

MSSC NEWS



SEPTEMBER
2020

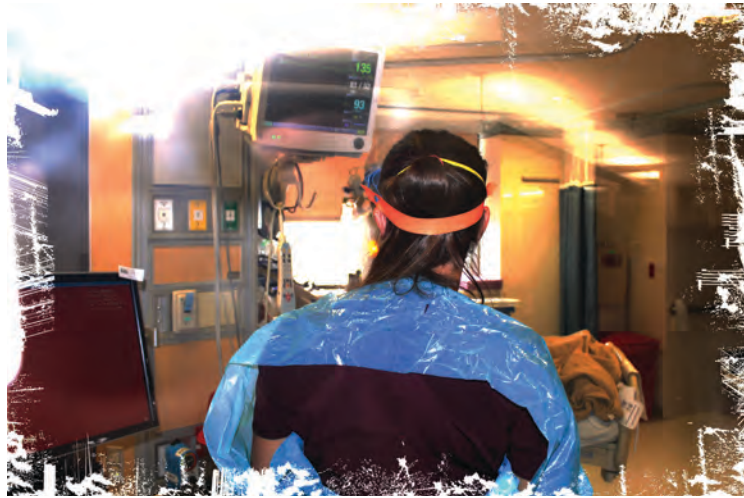
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SEDGWICK COUNTY

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Inside the ICU

For some physicians, appearances can be deceiving.

The number of positive COVID-19 cases in Sedgwick County has declined in recent weeks while deaths in the Wichita area remain below 100. But if you ask the exhausted physicians and nurses working in Wichita's busy ICUs, COVID is still as real as it gets – a horrifying, unpredictable virus that requires constant vigilance and response to keep its victims alive.

"Everything has changed about the COVID ICU," said Shauna Kern, DO, a hospitalist intensivist at Ascension Via Christi St. Francis. "The words to describe it are rather depressing and somewhat terrifying. We haven't really had a situation before in which we don't know what we don't know, so it's really hard to watch people pass away despite our best efforts. We're not used to it."

Just days ago, a Wichita nurse in an ICU remained covered in full PPE to stay inside the closed room of a critical patient who was both on

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A WICHITA ICU NURSE MONITORS AN UNSTABLE COVID PATIENT; CHLOE STEINSHOUER, MD, DONS HER PPE; ANOTHER LOOK INTO THE ROOM OF AN ISOLATED COVID PATIENT WITH CONSTANT MONITORING.

dialysis and a ventilator and required the administration of a half dozen medications. The patient was COVID-positive with unstable heart rhythms and needed constant monitoring.

On the other side of the transparent sliding doors, physicians and nurses read notes written on the glass with dry erase markers and advised or rushed off to gather needed supplies, which were

PLEASE SEE **ICU**, PAGE 4

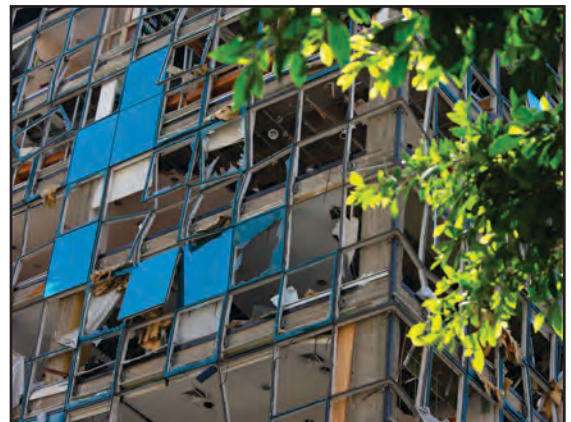
Impact of Beirut explosion felt in Wichita community

Beirut, Lebanon, may be more than 6,600 miles away from Wichita, but the massive and devastating explosion that rocked the country on Aug. 4 had a significant impact on many physicians in Sedgwick County and continues to drive their efforts today.

The disaster started with a warehouse fire at the Port of Beirut, which officials reported set off a colossal explosion after 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate that had been unsafely stored there detonated.

The blast leveled nearly everything surrounding the port and damaged buildings and blew out windows of structures miles away. Three hospitals were wrecked and one of the largest ones was destroyed. Some 200 people were reported dead from the blast and thousands more were injured. Officials reported damages of up to \$15 billion while an estimated 300,000 people were made homeless.

PLEASE SEE **BEIRUT**, PAGE 2



MASSIVE DESTRUCTION: THE FACADE OF A HIGH-RISE BUILDING THAT WAS DAMAGED IN THE AUG. 4 EXPLOSION IN BEIRUT, LEBANON.

Another transition during this unusual year: Retirement



Patricia Wyatt-Harris, MD
September President's Message

This year has been full of interesting, new situations. Many transitions have been made from the lives we were living before COVID-19 to the lives we are living now. I am getting ready for another transition: I am going to retire at the end of 2020.

I have been thinking about this for a long time, but announcing and planning for the change have just started.

I met with my office staff to determine how to reschedule future appointments to other doctors in our practice starting in January. One of my receptionists asked, "When you were younger did you ever really think about how to do this?" I always knew it would happen sometime, but it always seemed so far away.

Mailing a letter to all my patients didn't seem like a good idea because the office would be swamped with phone calls. We decided on a plan to notify patients incrementally, and that will be starting soon.

I have started telling my patients. This news has been met with mixed reactions. A lot of patients say, "Oh, no, what am I going to do next year?" Some say, "I knew this was coming." These state-

ments are usually followed by "Congratulations!" and "Enjoy your retirement."

I have some very long-term relationships with patients and their families. For example, I have delivered many babies for women whom I actually delivered. Ending these relationships is difficult.

Some have asked what I plan to do when I retire. I have written about being a grandma, which I love. Spending more time with my family is my first priority. I am also a musician. I play the violin and I take piano lessons, so I am looking forward to having more time for these activities. We also plan to travel in our camper as much as possible.

I have been called a "trailblazer" at times because I was the first married female resident in the Wesley Ob-Gyn residency. I was the first female resident in that residency to have a baby during training. Academic milestones were always planned for me, but I had to figure out how to have a fulfilling family life while becoming a physician.

There aren't any handbooks out there to tell people how to retire. Lots of people are willing to give financial advice. My husband and I have navigated the transition to Medicare, which is quite confusing, even for a doctor. I am joyfully looking forward to blazing another trail into retirement.

BEIRUT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The explosion sent emotional shock waves around the world and directly to Wichita, where a thriving Lebanese community – including an estimated 40-60 physicians of Lebanese descent – reeled from the shock and horror of the news. Many have family or friends who were living there at the time and were injured or impacted by the explosion.



DR. MATTAR

"My parents live there and I have a house in Beirut," said oncologist Bassam Mattar, MD, of the Cancer Center of Kansas. "We prided ourselves that we can see the port and Mediterranean from our house."

Fortunately for Mattar, his parents were vacationing in the mountains and were not present in their sixth-floor house that day. "They were not home," Mattar said. "That's why they survived."

His brother, however, was home and luckily received only minor scratches as the roof blew in. He helped take an injured neighbor to a hospital, which was a major undertaking since the nearby hospitals were out of commission, Mattar said.

"It was a big mess," he said. "There was a lot of damage."

Many Lebanese people blame an inept government crippled by corruption for allowing circumstances to exist that led to the explosion. The Aug. 4 blast, which prompted traumatic memories of the country's 15-year civil war, has motivated many Lebanese families to leave for good, Wichita physicians said.



DR. SHAHOURI

This is a shame for the country, whose beauty is unrivaled and whose potential could be limitless, said Shadi Shahouri, MD, a rheumatologist with Arthritis and Rheumatology Clinics of Kansas. Shahouri, who received his medical degree in 1998 from the American University of Beirut, has been in contact with his nephew, a well-educated, young urbanite whose home was completely destroyed by the blast.

Sadly, his nephew has had enough and is going to leave Lebanon permanently and move to France.

How to help

To join or help Dr. Chady Sarraf through the USA Chapter of the International Lebanese Medical Association, please contact Dr. Sarraf at chadysarraf@hotmail.com.

"This makes me feel sad because this is the story of a lot of Lebanese generations," Shahouri said. "His story is like my story. They are supposed to be the hope of the country. But they could not have a successful, good life in Lebanon because of wars and corruption. We didn't have enough chance to succeed in our country and we basically emigrated. That's what is happening now."

There is anger, too. For the senseless deaths. For the loss of property. For the helplessness one feels being worlds apart and watching the devastation unfold. Despite the challenges, many Lebanese residents in Wichita want to help.

Chady Sarraf, MD, chief hospitalist with Sound Physicians, is corralling his shock and frustration into an organized platform through which Wichitans can assist. He co-leads the USA Chapter of the International Lebanese Medical Association (ILMA), which officially launched in August. The group is looking to connect with colleagues and support medical graduates of Lebanese descent in the U.S. as well as in Lebanon. At the moment, however, its priority is to provide medical and food assistance to Lebanon following the disaster.

"The scale of the disaster is just beyond anything you can imagine," Sarraf said. "We know there are going to be a lot of limitations taking care of those patients. We want to reach out and see how we can support them."

After the blast, and with COVID in full swing, one of the immediate needs is for dialysis machines to minister to 4,100 Lebanese



DR. SARRAF

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

New lab options for COVID tests

To help reduce the turnaround time of COVID-19 tests of physicians, MSSC made arrangements with two local labs that perform PCR tests and a medical practice that conducts antigen rapid tests.

Affiliated Medical Services Lab, in partnership with Ascension Via Christi, has agreed to perform a PCR test on any MSSC physician. Test results would be available in fewer than 12 hours.

In order to be tested, a physician needs to go the AMS lab at 2916 E. Central and present his or her badge (or other physician identification) and a prescription for the test. Lab costs are billed to insurance companies.

Heartland Pathology recently obtained an Abbott antigen rapid-test machine and has agreed to test MSSC physicians. Results are available in as little as 15 minutes. Heartland offers testing in the parking lot of its office at 9300 E. 29th St. N. Tell the technician that you are a physician with the Medical Society. Lab costs are billed to insurance companies.

Wichita State University built a new laboratory that can analyze nasal and oral PCR tests. MSSC member Joel Alderson, DO, is the director of the lab, which will be operational in October. The lab is available to process tests of physicians, medical staff and patients. The turnaround time is 24 hours.

WSU supplies the testing kit, but the sampling must be done elsewhere. Samples should be sent via medical courier to the lab at 4174 S. Oliver, Bld. #174H. The total lab cost is \$80 per test, with \$24 billed when the testing kit is ordered and the remaining \$56 billed upon lab analysis. Practices are responsible for billing insurance.

MSSC large meetings canceled

Due to ongoing concerns about the coronavirus, the Medical Society has canceled all its large-group meetings through the end of this year, including the annual meeting in December.

"The potential risk of having that many physicians in the same room is too high," MSSC Executive Director Phillip Brownlee said. "And if we limit attendance and have people spread out, that defeats one of the main purposes of these meetings, which is interacting with other physicians."

Brownlee said the MSSC budget for 2021, which normally would be approved at the annual meeting, will be voted on electronically this year.



PSAs in Action: JENNIFER JACKSON, MD, was one of nine MSSC physicians who recently filmed public service announcements for Sedgwick County. The PSAs, which should start airing soon in the Wichita television market, thank the public for wearing masks and doing their part to help limit the spread of COVID-19. One PSA by MSSC President **PATRICIA WYATT-HARRIS**, MD, encourages people not to put off getting medical care, including preventive care. Psychiatrist **LARRY MITNAUL**, MD, offers tips on dealing with stress. **VENESSA LOPEZ**, MD, did a PSA in Spanish.

BEIRUT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

dialysis patients throughout the country. The minister of public health, Dr. Hamad Hassan, wrote the USA Chapter of the ILMA on Aug. 31 asking for help with obtaining at least five dialysis machines and four portable reverse osmosis units.

"I think we can reach out, talk to our connections, see if we can help," Sarraf said. "We want to be established and be strong in Wichita and Sedgwick County because we would like to give back to the community and make a difference. We can definitely help in many ways. That's why I feel really passionate about it."



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Exhausted and emotionally raw ICU physicians face COVID patients daily

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

carefully passed through the doors to the attending nurse. There is no rushing into these rooms. Physicians and their care teams must stop and suit up in multiple layers each time an ICU patient crashes or needs attention, which can be as many as 30 times a day. Seconds tick by, but there is no other way.

Not long before that, an older man in his late 80s had one wish: to eat lemon cake with his wife for his birthday as he had done every year for many years. As he was COVID-19 positive with multiple comorbidities and was being treated in a Wichita ICU, his bereft care team chose to get him a lemon cake, which they arranged for him to eat with his wife on FaceTime. The man passed away not long after from complications of COVID, his comfort care team at the bedside in place of his family.

The COVID risk is real

This is daily life for physicians and their teams in Sedgwick County hospitals today. For them, COVID remains as devastating a monster today as it was in early 2020 as the virus expanded into the United States and became a full-fledged global pandemic.

"We are seeing people fight for their lives all day and we're trying to stay safe while taking care of them, and then you hear 120 people argue at a city council meeting about why they don't want to wear a mask," said critical care intensivist and pulmonologist Chloe Steinshouer, MD, ICU medical director at Wesley Medical Center. "It's very disheartening."

She's referring to a Wichita City Council meeting on Sept. 8 where council members heard testimony from anti-maskers who complained the ordinance was negatively impacting their lives and businesses. Many conspiracy theories were shared, as were opinions that masking and social distancing do not save lives. The council ended up voting to extend the mask mandate until Oct. 21, or until the COVID threat drops to the green level or the rate of positive cases in Sedgwick County drops below 5%.

In the past few weeks, Sedgwick County's new positive COVID test rates have been declining from a high of 14.1% in late July. The county has bore witness to more than 8,000 cases since the pandemic started.

Such numbers don't seem very high when compared to states such as Florida, California and Texas, though on a per-capita basis Kansas has been considered a "hot spot" at times. Wichita also has fared better than peer cities in the region.

Not just a matter of luck

Have we just been lucky? Not really, said Garold Minns, MD, Sedgwick County's public health officer. We've been smart because Sedgwick County instituted masking and social distancing ordinances early on and has kept them in effect in addition to other restrictions. And the majority of people in the county have cooperated, which has made these tools effective right now, he said.

"There's no reason to think the numbers won't go up if we stop masking," Minns said. "The virus is still circulating and over 90 percent of us are still vulnerable. We don't have our own immunity. If we stop doing the things we're doing now – wearing masks, social distancing, and frequent testing and isolation of people with symptoms – then the virus is going to take advantage of that and the numbers will go right back up."

For ICU workers, COVID constantly shapes their perspectives as positive patients continue to fill ICU beds and physicians and their care teams are forced to stay on top of every detail that will keep them and the families they go home to safe.

"We're scared that we're going to contract the virus and take it home to our family," Kern said. "We're all just human, and this virus



ALL DECKED OUT: HOSPITALISTS SHAUNA KERN, DO, LEFT, AND DANIEL DEJONG, MD, IN FULL PPE. THEIR SELFIE APPEARS HAZY BECAUSE THEIR CELL PHONES ARE STORED IN BIOHAZARD BAGS WHILE ON DUTY IN COVID UNITS.

scares us too."

Because of the risks, families of ICU patients are not allowed to visit their loved ones, and many patients who die from COVID do so surrounded only by the health care team that tried to save them.

That's been a real game-changer for most ICU specialists, not having the family be by the bedside, supporting the patient in ways only a loved one can. This frustrates physicians, who can't even share an encouraging smile with a patient through an N95 mask, goggles, head cap and face shield.

"We know we're doing really important work, but it takes its toll," said Michael Lowe, RN, ICU manager at Wesley Medical Center. "We like to be stoic and proud and not admit to the toll that patients getting worse and worse takes on us, with family members sobbing over the phone, not being able to visit."

The stress rarely abates

While perhaps not as shell-shocked as many felt in early March, frontline physicians are anxious and exhausted, both emotionally and physically as they strive to keep patients alive amidst a virus that still does not have a cure or vaccine.

Many doctors are juggling obstacles to providing an elevated standard of care in the COVID era and must think outside the box to get the things people need to get better, Steinshouer said. The stress of caring for so many sick patients with limited tools is very real. "Even with the best care we provide, we can't save all these patients," she said. "You can't watch someone die every day and stay the same."

That's why self-care is such an important component of a medical professional's mental, emotional and physical health, said Shawna Allen, LMSW, LMAC, with the Mental Health Association of South Central Kansas. That includes talking about the day with a friend, colleague or professional and taking regular, even short, breaks from work to relax and revive.

"We all in the helping field think that we are supposed to hold and have it together at all times," Allen said. "But in reality, we are experiencing secondary trauma, and we have to address that and treat ourselves to be healthy to treat our community."

In Brief ▶▶▶

New and noteworthy

Antonios named chief clinical officer



DR. ANTONIOS

Ascension Via Christi's Chief Medical Officer Sam Antonios, MD, was named Chief Clinical Officer for Ascension Kansas effective Sept. 7.

Since March, Antonios has served as one of three executive leaders of the Ascension Kansas COVID-19 Command Center. He has served as a member of the senior leadership team in Wichita since 2016, where, in his role as CMO, he has been responsible for executive leadership and direction on hospital clinical matters and supporting the Ascension Via Christi medical staff in Wichita, Ascension officials said.

Antonios joined Ascension Via Christi in 2008 as a hospitalist and also served as medical director of Information Systems.

"I'm honored and excited to serve our communities in Kansas in my new role," Antonios said. "It is a privilege to work with all the great physicians of our state to advance the quality and safety of patient care."

Hospitals loosen visitor restrictions

Both Ascension Via Christi and Wesley Healthcare have eased visitor restrictions at their Wichita-area hospitals.

On Sept. 11, Ascension's three Wichita acute-care hospitals – St. Francis, St. Joseph and St. Teresa – and the Ascension Via Christi Rehabilitation Hospital began allowing patients (except for those undergoing treatment for COVID-19) to have one visitor per day between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Further exceptions may be made where there are end-of-life or other extenuating circumstances, such as patients unable to advocate for themselves.

On Sept. 21, Wesley began allowing patients to have one visitor in the building between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. daily. One patient advocate also will be allowed to accompany patients into the emergency departments and freestanding ERs. No visitors are allowed in high-risk areas (including COVID units), and no visitors under the age of 12 are allowed.

Both hospital systems may allow some exceptions to the policy, such as for end-of-life situations, on a case-by-case basis.

KUSM-W grant tackles drug abuse

The University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita has received a \$200,000 federal grant to start offering substance abuse education as part of its training for the school's medical students and residents, as well as area practicing physicians.

The two-year grant is from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or SAMHSA, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The grant is filling a critical need in training medical providers who are treating patients struggling with addictions, particularly those related to opioid use, KUSM officials said.

Bike Walk Wichita promotes Walktober

Walktober is a free, community-wide initiative to promote physical activity during the month of October, led by the Health and Wellness Coalition. The goal is to encourage activity for at least 150 minutes per week. For a list of events, check out the Wichiwalks calendar at bikewalkwichita.org/walktober.

Wine, Whiskey and Wichita debuts

MSSC is changing up its popular December "Wine with a Purpose" event to benefit Project Access. With the uncertainty of COVID-19, MSSC canceled this year's annual meeting. Instead, MSSC is excited to partner with Project Access to assist with a new fundraiser called Wine, Whiskey and Wichita to be held Oct. 19-22.

"During this time of COVID and the impact it has had on those who have lost their employment, along with their health insurance, Project Access is even more important than ever," said Shelley Duncan, executive director. "Project Access is expecting to see an increase in the number of individuals seeking donated medical care provided by our generous medical community."

The fundraiser will be an online silent auction. Organizers are seeking donations from MSSC members of one or two bottles of quality wine or whiskey, or a Wichita-themed item. If you are able to donate, please drop off your donated items at the MSSC office by Sept. 30. Arrangements also can be made to pick up donations. Please call Denise at 683-7558. The auction site will be live on Oct. 19. Emails will be sent out with more information.



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ROSTER UPDATE

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NEW ACTIVE MEMBERS



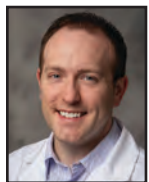
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REINSTATE TO ACTIVE



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Tari M. Ernst, MD - 9/30/2020
John K. Forge, MD - 3/1/2020
Yoram B. Leitner, MD - 7/17/2020
William R. Reed, MD - 6/30/2020
Donald B. Scrafford, MD - 10/28/2020

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The MSSC News is published monthly by the Medical Society of Sedgwick County, Kansas. The Society does not necessarily endorse all the views expressed in this publication.

Managing Editor: Phillip Brownlee, Executive Director



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