

LAPEER GOOD LIFE

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SPRING 2022

A PUBLICATION OF



LAPEER REGION

YOUR HOME IS NOT AN E.R.

Your home is your safe place. But when you experience symptoms of a stroke or heart attack, have trouble breathing, or have a serious injury or medical issue, McLaren is the safest place you can be.

Check-in to the E.R. from home by visiting mclaren.org/lapeerER.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO.

Lapeer Community, Spring has sprung and brought with it a sense of possibility, hope, and refreshment. I am happy to say that our hospital and outpatient operations are beginning to return to full-functionality with the decline in COVID-19 cases throughout Lapeer County and the State of Michigan.

Now is the time to get the care you have been postponing. We all have been reminded that our health is precious and delaying health care can cause an array of negative impacts. Our team is ready to provide high quality, safe care when you need it. I urge the community to continue to see primary care physicians, attend cancer screenings, and continue to receive procedures that directly impact your quality of life.

This issue of Lapeer Good Life

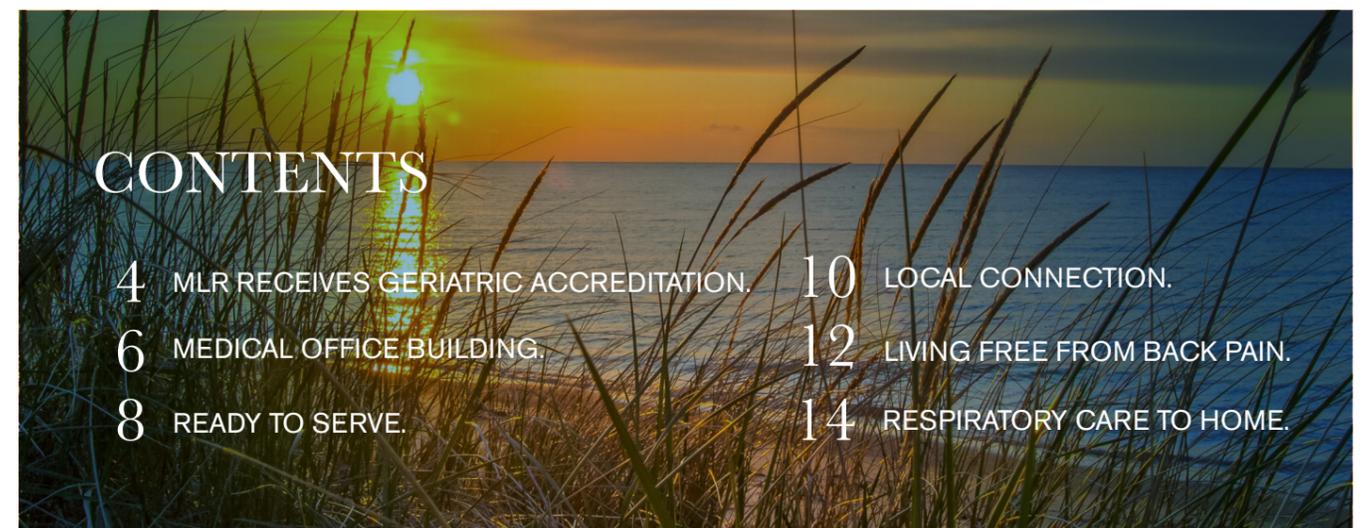
shares with you all we accomplished despite trying times. I am proud to say we continue to grow to meet the needs of our community through new technology, accreditation, and services.

I would like to thank the entire McLaren Lapeer Region team for your dedication as well as our amazing community for your support. I hope we all can take some time to breathe in the fresh air, enjoy some sunshine, and appreciate those who weathered the winter with us.

In Good Health,

Tim Vargas

President and CEO
McLaren Lapeer Region



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McLAREN LAPEER REGION ACCREDITED AS A LEVEL III GERIATRIC EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT.

In December 2021, McLaren Lapeer Region was accredited as a Level III Geriatric Emergency Department by the American College of Emergency Physicians. This accreditation demonstrates McLaren's commitment to senior patients who visit the emergency department by ensuring high-quality care through expertise, equipment, and personnel.

Emergency departments that are geriatric accredited improve patient outcomes; provide standardized approaches to care that address common geriatric issues: ensure optimal transition of care from the emergency department to other settings; improve emergency department throughput and support geriatric-focused quality improvement.

"This achievement is a testament of our dedication to our aging population," said Tim Vargas, president and CEO of McLaren Lapeer Region. "Our team is proud to be recognized for our outstanding care for older adults."

To be Level III accredited, an emergency department is required to have focused education in geriatric care; access to mobility aids such as canes and four-point walkers; evidence of a geriatric emergency care initiative; and easy access to food and drink at all times.

"The majority of people who visit our emergency department are elderly," said Dr. Joseph Zajchowski, chief medical officer at McLaren Lapeer Region. "They often present with multiple conditions and have several more barriers than the rest of our population. This accreditation guarantees that our emergency department has the proper care and protocols in place to ensure the best outcomes."



Official seal of the American College of Emergency Physicians accrediting McLaren Lapeer Region as a Level III Geriatric Emergency Department.

“THIS ACHIEVEMENT IS A TESTAMENT OF OUR DEDICATION TO OUR AGING POPULATION. OUR TEAM IS PROUD TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR OUR OUTSTANDING CARE FOR OLDER ADULTS.”

TIM VARGAS
PRESIDENT & CEO
McLAREN LAPEER REGION



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The exterior of McLaren Lapeer Region's Medical Office Building, August 2021.

BUILDING A HEALTHIER LAPEER.

For the past eight months, McLaren Lapeer Region's new Medical Office Building has been serving as an accessible center of care for Lapeer County residents.

The building opened to the public August 3, 2021, less than two years after its groundbreaking in November 2019.

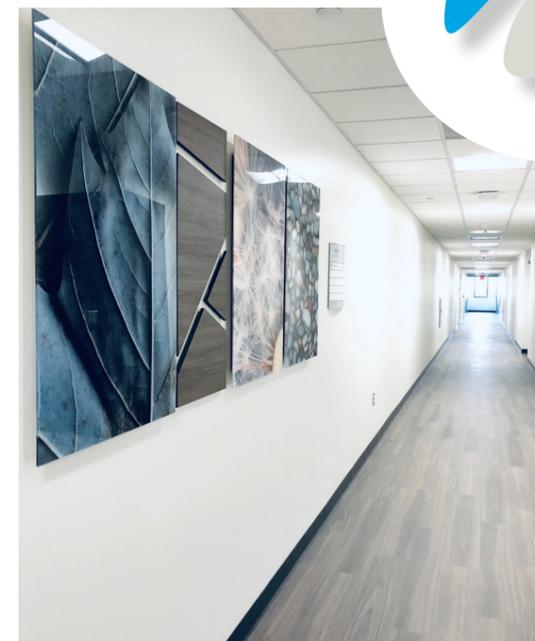
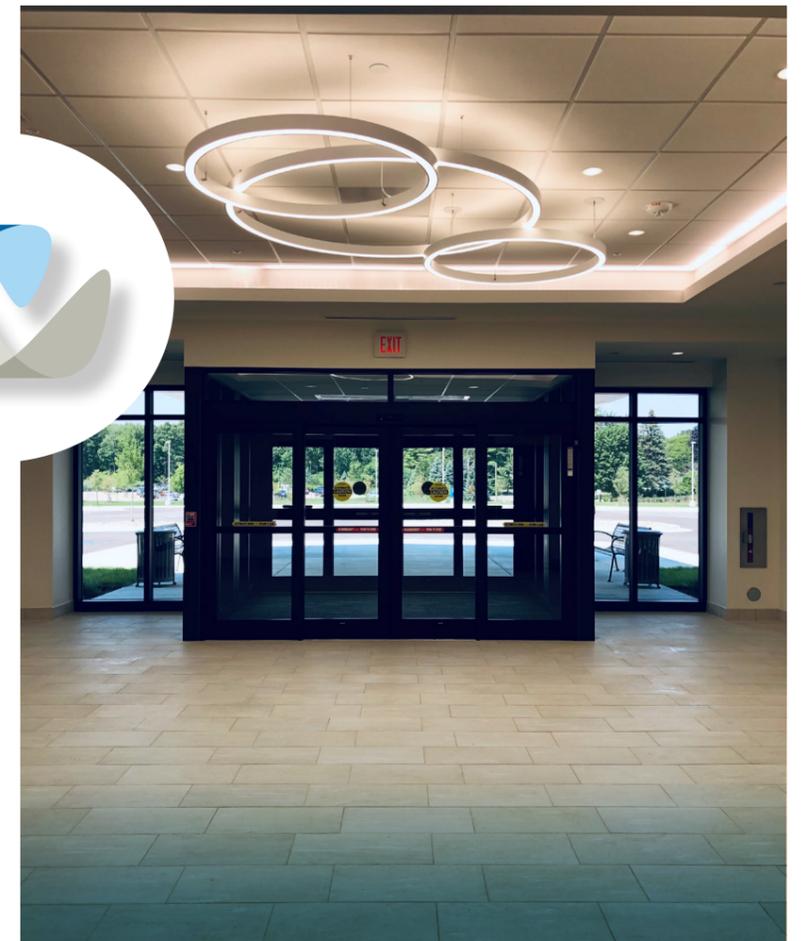
"The goal was to create an environment where patients could receive several outpatient services, all in one location," said Tim Vargas,

president and CEO of McLaren Lapeer Region. "We are proud to see our patients benefiting from this \$27.5 million investment."

The medical office building houses the offices of physicians from a variety of specialties, including orthopedics; otolaryngology; physical, occupational and speech therapy; neurosurgery; obstetrics and gynecology; pediatrics; family practice; internal medicine; gastroenterology; and general surgery. The building also houses laboratory services and diagnostic imaging.



2019 groundbreaking (left), Signed beam (bottom right).



Inside the Medical Office Building: Physical therapy space (top), Pediatric waiting area (middle left), Waiting area (middle right), Hallway with artwork (bottom left), Main lobby (bottom right).

READY TO SERVE.

As cases of COVID-19 rapidly decline throughout Lapeer County and the State of Michigan, officials at McLaren Lapeer Region announced hospital and outpatient clinic operations are returning to a more normal state, allowing the community improved access to care.

“A surge in COVID-19 cases, combined with an industry-wide worker shortage, led to longer than usual wait times for care for much of the winter,” said Tim Vargas, president and CEO, McLaren Lapeer Region. “We are now returning to a more normal state of operations and seeing vastly improved wait times and appointment availability for emergency services, imaging, surgical care, and cancer treatments at the Karmanos Cancer Institute at McLaren Lapeer Region.”

Vargas noted the hospital is still recruiting additional team members to its workforce to further improve operations and access, something that is occurring throughout the entire health care industry.

During COVID-19 surges, fewer people seek treatment in emergency rooms and urgent care settings, leading many physicians and staff members to worry about the long-term impacts of patients waiting too long to get the care they need.

“McLaren Lapeer Region has adapted our operations as COVID-19 cases have risen and fallen over the past year especially,” Vargas said. “As a Level II Trauma Center, we are always ready to serve the public’s emergency needs, even during surges.”

Vargas also noted the hospital’s surgical services operations are ready for patients who had to delay procedures over the past few months due to COVID-19. “Patients who had a surgical procedure, diagnostic test, or cancer screening should immediately talk to their physician about getting their care rescheduled,” Vargas said. “Unfortunately, the shutdown during the early stages of the pandemic taught us that delaying care can have adverse impacts on a person’s long-term health.”

During the most recent COVID-19 surge, emergency departments throughout the state were pushed to care for above-average daily censuses. The increase in

volume led to higher-than-normal wait times for many people. McLaren Lapeer Region instituted processes that allowed people to get imaging and other tests done while they waited for a room.

“It is important to us that we were able to see patients as quickly as possible,” said Dr. Joseph Zajchowski, emergency physician and chief medical officer, McLaren Lapeer Region. “These processes allowed for decreased wait times once a patient was seen by a physician.”

Now, however, emergency rooms are seeing fewer visits, which is concerning for many providers. “People are avoiding the emergency department, even for some life-threatening ailments,” said Dr. James Sutton, director of emergency services. “By the time they reach the ER their symptoms are more acute, and their illnesses are in advanced stages. It is important to seek emergency care the second you need it.”

If symptoms are serious and you’re even considering a visit to the emergency department, it is vital that you do not wait or avoid the hospital. It is critical to seek immediate care if you are experiencing conditions such as broken bones, trouble breathing, chest pain, fainting/passing out, deep wound with heavy bleeding, head injuries, seizures, persistent vomiting, or signs of stroke or heart attack. “Seconds matter when you are having a heart attack or stroke,” said Dr. Sutton. “Any signs or symptoms, even subtle ones, should be evaluated in the emergency room immediately.”

For non-life-threatening ailments, patients can check-in to the emergency department online at McLaren Lapeer Region and wait from home. Online ER check-in is a quick and easy process, which starts by visiting mclaren.org/lapeerER. Patients can view available check-in times, provide basic contact information, and describe their symptoms, all in about five minutes. Minor illnesses and injuries can also be treated in an urgent care setting. This includes conditions such as rashes, minor infections, fever, nausea, minor wounds, or injuries.

For more information about any of our locations, including emergency services and urgent care locations, please visit www.mclaren.org/lapeerconnect.

DAISY & TULIP AWARDS.

Each quarter McLaren Lapeer Region administrators recognize healthcare professionals on staff for their service and care of patients.

On behalf of patient families and staff who nominate employees for their outstanding service, McLaren officials presented respiratory therapist Kelly Long with the TULIP Award and obstetric nurse (OB RN) Jodie Schultz with the DAISY Award.

Jodie Schultz of Lapeer was presented the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses in recognition of her 20-plus years as an OB RN. These nursing professionals are responsible for helping welcome babies into the world and taking care of them during their first few days of life.

Schultz was honored by the award, and to be in the company of previous DAISY Award recipients recognized for nursing excellence. “I love what I do, to educate my patients. I think it’s important to be compassionate and supportive for new moms.”

The level of care Schultz is known for at McLaren Lapeer was exemplified in a message a new mother sent to the hospital following delivery of her child at the hospital. “I was so nervous, and you were absolutely wonderful. You are so kind and patient. I couldn’t have asked for a better nurse,” wrote the new mom. “I was terrified to leave and be responsible for a newborn. Just before we left, you (Schultz) asked if you could give me a hug and I really, really needed that.”

Long, a Columbiaville area resident, has been a respiratory therapist at McLaren Lapeer for 19 years, and this year was the recipient of the Homer Engert Practitioner of the Year Award given by the Michigan Society of Respiratory Care – a nonprofit professional association dedicated to providing education, advocacy, and resources to promote respiratory health in communities throughout Michigan.

“This (award) means I’m recognized for making a difference, and for being the best version of myself to help the patient population,” said Long, who provides respiratory therapy to McLaren Lapeer patients in their homes.

“My goal is to prove to Medicare how important respiratory care in the home is, and to encourage more people to get their care that way,” said Long, who has provided hundreds of in-home respiratory care visits in the last few months.

The in-home respiratory therapy program conducted by Long and initiated at McLaren Lapeer will likely become model protocol to be implemented by the entire McLaren Health Care system.

A patient in Long’s care submitted a nomination letter to suggest she be recognized for the attention and passion she has for respiratory therapy. Recently in the hospital for a stress test, the patient wrote of a conversation she had with Long. The patient wrote, “We started talking. We talked at length about her job helping people with COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). I have lost family members to this terrible disease (that causes airflow blockage and breathing-related problems). We continued to talk. I was taken by her passion and determination to help get funding for so many in need.”

*This article was written by Jeff Hogen and was published in the County Press in November 2021.



Jodie Schultz with her DAISY Award

DAISY is an acronym for Diseases Attacking the Immune System. The DAISY Foundation was formed in January 2000 and presents the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses in 2001 to say thank you to nurses - the unsung heroes.



Kelly Long with her TULIP Award

TULIP stands for “Touching Unique Lives in Practice.” The award recognizes clinical staff who go above and beyond in their work.

YOUR LOCAL CONNECTION TO A WORLD OF CARE.

From primary care to orthopedic surgery, McLaren Lapeer Region is your local connection to a world of care. Our one-of-a-kind, interconnected healthcare network provides our patients with the best physicians and services when and where they need them most.

The McLaren Advantage: Stroke and Cardiovascular Care

McLaren Lapeer is a nationally certified Primary Stroke Center and is part of a tele-neuro stroke network that includes 18 sites across the entire McLaren Health Care system. In 2021 we received the highest award for excellent stroke care in accordance with Joint Commissions Get With The Guidelines a Silver Plus Target Stroke Honor Roll Elite Plus and Target Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll.

The McLaren Stroke Network is the only program in Michigan - and one of only a handful in the nation - where every stroke patient is seen by a stroke trained interventional neurologist in minutes, any time, day or night.

"The McLaren Stroke Network makes specialized stroke care accessible to every patient," said Jacqueline Raymond, stroke program coordinator at McLaren Lapeer Region.

As part of the McLaren Stroke Network, interventional neurologists utilize a telemedicine 'robot' to provide consultative services within minutes of notification by on-site emergency and in-house physicians.

"Our TeleStroke System allows an interventional neurologist to beam to the patient's bedside from a remote location," said Raymond. "This allows the neurologist to assess the patient, review CT scan images, and discuss best treatment options with on-site physicians and the patient's family."

McLaren Lapeer treats an average of 30 stroke patients per month. "While most are treated in-house, we do transfer special cases to McLaren Flint," said Raymond.

Only minutes from McLaren Lapeer Region, McLaren Flint bolsters a nationally recognized stroke program. The McLaren Flint stroke program has received Gold Plus, Target Stroke-Honor Roll Elite Plus, and Stroke Honor Roll Advanced Therapy performance status with the American Heart Association's Get With the Guidelines program - the highest recognition awarded by the American Heart Association.

If you experience heart attack symptoms, McLaren Lapeer ensures that you will be assessed and treated within 90 minutes. This 90-minute standard is what medical

professionals refer to as "door-to-balloon."

"In the first five minutes of your arrival at the McLaren Lapeer Emergency Department you will be given an EKG," said Betsy Felton, corporate director of McLaren's Cardiovascular Service Line. "If this EKG comes back positive, you immediately are taken to Flint for an angioplasty."

The 90-minute standard applies whether you are brought to the emergency department by ambulance or bring yourself in.

"If brought in by ambulance, you are given an EKG before even getting off the stretcher. This is so if your EKG comes back positive, no time is wasted getting you to Flint," said Felton. "If you bring yourself in and your EKG indicates you need to be transferred, an ambulance will be called and will take you to Flint within the 90-minute window."

McLaren Lapeer provides the initial, lifesaving care for heart attack patients, and, because of the seamless interconnectedness of the McLaren system, patients can be transferred within minutes to McLaren Flint, which has the highest national ranking for coronary artery bypass surgery from the Society of Thoracic Surgeons.

The McLaren Advantage: Trauma Care

McLaren Lapeer Region is a Level II Trauma Center, which means certified physicians and specialists are available 24/7 to provide critical care when you need it.

"As a Level II Trauma Center, we undergo a rigorous application and review process every 2-3 years to ensure we are maintaining requirements to properly care for critically injured patients," said Jamie Oneil, manager of the Trauma Program at McLaren Lapeer Region. This designation allows McLaren Lapeer to best serve patients in Lapeer County and beyond.

"We are the only Level II Trauma Center in the Thumb of Michigan," said Oneil. "When choosing where to go in an emergency, coming straight to McLaren Lapeer could save patients precious time."

The best minds in medicine are right here in your community. With McLaren Lapeer Region, you're always closer to leading doctors and advanced specialty care, because our primary and urgent care providers are seamlessly connected with specialists across our network. And with McLarenNow virtual care, you can conveniently access McLaren Lapeer Region physicians when you need them, wherever you are.

See the power of connection at mclaren.org/lapeerconnect.



FROM PRIMARY CARE TO ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

YOUR LOCAL CONNECTION TO A WORLD OF CARE.

The best minds in medicine are right here in *your* community. With McLaren Lapeer Region, you're always closer to leading doctors and advanced specialty care, because our primary and urgent care providers are seamlessly connected with specialists across our network. And with McLarenNow virtual care, you can conveniently access McLaren Lapeer Region physicians when you need them, wherever you are.

See the power of connection at mclaren.org/lapeerconnect



DOING WHAT'S BEST.®



By evaluating each patient's physical, emotional, and psychological needs, McLaren's pain management physicians provide a responsive, thorough, and individualized care plan.

"I've never had such quality attention or care anywhere else. I actually look forward to having more procedures done."

- Pain management patient

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LIVING FREE FROM BACK PAIN.

Back pain can be as frustrating as it can be limiting. If ignored, it can create a vicious cycle of depression and inactivity. "If you experience frequent or severe back pain, talk with your doctor about steps you can take to find relief," said Dr. Ryan Barrett, neurosurgeon at McLaren Lapeer Region.

Nonsurgical Treatments

"It is important for those who suffer from back pain to know that there are outpatient treatments available that can bring you relief," said Dr. Ihsan Asbahi, pain management physician at McLaren Lapeer Region.

Some of these treatments include:

Bilateral Sacroiliac Injections

"When pain occurs in one or both sides of the lower back it is often caused by the sacroiliac joint that connects the spine to the pelvis," said Dr. Asbahi.

One treatment approach is a sacroiliac joint block. The physician uses a fluoroscope to guide and insert the medication by needle directly into the joint. This treatment can be repeated up to three times in one year and is usually coupled with physical therapy for mobility and maximum range of motion.

Facet Joint Injections

Each vertebra in your spine has flat surfaces that touch where the vertebrae fit together. These form a "facet joint" on each side of the vertebrae. Pain occurs when facet joints in your back or neck become inflamed. A facet joint injection into the inflamed joints can relieve pain and reduce inflammation.

Cortisone Injection

Injectable cortisone is a type of steroid designed for pain relief. A cortisone injection can relieve pain of inflammation or sprains by directly targeting the inflamed area. Often, one or more injections can bring lasting relief and prevent surgery.

Surgical Treatments

When your pain requires more than management, McLaren Lapeer Region can help give you your life back. "If your pain persists even with nonsurgical treatments, your doctor may suggest surgery," said Dr. Barrett.

The three most common back surgeries include:

Spinal Fusion

During a spinal fusion procedure, the surgeon will fuse vertebrae together to inhibit joint movement, alleviating pain. "This procedure can often be performed in a minimally invasive fashion," said Dr. Barrett.

Laminectomy

During a laminectomy, the surgeon will remove part of the bone that makes up vertebrae (lamina) and sometimes bone spurs to create extra room in the spinal column, which eliminates the pressure that was affecting the spinal nerve.

In some cases, a large portion of bone must be removed, which can cause instability of the spine. This may create a need for a spinal fusion. This surgery is ideal for patients who are dealing with severe, chronic pain or loss of function due to bone spurs.

Discectomy

"Discs in the spine act as shock absorbers and provide cushioning in between the vertebrae.

When one of these discs slips or becomes herniated, it can put intense pressure on the spinal nerve and cause back pain," said Dr. Barrett. During a discectomy, a surgeon will remove all or part of the disc.

To find a physician that is right for you, call **(810) 667-5990.**

Physical Therapy

Physical therapy helps reduce pain and restore function and independence in patients who have undergone surgery, suffered an injury, are recovering from serious illness, or are coping with a chronic condition.

Treatment begins with a physician's prescription. Talk with your doctor about the benefits of physical therapy today.

If you need a referral for a primary care provider, call **(810) 667-5990.**

VETERAN RESPIRATORY THERAPIST DEVELOPS 'RESPIRATORY THERAPIST TO HOME' PROGRAM.

With a passion for enhancing the lives of patients, veteran respiratory therapist (RT) Kelly Long reduced pulmonary readmission rates at McLaren Lapeer Region by spearheading a Respiratory Therapist to Home program.

In 2018, McLaren Lapeer Region had a 27% readmission rate for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients within a 31-day span. To improve this statistic, the idea was posed to provide in-home respiratory therapy to post-acute pulmonary patients. Brian Wicker, director of Respiratory Care, Sleep, and Wound Services at McLaren Lapeer Region, ran with the idea and applied for a grant to fund the proposed program.

Shortly after Wicker's submittal, the grant was approved, and a job opening was posted for the program's lead respiratory therapist. But the position sat empty. No therapist wanted to risk their current position on a grant-funded position. It looked like the Respiratory Therapist to Home program had hit a dead end.

CHANGING THE WAY WE DELIVER HEALTHCARE

It was at a corporate event a few months later that Wicker presented his new program to Long, who at the time, was working in Cardiac Diagnostics. Already frustrated by the lack of accessible respiratory care, Long saw this as an opportunity to put respiratory therapist boots on the ground in uncharted yet crucial territory.

"When I accepted the job, I knew that it was going to be a challenge, but I was motivated to change the way we deliver healthcare," said Long. Long designed the Respiratory Care to Home program to provide patients with in-home respiratory therapy for a span of 31 days. Within that timeframe, the average patient received four, hour-long home visits.

"The initial home visit is when the respiratory therapist creates an optimized wellness plan for the patient. The following visits adhere to that plan and typically consist of breathing mechanics coaching, medication review, and anxiety-relieving techniques," said Long. According to Long, providing post-acute pulmonary patients with the support they need is crucial. "When the

patient feels safe, supported, educated, and empowered at home, the likelihood of them returning to the emergency room is lowered."

Through her home visits, Long noted distinct factors that lead to the readmission of pulmonary patients, including financial, environmental, compliance, transportation, and technological. It became clear to her that these all-too-common obstacles could be overcome with the advocacy of a health care professional.

"In this program, the respiratory therapist monitors the patient's overall health and makes referrals accordingly," said Long. "Most COPD patients suffer from multiple conditions, not just pulmonary. These in-home visits allow the respiratory therapist to tend to the pulmonary needs of the patient while holding the patient responsible for their overall wellbeing."

THE PROGRAM'S CONTINUED SUCCESS

Within the first year of the program, pulmonary readmission rates decreased from 27% to 9%. Now in its third year, the Respiratory Therapy to Home program is going strong, continuing to succeed in its mission of decreasing pulmonary readmissions at McLaren Lapeer Region.

Since its initiation, the program has expanded and currently provides patients, including Medicare patients, 91 days (3 months) of in-home care. The number of pulmonary readmissions remains 9% since the program's extended 91-day visitation span.

To date, the program has received 100% satisfaction scores from patients.



Kelly Long, respiratory therapist at McLaren Lapeer Region.

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McLaren Lapeer Region – Medical Office Building

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