

Spring 2025

BALANCE



SEE WHAT'S INSIDE

CANCER CARE
CLOSE TO HOME

HEALING
THE HEART

IS HORMONE
THERAPY SAFE?

COMPASSION IN ACTION

Every day, I am inspired by the compassion and excellence demonstrated by the Phelps Health team. This issue of *Balance* magazine is a true reflection of that spirit – with two special stories highlighting how we improve the lives of the community members we serve.

One standout story belongs to Traci Brookshire, a Phelps Health employee who overcame a life-threatening heart condition. “I knew I wanted my care to be here,” she said. Traci’s journey is a true testament to the quality of care we proudly offer at Phelps Health. See page 11 for more.

Traci’s story is a personal reminder for me, as I’ve witnessed the impact that cardiovascular care can have on a family. From my mother’s recent open-heart surgery to the heart health challenges experienced by my grandparents, this issue is top of mind.

I’m excited about the strides Phelps Health made in 2024, including offering 24/7 cardiac catheterization care and advanced treatments like PFO closure for heart defects. Our heart and vascular experts consistently bring new, lifesaving innovations to our community.

The “sister spotlight” on page 15 features the inspiring story of Debbie and Barbara Grommet, two longtime employees who embody our organizational values through their dedication to Phelps Health and the Phelps Health Foundation.

I am so proud of employees like Debbie and Barbara who not only show care for patients every day but also financially support our mission through the Foundation’s vital work. Their generosity helps ensure that our most vulnerable patients have access to resources and support that can make all the difference.

Please enjoy this issue of *Balance*.

Sincerely,

Jason Shenefield, President and CEO



“I AM INSPIRED BY
THE COMPASSION
AND EXCELLENCE
DEMONSTRATED BY THE
PHELPS HEALTH TEAM.”

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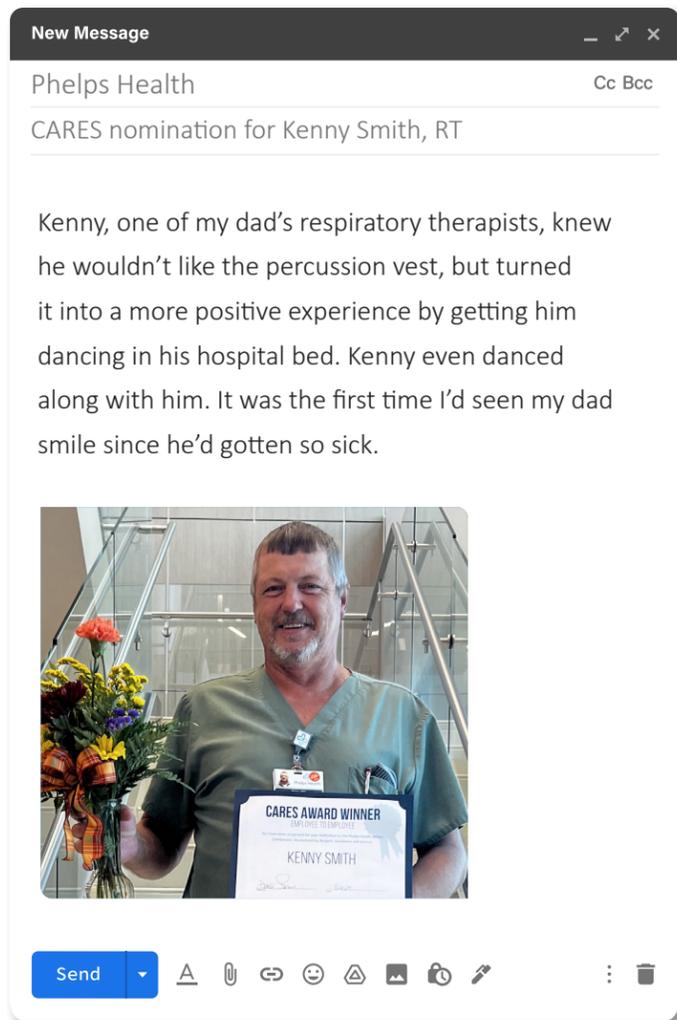
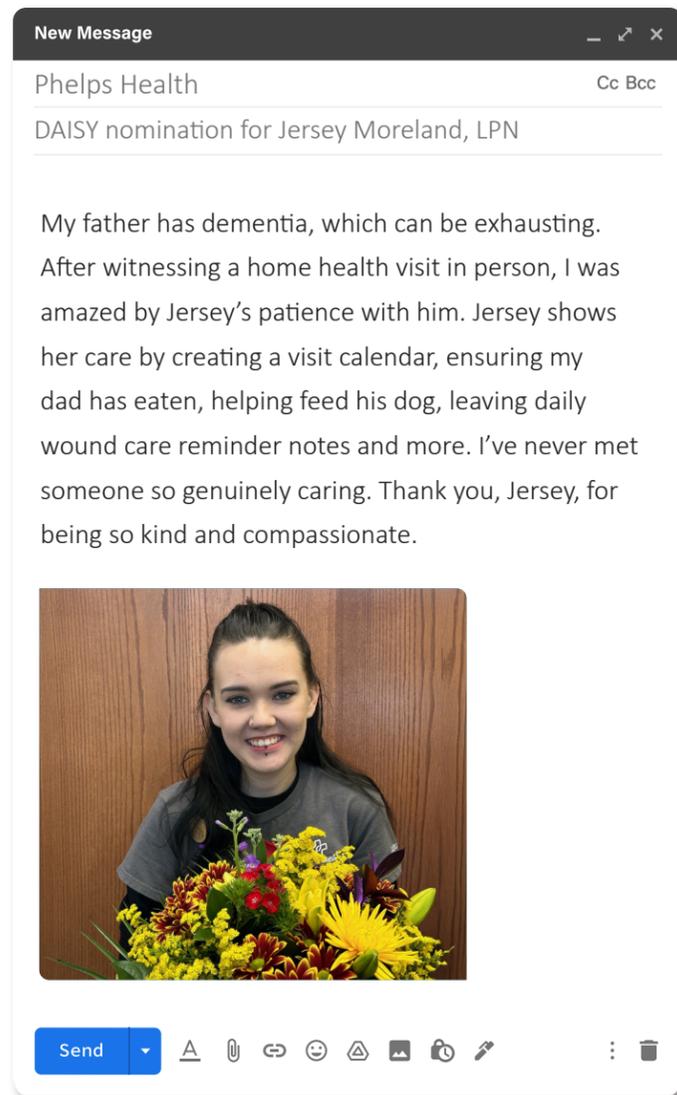
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AT PHELPS HEALTH, WE LOVE HEARING FROM OUR PATIENTS AND VISITORS.



ASK A DOCTOR

Children and Screen Time: How Much Is Too Much?

How much screen time is OK?

Screen time depends on the child's age and how they use devices. Here's a simple guide:



Babies and toddlers under 2: No screen time, except for quick video chats

Kids ages 2-5: No more than 1 hour per day of high-quality programming with adult supervision



Children 6 and older: No more than 2 hours per day

Make sure screen time doesn't get in the way of sleep, exercise, school or quality time with friends and family.

What happens when kids have too much screen time?

Too many hours staring at screens can cause:

- Eye strain and vision problems
- Bad posture and body aches
- Trouble sleeping
- Increased risk of gaining unhealthy weight

To reduce these effects, encourage regular breaks, set screen-time limits, promote physical activity and avoid screens before bedtime.

How does screen time impact mental health?

Spending too much time on devices can:

- Increase anxiety and depression
- Reduce in-person social interactions
- Lower self-esteem

However, not all screen time is bad! Educational and interactive content can help kids learn and develop skills when used carefully.

How can kids cut down on screen time?

Children can reduce screen time by engaging in fun, offline activities that foster connection and creativity.

- Read books
- Draw or do art projects
- Play sports
- Have family game nights
- Go outside and explore
- Talk and spend time with friends in person

By finding fun things to do, children can stay connected while reducing their screen time.



Shruti Sinha, MD

What are some tips for healthy screen use for homework?

If your child uses a tablet at school:

- Set clear screen-time limits
- Take regular breaks
- Encourage good posture
- Promote physical activity
- Keep screens at a good distance
- Have good lighting

Parents should also set a good example by modeling healthy screen habits. Remember, balance is key! Help your kids enjoy technology without letting it take over.



SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT TODAY

Dr. Sinha is a pediatrician at Phelp's Health. She currently accepts new patients from newborn to age 18 at the Phelp's Health Medical Office Building in Rolla. Call (573) 458-3723, visit phelpshealth.org or use MyChart to schedule an appointment.

These letters, which were edited for length and clarity, were sent from patients and visitors about their experience at Phelp's Health.

If you would like to nominate a Phelp's Health employee who made a difference, visit bit.ly/3Tm2d7K or scan the QR code.



Erin's Journey:

TREATING METASTATIC BREAST CANCER AT PHELPS HEALTH

By Sarah Potter



In August of 2023, Rolla resident Erin Simon noticed a lump in her breast while breastfeeding. She initially dismissed it as a clogged duct, but her history of benign tumors prompted her to visit her obstetrician gynecologist (OB/GYN) at Phelps Health. Following her doctor's advice, she scheduled an ultrasound to check the lump. While waiting for the appointment, she started feeling pain in her upper right abdomen that spread to her shoulder. In late August, she went to the Emergency Department (ED) because her pain was getting worse. There, a CT scan showed multiple spots on her liver, revealing that she had cancer spreading to other parts of her body.

"That was a huge shock," said Erin, who was only 38 at the time of her diagnosis. "I was a deer in the headlights at that moment, rushing around to get additional scans."

The following whirlwind of tests included multiple CT scans, a mammogram, ultrasounds and a biopsy. Ultimately, Erin was diagnosed with stage four metastatic triple-positive breast cancer, a late-stage breast cancer where the cancer has spread to distant organs and, in her case, her liver. Fortunately, her bones, lungs and brain remain clear, sparing her from even more invasive complications. Despite the diagnosis, Erin remains hopeful, empowered by the knowledge that being triple positive means she has multiple treatment options available.

After visiting with different oncologists in St. Louis, Erin's journey brought her back home to Rolla to the Phelps Health Delbert Day Cancer Institute (DDCI), where she says she received excellent care.

"Everything at the DDCI has been top-notch," she said. "The facility is nice, new and clean, but the people truly make the difference. They see me as a real person, not just another patient. They know my family, ask about my son and genuinely care about my well-being."

She said her medical oncologist, Thomas Guerrero-Garcia, MD, framed her diagnosis not as a death sentence but as a chronic illness to manage.

"When I met with him [Dr. Guerrero] for our second



opinion, I could tell immediately how kind he was," said Erin. "He didn't give me any prognosis. He didn't tell me how long he expected me to live. He didn't look at me like I was already gone. He told me to keep planning my summers, and that was all the hope I needed."

Since October 2023, Erin has been undergoing chemotherapy infusions every 3 weeks and immunotherapy to target the HER2 protein, a hallmark of her aggressive cancer type. She finished her active chemotherapy in May 2024 after 11 rounds. Now, she is in her maintenance phase, where she takes nightly hormone medication to suppress the hormones that feed her cancer.

Erin has tolerated the immunotherapy treatments remarkably well and has maintained a normal life despite her diagnosis. She emphasizes the importance of the support she received from Phelps Health and the DDCI. The Cancer Gala & Co., a Rolla nonprofit organization that supports cancer patients, also helped Erin with one of her mortgage payments, which freed up their funds for medical bills. This financial support can alleviate stress for patients undergoing treatment and their families.

Despite the challenges, Erin maintains a positive outlook. "I tell people I'm fine—there's nothing wrong with me," she said. "I don't feel sick, and I don't look sick. I intend to live a normal life for as long as possible."



“IF SOMETHING FEELS OFF, BE YOUR BEST ADVOCATE. DON'T LET ANYONE DISMISS YOUR CONCERNS.”

Hair loss is one of the most feared side effects of chemotherapy, adding to the emotional and physical challenges of treatment. Erin credits cold capping, a special cap that patients wear to chill the scalp, for helping her keep about 90% of her hair during chemotherapy. The tight rubber cap freezes the scalp, slows blood flow to the hair follicles and limits the amount of chemotherapy that can reach the hair.



Erin's determination is evident as she approaches her treatment with a mindset focused on living fully.

“Metastatic breast cancer is not curable, but I don't consider it terminal,” she clarifies. “I have many treatment options available, and until I run out of those options, I'll keep fighting.”

Erin's story also powerfully reminds us of the importance of self-advocacy in healthcare.

“Listen to your body,” she advises. “If something feels off, be your best advocate. Don't let anyone dismiss your concerns.”

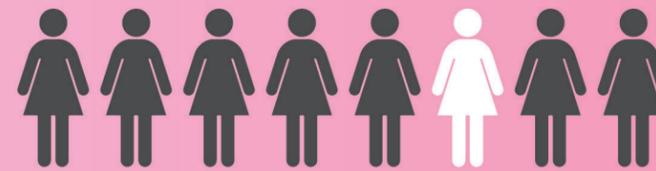
Erin advises women to get checked regularly because one in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. Her experience reinforces the need for self-awareness about health, particularly for those under 40 who may not routinely receive diagnostic testing.

As Erin continues her health journey, she remains grateful for the compassionate care she receives at the DDCI.

“I haven't met a single person here who doesn't genuinely care about my health and family,” she reflects. “You become a regular at your cancer institute, and it's crucial to feel comfortable and trust your care team.”

Erin's optimism is infectious, and she hopes her experience will inspire others to seek the care and support they need. With support from Phelps Health and the DDCI, Erin continues to embrace life, advocate for herself and guide others facing similar challenges.

BREAST CANCER: KEY STATS AND FACTS



1 IN 8 WOMEN

in the US will develop breast cancer in their lifetime, making it the most common cancer among women, aside from skin cancer.



30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week, along with maintaining a healthy weight, limiting alcohol and avoiding smoking, can help reduce the risk of breast cancer.

5-10% of Breast Cancer Cases

are linked to inherited gene mutations, such as BRCA1 and BRCA2, meaning family history and genetics can play a role in risk.

3.8 MILLION!

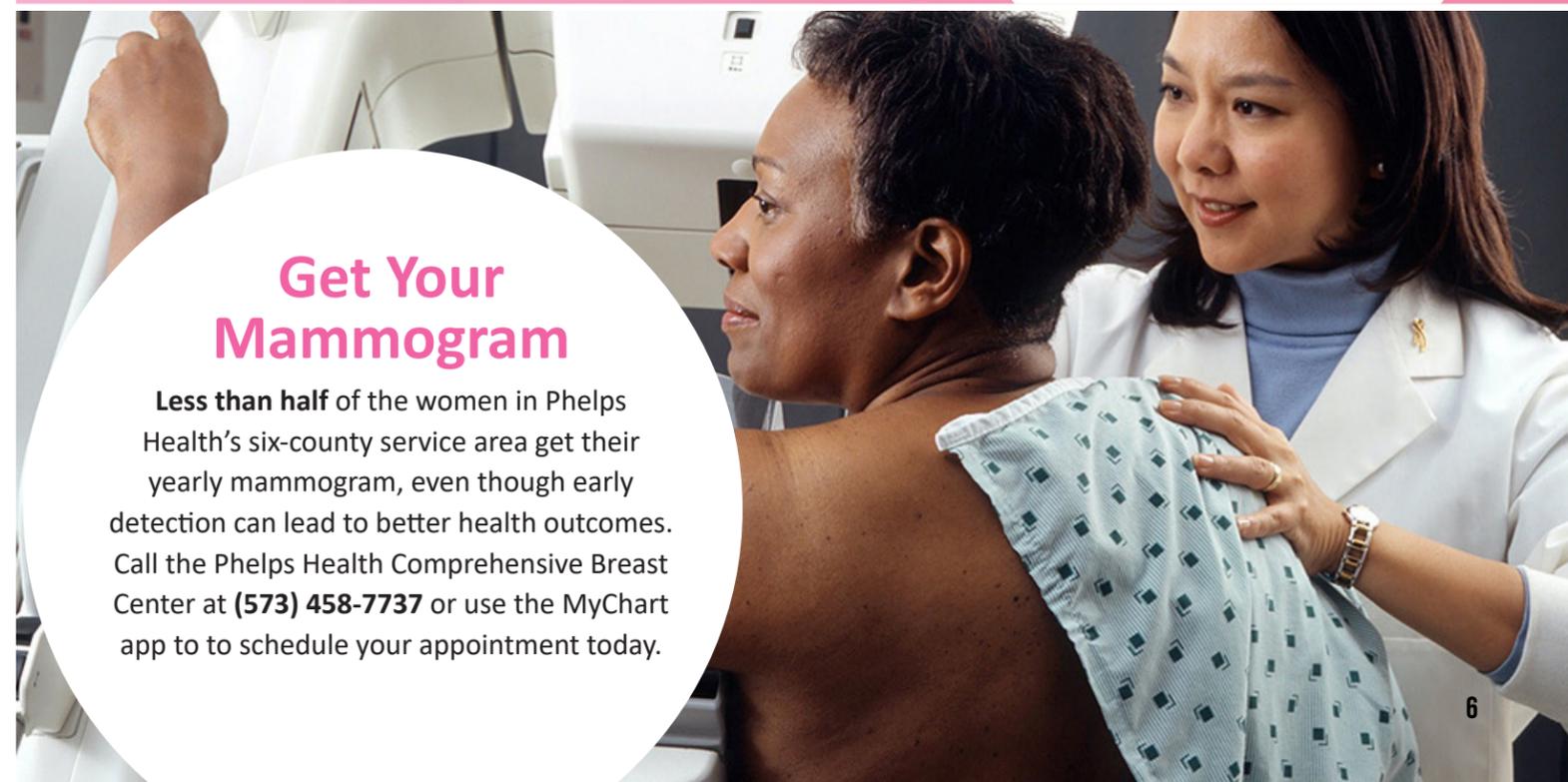
That's the estimated number of breast cancer survivors in the US today, thanks to advances in treatment options like surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, targeted therapy and immunotherapy.

99%

That's the 5-year survival rate for women diagnosed with localized breast cancer (before it spreads), highlighting the importance of early detection through mammograms and self-exams.

Get Your Mammogram

Less than half of the women in Phelps Health's six-county service area get their yearly mammogram, even though early detection can lead to better health outcomes. Call the Phelps Health Comprehensive Breast Center at (573) 458-7737 or use the MyChart app to to schedule your appointment today.



HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY: WHAT WOMEN NEED TO KNOW

By Stefanie Van Wyk

Navigating menopause can feel overwhelming, but understanding your options is key. Phelps Health Obstetrician and Gynecologist (OB/GYN) Jenny Pennycook, MD, FACOG, cuts through the confusion to shed light on hormone replacement therapy. She also offers essential advice for women considering trendy treatments.

WHAT IS HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY?

Hormone replacement therapy (or HRT) is an FDA-approved treatment to relieve the symptoms of menopause (when periods stop) and perimenopause (the months or years leading up to menopause). During this transition, the ovaries make varying amounts of hormones, which can lead to symptoms including:

- Bone loss
- Brain fog
- Hot flashes and night sweats
- Mood swings or depression
- Sleep problems/fatigue
- Vaginal dryness

HRT treats these symptoms by stabilizing levels of the reproductive hormones estrogen and progesterone, restoring hormonal balance.

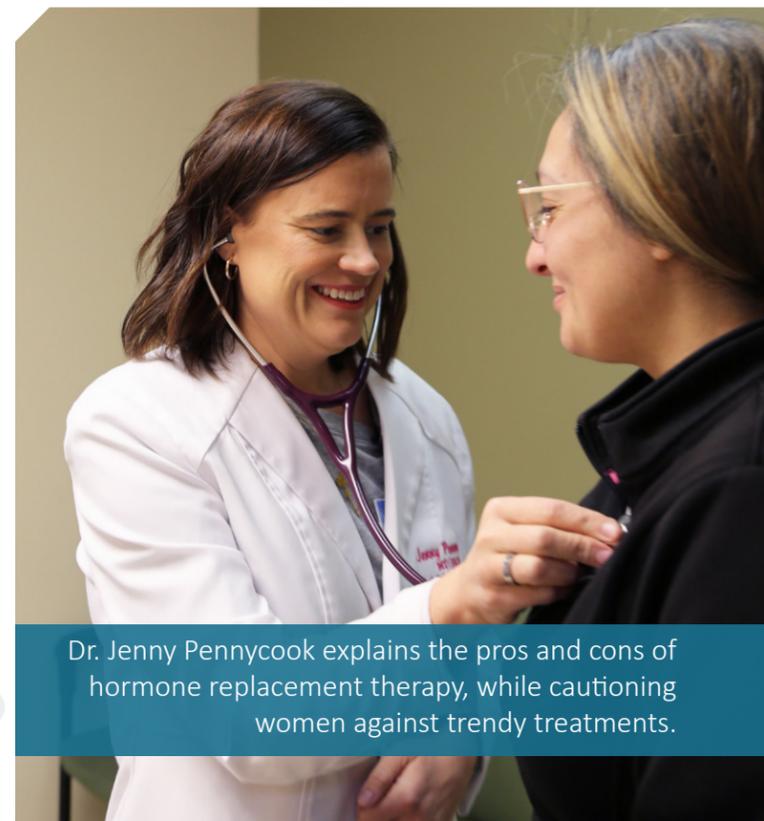
IS HRT SAFE?

The Scare. In 2002, a Women's Health Initiative (WHI) trial raised questions about the safety of hormone therapy. Increased risks (cardiac events and breast cancer) appeared to outweigh the preventive benefits (reduced fractures and colon cancers). The study's negative results garnered widespread publicity, causing panic among users and prompting new guidance for doctors prescribing HRT. The result? Ninety percent (90%) of women using the HRT ended treatment at the time. Note: The study focused on women in their late 50s and 60s, who had taken a hormone pill for 5-plus years.

A Fresh Look. Like most things, the truth is somewhere in the middle. In later years, reanalysis of the WHI trial and new studies showed that HRT benefits younger or early postmenopausal women, by improving heart health and mortality. However, public opinion on HRT remains mixed.

HOW CAN WOMEN MINIMIZE THE RISKS?

- Start HRT before age 60 or within 10 years of menopause. Studies show your risk for HRT complications is higher if you begin therapy more than 10 years after menopause symptoms begin. Taking HRT in your 40s or 50s is typically not associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular (heart) disease.
- Take progesterone if you still have a uterus.
- Work with your provider to find an HRT that best minimizes your risk.
- Live a healthy lifestyle.
- Get regular women's health exams and mammograms.



Dr. Jenny Pennycook explains the pros and cons of hormone replacement therapy, while cautioning women against trendy treatments.



WHO IS A GOOD CANDIDATE?

In recent years, hormone panels (or tests) have become trendy. While these tests can be helpful, bloodwork only shows a snapshot in time. During perimenopause, women's hormone levels constantly fluctuate with their cycle. And what's considered a "normal" level for one woman may not be "normal" for another.

Because of this, women should first listen to their bodies. If hormonal symptoms are interfering with quality of life, women should consider talking with their women's health provider about HRT.

WHO SHOULD NOT TAKE HRT?

Women may not be a good candidate if they:

- Have or had breast, ovarian or uterine cancer
- Have had blood clots or are at high risk for them
- Have a history of stroke, heart attack or increased risk for cardiovascular disease

In these cases, women should discuss the risks and benefits with their provider.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS OF USING HRT?

- Light bleeding
- Breast tenderness
- Mood swings

Typically, these symptoms go away in 3-4 months. If symptoms are bothersome, women should ask their provider about adjusting the dosage or the type of HRT to reduce side effects.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN TYPES OF HRT?

- **Estrogen therapy:** Available in pill, skin patch, ring, gel, cream or spray form. For women who have had a hysterectomy (surgery to remove the uterus), a provider will typically recommend an estrogen-only therapy.
- **Combination therapy (estrogen-progesterone therapy or EPT):** Typically comes in a pill, skin patch or intrauterine device (IUD). Progesterone may reduce the risk of uterine cancer in women who still have their uterus.



Med spas offer a trendy option for HRT treatment, but pose serious risks that must be considered.

CAN I GO TO A MED SPA FOR HRT?

The medical spa market has boomed in recent years. Advertised as a mix between a medical clinic and a spa, med (or medi) spas offer traditional spa services alongside promises of younger-looking skin, hormone therapy and more. With offerings once exclusive to doctors, these facilities promise the best of both worlds. When it comes to med spas, proceed with caution.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF MED SPAS?

-  **Safety and oversight:** In a 2023 med spa review, a supervising doctor was not on-site at 81.8% of the facilities. In addition, the level of expertise required for med spa employees varies greatly from state to state.
-  **Hormone testing:** Med spas often offer hormone testing, through blood, salivary or urinary tests. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, salivary tests have not proven to be accurate. Estrogen levels are extremely low in saliva, making it challenging to measure. Currently, there are no FDA-approved salivary or urinary hormone measurement tests. Consumers should be aware that these tests can often be expensive, unnecessary and unreliable.
-  **Compounded bioidentical hormone therapy:** Med spas may administer compounded therapy, compounds with identical chemical structure to hormones produced in the body (such as estrogen and progesterone). However, compounded medicines don't undergo the strict manufacturing and purity standards of their FDA counterparts, introducing more

room for human error. Additionally, insurance doesn't cover (sometimes costly) compounded therapy. Women can get bioidentical hormone therapy from their healthcare provider, though. With a prescription, patients can know that these treatments are FDA approved, rigorously tested for quality and covered by insurance.

-  **A dangerous mix:** Compounded hormone creams, for example, may conveniently combine estrogen, progesterone and testosterone, but they carry risks. In cream form, estrogen is easily absorbed, while progesterone may not be absorbed enough to protect the uterus. A Cleveland Clinic study found a link between the use of custom-compounded hormones and uterine cancer in traditionally low-risk women.
-  **Pellet hormone therapy:** Hormone pellets are implants under the skin that release bioidentical hormones. The absorption is inconsistent, and the effects can last up to 6 months. These pellets are also compounded and not FDA-approved or regulated.

CRACKING THE MENOPAUSE CODE

If menopause symptoms are impacting your quality of life, you may want to consider hormone replacement therapy (HRT). The decision to try HRT is personal and should be made only after discussions with your healthcare provider.



To view a list of our women's health providers, scan this QR code.



MEET OUR NEW PHYSICIANS AND PROVIDERS

Please help us welcome our new providers to Phelps Health:



Tiffany Bland, MD
Family Medicine
(St. James)



Rebecca Fryer, DO
Family Medicine
(Rolla)



Darren K. George, DO
Family Medicine
(Waynesville)



Mark Rusten, MD
ENT/Allergy
(Rolla)



Salli Lamberth, FNP-C
Urology
(Rolla)



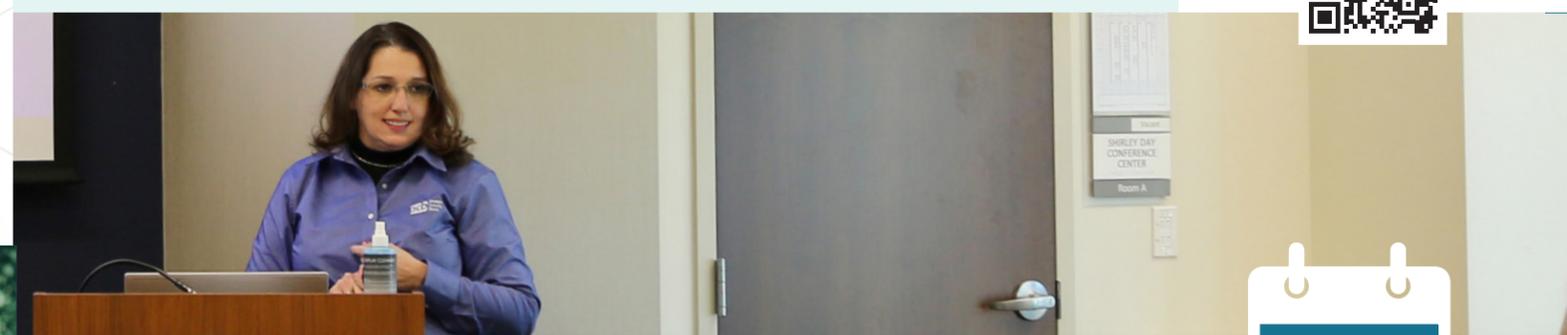
Claudia Martinez Rosales, FNP-BC
ENT/Allergy
(Rolla and Waynesville)



Hannah Shoupe, PA
Pain Management
(Rolla)

FINDING A NEW PROVIDER IS EASY!

Scan the QR code to search for the provider who's right for you and your family.



PHELPS HEALTH SUPPORT GROUPS



Diabetes Support Group

Second Tuesday of each month | 4:00-5:00 PM
Phelps Health Delbert Day Cancer Institute
1060 West 10th Street, Rolla, MO
Call (573) 458-7314

Parkinson's and Caregivers Support Group

Third Tuesday of each month | 2:30-4:00 PM
Phelps Health Delbert Day Cancer Institute
1060 West 10th Street, Rolla, MO
Call (573) 458-3007

From Crisis to Closure

By Michelle Prince

In 2017, Traci Brookshire was rushed to the Phelps Health Emergency Department (ED) when an arterial blood clot blocked blood flow to her leg. Her medical team feared the worst.

“I was going to lose my leg without treatment,” said Traci, age 51, of Rolla.

Phelps Health ED Physician Chukwudi



Nwodo, MD, soon discovered that Traci wasn’t dealing with just one blood clot. She was experiencing a thrombotic storm—a rare and dangerous condition where many blood clots form quickly. Traci was flown out for emergency vascular surgery.

During surgery, doctors discovered a patent foramen ovale (PFO), a hole between the upper chambers of her heart. Everyone has this hole before birth, but the flap that covers it typically seals within the first year of life. In patients with a PFO, the hole fails to close naturally, increasing the risk of stroke and severe blood clots like the one Traci had experienced. The PFO had allowed the clots to enter her bloodstream and travel throughout her body.

Traci, who works in the Phelps Health General Surgery Department, was surprised to learn of her condition, which had gone undetected for over 40 years. However, she remembered signs that she hadn’t understood at the time.

“There were times when I was short of breath when I shouldn’t have been,” Traci explained. “I had little symptoms that didn’t make sense.”

Over the next few years, Traci’s medical team closely monitored her condition. In June 2024, she underwent a procedure to close the PFO at one of Phelps Health’s two cardiac catheterization labs.

On the day of her procedure, Traci was understandably a little nervous, and light sedation helped to calm her nerves.



Phelps Health Interventional Cardiologist Stilianos Efstratiadis, MD, FACC, FSCAI,

performed the minimally invasive PFO closure. He used a catheter inserted through a vein near her groin to deliver a device that would seal the hole in her heart. When the

catheter reached Traci’s heart, the device was deployed, opening into two discs, one on each side of the PFO flap, to seal the hole.

“It seemed like it was over before it even started. There was just a Band-Aid, and no pain whatsoever,” Traci said, praising the skill and efficiency of Dr. Efstratiadis and his team.

Since the procedure, Traci has had several echocardiograms (heart ultrasounds) to ensure the closure device is working as expected. All of her results have been excellent, giving her peace of mind that her stroke risk is now much lower.

Before her 2017 emergency, Traci had never seen a cardiologist. Now, she emphasizes the value of having specialized cardiac care available locally. As a Phelps Health employee, she has an insider’s view of her healthcare team.

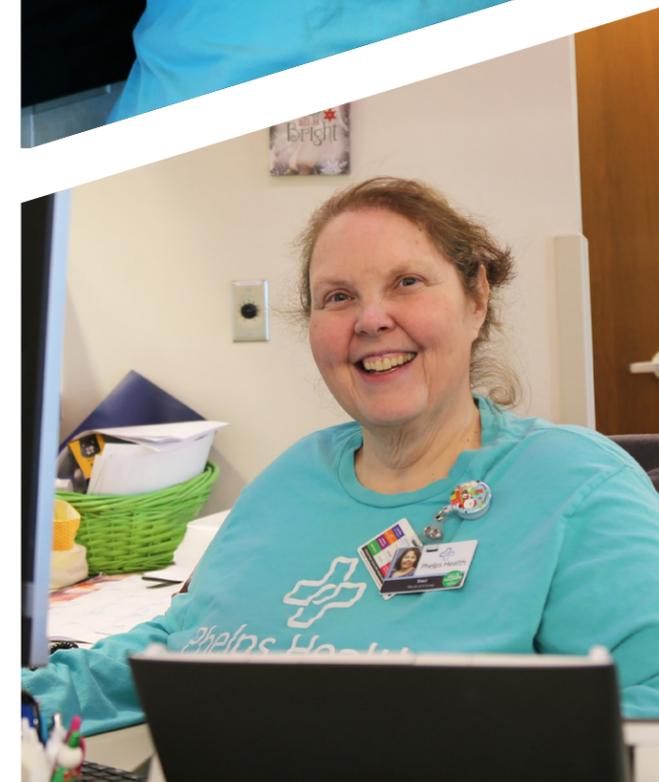
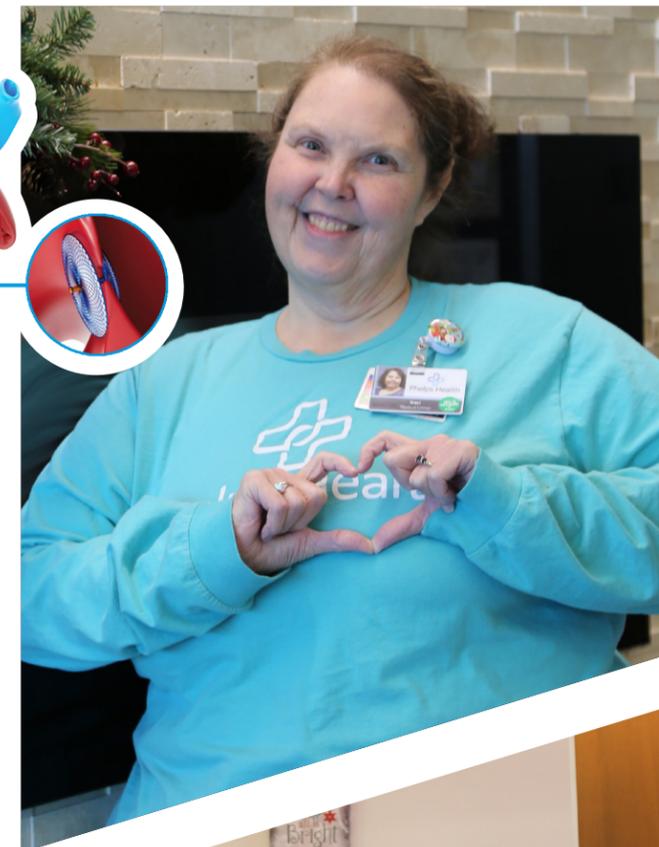
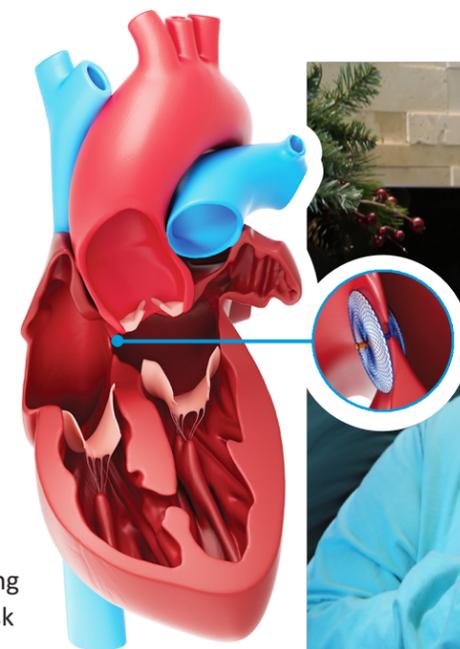
“I know my doctors. I see their work ethic and how they treat patients. I knew I wanted my care to be here,” Traci said. “I feel like an active participant in my healthcare. I’m the one who knows me best, and my doctors listen to me.”

Traci frequently uses Phelps Health’s MyChart app to check lab results, refill prescriptions and communicate with her providers.

“I use it for almost everything except ordering pizza,” she joked.

Traci highly recommends the Phelps Health Heart and Vascular Center to anyone needing specialized cardiac care. She encourages others with a PFO to consider the closure procedure if their doctor advises.

“I have complete faith in Dr. Efstratiadis,” she said, “We are so blessed to have him here at Phelps Health.”



Heart and Vascular Care: Advanced Treatment Close to Home

The Phelps Health Heart and Vascular Center offers specialized care for patients with heart conditions, including advanced cardiac catheterization procedures like PFO closure and stent placement. Call (573) 308-1301 to learn more about our services and how we can help you.



TICK TIPS: SMART STRATEGIES FOR A SAFE SUMMER

By Michelle Prince



Sara Bayless, CPNP

Outdoor adventures and summer fun are just around the corner. While camping and hiking are known tick risks, everyday activities like gardening, picnicking or having a backyard barbecue can also expose you to these tiny pests. With tick encounters on the rise, it's more important than ever to know how to prevent

tick bites and what to do if you find one. Sara Bayless, a certified pediatric nurse practitioner at Phelps Health, shares tips to stay safe while enjoying the great outdoors.

TICK SEASON IS IN FULL SWING

From April through July, ticks are at their most active. Whether your children are playing in the yard, exploring nature trails or enjoying the neighborhood park, daily tick checks are essential. Ticks are experts at hiding, so be sure to check the following areas:

- Behind the ears
- Along the hairline
- In the armpits
- Around the waistband
- Behind the knees

A thorough check after outdoor activities and prompt removal is a simple and effective way to prevent tick-borne illnesses.



TICK PREVENTION STRATEGIES

The best way to prevent tick bites is to treat skin and clothing before going into wooded areas, tall grass and weeds, or other areas known for ticks.

- **Treat Clothing and Gear with Permethrin:** Treating clothing and gear with 0.5% permethrin (an insecticide) is a highly effective preventative measure. Spray clothing and allow it to dry completely before wearing. This treatment lasts two to three washes. You can also spray tents, boots and other outdoor gear.
- **Use DEET on Exposed Skin:** For children 2 months of age or older, DEET is a safe and effective tick repellent. A 10% DEET product is good for shorter activities, while 20-30% DEET is best for longer exposure. Avoid products that include sunscreen, as DEET can reduce its effectiveness. Apply sunscreen first, wait about 30 minutes, and then use DEET if needed.

IDENTIFYING COMMON TICKS

In Missouri, the most common species are the lone star tick and the deer tick.

- **Lone Star Ticks** feature a distinctive white dot on the backs of females. Males may have white streaks or dots. They are about the size of a small watermelon seed (1/8").
- **Deer Ticks**, also known as black-legged ticks, have dark legs and underbodies. They are about the size of a sesame seed (1/16" - 1/8").



Lone Star Tick



Deer Tick

It's also important to be aware of **seed ticks**, the tiny larvae of various tick species, which can be particularly difficult to spot. They are about the size of a poppy seed.

TICK REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL

If you find a tick, it's important to remove it correctly to minimize the risk of infection. Use tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible and pull it out with steady, even pressure — avoid twisting or jerking. If the tick's head remains embedded and is easily accessible, you can attempt to remove it; otherwise, allow the area to heal naturally. After removal, clean the skin with soap and water or rubbing alcohol.

Folk remedies such as "painting" the tick with nail polish or petroleum jelly are not recommended. Remove the tick as quickly as possible. Waiting for it to detach increases the chance of infection.

Once you've removed the tick, dispose of it by flushing it down the toilet or placing it in a sealed container or bag and discarding it in the trash. Avoid crushing it, as this can release pathogens, such as bacteria or viruses.

SIGNS OF TICK-BORNE ILLNESSES

Following tick removal, watch for symptoms of tick-borne illnesses over the next 30 days.

- **Lyme Disease:** A bull's eye rash — a red bump with a circular pattern and a white center — is a significant indicator.
- **Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever:** Red dots on the ankles and wrists may indicate this condition.
- **General Symptoms:** Flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, fatigue, muscle or joint pain, and a stiff neck should also prompt concern.

If symptoms develop, promptly contact your healthcare provider.



Step 1

Grasp the tick close to the surface of the skin with tweezers.



Step 2

Pull it out with steady, even pressure — avoid twisting or jerking.



Step 3

Clean the skin with soap and water or rubbing alcohol.



Step 4

Dispose of the tick by flushing it down the toilet or in a sealed container in the trash.

BUGGED BY TICK BITES?

Is your child's tick bite concerning you? If so, schedule an appointment with Sara or any of our pediatric providers by visiting our website or calling (573) 458-3723 today.

GIVING BACK MATTERS: A SISTER STORY

By Sarah Potter

At Phelps Health, two sisters demonstrate how small acts of kindness can make a big difference. Debbie and Barbara Grommet have worked at the Phelps Health Hospital for years and have found more than just jobs—they've found a family and a purpose.

TWO SISTERS, TWO PATHS

Debbie, 69, works as a dietary aide in Food Services. Her journey to Phelps Health wasn't easy. At 59, she lost a job she had held for over 33 years. Debbie was worried about her future but found a new beginning in the Hospital's Cafeteria.



Debbie Grommet, Dietary Aide

For over 26 years, Barbara, 64, has been drawing blood for patients all over the Hospital. She's now a lead lab assistant in the Main Laboratory. Barbara's path to Phelps Health began with a simple conversation.

"My friend Dee Duncan suggested I apply for a phlebotomy position," she recalled. "Drawing blood sounded cool, so I gave it a try and never looked back."

Both sisters quickly discovered that Phelps Health is more than just a workplace. "It feels like a family away from family," Barbara explained. Debbie agreed, noting how many retired employees return to work part-time because they miss the community. "It's fulfilling to be part of something special," she said.

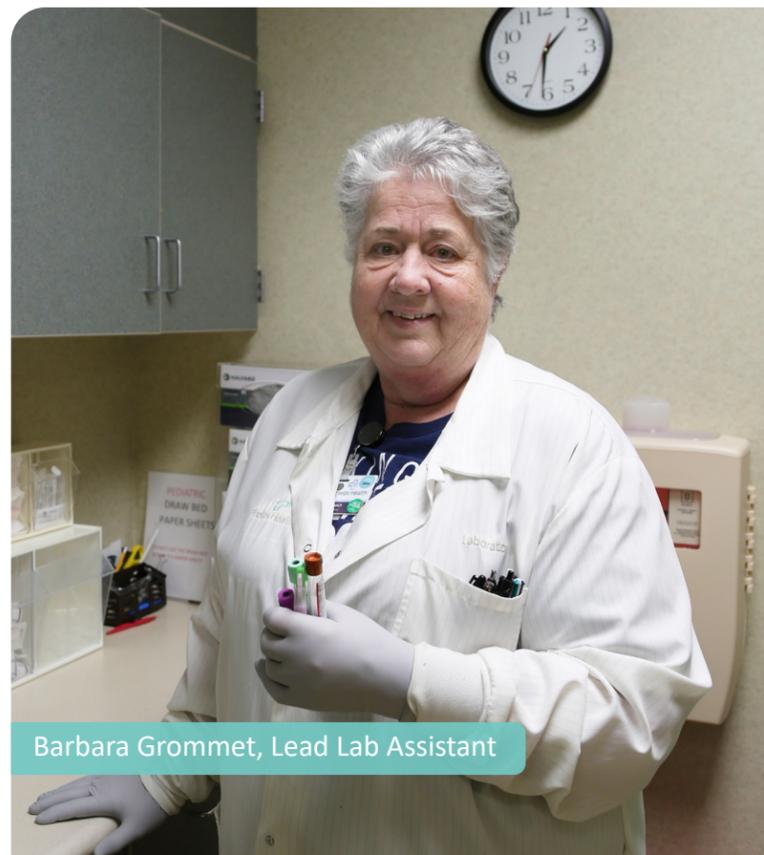
A PERSONAL REASON TO GIVE

Together, the Grommet sisters have donated an impressive **\$7,580** to the Phelps Health Foundation, the charitable arm of Phelps Health that provides for the community's healthcare needs. Their giving is based on deeply personal experiences.

Debbie's motivation stems from a challenging time in her life. As a young single mother, she and her child became sick. With limited resources, she struggled to afford their medication. Then, the Greater Rolla Area Charitable Enterprise (G.R.A.C.E.) stepped in to provide transportation, medicine and support when she needed it most.

"That act of kindness stayed with me," Debbie said. "I know what it feels like to receive help when you need it. Now, I can help others in similar situations."

For Barbara, giving is a community responsibility. "Our community is made up of our family, friends and neighbors," she explained. "When we contribute to the Foundation, we support people we know and care about. Everyone who can give should give—even small amounts add up and make a big difference."



Barbara Grommet, Lead Lab Assistant

MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE

The sisters are particularly proud of their donations supporting the Phelps Health Delbert Day Cancer Institute (DDCI). This nationally accredited cancer center provides top-quality care close to home, something both sisters genuinely appreciate.

Barbara has a personal connection to the DDCI. During a health scare, she needed a PET scan and was thankful to have the cancer center nearby. Barbara was greatly relieved when her results showed no signs of cancer. "I hear from grateful patients all the time," she said. "The Foundation's efforts directly impact lives."

Debbie appreciates how easy the Foundation makes giving. Through payroll deductions, she contributes without feeling the financial strain. "I never miss the money," she said. "But I see how it helps others. It's a simple way to make a big difference."

A LESSON IN GIVING

What makes their story special is their practical approach to generosity. "Donating just \$5 a paycheck is like skipping a Monster energy drink and a bottle of water," Debbie pointed out.

The Foundation noted this year that if every employee gave \$5, \$260,000 would be raised to support the patient care areas, new equipment or staff training.



"Giving feels good. It's fulfilling to know you're helping your community," Barbara added. "First, you take care of your family and then extend that to others. That's what makes a community strong."

For the Grommet sisters, giving back is more than a financial transaction. It's a way of honoring the support they've received and ensuring others have the same opportunities. Their story reminds us that kindness isn't always about grand gestures but consistent, thoughtful actions that uplift those around us.

CONSIDER GIVING TO THE PHELPS HEALTH FOUNDATION

Support patient care through the Phelps Health Foundation. Your gift directly impacts local healthcare, funding lifesaving initiatives and patient needs.

“When we contribute to the Foundation, we support people we know and care about.”

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