

THE QUARTERLY COMPASS

SUMMER 2024
Newsletter



**Saint Alphonsus
Health Alliance**

A Member of Trinity Health

President's Message



It was great to be in person again and see many of you at the recent Network Breakfast hosted May 1st. For those that attended you were able to hear from our Health Alliance team as well as some dynamic speakers including Dr. Wesley Jones, Inpatient Palliative Care, Saint Alphonsus Medical Group, who spoke about Palliative Care, Advanced Directives and care planning. Along with a very comprehensive and robust presentation by Dr. Sophia Airhart, Saint Alphonsus Medical Director of Heart Failure, regarding Advanced Heart Failure. We were also joined by several care partners from the community which support other aspects of patient care including laboratory and imaging services to name a few. The event was such a success that we are already planning for a Fall event so look for a “save-the-date” soon.

These interactions are such an important opportunity to learn from you, our network providers, what you need to best care for your patients and how we can support your success in value-based or advanced payments models. We also appreciate being able to share information and resources, which are best practice, drawing from our national experience across Trinity Health and the Healthcare industry to truly bring a best-in-class experience. Throughout this edition we hope you find value in the information especially to those of you who were not able to attend the event. Success is shared achievement between our providers across the network, and we appreciate all you do to care for your patients and support one another in performance.

Stacy Meyr, DC
President
Saint Alphonsus Health Alliance & Community Health and Well-Being



Saltzer Announcement



Saint Alphonsus and Saltzer Health Reach Agreement on Ambulatory Surgery Center and Urgent Care Centers



Access to High-Quality Urgent Care, and Outpatient Surgery Options Remain Available in South Nampa and Meridian, Idaho

Over the past several months, Saint Alphonsus Health System and Saltzer Health have been working collaboratively to ensure that services offered at Saltzer's Ten Mile Ambulatory Surgery Center (ASC) in Meridian, ID, and the two Saltzer Urgent Care Centers located in South Nampa at 215 E. Hawaii Avenue and at 867 S. Vanguard Way, Meridian, remain open to provide convenient, accessible, high-quality care for the community.

The agreement between Saint Alphonsus and Saltzer Health provides stability, continued access to these services, and continuity of care for the residents of the Treasure Valley community. The Urgent Care Centers closed on Friday, March 29, 2024, while the installation of new IT equipment and an Electronic Medical Record (EMR) is completed by Saint Alphonsus. The Urgent Care Centers will reopen in May, 2024. Patients seeking care at the Urgent Care Centers in the interim can view convenient locations on the Saint Alphonsus website. The Ambulatory Surgery Center will continue to operate uninterrupted under Saint Alphonsus ownership.

"We are excited to collaborate with Saltzer Health to continue to provide vital services locally for the residents of our communities and proudly welcome these new providers and colleagues to the Saint Alphonsus family," said Odette Bolano, president and CEO of Trinity Health, West Region, "Working together with our colleagues and providers, patients will experience exceptional and accessible primary and specialty care close to home."

"Our goal during this challenging process was to ensure that as many medical services as possible continue to operate and serve the healthcare needs of the community," said Jana Huffman, assistant vice president for the Intermountain Medical Group. "We appreciate this collaboration with Saint Alphonsus so that residents in the Treasure Valley will continue to have access to convenient and affordable urgent care and surgery services."





At Saint Alphonsus Health Alliance (SAHA) it is important to us that our members receive care at the right time and right place, and we know it is important to you too. Our Resource Center makes every reasonable effort to ensure orders are being reviewed and followed up on within 24hours. This becomes more challenging when we are referring outside of the organization, given the distinct EMR's and fax numbers. To provide the best care to our members, there are three steps you can take to help us maintain appropriate turnaround times for patient referrals.

- 1)** Provide any changes to your clinic address and/or fax numbers.
- 2)** Once a referral is received from Saint Alphonsus, make outreach to the patient within 24 hours to get the patient scheduled.
- 3)** If unable to outreach to the patient within 24 hours or your access is limited, please respond to our resource center promptly which allows the patient to be scheduled elsewhere.
Our resource center is glad to take your calls. For ambulatory referrals please call 208-367-7337, or for diagnostic testing referrals 208-367-8787.

Medical Minute - Urinary Tract Infections

By Dr. Michael Twomey



Urinary Tract Infections are the fourth most common cause of emergency department visits. Our Saint Alphonsus Health Alliance team has completed analysis on a selection of local cases to see what opportunities might be present to improve site of care. Some of these patients had pyelonephritis, catheter associated infections, and complicated UTI's appropriately treated in the ED. However, a selection of these cases could have been avoided with earlier preventative care. Most striking, however, were >50% of cases that could have been managed by a PCP or Urgent Care. These were patients diagnosed with uncomplicated UTI's or cystitis who were sent home with only an outpatient script for antibiotics.



Our team is working on a mailer to send to high-risk patients identifying reasons to seek care for urinary issues. This highlights our in network urgent cares along with the Saint Alphonsus Telehealth Urgent

Care. Finally, for our Idaho patients, local pharmacies can help. For uncomplicated female patients with a prior UTI and similar symptoms, pharmacists can prescribe a short course of antibiotics based on clinical judgement. Local pharmacies including Walgreens and Albertson's have protocols that allow for quick treatment of diseases when patients cannot access PCP or UC resources. This is a great resource to keep in mind on the weekends or when clinics are fully booked.

From a clinical treatment perspective, it's important to note that antibiotic choice and length of therapy have been evolving in the past 20 years. Hopefully clinicians have access to your local antibiogram, but our Regional Saint Alphonsus Health System version shows three quarters (76%) of UTI's are still caused by E. Coli. The most likely medication to successfully treat? Nitrofurantoin at 97% susceptible! Most providers have caught on; however, this is still an underutilized medication. Other agents like Bactrim and Ciprofloxacin show susceptibility profiles in only the low to mid 80's.

Regarding length of treatment, this is an area where we can really change some practices. Reduced course of time has been found to be equally beneficial in many cases. For uncomplicated cystitis just 5 days of nitrofurantoin (100mg BID), 3 days of Bactrim (DS tablets BID), 1 day of Fosfomycin (3g once), and 3 days of cephalexin (500mg BID) are necessary. As always, avoid bacteriostatic antibiotics like nitrofurantoin and Fosfomycin in cases where there is concern for bacteremia or pyelonephritis. Protocols recommend reserving fluoroquinolones for use in complicated UTI's or allergic concerns. When used for uncomplicated UTI's due to resistance or allergies, just 3 days of 250mg BID Ciprofloxacin is needed.

Finally, if your culture comes back with resistance to your chosen antibiotic, remember most of these medications get concentrated in the urine which can improve clinical clearance. You may not need to change the antibiotic unless the patient is not improving.



Palliative Care and Advanced Directives



Having Difficult Conversations about Palliative Care and Advanced Directives with your patients – Courtesy and excerpts from Dr. Wesley Jones

These type of conversations with patients can be extremely difficult but are indicated as a key priority by the National Academy of Medicine and rated by an expert panel as the most important outcome measure for studies of Advance Care Planning (ACP) interventions. In order to effectively support a patient facing debilitating and potentially end-of-life decisions, it's crucial to know



what their goals of care are. How do they feel about going to the emergency room or being admitted to the hospital? Beginning conversations early with patients on their preference of care setting related to their serious illness also helps their loved ones feeling prepared and satisfied with difficult choices. How you to take that first step if often the most difficult, consider a asking a few simple questions:

- How do you feel about being in the hospital?
- When you think about the future, what are you hoping for?
- If you get sick in the future how you feel about coming back to the hospital?
- Have you completed a living will?

Once you understand a patient's perspective and goals, you can help guide them to appropriate resources. A good start with is Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, patient's can create ACP and upload it to Idaho Directory <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/services-programs/birth-marriage-death-records/advance-directives-and-registry-services>. There is also a PDF for download.

Another important consideration when supporting patients facing end-of-life decisions is referral to palliative medicine. Some of the questions below help to make the determination if your patient might be a good candidate for a palliative care referral.

- Is there serious illness? Cancer, CHF, COPD, CKD, Cirrhosis, Dementia
- Is there a palliative care need? Uncontrolled symptoms, limited understanding, unclear goals of care, assistance with complex treatment decisions
- Compelling factors? Decline in function, limited support, high utilization of services, low health literacy



Interested in becoming a Civil Surgeon?



A Civil Surgeon performs medical exams for patients working through the immigration process. There are currently extremely long wait times in and around the Treasure Valley. The Alliance is working in collaboration with a local non-profit organization, who is seeking interested individuals and will subsidize the application and processing fee for any interested practitioners. You can learn more at the following website: [Designated Civil Surgeons | USCIS](#).

If you would like more information on the available subsidy, please contact our Alliance President, Stacy Meyr, DC at stacy.meyr@saintalphonsus.org.



Get involved!



We are currently accepting applications to join our board committees, these include Finance & Contracting, Quality & Informatics and Provider Network Committee. If you are interested in learning more and applying to be considered, please contact Joy.Gustafson@saintalphonus.org via email for additional information.

