



## REHABILITATION SERVICES

### TGH and Kindred Healthcare Announce CEO of New TGH Rehabilitation Hospital

Tampa General Hospital (TGH) and Kindred Healthcare, LLC are proud to announce the appointment of Heather Higgins as CEO of the new TGH Rehabilitation Hospital to lead the new 80-bed, freestanding inpatient rehabilitation hospital, which is expected to open in the second quarter of 2022.

Higgins has more than 25 years of clinical and management experience across several complex environments, including for-profit systems, academic medical centers, and government-run systems. She will be responsible for the operations, management, and clinical resources of the TGH Rehabilitation Hospital and its more than 140 team members and caregivers, including transitioning Tampa General's inpatient rehabilitation hospital and team from the main campus to the new facility when it opens.

She most recently served as the director of rehabilitation at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation in West Orange, N.J., since 2014. Prior to that, she was the operations manager for the Rehabilitation Medicine Department at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York, N.Y., for more than 10 years. In these roles, she directed inpatient therapy services, fostered growth of clinical programs across all subspecialties, and facilitated rehabilitation operations in areas spanning inpatient, outpatient, and physician practices. Higgins began her career as an occupational therapist and her clinical background is in adult physical disabilities.

Higgins has also served as a program surveyor for the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) since 2007, CARF is an independent, non-profit accreditor of health and human services.

Higgins received a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy from the Medical College of Virginia/Virginia Commonwealth University and a Master of Business Administration from Baruch College of The City University of New York. She is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives.



*Heather Higgins, CEO,  
TGH Rehabilitation Hospital*



The New TGH Rehabilitation Hospital Construction Making Progress, see story on page 2



## U.S. News & World Report Names TGH as Best in Tampa Bay

*Rehabilitation was named #36 in the nation and tied for 1st in the state*

TGH is once again ranked as the #1 hospital in Tampa Bay by U.S. News & World Report for 2021-2022.

This is the sixth consecutive year that Tampa General has been named by U.S. News & World Report as Tampa Bay's top hospital. Tampa General is also listed among the top four hospitals in Florida and ranked as one of the nation's top 50 hospitals in five medical specialties, according to the digital media company.

The annual **Best Hospitals** rankings and ratings, now in their 32<sup>nd</sup> year, are designed to help patients and their doctors in making informed decisions about where to receive care for challenging health conditions or for common elective procedures. "The high U.S. News rankings are a sign of Tampa General's ability to treat the most complex illnesses and conditions," said TGH President and CEO John Couris.

Tampa General is ranked as one of the nation's 50 top hospitals, as well as the top hospital in Florida, in these five medical specialties:

- **Ear, Nose & Throat** – ranked #21 in U.S. and #1 in Florida
- **Orthopedics** – ranked #23 in U.S. and #1 in Florida
- **Gastroenterology & GI Surgery** – ranked #26 in U.S. and tied for #1 in Florida
- **Diabetes & Endocrinology** – ranked #28 in U.S. and #1 in Florida
- **Rehabilitation** – ranked #36 in U.S. and tied for #1 in Florida

Tampa General also ranks as "high performing," or among the top 10% of U.S. hospitals, in four more specialties:

- **Cancer**
- **Geriatrics**
- **Neurology & Neurosurgery**
- **Pulmonology & Lung Surgery**



## New TGH Rehabilitation Hospital Construction Making Progress

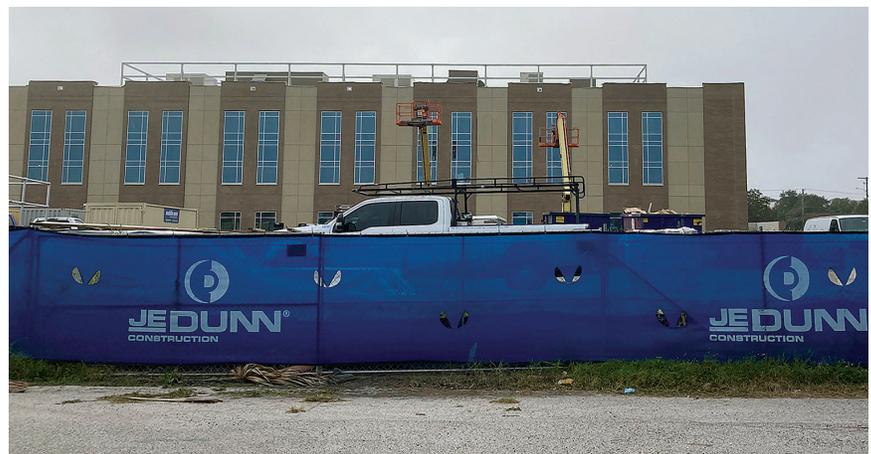
Almost a year since shovels broke ground, the new TGH Rehabilitation Hospital is taking shape, with the anticipated opening in second quarter of 2022.

Designed as a joint venture, the new TGH Rehabilitation Hospital is a freestanding inpatient rehabilitation facility that will increase its number of beds to 80 to better meet the growing needs of the Tampa Bay region.

The new TGH Rehabilitation Hospital will provide inpatient care for adults recovering from conditions such as stroke, neurological disease, injury to the brain or spinal cord and other debilitating illnesses or injuries. The new facility will offer state-of-the-art technology and feature all private rooms. It will also have a secured brain injury unit with private dining and a therapy gym.

The facility will feature a transitional living apartment – designed to simulate a residential apartment – that will enable patients to heal in a personalized and private environment as they prepare to return to independent living. Patients will also experience specially planned rooms to treat dialysis patients and programs dedicated to neurological conditions, stroke, brain injury and amputation recovery. Clinical teams will ultimately move to the new site, while Tampa General Hospital will continue to provide pediatric and outpatient rehabilitation at alternate sites.

Tampa General Hospital currently operates its inpatient rehab facility and is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Tampa General's rehabilitation services are ranked among the top 50 in the nation by U.S. News & World Report's 2021-22 Best Hospitals. Tampa General was also recently named to *Newsweek's America's Best Physical Rehabilitation Centers 2021*, ranking 25<sup>th</sup> in the nation.



# Former Brain Injury Patient Gives Back as TGH Team Member

Seventeen years ago on a hot summer night, 17-year-old Patrick Lafalce was out having fun with his friends. As a typical teenager, he was out celebrating his youth and felt so invincible, he climbed on top of a moving car. That



*Patrick Lafalce, a former brain injury patient, now works as a floater in Environmental Services.*

decision was a pivotal moment in his life, as he fell off the car and badly hit his head and shattered his left hand. He was airlifted to the closest hospital.

A month and a half later, he was transferred to the Tampa General Hospital Rehabilitation Center to rehabilitate his traumatic brain

injury and shattered left hand – which had two pins surgically placed into it. During the 90 days spent at TGH, he had to learn everyday skills all over again, from speech, to using the bathroom to simply walking. Although he does not remember much of the time of his hospitalization, he clearly remembers the effect that Dr. Seema Weinstein and Dr. Paul Kornberg had on his rehabilitation.

When Patrick first woke up from his initial injuries, the first thing he said to his mother was “I want to help people.” And helping people he would one day do.

He remembers the memorization skills, challenging games, and activities that Dr. Weinstein performed with him and said he would never forget what she did for him. During recovery, he was able to home school through the Hillsborough County Hospitalized Homebound program so he could graduate high school on time.

When he recovered, he took classes at a community college and worked at Publix for the next few years. Later, he accepted a position with a property management company and after that, he was employed by an outpatient catheterization lab. Proudly, he completed his business management degree at the University of South Florida, which led to his application to various positions with Tampa General.

In May, Patrick became a full-time team member in Tampa General’s Environmental Services Department. One day while on the job, he ran into his rehab physician, Dr. Kornberg, for whom he also feels deep gratitude. In his current position, Patrick frequently works on 5K, the unit he spent a lot of time on, providing much satisfaction.

The former TBI patient says the biggest lesson he learned from this experience is that you never know what someone has been through by just someone’s appearance. This has helped him build relationships, he says.

Patrick has done so well on the job, that his boss, Director of Environmental Services, Glenda Wright has fully supported his career growth within the hospital.

Patrick’s story proves that life can be fragile and your life can take a turn in a minute. But with perseverance and nurturing, skilled caregivers advocating for you, the sky’s the limit on what you can achieve.

## TGH Named One of Newsweek’s America’s Best Physical Rehabilitation Centers, Ranking 25th in the Nation



### REHABILITATION SERVICES

Tampa General Hospital has been named to **Newsweek’s America’s Best Physical Rehabilitation Centers 2021**, ranking 25th in the nation. Newsweek partnered with Statista Inc., the world-leading statistics portal and industry ranking provider, on the Best Physical Rehabilitation Centers list.

The America’s Best Physical Rehabilitation Centers 2021 list highlights the nation’s top inpatient rehabilitation facilities (IRFs) based on quality of care, quality of service, quality of follow-up care and accommodation and amenities. Facilities in the 25 states with the highest number of inpatient rehabilitation centers – according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) – were part of this study. The rankings feature the top 230 centers nationwide. The valuation process was comprised of these steps:

**Recommendations from Peers:** Thousands of medical experts (physicians, therapists, medical doctors, administration & staff working in physical rehabilitation facilities) were invited to an online peer-to-peer survey.

**Quality Score:** Participants were also asked to rank the quality of care, quality of service, quality of follow-up care, accommodations and amenities.

**KPI (Key Performance Indicators) Data Scores:** The U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) publishes KPI data for physical rehabilitation centers. The KPI data includes 15 different measures.

**The Model Systems and Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) Accreditations:** Facilities with these accreditations received a bonus to their overall score.

“In spite of the pandemic, achieving this honor is a testimony of the absolute focus and dedication the team members have in providing world-class, innovative and safe rehabilitation services to all of our patients and their families,” said Michael Daniels, director of rehabilitation services at Tampa General Hospital.

Tampa General Hospital provides an array of physical medicine and rehabilitation options for patients with functional limitations. The rehabilitation program provides patients with a comprehensive inpatient setting and offers a variety of outpatient programs such as physical, occupational, and speech therapies.

The TGH Rehabilitation Center’s team includes psychiatrists, physicians, psychologists, rehabilitation nurses, physical therapists, respiratory therapists, occupational therapists, recreational therapists, social workers, and many others with the goal of fostering an improved quality of life for all patients. As part of the region’s only Level I Trauma Center, Tampa General can provide everything from emergency hospitalization and treatment to outpatient therapies.

The prestigious ranking was announced on Aug. 25, 2021 and can currently be viewed online at: <https://www.newsweek.com/best-physical-rehabilitation-centers-2021/florida>.

# TGH Rehabilitation Team Members and Patients Participate in We Are TGH Day in Tallahassee

After a one-year break due to the pandemic, TGH Rehab team members and former Rehab patients were proud to bring back We Are TGH Advocacy Day in the State Capitol in Tallahassee!

Select patients and team members joined to become a coalition of advocates supporting TGH and telling the hospital's story to government leaders.

This patient group included survivors of trauma, cancer, transplant, COVID-19, and more – many whose hospital experience included both inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation.

Patient Ria Straker-Gumbs, a survivor of a severe case of COVID-19, even carried her hospital lap blanket, signed by her caregivers while she was in the hospital, as a symbol and memory of the great care she received.



Dr. Seema Weinstein, representing TGH Rehabilitation Services, was one of the health care heroes who shared the courage, dedication, and amazing work the hospital provides every day.



# TGH SLPs Providing Innovative and Complex Procedures to Assist with Speech and Swallowing

Two complex procedures are currently being performed in both the Tampa General Hospital-based programs. The procedures assist patients with swallowing difficulty (dysphagia) and with their speech following a total laryngectomy.

A procedure called a Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES), is where a trained medical Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) passes a thin, flexible endoscope with an attached camera gently down the nose to the throat. During the FEES, the SLP administers food and liquid to the patient to visualize their swallowing as it occurs. This assessment tool can be used for a multitude of patient populations despite the setting (hospital-based rehab, inpatient rehab or outpatient rehab). This study will help the SLP determine what the safest diet is for the patient to eat/drink while minimizing the risk for aspiration and related complications.

A tracheoesophageal prosthesis (TEP) allows patients who have had a total laryngectomy, have a voice. The prosthesis is placed between the trachea and the esophagus. Through this connection, air is directed to vibrate the tissues

of the esophagus which then creates tracheoesophageal speech. The speech sounds natural and the patient is able to speak at a conversational level with coordinated breathing.

With a TEP procedure, the role of the SLP is to replace a patient's prosthesis as these inevitably break down. The procedural routine consists of removing the prosthesis, measuring the connection between the trachea and the esophagus, and preparing to insert a brand new prosthesis. The SLP will teach the patient appropriate prosthesis cleaning and maintenance routines as well as safety precautions and prescribe laryngectomy supplies.

It is very rewarding to hear the patients' new voice for the first time and often a very emotional experience for them.

Thanks to the hard work of Speech Language Pathologists Alexis Benstock, Heather Bruno and Jennifer Larsson, these procedures will hopefully be viable tools for therapists to impact their patients with life-changing outcomes.

# New TGH Outpatient Services Location Opens in Westshore Area

As part of its deep commitment to serving the people of Tampa Bay, TGH has opened TGH Outpatient Services in the Westshore area.

Conveniently combining several services under one roof, TGH Outpatient Services offers:

- **Adult Outpatient Rehabilitation**, including physical, occupational and speech therapy to help patients with orthopedic and neurological conditions achieve the most complete recovery possible.
- **Outpatient Pediatric Rehabilitation**, including physical, occupational and speech therapy to promote independence and quality of life for pediatric patients with developmental or acquired neurological conditions.



- **Audiology Services** for children and adults, including hearing evaluations and hearing aid fittings.
- **Pediatric Medical Coping Clinic** to provide children and young adults (ages 2-21) with a specialized resource for living with a chronic condition or illness.
- **Health and Rehabilitation Psychology Specialty Clinics** provide services to individuals and their families for the evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive impact of medical conditions. Our team helps to promote recovery, improve quality of life, develop coping strategies, and provide education.
- **Neuropsychology Services** for both adult and pediatric patients provide intensive evaluation and diagnosis of cognitive disorders as well as treatment recommendations for individuals with a variety of neuropsychological, neurodevelopmental, and neuropsychiatric conditions.

Located at **1411 N. Westshore Blvd.**, TGH Outpatient Services opened on Oct. 18. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 813-844-7719.



# Craig H. Neilsen Foundation Grant Awarded to TGH Spinal Cord Injury Wellness Program

Spinal cord injury patients now have another option for rehabilitation through Tampa General Hospital, thanks to a \$79,000 grant awarded by the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation.

The grant provides two Tampa YMCA locations with the equipment and resources needed to serve the unique needs of spinal cord injury patients in our community. The program offers individuals living with a spinal cord injury (SCI) the chance to start or continue their exercise program, improve functional mobility, maintain overall health and wellness, and decrease the chance of secondary complications in conjunction with or following formal rehabilitation.

The main goal of the program is to improve the overall quality of life of individuals living with a SCI by creating a suitable community wellness space for these individuals to improve cardiovascular and pulmonary fitness.

Requirements for individuals to participate:

- Caregiver support if the individual is not independent.
- Ability to bring supplies needed for safe care during exercise (i.e. catheter).
- Transportation to and from the YMCA.
- Clearance from the physician to use functional electrical stimulation with Motomed cycling and standing frame (if desired).
- Commitment to the program for at least 6 months.
- Completion of intake and outtake paperwork to track program progress and goals.

The YMCA locations include:

- South Tampa YMCA, 4411 S. Himes Avenue in Tampa.
- New Tampa YMCA at 16221 Compton Drive in Tampa.

There is no limit to the use of this equipment if SCI participants already have a YMCA membership. But additionally, the grant allows the first 15 participants with a complimentary one-year YMCA membership and use of the equipment. Participants must be at least 18 years of age.

To assure safety, Tampa General therapists have trained YMCA staff members on the handling of spinal injury patients, which included education about spinal cord injuries in general.

TGH therapists shared expectations for paraplegics and tetraplegics, typical equipment utilized, secondary complications, and functional expectations. However, they will not serve as personal trainers. The goal is to allow individuals to work out independently.

There are many people to thank for securing this grant and making the program a reality:

- **Rachel Bozich** – Senior Health and Wellness Educator
- **Jennifer Carotenuto** – Inpatient Rehabilitation Manager
- **Kim Christine** – Administrator, Community and Corporate Wellness
- **Craig H. Neilsen Foundation**
- **Jamie Dietrich** – Physical Therapist and Neuro Specialist (Outpatient)
- **Inpatient and Outpatient Rehabilitation Team**
- **Nita Kidiyoor** – Outpatient Rehabilitation Manager
- **Mary Kutash** – Advanced Nurse Specialist, Research
- **Amanda Schindler** – Physical Therapist and Neuro Specialist (Inpatient)
- **YMCA Staff**



*Lori Pratt, former TGH Rehabilitation patient and volunteer, has made great use of her time during the pandemic. She generously crafted masks for the Rehab team and pediatric patients. She also made small blankets, Easter bunnies and has brought in books, pencils, and journals over time.*

*We thank Lori and our other generous volunteers for their good deeds! Their kindness has made an impact on many lives.*



## About Tampa General Hospital Rehabilitation Services

Rehabilitation Services at Tampa General Hospital is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for the following:

- Comprehensive Integrated Inpatient Rehabilitation – Adult and Pediatric Rehabilitation Patients
- Rehabilitation Services is also designated by the Florida Department of Health as a provider of services to both adult and pediatric Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP) patients. Our services are accredited by The Joint Commission, and TGH is proud to be a Magnet hospital.

In addition to inpatient programs, the continuum of care includes services provided by hospital-based rehabilitation therapists, outpatient rehabilitation services, and physician services for new and follow-up patients in the Rehabilitation Medical Clinics.

## RehabMatters

### Rehab Matters

is published by Tampa General Rehabilitation Services for its patients and other stakeholders.

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