

## A TEAM *Effort*

Inova Alexandria Hospital's approach to breast cancer ensures that every patient receives support at every step

**PAGE 6**

Inova Alexandria Hospital's breast care team includes (from left): Lonika Majithia, MD, radiation oncologist; Nadia Shah, MD, breast radiologist; Margaret S. Howard, MD, medical oncologist; and Sara Bruce, MD, breast surgeon.

# FOLLOW THE LEADER

## The Place for Cancer Care

We at Inova Alexandria Hospital (IAH) want to be the first hospital you turn to for all of your important healthcare decisions and treatments. This includes cancer care.

As you'll see in our cover story on breast cancer, we provide support for you at every stage in this journey — from the time of diagnosis and through treatment and recovery. Our all-female medical team is armed with the expertise to fight breast cancer in a comprehensive, multifaceted way.

We continue to grow services in other areas as well. We now are offering laboring moms nitrous oxide to ease labor pains, for example. And our Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit, which is undergoing an expansion, received the 2016 Platinum Performance Achievement Award from the American College of Cardiology.

Being well means having a high quality of life. Patricia Keller understands this all too well. She got her mobility back after a life-changing spinal surgery at IAH. Also in this issue, you will read updated information about this year's flu season.

Our goal is to always deliver excellent patient care. We seek every opportunity to meet the unique needs of each person we are privileged to serve — every time, every touch.



**SUSAN CARROLL FACHE, MBA, MHA**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Inova Alexandria Hospital



### WELLNESS

# BEAT the Bug



## There's still time to receive a flu shot

Flu season has arrived again — and it's nothing to sneeze at. Each year, the flu virus is the cause of thousands of hospitalizations and even deaths. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyone 6 months and older receive an annual flu vaccine.

"The flu shot is the most effective way to prevent influenza illness and reduce doctors' visits and missed days from work and school," notes Nandini Koka, MD, Medical Director, Inova Urgent Care Centers. "The flu shot can also prevent flu-related hospitalizations and serious illness."

There are other types of flu vaccinations, such as the nasal spray, FluMist. But the CDC advises against getting FluMist this season because of the vaccine's relatively poor effectiveness for the last three years. Fortunately, the flu shot is safe for everyone

6 months and older. "People who are at risk for serious illness and complications, including young children, pregnant women, people 65 years and older and those with chronic medical conditions, should be especially proactive about obtaining a flu shot," advises Dr. Koka.

Since it takes approximately two weeks after receiving the vaccine to build up antibodies that protect against the virus, it is best to get a flu shot before influenza activity begins in your community, adds Dr. Koka.

Flu shots are now available at Inova through its Urgent Care Centers, outpatient doctors' offices and flu clinics held at each Inova hospital. Please check the schedule at [inova.org/flu](http://inova.org/flu). Those seeking flu shots at Inova Urgent Care Centers can check in online in advance to minimize wait times. Visit [inova.org/ucc](http://inova.org/ucc).

#### Flu signs and symptoms



Headache



Cough



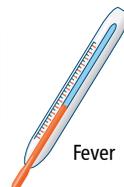
Sore throat



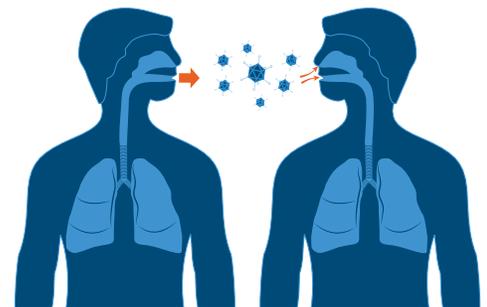
Joint aches



Runny nose



Fever



Flu viruses can spread mainly by droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk.

# Providing RELIEF

## Inova Alexandria Hospital offers nitrous oxide to laboring moms

Nitrous oxide, or N2O, also known as laughing gas, is often applied as an analgesic, or pain killer, for a variety of medical procedures. In recent years, it has become increasingly used to ease pain and discomfort for pregnant women going into labor. It is now available for laboring moms at Inova Alexandria Hospital (IAH). “N2O is starting to become more widely practiced in the labor room,” says Jodie Turner, Senior Director of Women’s and Children’s at IAH.

There are two points during the labor process at which nitrous oxide can be distributed. Most commonly, it is given to the mother early in the process to provide pain relief until she can receive

her epidural anesthesia (which is given to about half of all women that give birth at a hospital). Or, if the mother chooses not to receive an epidural and instead undergo natural labor, the laughing gas can be an alternative pain reliever.

“I like the fact that offering nitrous oxide to women in labor will give them more pain mitigation options and more control over their own experiences here at Inova Alexandria Hospital,” says Brent Lee, MD, MPH.

Marc Siegel, MD, agrees. “Improving our patients’ satisfaction in the labor



process is our goal and this gives them another option to choose, other than the conventional methods to manage their discomfort,” he says.

A hospital nurse gives the N2O as a temporary inhalant, and all of the nurses are trained in how to properly give the treatment.

**WELCOME TO MOTHERHOOD**  
Learn more about maternity services at [inova.org/iahN20](https://inova.org/iahN20).

# On the MOVE

## New therapy available for people with Parkinson’s

The Inova Alexandria Hospital (IAH) Physical Medicine and Rehabilitative Care Department has been expanding its services over the past year. As an example, it now offers Lee Silverman Voice Therapy (LSVT) BIG, a technique that addresses the unique movement impairments associated with Parkinson’s disease. It provides people with the disease the tools they need to keep moving and stay active. The protocol is both intensive and complex, with many repetitions of core movements used in daily life. Four therapists are certified to provide LSVT BIG therapy at IAH.

Since adding LSVT BIG, the Parkinson’s population at the hospital has skyrocketed, notes Srilekha Reddy Pale, PT, DPT, Rehabilitation Director at IAH. “There was a time where we had one to two Parkinson’s patients per week, and right now, our caseload is anywhere between four to six patients per week. The program has really grown, and that’s because there is a strong need for it in the community.”



In other areas of growth, the department is teaming up with the local chapter of the Parkinson’s Foundation for patient group exercise sessions. It also has expanded its oncology rehabilitation services, specifically for breast cancer patients. Recently, the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitative Care team participated in a breast cancer education event, showcasing its program and allowing its therapists to speak to potential patients. It also is partnering with Life with Cancer® for oncology rehab and cancer recovery exercise programs.

**HELP FOR PARKINSON’S**  
Learn more about treatments for movement disorders at [inova.org/movement-disorders-program](https://inova.org/movement-disorders-program).

# BACK

Spinal corrective surgery works wonders

**P**atricia Keller had nearly given up hope that she would ever be able to walk normally again. The 70-year-old had been through four spinal surgeries over the course of a decade, and the last had left her worse off than she'd ever been. Unable to stand without support, she was hunched over a walker just to cross a room. She couldn't drive, and her limited mobility kept her housebound and in constant pain.

# ON TRACK

Even worse, her doctors told her that nothing more could be done except to put her on a pain medication regimen for the rest of her life.

"But I felt strong on the inside," she recalls. "I couldn't give up that easily. This wasn't how I wanted to live."

After moving to Fairfax, she got a referral to Brian McHugh, MD, at Inova Alexandria Hospital. And that changed everything.

## FRESH EXPERIENCE

Dr. McHugh specializes in several areas related to spinal health, including corrective surgery for adult and pediatric deformity — which was Patricia's main issue. He also does non-invasive procedures and contributes his expertise to cases involving spinal oncology.

"There has been so much new research in the past 10 years that redefines how we treat spinal issues," he says. "Those who've had issues in the past, like Ms. Keller, may have more options than they think."

In particular, much more is known now about alignment, Dr. McHugh adds. Those who have ongoing, chronic problems may be dealing with fundamental alignment challenges that may be treatable.

"If you've had the experience where you think nothing can be done anymore, then it's worth coming in to see whether some of this new research and procedures would be beneficial," he says.

## NEW PATH

Patricia had her surgery in May, and even within a few days she could sit up on her own and stand without help — two motions she hadn't been able to do in years.

After a couple weeks, she was able to stop taking pain medication, and started swimming and driving. Every day gets a little better, she says, and she is grateful for Dr. McHugh's confidence and competence.

"What he did was miraculous, really," she says. "Everyone else gave up on me, but thanks to Dr. McHugh and Inova, I have another chance. I got my life back."



Patricia Keller can ride this tricycle thanks to corrective spinal surgery for a deformity.

## SPINE CARE

To learn more about Inova Spine Institute, visit [inova.org/spine](http://inova.org/spine).

# HEALING THE HEART

Award-winning critical care unit expands to heighten care delivery

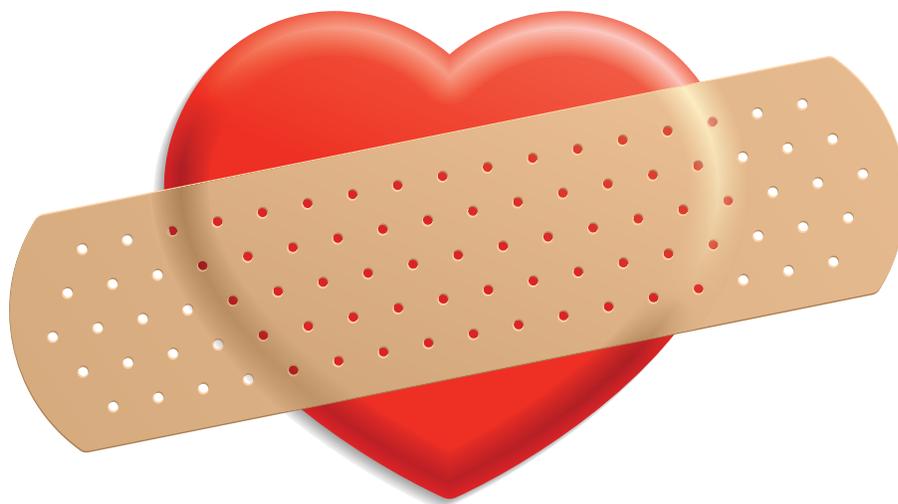
**R**ecovery from a major cardiac event such as a heart attack or a complex surgery can be difficult. Guided by experience, skill and compassion, the medical team at Inova Alexandria Hospital's Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU) understands and responds to the challenges patients and their families face. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the CVICU helps the highest-acuity patients resume their lives.

To ensure that each patient in the CVICU receives superior care and attention, the CVICU is undergoing an expansion, which should be completed in February.

"The expansion is going to impact the unit tremendously, allowing us to increase the number of beds from 10 to 16, and to provide every patient with a private unit equipped with a bathroom

and a shower," says Robbin Young, RN, MSN, NE-BC, Senior Director of Critical Care Services. Eight of the rooms will be designated for intermediate care after a patient has been stabilized.

To allow family members to stay with a loved one, each patient room will be equipped with a sofa bed. The family waiting room has also been remodeled with comfortable furniture, ample space to plug in electronics and a private conference area.



## SAVING LIVES

The highly trained staff at the CVICU treats patients who have had complex heart surgery, a heart attack, cardiac arrest, heart failure, heart rhythm disturbances and neurovascular diseases such as stroke. Using state-of-the-art technology and equipment, the team helps restore the health of critically ill patients with cardiac monitoring, ventilator support, medication, and fluid and nutrition management, plus physical, occupational and speech therapy when needed.

The CVICU also provides advanced lifesaving techniques, including an intra-aortic balloon pump to support circulation, a non-invasive cooling system to maintain optimal neurological function following a cardiac arrest and continuous renal replacement therapy for patients who develop acute kidney injury.



## Award-Winning Care

Recognized for its excellence and dedication to maintaining a high standard of care for medically complex patients with coronary artery disease, the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU) at Inova Alexandria Hospital has been awarded the 2016 Platinum Performance Achievement Award bestowed by the American College of Cardiology. "We have great outcomes with getting our patients off the ventilator post-surgery within six hours," says Robbin Young, RN, MSN, NE-BC, Senior Director of Critical Care Services. "Our benchmark is six hours, but our unit goal is under four hours."

Patients typically stay in the CVICU just four days. Readmission rates are low due to the vast amount of education patients and their families receive while in the CVICU by multiple disciplines from cardiovascular nurse practitioners, dietary, physical therapy, Mended Hearts and the bedside nursing staff.

## WE'VE GOT ANSWERS

For questions about the CVICU, contact the Senior Director of Critical Care at **703.504.7751**.

# PLAN OF ATTACK

Inova Alexandria Hospital's approach to breast cancer ensures that every patient receives support at every step

**R**eceiving a diagnosis of breast cancer can be overwhelming, not to mention scary. That's why the health professionals at Inova Alexandria Hospital (IAH) provide a high level of treatment, insight and resources that can make a significant difference in physical, emotional and medical outcomes.

Inova Schar Cancer Institute at IAH has an expert, all-female breast care team — from surgeons and radiologists to dietitians, a genetics counselor and nurse navigators — that helps patients feel supported every step of the way. Most medical members of the team are fellowship-trained, which means they have received an additional year of training in their specialties in order to master those areas of medicine. Breast cancer patients, as a result, will have the benefit of more in-depth education and experience from every professional on their care team.

Although every case has unique factors in terms of treatment plans, here are the steps that are part of IAH's approach to breast cancer:

## STEP ONE: IMAGING TO DETECT ANOMALIES.

Mammograms are an essential part of preventive care, and if a routine screening shows abnormalities that need more in-depth examination, a patient will undergo additional screening. Results are sent to IAH's breast radiologist, Nadia Shah, MD. "Our job is to interpret what we're seeing, and either take more mammogram images or do an ultrasound," she says.

Dr. Shah brings extensive experience to her role at IAH. She did fellowship work at Cleveland Clinic — one of the country's most prominent academic hospitals — and Ellen Shaw de Paredes Institute for Women's Imaging, a renowned women's health practice specializing in breast imaging and breast cancer diagnosis. Dr. Shah is particularly passionate about getting younger women screened since they tend to have more aggressive tumors than those at higher risk, she says.



## STEP TWO: IF CANCER IS SUSPECTED, A BIOPSY OF THE AFFECTED TISSUE WILL BE DONE.

If Dr. Shah is concerned about potential cancer, she refers the patient to IAH surgeon Sara Bruce, MD, who specializes in women's health and breast surgery in particular. She will do a biopsy, which means taking a small selection of tissue from the area in question so that it can be examined to determine whether it's cancerous. Many times, a biopsy reveals that the mass is a cyst or otherwise non-threatening condition.

Dr. Bruce gained her expertise through a breast surgical oncology fellowship at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City after training in general surgery at Georgetown University Hospital.



## STEP THREE: A TUMOR BOARD DISCUSSES TREATMENT AND RESOURCE OPTIONS.

If the mass is determined to be cancer, a team of oncology professionals will discuss the patient's treatment plan. Every Wednesday, they meet as a "tumor board" to discuss newly diagnosed and ongoing cancer cases. Participants include radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, surgeons, nurse navigators, social workers, dietitians, a genetic counselor, lymphedema specialists and others involved in care.

"This team approach is very important for getting everyone involved in delivering the best and most customized care for each cancer patient," says Junaid Abu, Director of Oncology Services at IAH.





Inova Alexandria Hospital's breast cancer care team includes: (top row, L to R) Debra Rowland; Nadia Shah, MD; Rebekah Moore; Lonika Majithia, MD; (bottom row, L to R) Margaret Howard, MD; Donna Haines-Williams; and Sara Bruce, MD. Not pictured: Gerry Higgins.

#### STEP FOUR: CARE IS COORDINATED THROUGH A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH.



Since each treatment plan is unique, a patient may be facing chemotherapy or radiation, or both. She may need additional surgery before or after those treatments, or require endocrine therapy that focuses on her hormones. No matter what path a patient is treading, IAH's medical oncology department will be there to help them navigate what's next.

Medical oncologist Margaret Howard, MD, adds that a patient may be referred to genetic counselor Rebekah Moore as well as dietician Debra Rowland. Basically, whatever it is she needs, IAH is there to provide the resources and care.

"My role is to understand what you need," Dr. Howard says. "I counsel you on all the different aspects of screening and care that can come into play. Even after surgery and radiation or chemotherapy is complete, many patients continue to see me for years, sometimes decades."

Much like her fellow team members, Dr. Howard brings a rich background to patient care. From volunteering at the Duke Cancer Patient Support Program to attending Georgetown University School of Medicine, she has always been passionate about the importance of counseling and support for cancer patients.

"It's so vital for patients to know what resources they have, for themselves and their family members," she says. "I'm proud of how much IAH has in place for breast cancer patients."

For some patients, treatment will include radiation oncology, directed by Lonika Majithia, MD, who has extensive experience with multiple radiotherapy techniques. After completing her medical training at the University of New Mexico, Dr. Majithia served as chief resident during her radiation oncology residency at The Ohio State University.

The radiation oncology department at IAH offers the most technologically advanced therapy equipment available today — delivering powerful, targeted treatment to tumor sites while minimizing exposure to healthy cells. As a result of this type of precision, treatment is faster and more comfortable for patients.

#### STEP FIVE: NURSE NAVIGATORS PROVIDE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.



If a patient has breast cancer, she will be connected to a nurse navigator network that excels at getting to know what challenges she might face. Family members, too, have unique challenges that have to be addressed for ideal at-home care.

Whatever the issue might be, nurse navigators are there. "If you're a breast cancer patient, you will never be alone; there will be a team in place to guide you through your cancer journey," says Abu.

Nurse navigators serve as a resource for patients, helping with everything from coordination of care to facilitating community support groups, delivering surgery recovery instructions and offering tips on medication adherence.

For example, Gerry Higgins, oncology nurse navigator, helps those who are getting radiation for their breast cancer. She works with them to identify what they need before treatment so that the process is less stressful. "We try to get ahead of what needs to be put in place so patients can feel confident and comfortable going into treatment," she says.

#### STEP SIX: A PATIENT WILL HAVE SUPPORT AFTER TREATMENT AS WELL.



Funded mainly by donations, the Life with Cancer® program is open to everyone with cancer, even those who aren't being treated at Inova. The program includes educational classes on topics like surgery and recovery, and has a number of support groups.

Life with Cancer isn't just for those going through treatment; many people find the support groups helpful for post-treatment, too. As difficult as diagnosis and treatment might be, it's the time afterward that can sometimes be the most challenging, says Carrie Friedman, oncology nurse navigator.

"Inova is a resource at every stage of a breast cancer journey," says Friedman. "We are here to support patients and caregivers in whatever is needed."

### CANCER FIGHTERS

Learn more about cancer treatments and resources at [inova.org/iahcancer](http://inova.org/iahcancer).

Inova is a not-for-profit healthcare system located in Northern Virginia in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, serving over 2 million people with over 1,700 licensed beds. It consists of five hospitals including the area's only Level 1 Trauma Center and Level 4 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Inova encompasses many health services including the internationally recognized Inova Heart and Vascular Institute (IHVI), Inova Translational Medicine Institute (ITMI), Inova Neuroscience Institute, Inova Schar Cancer Institute and Inova Children's Hospital. Inova's mission is to improve the health of the diverse community it serves through excellence in patient care, education and research. More information about Inova is at [inova.org](http://inova.org).

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[inova.org](http://inova.org)

IHS-068-IAH



# WELCOME, NEW PROVIDERS!

Here are new healthcare professionals who have joined the Inova Alexandria Hospital medical staff in recent months:

NAME	DEPT/SECTION
Imtiaz Ahmed, MD	Family Practice
Aakash Ahuja, MD	Radiology
David Ansel, MD	Neurology
Carl Ansevin, MD	Neurology
Eva Asomugha, MD	Surgery
Michael Baek, MD	Family Practice
Karen Beydoun, MD	Infectious Disease
Minal Bhojani, MD	Pediatrics
Irina Brennan, MD, PhD	Emergency Medicine
Matthew Burt, MD	Anesthesiology
Richard Comstock, MD	Surgery
Thomas Conley, MD	Neurology
Ahmed Damte, MD	Psychiatry
Duncan Davidson, MD	Radiology
Michael Eblan, MD	Medicine
Ahmed Elebiary, MD	Internal Medicine
Razaak Eniola, MD	Internal Medicine
Michelle Ervin, MD	Internal Medicine
Olatokunbo Famakinwa, MD	Internal Medicine
Domingo Franco Palacios, MD	Pulmonary Disease
Nora Graham, MD	Obstetrics and Gynecology
Yousif Hassan, MD	Family Practice
Margaret Howard, MD	Hematology/Oncology
Dhiraj Jeyanandarajan, MD	Neurology
Ahmed Kayssi, MD	Surgery
Karthic Kumaran, MBBS	Anesthesiology

NAME	DEPT/SECTION
Caroline Kwon, MD	Nephrology
Barbara Landesman, MD	Neurology
Michael Maitland, MD, PhD	Hematology/Oncology
Lonika Majithia, MD	Radiation Oncology
Shawn Masia, MD	Neurology
Suman Matiana, MD	Family Practice
Timothy McCormick, DO	Anesthesiology
Abdullahi Musa, MD	Internal Medicine
Hida Nierenburg, MD	Neurology
Hiral Patel, MD	Surgery
Christine Pletkova, MD	Psychiatry
Zachary Plotz, MD	Radiology
Dorothy Polahar, DO	Family Practice
Alexander Sailon, MD	Surgery
Eric Sarin, MD	Surgery
Matthew Sherwood, MD	Cardiovascular Disease
Lauryn Smith, DPM	Podiatry
Brittany Taylor, MD	Family Practice
Tesfaye Tetemke, MD	Internal Medicine
Francisco Vega-Bermudez, MD	Neurology
Roberta Vickery, MD	Internal Medicine
Nancy Vu, MD	Internal Medicine
Grant Warmouth, MD	Neurology
Hyung Woo, MD	Pediatrics
George Younan, MD	Surgery

## Find a Physician



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