

HEALTH NEWS from

SUMMER 2016

# Northwest

*Passion. Commitment. Experience.*

## TAKING EMERGENCY SERVICES **HIGHER**

Advanced **LIFESTAR** services  
and a new ER facility in Amarillo  
support fast, accessible care



DEDICATED PEDIATRIC CANCER CARE

.....  
HELP FOR BALANCE DISORDERS

Compliments of

 **Northwest**

# Northwest FROM THE CEO

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More than 57,000 patients come to the Emergency Department at Northwest Texas Healthcare System each year. Northwest has the only Advanced Level III Trauma facility in Amarillo, and it is designated by the Texas Department of State Health Services as the Lead Trauma Facility in the top 26 counties within the Texas Panhandle.

The LIFESTAR helicopter program continues to set Northwest's emergency services apart with timely and life-saving medical transports. You can read about the latest developments on pages 4 and 5. You can also learn about our new freestanding ER in Amarillo, which is bringing high-quality emergency care even closer to many residents.

In other news, page 6 features Northwest Texas Physician Group, which is opening two new locations in greater Amarillo. And page 7 includes a story about balance disorders, which are one of the most common reasons older patients seek medical help.

As we continue to expand our services, our mission at Northwest remains focused on providing compassionate care for all our patients, including the young patients in our pediatric oncology program, featured on the next page. We thank all the families and individuals we serve for entrusting us with your care.

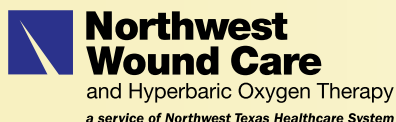
Sincerely,

**Mark W. Crawford**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Northwest earns distinguished honors for WOUND CARE

Northwest Wound Care and Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy was named the 2015 Center of the Year for the southwest zone by Healogics™, the nation's largest provider of advanced wound care services. The award recognized Northwest as the highest-performing center for quality among more than 200 affiliated wound centers across several states. Northwest had a healing rate in 2015 of 94 percent and a patient satisfaction rate of 96 percent.

This high performance also earned the center recognition as a Healogics 2015 Center of Distinction. The Center provides care for diabetic ulcers, pressure ulcers and other chronic wounds, utilizing advanced treatments such as hyperbaric oxygen therapy.




To find a doctor for yourself or your family, please call our FREE Direct Doctors Plus® physician referral service at 800-887-1114.



# Helping young patients and their families

# HEAL

*The team at Northwest Children's Hospital talks about the special ways they are supporting patients and families as they overcome a childhood cancer diagnosis together.*



Getting a pediatric cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming, and providing support to families right away is an important first step in treatment at Northwest Children's Hospital. "Our Pediatric Oncology Navigator, Brooke Rodrigues, RN, immediately helps put families at ease by answering their questions and explaining what treatment will be like," says Lisa Strickland, Director of Northwest Children's Hospital. "Brooke also acts as a liaison between the hospital and the pediatric oncology department of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center."

To give young patients a welcome distraction from their illness after treatment begins, Northwest features two fully equipped playrooms, which were remodeled with help from the

Ryan Palmer Foundation (begun by the Amarillo professional golfer). One room is a "playhouse" for younger children. The other, known as the Palmer Sportzone, includes two flat-screen TVs, game stations and computers.

Occasionally, children's treatment restrictions prevent them from utilizing these play spaces. In these cases, they get to know another prominent Northwest staff member: Child Life Specialist Becky Imel.

Imel's job is to reduce anxiety and stress among pediatric patients. She talks to them, helps provide distractions in the form of toys or games, and makes sure families understand various diagnoses. A program she heads called "Beads of

Courage" gives patients a necklace bead for each milestone they meet. "When patients see her, they know it's always for something good," Strickland says.

Patients at the Children's Hospital also get to know Pediatric Oncologist Smita Bhaskaran, MD. "The kids love her," Strickland says. "Dr. Bhaskaran has a special ability to make children feel comfortable and talk with them in terms they understand."

While helping young patients to get better is the primary focus of treatment, the team at Northwest knows their care does not end there. "We're not just treating the patient," says Dr. Bhaskaran. "We're treating the family." ■

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**Northwest Children's Hospital is the only specialty children's hospital in Amarillo. For more information, visit [nwths.com](http://nwths.com) or contact Lisa Strickland, Director, at 806-351-5616.**





# TAKING EMERGENCY SERVICES **HIGHER**

***LIFESTAR*** leads the way in fast, innovative care

The sight of a dark blue LIFESTAR helicopter flying overhead is familiar to residents across the Texas Panhandle. With more than two decades of providing medical transport, the LIFESTAR program continues to expand its capabilities and provide critical life-saving services to the region.

LIFESTAR operates helicopters from bases in Amarillo and Pampa within a 150-mile radius from each location. "That takes us into part of Kansas, southeast Colorado, eastern New Mexico and Oklahoma," says Stewart Jackson, Director of LIFESTAR Services. That means mothers facing difficult child deliveries, people having a heart attack or stroke, and trauma patients are just a short flight from Northwest's Level III Advanced Trauma facility.

LIFESTAR's medical transport teams include a highly trained pilot, critical care nurse, critical care paramedic and providers specially trained to offer neonatal and high-risk obstetric care when needed.

## **NEW ADVANCES IN LIFE-SAVING CARE**

Recently, LIFESTAR became fully accredited to begin carrying blood and plasma, further enhancing the program's capabilities. Blood loss is a leading cause of death among trauma patients, according to the National Trauma Institute.

Patients needing emergency treatment for a classic STEMI heart attack (ST Segment Elevation Myocardial Infarction, the most serious type of heart attack) are also benefitting from an emergency protocol that can now be deployed onboard LIFESTAR helicopters. The STEMI protocol was developed by cardiologists at Northwest to treat cardiac patients with a clot-buster medication and prepare them to travel to Northwest for emergency care. ►





### FASTER TRANSPORTS

Regional providers contact LIFESTAR through a dedicated emergency transfer center, which is equipped with satellite tracking and a real-time weather system to get crews to an accident or emergency as quickly as possible. "This decreases the amount of time a patient has to be out of a hospital environment," Jackson says.

The transfer center also has streamlined the process of arranging for patient transport from regional and rural hospitals, reducing the time it takes to make these arrangements from several hours to about eight minutes.

### THE AIRMEDCARE NETWORK

Northwest's LIFESTAR medical transport is part of the nationwide AirMedCare Network®, which offers memberships for families and individuals in the Texas Panhandle. Residents are encouraged to visit [www.airmedcarenetwork.com](http://www.airmedcarenetwork.com) and learn about the benefits of membership.

"A LIFESTAR helicopter can land directly at the site of an accident or the doors of the ER. It can meet up with an ambulance and get a patient right to the hospital," says Jackson. "Our number-one goal is to provide the safest, fastest point-to-point care we can." ■

**For more information on LIFESTAR and emergency services at Northwest, visit [nwths.com](http://nwths.com).**



Aircraft Owned and Operated by Med-Trans Corp Certificate M3XA227H



## Northwest Emergency

at Town Square

a service of Northwest Texas Healthcare System

### Now open in Amarillo

Residents in and around Amarillo can now access high-quality emergency care closer to home at the new Northwest Emergency at Town Square.

The new facility is the only hospital-based freestanding emergency room in Amarillo. It is open 24-hours, seven-days-per-week and features adult and pediatric emergency services with a separate entrance and waiting area for children. Services available include laboratory and imaging, as well as assistance with admission to Northwest if more specialized care is needed.

Northwest Emergency at Town Square is located at the intersection of Soncy and Hillside in Amarillo. For more information, visit [nwths.com](http://nwths.com).





# Northwest Texas Physician Group expands care in greater Amarillo

## TWO NEW PRIMARY CARE LOCATIONS OPENING

The Northwest Texas Physician Group announces two new locations offering primary care in the Amarillo area. They are **Northwest Texas Physician Group at The Craig**, located at 5500 S.W. Ninth Avenue, and **Northwest Texas Physician Group at Canyon**, which will open in September at US-87 and Russell Long Boulevard.

"Our goal is to be the provider of choice in the community," says David Bullard, CEO for Northwest Texas Physician Group. "We want to give patients the best experience they can have, when they need it. That means short wait times, easy access and superior customer service."

## SPECIALISTS ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS

*Find care close to home with these physicians, located at 1600 S. Coulter in Amarillo.*



**Craig Sessions, MD**  
Orthopedic Surgeon

Dr. Sessions specializes in joint replacement,

arthroscopic surgery and joint reconstruction, as well as sports medicine, exercise medicine and carpal tunnel release. He also provides trauma and fracture care for adults and children, general hand surgery, rotator cuff repair and non-operative clinical management of joint conditions.



**Shivaram Gowdagere, MD**  
Board-certified Neurologist

Dr. Gowdagere's expertise includes

electroencephalograph tests for epilepsy and the use of electro-diagnostic studies like EMG to evaluate neuromuscular disorders. His areas of specialty include strokes, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, brain tumors, neuropathy, migraines, headaches, tremors, spinal injury, dementia, gait disorder and myopathy.



**Joy Obokhare, MD**  
Board-certified Otolaryngologist

Dr. Obokhare specializes in facial plastic and

reconstructive surgeries, including eyelid surgery, rhinoplasty, face lifts, treatments for facial paralysis, forehead and brow lifts, scar revision and others. She also performs general ear, nose and throat procedures, with specialization in adult and pediatric sleep apnea, tonsillectomy/adenoidectomy and sinus surgery.



 **Northwest**  
Texas Physician Group

**To make an appointment,  
please call 806-398-3627.**

# *Do you have a* balance disorder?



**It is estimated that more than four out of 10 Americans will experience an episode of dizziness that is significant enough to send them to a doctor.\* This can happen at any age, although it's more common in seniors. Balance problems are among the most common reasons that older adults seek help from a doctor.**

Along with dizziness, there can be other symptoms of a balance disorder. You may feel like you're going to tip over while you're walking. Or you may feel a sensation that the room is spinning, which is often referred to as vertigo. For other signs and symptoms, see the sidebar on this page.

## ***What causes balance disorders?***

Most of the time, balance disorders are caused by problems with the vestibular system, which refers to the parts of the inner ear and brain that help control balance and eye movements. Balance problems often resolve on their own over time, but sometimes they persist. It may be difficult to function with a balance disorder, and the disorder can lead to dangerous falls and injuries.

Also, in some cases, symptoms commonly associated with balance disorders can be a sign of heart, circulatory or other problems. Or they can be related to medications you are taking.

## ***What treatments are available?***

The Balance Center at Northwest provides individualized evaluation and treatment plans for people suffering with balance disorders. One treatment approach, known as positioning therapy, guides patients through a series of maneuvers to reposition calcium crystals in the inner ear that often cause balance problems.

Other therapies and exercises may be offered to help patients strengthen weaknesses in the balance system and develop other abilities to compensate for those weaknesses. ■

\*National Institutes of Health

## ***Signs of a possible balance disorder***

- Dizziness
- Motion sickness
- Sensation of falling or spinning
- Nausea
- Unsteadiness
- Clumsiness
- Staggering
- Frequent falls
- Lightheadedness

If you have two or more of these symptoms, you may have a balance disorder. Discuss these symptoms with your physician, who can refer you to The Balance Center for evaluation and treatment.

**The Balance Center at Northwest Texas Healthcare System moved to a new location at The Craig earlier this year. The new address is 1000 Craig Drive in Amarillo. For more information, please call 806-351-7045.**



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Amarillo, TX 79106

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# Now open at Hillside and Soncy

## *ER care is easiER at the new Northwest Emergency at Town Square*

- Convenient location
- Open 24/7
- Dedicated pediatric ER
- Easy access
- Laboratory and Imaging
- Direct admission to Northwest if needed

We're bringing our **passion, commitment** and **experience** to Northwest Emergency at Town Square

*Learn more at [nwths.com](http://nwths.com)*



at Town Square

a service of Northwest Texas Healthcare System

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HEALTH NEWS FROM  
NORTHWEST TEXAS HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

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