older adults	74th	75th
Overall ambulatory quality	78th	75th

5 minutes



Care transformation projects (hardwired or implemented) include:

- Diabetes mellitus (ambulatory).
- Opioid reduction (ambulatory).
- Mental health with PriCARE.
- CBV/LDL (ambulatory).
- Hypertension (ambulatory).
- Hip and knee, phase 2.
- Outpatient POLST form/ advance directive.
- Acute sinusitis, ambulatory.
- Stroke.



AHEAD PROGRAM

Helping patients **STAY AHEAD** of genetic cancer risk

Up to 10% of cancers may be due to inherited changes in genes. Genetic testing can help identify these inherited variants. But the question for many providers is: Which patients might be candidates for genetic testing?

An Adventist Health campaign called AHEAD (Adventist Health Early All-around Detection), has launched at Sonora and can help answer that question.

The test screens for variants in genes (such as BRCA) that are associated with cancer syndromes, such as HBOC, Lynch and Cowden syndromes.

“The AHEAD program can help us more effectively screen patients for their risk of inherited cancers,” says Alexa L. Calfee, M.D., an obstetrician/gynecologist at Sonora.

Patients who then choose to have genetic testing can be managed appropriately with additional screening or potentially with prophylactic surgery.

Putting the program into practice

Sierra OB/GYN is the first clinic at Sonora to roll out AHEAD. All patients receive a survey that asks about their family health history and other risk factors for cancer. A risk-assessment software program checks this data against a wide set of medical guidelines.

“That’s kind of the beauty of this screening program,” Dr. Calfee says. “It catches people that you may miss if you are not up-to-date on ever-changing guidelines and syndromes.”

The program may then prompt the provider to discuss with the patient the option of having a genetic test. For instance, testing may be done for inherited BRCA gene mutations or for one of the genes linked to Lynch syndrome.

Resources are available to help providers with those discussions.

“Patients can sometimes be referred to additional genetic counseling through the AHEAD program,” Dr. Calfee says.

The software also includes prompts and patient handouts providers can use to counsel high-risk patients on next steps, even if they do not qualify for a genetic test. Those steps might include earlier or more frequent cancer screenings or screening with tools such as breast MRI.

Expanding to other providers

The hope is to expand the AHEAD program to primary care offices at Sonora.

Most insurances cover genetic testing through AHEAD, says Jessica Singer, practice manager at Sierra OB/GYN.

“Any time we can provide a service to help save lives, it’s a great addition to have for our patients,” she says.

A new voice for the clinics

Ambulatory medical director is a longtime physician

You may know Donald Westbie, M.D., already. He's a longtime Sonora endocrinologist, having practiced here since 2001. But he now also serves as the ambulatory medical director for Adventist Health Sonora, effective January 2.

Recently, *The Pulse* caught up with Dr. Westbie to learn more about his new administrative role overseeing ambulatory clinics. (He also continues to see endocrinology patients.)

Q Why were you looking to take on this role?

A I've been working half-time at my practice for a couple of years now. And I decided this role would be a good way to get out, meet new people and expand my horizons a little bit.

Q What will you be working on in your first year?

A Communication—mainly making contact with providers in outlying clinics who don't come into the hospital very often. That would include places like Groveland, Arnold and Angels Camp. It's about what can the administration do to help make your life easier? Do you have any problems? What do you need? Those kinds of things.

Q What do you hope to accomplish and be for the providers of Adventist Health Sonora?

A I want to give them an avenue of communication, more than anything. I think the people in some of the outlying areas may tend to feel a little isolated sometimes. I'd



just like to make them feel that there is a voice or an avenue that they can present their challenges to and ask for help.

Q What should providers know about you?

A I want them to know that I've been in the area for a long time, that I've held a variety of positions on the medical staff and that I'm here to help them.



More about Dr. Westbie

Hometown: Danville, California.

Medical training: Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans.

Internship: Naval Hospital Philadelphia.

Residency and fellowship: internal medicine and endocrinology at Naval Hospital Oakland.

Board certifications: endocrinology and metabolism, American Board of Medical Specialties; internal medicine, American Board of Medical Specialties.

Additional experience: Chief of Medicine at the VA Clinic in Livermore; private practice in Pleasanton.



BCMA COMPLIANCE PROJECT

An initiative for safe, quality care

Katie Anderson, R.N., B.S.N., is a quality assurance nurse at Adventist Health Sonora, but lately, some people have been calling her the “cookie lady.” Anderson doesn’t mind the moniker. She earned it for handing out celebratory cookies whenever hospital units meet



compliance goals for Sonora’s Bar Code Management Administration (BCMA) quality-improvement project. In other words, the sweet nickname is a happy sign of success. We caught up with Anderson to ask her some questions for a better understanding of this important initiative.

Q What is the BCMA project, and why did Sonora implement it?

A It’s a quality-improvement project for the hospital that kicked off last fall. This key initiative supports safe and excellent patient care. BCMA has proven to reduce

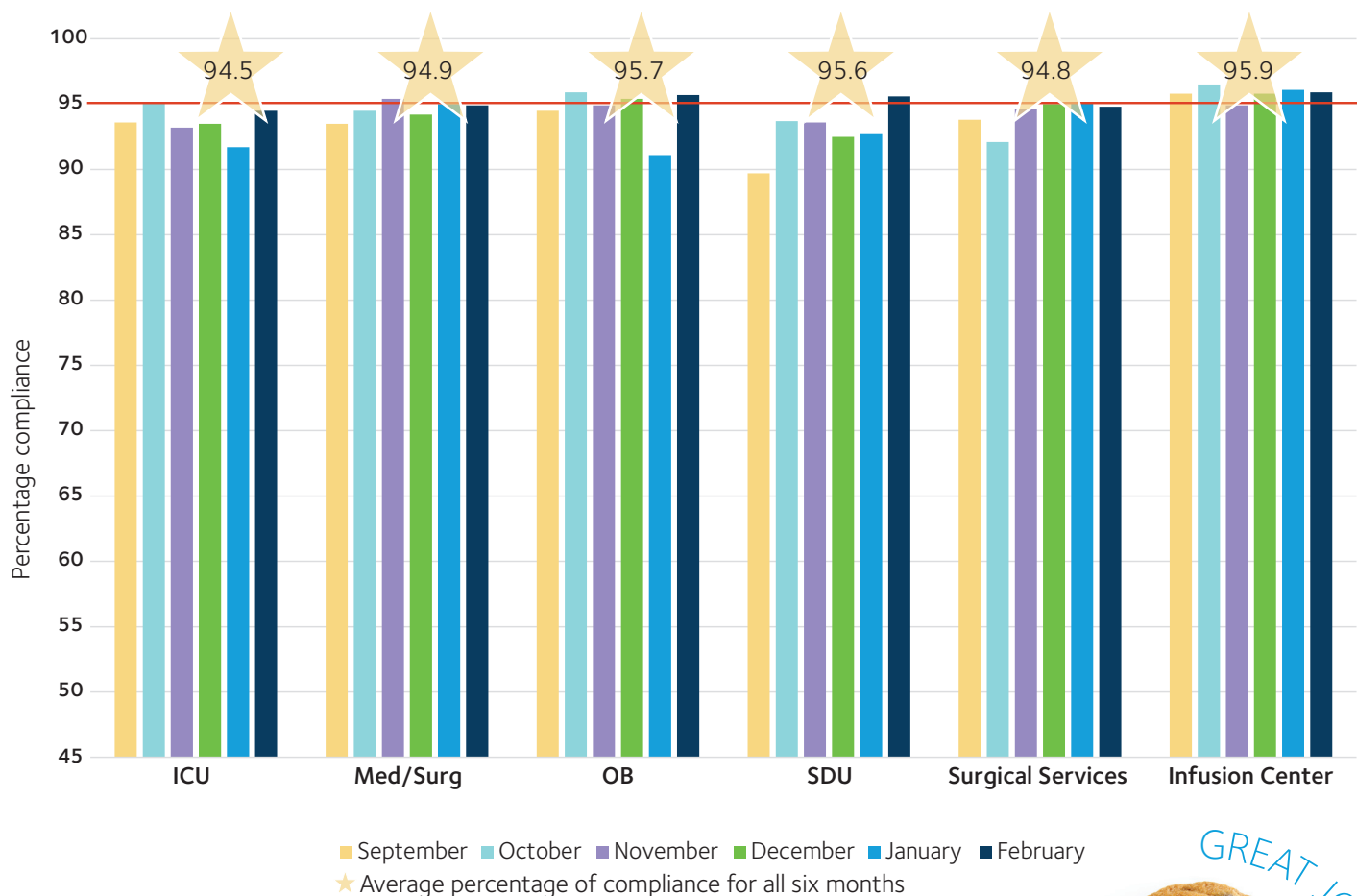
patient medication errors by about 5% and more serious errors by up to 3%.

As a hospital, we very much value excellent and safe care. For every person who works here, the goal is to help people feel better and have a better quality of life and health. This initiative is helping to ensure that our patients are getting the best of care. We’re all working together.

Q Sonora is working with The Leapfrog Group to track BCMA compliance scores. Tell us more about that group.

BCMA percentage compliance: 6 months, ending February 2022

Goal: 95%



A Leapfrog is an independent nonprofit organization. They look at different metrics for patient safety and quality of care and publicly report the information. They give us a score and point out areas we can focus on and improve. Leapfrog has a goal for every unit in the hospital that uses BCMA to be at 95% compliance. So through this quality-improvement initiative, we're tracking where we are and talking about it daily in each unit to emphasize how important it is.

Q How is the staff doing so far?

A They're doing a fantastic job! There have been several

months where every unit has cumulatively been above 95%. That's been great. And one of the things that's been exciting is, even if one month you have a dip, then you see it bounce back up that next month. So everyone is following it and being aware. (See the BCMA compliance chart above.)

Q What kind of response are you getting from everyone?

A Staff are responding positively—they seem very engaged. We've been handing out rewards for doing such a great job. We've been providing pizza, cookies and celebratory banners. I'm getting

known as the cookie lady around here. I walk up on the floor and they say, "Did you bring us more cookies?"



Q What is one thing staff who administer medicines should know when they use the BMCA scanners?

A If anything pops up from the computer system that prevents you from scanning the patient and the meds, please contact the pharmacy first so they can review the medication with you prior to administering.

Staying AHEAD of cancer

The Adventist Health Early All-around Detection (AHEAD) program is helping physicians identify which patients might be candidates for genetic testing.

See page 8.

Why I became a physician

Back in his hometown of

Sandy, Utah, Levi Ballstaedt, D.O., experienced his share of boyhood bumps and bruises that landed him in his local emergency department. The physician who treated him was Dr. Ballstaedt's neighbor and bishop from church. One thing that stood out was his doctor's calm demeanor.

"He was reassuring and warm, even in a stressful environment," says Dr. Ballstaedt. "I thought, 'I want to be that type of person for other people.'"

After high school graduation in 2003, Dr. Ballstaedt ran a window-blinds company that he'd started when he was just 17. After a year at the University of Utah, he went on a two-year church mission to Brazil before returning to finish his degree. Around this time, Dr. Ballstaedt also sold real estate and thought about getting an architecture degree. But practicing medicine had always been in the back of his mind.

"I thought, 'I'm going to give it a shot,'" Dr. Ballstaedt says.

At the University of Utah, Dr. Ballstaedt earned his undergraduate degree in exercise and sports medicine. He then earned a medical degree from Western

University of Health Sciences, where he solidified his interest in emergency medicine.

"When you're an emergency physician, you see everything from stubbed toes to brain bleeds," he says. "You have this broad range of skills and experiences, and that was a big draw for me."

Dr. Ballstaedt chose Kingman Regional Medical Center in Arizona for his residency in emergency medicine. In 2020, as his time there drew to a close, Dr. Ballstaedt and his wife visited family in Sonora. He ran into fellow emergency physician Cody Anderson, D.O., whom he'd met during medical school.

"He said, 'This place is great. You should come work here,'" recalls Dr. Ballstaedt. "My wife and I were looking all over the place, from the Midwest to Oregon to South Carolina. The opportunity presented itself here, and it's been great."

Our area's abundant skiing opportunities was also a perk for the Utahn. "I had been 10 years away from a ski resort," Dr. Ballstaedt says. "The first thing I did was buy a season pass to the local ski resort."



"My wife and I were looking all over the place, from the Midwest to Oregon to South Carolina. The opportunity presented itself here, and it's been great."

—Levi Ballstaedt, D.O.

