



## Director's Desk

Christina R. Ghaly, MD  
Director

It's wonderful when DHS staff are recognized by others for their talent, determination and compassion. In this month's Pulse, there are two notable awards I am proud to share.

First, Cathy Chidester and Marianne Gausche-Hill, the Director and Medical Director respectively of the LA County Emergency Medical Services Agency, were nominated by their peers and recognized as the "EMS Administrator of the Year" and the "EMS Medical Director of the Year." This is a state-wide award given to one administrator and medical director across California's 58 counties. The award is a testament to the creativity, passion and tenacity with which each approach their roles. Their work, along with the contributions of all EMS staff, have made LA County's EMS Agency a true pioneer and leader in the field of pre-hospital care.

Another individual in our midst, Dr. Raymond Perry, was named by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as an "HPV Vaccine is Cancer Prevention" Champion. HPV is a virus that causes a number of cancers. The most common cancer caused

by HPV is cervical cancer and can be prevented with a vaccination. This award recognized Dr. Perry's work in leading patient engagement, education and communication. Dr. Perry worked with staff and leadership across the Ambulatory Care Network on efforts to enhance HPV vaccination rates and save lives. Congratulations to Dr. Perry, Director Chidester and Dr. Gausche-Hill!

Finally, this month's Spotlight highlights the new DHS strategic plan. The new DHS mission statement is: To advance the health of our patients and our communities by providing extraordinary care. Our departmental values are to be Inclusive, Compassionate, Innovative, Excellent, Accountable and Welcoming. Our mission defines who we are and how and why we do our work. One of the things I like best about our new mission statement is that it encompasses all of the work we do across DHS, including our hospitals and clinics, our community based programs such as the EMS Agency, Housing for Health, the Office of Diversion and Re-entry and Correctional Health Services, among others. We are a big family - but we are one family, united in our common purpose and mission of improving the health and lives of those in need. I look forward to sharing more about the new strategic plan and its four goals as we enter 2020.

Until then, wishing you and your loved ones a very merry holiday season!

Christina

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## State Emergency Medical Services Authority Honors LA County EMS Agency

By Kay Fruhwirth

On December 4, 2019, the State Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Authority hosted its 12th Annual EMS Awards ceremony at the Marines Memorial Club & Hotel in San Francisco.

These annual awards honor and recognize exceptional acts and service by individuals working or volunteering in California's emergency medical system. Fifty-eight awards were presented at the luncheon with two very prestigious awards going to DHS employees. Cathy Chidester, EMS Agency Director received the EMS Administrator of the Year Award and Marianne Gausche-Hill, MD, EMS Agency Medical Director received the EMS Medical Director of the Year Award.

The EMS Administrator of the Year Award honors an EMS system administrator who has distinguished him/herself through noteworthy contribution to a local, regional or to the statewide EMS system. Cathy Chidester was nominated by her peer group, the EMS Administrators Association of California and the Administrative staff of the EMS Agency. She was recognized for her tireless devotion to public health as a reputable leader of regional EMS care and exemplary contributor to the development of prehospital system standards throughout the State. It was also noted that Cathy can be relied upon as an expert in both EMS ad-



ministration and education.

The EMS Medical Director of the Year Award honors a physician who serves or has served the EMS system by providing medical direction, who has served with distinction and who has made a special contribution through such activities as systems development, continuing education, quality assurance and serving as medical community liaison. Marianne Gausche-Hill, MD was recognized for her invaluable contributions to medicine through groundbreaking research and guidance of emergency medical services for pediatrics nationwide and the furtherance of care for all EMS patients.

## Martin Luther King, Jr. Outpatient Center Sickle Cell Clinic Dedication and Ribbon Cutting

By Denise Gordon

Sickle cell disease (or SCD), a painful and disabling condition of red blood cells, is the world's most common genetic disease affecting roughly 100,000 individuals. It disproportionately affects African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans. The average life expectancy for people with the most severe form of SCD is 30 years shorter than that of people without the disease. The majority of adults with SCD are forced to obtain care in hospital emergency departments and other non-SCD specialty settings. Decades of inadequate funding for adults living with SCD resulted in Los Angeles County residents with the genetic disorder having the shortest life expectancy of sickle cell patients in the nation. Now, South Los Angeles has become a model for the treatment of SCD.

Three years ago, the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (DHS) launched an innovative clinic specifically designed to meet the complex health care needs of adults with this disease in the heart of South Los Angeles on the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Medical campus. This year, for the first time in

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California’s history, the Governor committed \$15 million dollars for adult SCD treatment programs statewide. The legislation, sponsored by Assemblyman Mike Gipson, is intended to spread the MLK Outpatient Center model and ensure access to holistic and integrated care across the entire state. The MLK pilot clinic was renamed after Jeffrey Smith, who died at age 23 from complications from SCD. His father, Gil Smith, was the first mayor of Carson.

On October 25, 2019, Gil Smith joined Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Assemblyman Mike Gipson, Assemblyman Steven Bradford, Dr. Christina Ghaly, the Office of Senator Holly Mitchell, the Sickle Cell Foundation, along with MLK Outpatient Center staff and patients to offer a remembrance of Jeffrey Smith and to mark the launch of a critical statewide, coordinated system of care for individuals like him.

The MLK Outpatient Center Jeffrey Smith Sickle Cell Clinic team is led by Drs. Ellen Rothman and Susan Claster, Kimberly Boyd (LVN), Ashley McKinney (NP), Carla Francisco (LCSW) and Anthony Wells (CHW).



## LAC+USC Medical Center Cultural and Linguistics Department Opens

By Erika Flores Uribe, MD, MPH and Claudia Mata, MPH

We care for one of the largest linguistically diverse patient populations in the country. In fact, our DHS patient population is majority Limited English Proficient (LEP). Approximately 1.4 million encounters a year require language assistance services to enable patients to effectively communicate with physicians and health care providers.

Research suggests that adverse events affect LEP patients more frequently and are more likely to result in serious harm compared to those that affect English-speaking patients. Effective provider-patient communication is vital, especially in critical conversations like complex discharge instructions, informed consent, end of life decisions and catastrophic diagnoses, to name a few.

On November 15, 2019, Dr. Christina Ghaly joined LAC+USC Medical Center CEO Jorge Orozco to officiate the ribbon-cutting/grand opening of the new Cultural and Linguistics Department at the Historic LAC+USC General Hospital. The new Language Department headed by Claudia Mata now has an experienced team of 26 fully dedicated and nationally qualified Healthcare Interpreters on staff to assist with our linguistically diverse patient population. During the officiation Dr. Ghaly affirmed, “I am so glad to take the first steps to provide in-person interpretation for critical services.”

Access to qualified healthcare interpreters is vital for:

- Effective communication and improved understanding
- Adherence to care plans
- Appropriate use of resources
- Better patient and clinician satisfaction
- Decreased risk of adverse events and revisits



The healthcare interpreter team provides in-person interpretation services at LAC+USC Medical Center and also supports video remote interpretation needs across our entire system. The team is specifically trained in healthcare interpretation as well as medical terminology and are incredibly dedicated to our patient population.

Señora Amelia Hernandez, a patient at LAC+USC Medical Center who represents the approximate 60% of our patient population who are LEP, shared her experience with language services across decades of care:

“I’ve been coming to this hospital for a long time and I’m very proud of how far it has come to care for me and my family. My first visit to LAC+USC was in 1972. There were no language services then and no one who could tell me what was going on during my visits with the doctor.

I recently had to have a high-risk surgery here. I was very nervous. Having a medical interpreter available during my medical visits gave me a voice to express myself. I went into the surgery comfortable and at ease having had all my questions answered. I felt informed. I felt safe. I hope that you are able to help others like you helped me in whatever language they need.” Many patients like Señora Amelia, have expressed their gratitude and the impact of having qualified healthcare interpreters available for their visits.

Jorge Orozco, CEO LAC+USC Medical Center, concluded, “Improving the medical center’s language resources reinforces LAC+USC Medical Center’s mission to deliver culturally competent care and increase patient safety and reduce risks of medical errors due to miscommunication. I’m deeply grateful to everyone who believed in the vision and worked so hard over the past year to make The New Cultural and Linguistics Department a reality. Today is a testament to their efforts.”

## Humphrey CHC Director named “HPV Vaccine is Cancer Prevention” Champion by CDC

By Quentin O’Brien and Valerie Ojeda

Dr. Raymond Perry has been named California’s 2019 Human Papillomavirus (HPV) *HPV Vaccine is Cancer Prevention Champion* by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. As the director of Hubert H. Humphrey Comprehensive Health Center (Humphrey), Dr. Perry has been a leading force to improve our patients’ health throughout the Ambulatory Care Network (ACN).

In November 2018, Dr. Perry was awarded a grant to partner with the American Cancer Society (ACS) and focus on

improving the HPV vaccination rate within DHS. The goals were to establish the first-ever DHS HPV Taskforce of clinical champions, to address barriers to patient engagement and vaccination and to implement systems practice changes.

In true reflection of the ACN’s core purpose and values, Dr. Perry facilitated collaboration among all ACN sites as well as the DHS hospital-based primary care clinics to improve population health efforts. This quality improvement (QI) project launched in January 2019 and has included staff education as well as patient outreach efforts. In March, the Taskforce spon-

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sored a presentation to pediatric providers on how to improve communication with parents about HPV vaccination. In August, Dr. Perry coordinated a widespread outreach to adolescent patients empaneled at all DHS primary care who were due for the HPV vaccine. Each clinic site mailed postcards about the HPV vaccine to patients and followed the vaccination rates in ELM to track the impact of the outreach.

HPV vaccine is important because it can prevent cancers caused by HPV infection. HPV is a very common virus, and many people will not know if and when they are infected. However, every year in the US, nearly 40,000 women and men are diagnosed with a cancer caused by HPV infection. The most common types are cervical



Dr. Perry and Humphrey CHC Pediatric Primary Care Team (L to R: Saul Guzman, CMA; Christina Smith, LVN, Darcy Benedict, MD, Raymond Perry, MD, Courtney Harris, LVN, Cassandra Dixon, MD)

and throat cancers, and these may develop years or decades after someone has been infected with HPV. Most of these cases of cancer could be prevented with the HPV vaccine. This is why Dr. Perry, his team at Humphrey, as well as the members of the DHS HPV Taskforce are so committed to increasing the vaccination rate among our patients.

This year, with the focused work of the HPV Taskforce, HPV vaccination rates across DHS have increased by an average of 6 percentage points. In Dr. Perry’s clinic at Hubert H. Humphrey Comprehensive Health Center, the efforts of the pediatric team have resulted in a 61% vaccination rate for adolescents. Thank you Dr. Perry and team for your commitment to serving our patients!

## LA County Remembers the Unclaimed Dead at Annual Burial

By Fr. Chris Ponnet, Director of the Department of Spiritual Care at LAC+USC Medical Center

1,457...1,457...1,457 - A person who had experienced the interfaith prayer service was moved to tears. When the person next to them asked why they came, the person could only repeat the number 1,457, the number of persons buried as unclaimed in 2019 for the deaths of 2016. Tears were shared by these two strangers along with many others in the crowd.

The heavens opened up as we began the service with a heavy rain, which produced a lot of mud. It was a messy experience and yet under the blue tarps, the crowd of over 250 came together to remember and celebrate these lives.

I opened with these words: “We gather to pause, remember and acknowledge these 1,457 lives that were part of families. They were our coworkers, veterans, immigrants, homeless, babies and elders. The recent movie A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood asked the question: “Won’t you be my neighbor?” This is similar to the Golden Rule of most spiritual paths. At a key moment, Mr. Rogers asks for a moment of silence “to think of all the people who loved you into being.” This is what we do here every year. Today we pause and honor those who died in Los Angeles County during 2016 and today we bury. In song, sacred word and poetry, we celebrate that they were

part of our neighborhood at their deaths. May they continue to live.”

We had a chant and sage blessings led by a local Native American young man, then sacred texts were read in Hebrew, English, Spanish, Filipino and Chinese. We had a Zen Buddhist choir chant that was amplified by the blue tarps. The opening and closing of the service were led by the Street Symphony Choral Group with songs of solemn faith and hope for the future. It was a short time of community remembrance. During subsequent interviews with the media, I mentioned that some of the folks buried must have had broken relationships with their families. Some had come to Los Angeles to start a new life, a life of recovery, a life with great hope and ended up for many reasons alone and disconnected. We gather annually to affirm the human connection of all persons. May this annual service continue to be a light of hope to our city, county, nation and world.

Here are some closing thoughts from the service, “Let us be in silence to think of all the people who loved them into being. Gracious and loving, holy and true, we gather to remember, celebrate and bury persons created in your likeness, may they know they are loved and remembered. We pause in silence to entrust them into your hands. Amen.”

## Disaster Preparedness – Thank You First Responders

By Contributing writers, LA County Health Services — EMS Agency/DEC Program

In the November issue of The Pulse, we mentioned extreme fall weather. Since that article was published, Los Angeles County has experienced multiple Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) and the Saddle Ridge, Palisades, Getty and Tick fires. These have kept our first responders extremely busy and their exceptional bravery has saved many lives and property. We should all give THANKS to the men and women in uniform who respond to LA County’s wildland fires. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the Department of Health Services staff who worked overtime or covered shifts for those who could not make it into work because of the fires. All patients were cared for and operational continuity maintained.

As we move into the winter months, extreme weather events are still possible. The fires have burned much of the grass and brush, which can create potential landslide and mud-flow areas. Even if no property is lost, the roadways may get blocked and create delays or detours that may hinder access to work.

If you live near one of those burn areas, you may be

impacted during a sudden downpour. Even light but sustained rain can create hazardous conditions. With flash flooding, mud or landslides, there is very little time to give notice and evacuation is immediate. This is yet another reason to have a “Go Bag” ready in the trunk of your car.

You can establish good situational awareness by actively monitoring local radio stations and current traffic conditions. This practice is helpful and encouraged. It is important to remember that mobile traffic software may not provide quick enough directions to re-route you around or out of flash flood zones, mud or rockslides. A general rule to follow is to never drive through running water, especially if you cannot see the road.

A helpful link for monitoring major roadway incidents is the California Highway Patrol online dispatch (CAD) system. It may be found at: <http://cad.chp.ca.gov/Traffic.aspx>. This site is helpful for in and out of County travel planning.

We wish you a safe and healthy holiday season. Be vigilant at work, on the road, and while busy with holiday shopping. Don’t forget to buy a little something for your “Go Bag” as a gift to you!





# DHS SPOTLIGHT

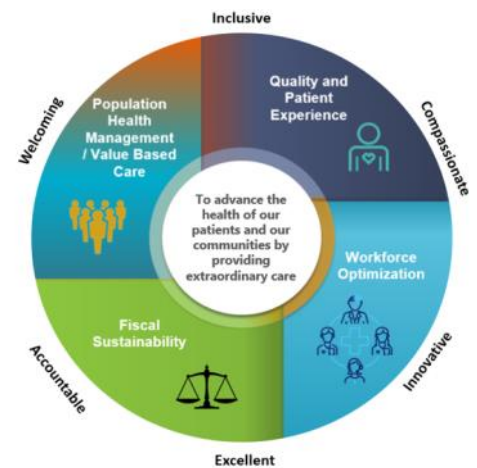
DHS Strategic Plan

December 2019

## Why is the DHS Strategic Plan important?

Our strategic plan provides a collective focus on who we are, what is important now, and how we as an organization can provide positive outcomes and benefits to the residents of LA County, in the context of a healthcare environment that presents both significant challenges and opportunities.

- DHS exists to serve our patients so our communities can flourish. Our history is rooted in a commitment to be of service to all those within Los Angeles County who need health services, regardless of who they are, where they are from, or how much money they make.
- As healthcare becomes more dependent on value-based, cost effective care models, and with the restructuring of Medi-Cal, our funding sources continue to evolve.
- Our financing environment is dynamic and uncertain, and informed by ongoing changes at every level of government.
- Expanded coverage under healthcare reform has provided patients with more choices, and we must meet their needs and expectations in order to ensure that they experience DHS as the best place to receive care and services.
- The importance of how we care for our patients across the system is critical. How we coordinate, communicate, and leverage resources across all our different venues will ensure that we are meeting the overall health needs of our patients.
- As part of the strategic planning work, we revised our Vision, Values and Mission to better reflect why we are here, the principles that guide our behaviors and what we want to become in a clear, meaningful way.



## What is the DHS Strategic Plan?

Our strategic plan aims to unify our health system together in a shared Vision, Values, Mission and Goals.

Our Vision is our future state, to achieve in the next decade or so: “Recognized nationally as a model integrated health system.”

Our Values and Mission are timeless. Our Mission is “to advance the health of our patients and our communities by providing extraordinary care.” Our Values that will guide all of our decisions and actions are: Inclusive, Compassionate, Innovative, Excellent, Accountable and Welcoming.

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(Cont'd from front)

To achieve our mission, we have identified four major goals that we will need to advance over the next three to five years:

- Population Health/Value-Based Care: Transform our system and services to provide cost-effective care of the whole patient across the continuum.
- Quality and Patient Experience: Optimize clinical quality and patient experience.
- Workforce Optimization: Establish a high-performing workforce.
- Fiscal Sustainability: Ensure financial viability in support of our vision.



## What is the impact?

Our plan provides a roadmap for how to navigate our complex and evolving healthcare environment. It provides a powerful, unifying vision to unite all of us across our organization. It grounds us in the values that matter to us, our patients and our communities. It focuses us on the key goals, objectives and initiatives that will help us to achieve that vision and fulfill our important mission.



## Where do we go from here?

It's important that our entire workforce understand our plan and their role in advancing it. We will be utilizing multiple communication channels to build awareness, understanding and excitement, including holding town hall meetings at various DHS facilities to invite further dialogue about the plan and how each of us can contribute to bringing it to life.

Learning about the plan will continue as we work collectively to implement it and achieve its goals. We will monitor our progress toward our goals, celebrate our achievements, make course corrections as needed and integrate all of these learnings as we move forward.



Achieving our vision and goals will require that each of us bring all of our talents, efforts and insights to our work every day. Talk to your colleagues about our plan and what it means to them, and to you. Identify ways in which your team's work aligns with the plan's goals and objectives. Seek opportunities to collaborate across roles, departments, facilities and disciplines. If we all work together, we can make an enormous impact for ourselves, our patients and our communities.

## Acknowledgments

Thanks to the DHS Executive Leadership Team for your leadership in authoring this plan and to all the stakeholders who contributed ideas and feedback as it was created.



**DHS**  
SPOTLIGHT

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