As the pandemic worked its way into our region, HUP’s clinical staff mobilized to provide necessary care on the front line. And while they battled COVID-19, behind-the-scenes work helped keep day-to-day operations as smooth as possible.

Below are some of their stories.

**KEEPING PATIENT TRANSPORT SAFE**

HUP’s Patient Transport team worked tirelessly to safely move COVID-positive patients throughout the facility with new guidelines and precautions to prevent contamination of the surrounding environment. Hundreds were eventually transferred safely, but the first came on April 1, when patients on the Donner 3 MICU unit were transferred to Rhoads 1.

Leading the effort was Rich Watson, who “enthusiastically” volunteered to steer each bed via a secure route to the Rhoads 1 unit, along with a team of clinical and support service staff. He ultimately assisted with the successful transfer of seven critically ill COVID-positive patients over a period of approximately five hours. “His display of professionalism and courage that day is just one of many examples of how the HUP Patient Transport team did their part to combat the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Peter Fratini, director of Patient Transport.

While Transport got the patients safely to their rooms, EVS made sure the COVID rooms were properly disinfected and cleaned. Through education and daily huddles for specialty training, EVS staff helped keep staff and patients protected, said Ariel Desphy-Carter, EVS assistant director.

**SECURING SUPPLIES**

As the pandemic reached our region, our patient care supplies — especially personal protective equipment — started dwindling. As March turned into April, distributors could only supply less than half of HUP’s normal PPE order. To make matters even harder, the type of shortages changed. For example, “initially the problem was face masks, but, then, when facemasks were replenished, hand sanitizer became a problem,” said Bonnie Lang, the department’s administrative secretary.

“We started calling all vendors they could think of — even dental suppliers,” Lang said. “We had to think outside of the box. Who else uses masks? This was not boot camp; we were at war.”

Donations of PPE helped immensely — including hundreds of masks and other supplies from throughout the University and the Penn Medicine Simulation Center. “The generosity that came with this pandemic was heartwarming to see and experience,” Lang said. “Our mantra is that we are saving our people in the hospital one face mask at a time!”

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**TRANSITIONING TO COVID-19 ROOMS**

Rhoads 1 became HUP’s first COVID patient care unit, but this transition required more than just moving patients in. The rooms had to be made COVID-19 “safe,” and that’s from throughout the University and the Penn Medicine Simulation Center. “The generosity that came with this pandemic was heartwarming to see and experience,” Lang said. “Our mantra is that we are saving our people in the hospital one face mask at a time!”

“People from all over the Health System stepped up in a big way,” said Ashley Stankiewicz, MSN, of the Center for Phenomic Science (CHIPS), a unit specializing in clinical trials, joined Elaina Carkhuff, MSN, of Penn Home Infusion Therapy, to visit the home of a patient who normally received infusions for cancer treatment at the Perelman Center. The patient’s daughter — a nurse in Virginia — thanked them both on Facebook for helping to keep her father safe.

And when Penn Medicine set up a tent on Market Street to expand its testing capabilities, several staff from HUP and PCAM joined the multidisciplinary team. “I’ve never worked with a more dedicated group,” said Erin Connolly, RN, of Dermatology Surgery in PCAM. “People from all over the Health System stepped up in a big way.”

Kristine Renshaw and Danielle Heffner, who are part of Pennsylvania Hospital’s catheterization/Electrophysiology teams, supported the HUP Cath/EP teams while they were on quarantine. And military veterans Taylor Vanderwoude, BSN, a nurse on the Founders 5 Heart and Vascular ICU who is a navy reservist, along with Sengpheth Phengvath, RN, of Perioperative Services, battled COVID-19 on the front lines of NYC, which was slammed by the pandemic.

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As the need for more COVID units increased, the team performed this behind-the-scenes work helped keep day-to-day operations as smooth as possible.

Below are some of their stories.

**BEHIND-THE-SCENES HEROES**

And while they battled COVID-19, behind-the-scenes work helped keep day-to-day operations as smooth as possible.

**BETTER TOGETHER**

As the clinical needs of COVID-19 care increased, staff from throughout Penn Medicine volunteered to help outside of their usual roles. Ashley Stankiewicz, MSN, of the Center for Phenomic Science (CHIPS), a unit specializing in clinical trials, joined Elaina Carkhuff, MSN, of Penn Home Infusion Therapy, to visit the home of a patient who normally received infusions for cancer treatment at the Perelman Center. The patient’s daughter — a nurse in Virginia — thanked them both on Facebook for helping to keep her father safe.

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**TURNING SMOOTHLY**

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As the supplies continued to arrive — from both vendors and other donations — one thing was evident. Materials Management needed a bigger storage area. Only one place could hold them and keep them secure: the cafeteria.  Soon, the area was filled with hundreds of boxes of PPE, disinfectant and basic cleaning supplies, and other patient care needs. “The dedication of the staff, working seven days a week, moving PPE many times over until a permanent spot was found in the cafeteria was key to having our process organized,” said Robert Fisher, director of Materials Management.

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As the need for more COVID units increased, the team performed this behind-the-scenes work helped keep day-to-day operations as smooth as possible.
The coronavirus pandemic made its way to Philadelphia in March and bed occupancy at HUP West started to increase due to the influx of COVID-19 patients. Based on the experiences of other cities that had been hard hit by the pandemic, Penn Medicine leaders grew concerned that the hospital might not have enough beds. When construction on the Pavilion (HUP East) was allowed to continue despite statewide shutdowns of many other building projects, an idea surfaced: could space in the facility be made patient-ready before a surge hit?

By mid-April, they had their answer: Yes! In total, there were 60 patient rooms on the seventh, eighth, and ninth floors of HUP East as well as 60 rooms on the building’s ground floor and mezzanine all fully set up for patient care.

Thankfully, as April rolled into May, the rooms at HUP West proved more than sufficient to meet the need for COVID-19 care, and no patients needed to move to the Pavilion. Still, the effort demonstrated what motivation and teamwork can accomplish, an effort UPHS CEO Kevin Mahoney described as “Herculean!”

Although the official opening was more than a year away, multidisciplinary teams had already started transition and activation planning for the move to HUP East and were familiar with the building. Now, they all stepped up to the plate in this effort to move in ahead of schedule. For example, the clinical teams from the Rheakd oncology floors who were slated to move over early if needed — as well as staff who would be supporting care delivery — received a full building and equipment orientation as well as life safety training and participated in simulated work flows, even mock codes — everything to ensure patient and staff preparedness. Working around the clock, EVS crews cleaned all the chosen areas multiple times to make sure there was no construction dirt or dust anywhere. Materials Management and Pharmacy stocked all the areas with patient care supplies.

But before any of this could move forward, construction had to be completed and all the necessary patient care supplies and technology had to be in place. Here’s how it happened.

### Getting the Right Stuff at the Right Time

Three shifts of construction crews worked around the clock to complete the patient rooms, which included finishing floors and ceilings, painting walls, fitting pipes and wiring rooms.

As construction continued, Peter E. Giovinco, MBA, the Pavilion’s Project Controls manager, and his team were tackling the mammoth task of obtaining all the necessary equipment for patient care in a very short period of time. “It was an intense three-week effort,” Giovinco said. He worked with Kathy Gallagher, MS, BSN, clinical liaison of the Pavilion Project to go through all the spaces in the Pavilion virtually to figure out what care operations would look like.

 Beds were the most urgent need. Not knowing if they’d get enough beds in time, they searched for stretchers as well, a flexible option that could be rolled anywhere. “We relied on vendor partners who know what kind of beds and stretchers could be available on a short time line,” Giovinco said.

All patient rooms were designed to have central medical gas, oxygen and suction in headwalls, but, at the time, these systems were in varying states of installation. “We thought about portable suction units and oxygen tanks and how they’d work,” Giovinco said. But, as it turned out, the headwall installations were completed on time.

As the targeted opening-ready day approached, everything had fallen into place. Thanks to bathroom pods which were constructed offsite and had already been brought to the Pavilion for installation, all of the patient rooms had working bathrooms and showers. But even the ground floor — which is really an ED and not an inpatient area with patient care supplies — worked properly.

Materials Management and Pharmacy stocked all the areas with patient care supplies. And staff preparedness. Working around the clock, EVS crews cleaned all the chosen areas multiple times to make sure there was no construction dirt or dust anywhere.

As a result, when the idea to open part of the Pavilion arose, IS made sure the units were patient-ready and they did it in two weeks.

Initially, said Dave Stover, director of Data Network, the focus was on “rudimentary solutions, for example, using portable patient monitoring with no central alarms,” but then, many more people sided in the efforts, and “suddenly everything seemed and was made possible,” including physiological monitors and central stations alarming. And the PennChart team built everything needed to support those beds.

“These efforts display what can be achieved when talented employees work collaboratively for our patients and the overall community,” said Michael Restuccia, chief information officer and SVP.

“’This all was a test of what we’ll need to do in 2021,” Gallagher said. “People were anxious about, ‘How will we do this?’ Now we know: we can.”

### Information Services Efforts

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### Making HUP East Patient-Ready

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### Keeping the Wheels of Care Turning Smoothly

DONATED FOOD FUELS THE FRONT LINE

Man may not live on food alone, but for staff who are working tirelessly to care for patients and stay safe themselves, gifts of goodies delivered to their units are not only a gutic delight but a boost for their mental state as well.

Almost from the time the first COVID-19 patient was admitted to HUP, donated meals started pouring in to HUP’s units and the ED. Jessie Reich, MSN, Magnet program director who oversees food donations to HUP, received close to 10,000 donations: From small sandwich platters to large ones with 100 sandwiches and salads. Reich said that although some donations targeted specific areas, “We try to make sure everyone at HUP gets something.”

While many donations came from restaurants and companies, some came from individuals wanting to help. For example, the brother of Hanna Liss of the ED, who lives in California, had bagel and fruit trays delivered to the ED. And then there was Breesa Kaut, who worked as an X-ray tech at HUP until last year when she decided to devote more time to her photography business. Reaching out on Facebook, she started “Food For Front Line” to boost spirits of not only HUP staff, but those at PPMC, PAH and other hospitals in the city. As donations poured in, she kept on ordering as many deliveries as possible. “What they’re doing on the front lines is amazing,” she said. “This is something to show we appreciate it.”

A greatly appreciated Food for Front Line delivery to the pre-op PACU.

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