

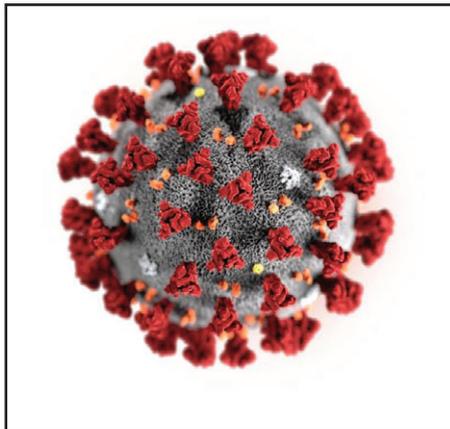
HEALTH WATCH

SEPTEMBER 2020

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Inside:



FLU AND COVID-19



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MONITORING**

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at ACMC*
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HIGHEST
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GRADE**

For the third consecutive rating period, ACMC has earned the highest ranking for patient safety.

At a time when safety protocols have never been more critical, here is what we're doing to protect our patients and employees:

- › Appropriate **personal protective equipment is worn by all** of our caregivers
- › **Surgical patients are tested for COVID-19** at least three days prior to their procedure
- › **All ED patients are screened for COVID-19 symptoms** and positive cases isolated
- › Everyone (caregivers, patients, visitors) entering our buildings is required to **wear a face mask**
- › Frequent **disinfection of surfaces**
- › **Temperature checks are required** for everyone who enters ACMC
- › **Screenings for symptoms** are conducted at every entrance
- › Created **physical separation in our waiting and procedural areas**
- › **Visitation rules** are more stringent

At ACMC, count on the highest standards of safety to support the highest level of care.

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Medical Center**
ACMC Healthcare System

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The Leapfrog Group is a national, independent nonprofit organization that sets the highest standards for patient safety in the United States.

Treating strokes

ACMC earns two awards

BY SHELLEY TERRY

sterry@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA — Ashtabula County Medical Center has received the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines®-Stroke Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award. The hospital also received the Target: Stroke Elite Honor Roll Advanced Therapy award.

The awards recognize the hospital's commitment to ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines based on the latest scientific evidence.

"ACMC is dedicated to providing the highest quality of care to our stroke patients," said ACMC Healthcare System President and Chief Executive Officer Michael Habowski. "The tools and resources provided in the American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines-Stroke initiative help us track and measure our success in meeting evidenced-based clinical guidelines developed to improve patient outcomes."

Signs and symptoms of stroke can happen in a matter of seconds. Recognizing the signs and getting medical treatment immediately are keys to minimizing the long-term impact of stroke.

Timely treatment is especially important for stroke caused by a blood clot. A medication called a tissue plasminogen activator, or alteplase, can destroy the clot and restore blood flow. However, it must be given

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Michael Habowski

ACMC Healthcare System President and Chief Executive Officer

within four-and-a-half hours of the stroke's start.

As the only Primary Stroke Center in Ashtabula County, ACMC has an expert team who work together to determine the best course of action for the patient. The stroke team consists of caregivers from the emergency department, neurology, radiology, pharmacy, laboratory and respiratory therapy.

Even before a potential stroke patient arrives at ACMC's Emergency Department, doctors are in communication with emergency medical services personnel to begin the stroke assessment and to launch internal stroke protocols. The protocol ensures the patient will be assessed face-to-face by a physician, vital signs recorded, blood sugar evaluated, and then

will be sent for a CT scan and sometimes CT angiography of brain and neck to determine the nature of stroke and eligibility for recombinant tissue Plasminogen Activator (rtPA).

The stroke protocol is a set

of evidence-based guidelines with the goal of speeding recovery and reducing death and disability for stroke patients. The protocol also includes education and having a follow up visit scheduled before being discharged from the hospital.

"We established our stroke protocols several years ago, with a focus on response time," said Dr. Imraan Haniff, the Medical Director of the ACMC Emergency Department. "We know that long-term and permanent brain damage increases as more time passes from the onset of symptoms to treatment."

The median time for door-to-CT scan at ACMC is 24 minutes. The national average is more than 34 minutes, according to hospital officials.

ACMC received the Association's Target: Stroke Elite Honor Roll award by meeting quality measures developed to reduce the time between the patient's arrival at the hospital and treatment with the clot-buster tissue

plasminogen activator, or alteplase, the only drug approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat ischemic stroke.

ACMC's median time to a patient receiving the alteplase medicine is 50 minutes. The average for hospitals not using American Heart Association guidelines is 70 minutes, according to hospital officials.

"Time is essential for patients having a stroke," said ACMC Neurologist, Dr. Preeti Muthusamy. "Though American Heart Association 2019 guidelines allow rtPA administration up to 4.5 hours from stroke symptom onset, the benefits are much stronger when the medicine is administered within three hours from symptom onset. In fact, rtPA administration

within three hours from symptom onset has shown to increase chances of functional independence at three months by one-third."

Because time is of the essence, it is important for family members or friends to recognize the signs and symptoms and to call for help quickly.

ACMC doctors suggest using the acronym BE FAST to remember the signs of a stroke and what to do:

B - Balance

Sudden trouble with balance or coordination

E - Eyes

Sudden blurred or double vision or a sudden loss of vision in one or both eyes

F - Face Drooping

One side of the face droops or becomes numb. Ask the person to smile.

A - Arm Weakness

Arm becomes weak or numb. Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm sag as if the person is holding something heavy?

S - Speech Difficulty

Difficulty speaking, slurred speech, or an inability to speak. Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence like, "The sky is blue."

T - Time to call 9-1-1

If a person shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and ask EMS to take your loved one to ACMC's Primary Stroke Center.

Hand washing

When to use soap and water or sanitizer

In the wake of the global COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020, millions of people across the globe found themselves scrambling for hand sanitizer. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that cleaning hands at key times is one of the most important steps people can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs, there are differences between washing with soap and water and washing with alcohol-based hand sanitizers.

The CDC notes that preventing the spread of sickness through handwashing is most effective when people know which method to use when cleaning their hands.



Clean hands can prevent the spread of disease. Knowing which hand cleaner to use in certain situations can be an especially important preventative measure.

bathroom, changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the bathroom

- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing

- After touching an animal, animal food or treats, animal cages, or animal waste

- After touching garbage

- If your hands are visibly dirty or greasy

When washing with soap and water, the CDC advises people to wet their hands with clean running water (warm or cold) and applying soap. Lather the

hands by rubbing them together with the soap, making sure to scrub all surfaces of the hands, including palms, backs, fingers, between fingers, and under the nails. Scrub for 20 seconds before rinsing hands clean under running water and drying your

hands, be it with a clean towel or air drying.

WHEN TO USE ALCOHOL-BASED HAND SANITIZER

Hand sanitizer should not be applied to hands that are dirty or greasy. Hands that become dirty or greasy

after activities such as gardening or fishing should be cleaned with soap and water. The CDC advises using alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

- Before and after visiting a friend or a loved one in a hospital or nursing home, unless the person is sick with *Clostridium difficile* (if so, use soap and water to wash hands).

- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol, and wash with soap and water as soon as you can.

Children should always be supervised when applying alcohol-based hand sanitizer. When using alcohol-based hand sanitizers, the CDC recommends covering all surfaces of the hands with the product before rubbing hands together until they feel dry, which should happen after roughly 20 seconds.

Clean hands can prevent the spread of disease. Knowing which hand cleaner to use in certain situations can be an especially important preventative measure.

WHEN TO USE SOAP AND WATER

The following are common situations when the CDC advises using soap and water to clean hands.

- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the

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Yellow alert

COVID-19 still a problem

BY BRIAN HAYTCHER

bhaytcher@starbeacon.com

No matter whether you believe in it or not, COVID-19 is still with us.

In the state of Ohio, there have been more than 140,000 cases of COVID-19, and more than 4,600 deaths as of Friday, Sept. 18, according to the Ohio Department of Health.

Nationwide, there have been more than 180,000 deaths from March 1 to Sept. 12, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Ohio's Public Health Advisory System has Ashtabula County in the yellow, or lowest category.

"We can look at that and at least take some satisfaction there that the county has fared, ... relative to the rest of the state, fairly well," said Ashtabula County Health Commissioner Ray Saporito. "But that being said, we're a yellow rating. It doesn't take much to change that yellow rating to an orange rating or to, unfortunately, a red rating."

The Public Health Advisory System looks at information including the number of new cases per capita, wheth-

er there has been an increase in new cases, cases in non-congregate settings, emergency room visits, doctor's office visits, hospital

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Ray Saporito
Ashtabula County Health
Commissioner

admissions and the percentage of ICU beds used, both for COVID-19 positive and negative patients, according to the system's website.

"You can be one major outbreak from going into the orange category, and two major outbreaks, perhaps you could be in the red category," Saporito said.

There have been 638 cases of COVID-19 in Ashtabula County, and 99 people have been hospitalized, according to the Ohio Department of Health.

In total, there have

been 48 deaths in Ashtabula County due to COVID-19, as of Friday, Sept. 18, according to the ODH. Of those 48 deaths, 27 were residents of nursing homes and long term care facilities, and four were inmates at Lake Erie Correctional Facility, according to ODH.

Last week, the state also released its first list of districts with students who tested positive for COVID-19. In Ashtabula County, Geneva Area City Schools and Pymatuning Valley Local Schools reported one new case among students each, and the Ashtabula County Educational Service Center reported one new staff case, according to ODH.

"It's a positive that we are and have maintained that yellow rating, the lowest risk rating," Saporito said. "But ... you have to remain vigilant. This is a tenuous situation. Nobody's had the experience of going through a full influenza season along with a COVID-19 season."

Saporito encouraged people to remain vigilant when it comes to COVID-19.

Did you know

Telehealth has its good and bad points

Social distancing guidelines encouraging people to stay in their homes as much as possible led many to wonder what to do in regard to visiting their physicians.

Telehealth is one option people may want to explore. Sometimes referred to as “telemedicine,” telehealth enables patients to speak with their physicians via phone, tablet or conferencing apps such as Zoom.

This can help patients and their physicians reduce their risk for exposure to viruses such as COVID-19, but also other conditions that can weaken their immune systems and, as a result, make them more vulnerable to illness. But as helpful as telehealth can be while social distancing restric-

tions remain in place, it's important that patients continue to seek the advice of their own physicians.

One of the concerns about telehealth noted by representatives for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is the difficulty of monitoring health care providers who may not have patients' best interests in mind.

This can lead to certain problems, including over prescribing medications and doctors offering medical advice to patients in states where the physicians are not licensed to practice.

Speaking only with physicians who have already treated you is one way to avoid this potential pitfall associated with telehealth services.

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Health care workers continue to confront the COVID-19 virus every day. Giving back to these valued members of the community is a great way to show just how much their efforts are appreciated.

Show of appreciation

How to give back to health care workers

Millions of people across the globe donate to charities or volunteer as a means of bolstering their communities and helping the less fortunate. Such help is valuable no matter when it's offered, but giving back in 2020 has proven to be an especially necessary endeavor.

As a global pandemic took hold during the winter of 2019-20, millions of people found themselves battling a potentially deadly virus, while millions more found themselves out of work as the economy came crashing to a halt. Health care work-

ers have been on the front lines in the fight against the COVID-19 virus for months on end. Stressful working environments and concerns about bringing the virus home and potentially infecting their families have made the challenges of fighting the pandemic even tougher for health care workers.

Supporting such workers in these uncertain times can be a great way for people to show just how much they appreciate the extraordinary efforts of doctors, nurses, EMTs, and others who continue to confront COVID-19 every day.

- Keep it simple. Efforts

to give back to health care workers need not be extraordinary. Simple gestures like preparing a weeknight meal for health care workers and their families, offering to babysit on a weekend afternoon or tackle a few chores around the house can help exhausted health care workers catch their breath.

- Donate more than just your time and effort. An actively engaged general public can reassure health care workers that they're not alone in the fight against COVID-19 and other potentially deadly viruses and diseases. While blood is not used to treat COVID-19, vari-

ous health organizations, including the U.S. Surgeon General's Office, have expressed concerns that hospitals will not have enough blood on hand to treat accident victims and sick people who need blood to survive.

Social distancing measures may be keeping potential blood donors away, but the American Red Cross is urging people to continue donating blood so health care workers can meet the needs of patient care.

- Support efforts to procure more funding for hospitals. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, both the American Hospital Association and the

American Nurses Association have expressed hospitals' need for more financial support as they continue to battle the virus. By supporting such efforts and encouraging others to do the same, people looking to give back can send a message to health care workers that they're supported and that their voices are being heard.

Health care workers continue to confront the COVID-19 virus every day. Giving back to these valued members of the community is a great way to show just how much their efforts are appreciated.

BETTER OPTIONS. BETTER CARE.

YOUR GUIDE TO ASHTABULA COUNTY'S LARGEST PROVIDER NETWORK.

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If you are unable to get to your appointment, ACMC's **Health Express** shuttle is a free transportation service available to patients of ACMC and our providers. The shuttle runs Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 4:00 pm, on a first-come, first-served basis. Service is limited to patients who are able to board the shuttle unassisted by the driver. To schedule a ride, call (440) 992-1917 or 1-800-292-5707 at least 48 hours in advance of your appointment.

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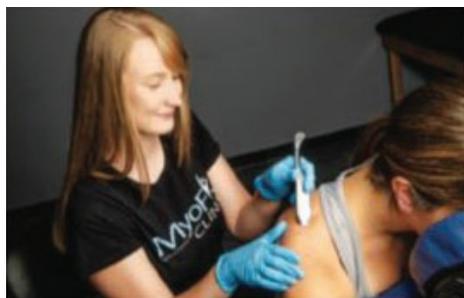
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Doctor of Physical Therapy First is Best for Shoulder Pain

By Dr. Adam M. Cramer, PT, DPT

Where do you look for relief of shoulder pain?

Too often when twinges of pain erupt from the shoulder, busy people just ignore it and push on through their day. The next day hurts even more, so they take a few pain-pills and continue without seeking help or they seek out a surgeon who can only provide surgery as an option when they actually don't want or even need surgery. Orthopedic surgeons have never physically made anyone ever use their arm again, that's not what they do, they provide surgery. The physical therapist that the surgeon owns (illegal in most states, see Stark Laws) also only sees people who have already had surgery and not equipped to help you avoid surgery. So if you are looking to avoid surgery see a independent private physical therapist first for the best chance to avoid surgery.

What to expect from Physical Therapy and how it can help your shoulder pain

When you consult with a doctor of physical therapy first at MyoFit Clinic you can expect that your symptoms will be immediately reduce conservatively that day. During your initial evaluation you will be diagnosed so the cause of your pain can be determined and then provide immediate effective treatment to reduce your symptoms the same day.

A combination of hands on treatment to loosen the muscles and joints and combine it with massage, dry needling, laser therapy and moist heat treatments. Add to that mobility and strengthening exercises along with training and education on how to decrease the pain naturally and you are well on your way towards recovery! Doing nothing or trying to avoid your pain will ultimately make things dramatically worse.

It takes time for your shoulder to heal. It is important that you move at the pace your physical therapist advises, because you need to avoid re-injury as you work to regain normalcy.

Our physical therapists at MyoFit Clinic provide private care can help you heal from your shoulder pain while avoiding surgery, saving you money and return you to your normal life. Just leaving your shoulder alone hoping it will heal won't help you at all. Physical Therapy first!

Dr. Adam M. Cramer, PT, DPT, is a Doctor of Physical Therapy owner/founder of the MyoFit Clinics in Chardon, Ashtabula and Middlefield, Ohio. MyoFitClinic.com



What information do I need to know about Medigap plans?**There are four things to know.**

1. You are still in the Medicare program. When you purchase Medicare Supplement insurance, you don't cancel or replace your Medicare Part A and Part B coverage. You still have all of your Medicare benefits, rights and protections.
2. Medicare Supplement insurance plans are standardized. By law there can be no difference in plans offered by different insurance companies. There is an exception for people who live in Massachusetts, Minnesota or Wisconsin.
3. Price and quality of service can vary from one insurer to another. Other than deciding which Medigap plan is best for you, comparing prices and selecting a quality insurance company are your most important decisions.
4. Prescription drugs coverage is not included. But you can consider a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan to cover your drug costs. Medicare Supplement insurance plans sold before 2006 may offer coverage for prescription drugs.

Why do 13 million Americans have Medicare Supplement Insurance?**Peace of Mind.**

A Medicare Supplement insurance policy offers financial security and peace of mind. Peace of mind comes from knowing you've planned and are prepared for any costly health care surprises.

Freedom to Choose

You control and choose to see any medical professional anytime, anywhere ... as often as you need care. The only requirement is that they accept Medicare (and new patients).

Portable Coverage

You are not restricted to use a network of health care providers. If you move, your Medigap coverage goes with you. You may even include foreign travel emergency benefits.

Guarantees that Protect

In most cases your premium (monthly cost) is locked in for the first 12 months.(can vary by carrier) Plus, policies are guaranteed renewable. That means no worries about being cancelled or having benefits reduced as long as your premiums are paid on time.

Who is eligible for a Medigap plan?

You can apply for a Medicare Supplement insurance policy if you are:

1. A resident of a state where the policy is offered.
2. Enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B.
3. Age 65 or over or, in some states, under age 65 with a disability and/or end stage renal disease (plan offering and eligibility vary by state).

When is the best time to buy A Medicare Supplement plan?

That depends. Most people enroll in Medicare when they turn 65. This is called the "Open Enrollment" period. It begins three months before your 65th birthday, includes the month of your 65th birthday and runs until three months after your birthday.

During the Open Enrollment period you qualify for guaranteed issue coverage. That means the insurance company must accept your application no matter what health conditions you have. This is a very important fact to remember.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Switching Medigap plans

There are reasons people switch their Medicare Supplement insurance plan.

You are paying for benefits you do not need.

You need or want more benefits than you needed before.

Your current Medigap policy has the right benefits but you want to change your insurance company.

You want to find a Medigap policy that is less expensive.

Before you switch do a very careful comparison of benefits. If you bought your policy before 2010, it may offer coverage that is not available in newer plans. If you bought your policy before 1992, your policy might not be a "guaranteed renewable policy." It may have a bigger premium increase than newer Medigap plans available.

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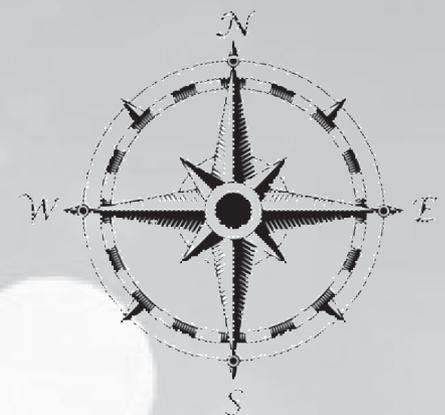
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Reduce the risk

Ashtabula County health assessment monitors issues

BY BRIAN HAYTCHER

bhaytcher@starbeacon.com

While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic remains a threat, people need to be on the lookout for other potential issues as well.

“I like to say there’s like three ... elements that influence a person’s health status,” Health Commissioner Ray Saporito said. “One is a person’s lifestyle, very important. The second, which you cannot change, is your genetic makeup, your heredity. And the third is your medical care.”

“But when you stop

and think about the leading killers today — heart disease, cancer, strokes, opiate overdoses, accidents — a lot of those are preventable.”

ing to commit to ... the healthy behavior, it’s going to go a long way to improving our health,” Saporito said. The Ashtabula

Improvement Plan.

There were many meetings involved in creating the most recent Health Needs Assessment. A consul-

published in 2019, and contains information about the health of Ashtabula County residents.

The 2019 Health

noted that the percentage of Ashtabula County adults who are uninsured increased to 18 percent for people making less than \$25,000, and was only eight percent for residents making more than \$25,000.

Forty-two percent of adults in the county rated their health as excellent or very good, 44 percent rated their health as good, and 14 percent rated their health as poor, according to the assessment.

The next step after creating the assessment is to create a community health improvement plan. “So all of this information was gathered and collected, and then we had to do something about it,” Saporito said.

The 2017 plan for Ashtabula County is available on the Health Department’s website. The 2017 plan’s focus areas include suicide, childhood and adult obesity, chronic disease and opiate use. Each priority has a list of actions associated with it, according to the plan.

COVID-19 has disrupted meetings of groups involved with the community health improvement plan, Saporito said.

‘I like to say there’s like three ... elements that influence a person’s health status. One is a person’s lifestyle, very important. The second, which you cannot change, is your genetic makeup, your heredity. And the third is your medical care.’

Ray Saporito

Ashtabula County Health Commissioner

Adopting a healthier lifestyle will reduce the risk from some of those causes of death, Saporito said.

“If people are will-

County Health Department, in conjunction with other entities, produces a Community Health Needs Assessment and Health

tant collected statistics and surveys from the public.

The most recent version of the Health Needs Assessment was

Needs Assessment found that 75 percent of Ashtabula County residents were either overweight or obese, based on body mass index. Additionally, the assessment found that 54 percent of county residents were limited in some way due to physical, mental or emotional health issues.

Ninety percent of county residents had some form of health insurance in 2019, according to the assessment. Just over 7,600 adults in the county were uninsured.

“Obviously, we all need health insurance,” Saporito said.

There have been studies that show people put off having health procedures due to the cost, he said.

The assessment also



Constance L. Eyman, LNHA, CEAL, LSW, CDR
Nursing Home Administrator

5740 Dibble Road, Kingsville
440-224-2161

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Perfect storm

When COVID-19 and flu season converge

BY SHELLEY TERRY
sterry@starbeacon.com

One thing everyone has learned about the COVID-19 pandemic is that there's a lot to learn.

In the early stages of the pandemic, it seemed like new information about the virus came out every day, but one thing we have yet to learn is what happens when flu season hits. Many had hopes that COVID-19 would have been much better contained — maybe even gone — before flu arrived. Sadly, with the start of flu season right around the corner, the probability of that is bleak.

To some in healthcare, the upcoming flu season combined with the coronavirus is a perfect storm. One concern is that all of the attention on COVID-19 will make people forget about the flu — and how dangerous and deadly it can be, said Ashtabula City Health Commissioner Christine Hill.

According to the World Health Organization, about 650,000 people throughout the

All ACMC family health centers will have flu vaccine available. To make an appointment, call 440-997-6969.

world die from the flu. That is less than the number of global deaths from COVID-19, but it is still a significant number when you consider that flu vaccination has been around for decades [in the United States, large-scale availability of flu vaccine began in 1945].

Because this will be the first year with COVID-19 and the flu circulating at the same time, we don't know if getting the flu will make someone more susceptible to the coronavirus, or vice versa.

What health professionals do know is that it is still important to protect yourself against the flu, and getting the flu vaccine is one of the best ways to do that, Hill said.

One note of caution around the flu vaccine: don't get it too early.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, getting the flu vaccine before mid-September or October likely reduces its protection against flu infection later in the flu season. This is especially true for senior citizens. Almost importantly, if you don't get the vaccine by the end of October — don't think it's too late. If the virus is still circulating, it's never too late to get the vaccine.

Providers at all ACMC family health centers will have flu vaccine available for patients beginning in mid-September. To make an appointment, call 440-997-6969.

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DAVID DERMER | SPECIAL TO THE STAR BEACON

Pharmacy Technician Sherri Lemak and LECOM School of Pharmacy student Jones Alyadago work near the new Clean Room inside the new pharmacy at UH Conneaut Medical Center Sept. 11.

Latest technology

UH Conneaut Medical Center boasts renovated pharmacy

BY SHELLEY TERRY

sterry@starbeacon.co,

'Ashtabula County is very fortunate to have as an asset University Hospitals in our backyard providing critical health care and services to our residents. This investment shows commitment to our county.'

Casey Kozlowski

Ashtabula County Commissioner

CONNEAUT — University Hospitals Conneaut Medical Center is looking to the future with the renovation of its pharmacy.

The UH Conneaut Pharmacy was completely renovated

in an area of about 1,100-square-feet, inclusive of adjacent office

and waiting area. The compliance and modernization included,

new work and storage space along with the latest technology in

clean room air changes and sealed cleanable surfaces.

"Ashtabula County is very fortunate to have as an asset University Hospitals in our backyard providing critical health care and services to our residents," Ashtabula

SEE **TECHNOLOGY**, 15

TECHNOLOGY:

UH Conneaut Medical Center boasts renovated pharmacy

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County Commissioner Casey Kozlowski said. "This investment shows commitment to our county."

At a cost of nearly \$1.9 million, all the mechanical and electrical systems were replaced in the renovated areas to provide the proper temperature, humidity and pressure balances required by the federal and state

pharmacy agencies, said Jason E. Glowczewski, chief operating officer at UH Conneaut and UH Geneva.

Several local tradesmen worked on the renovations, which were completed in early May. After several tests and inspections, the pharmacy staff started operating in the new space in mid-June.

"We have served our community for almost 100 years; we

want to ensure we can continue to care for you another 100 more," Glowczewski said. "Thank you for the opportunity to allow us to be your first-choice partner in healthcare."

UH Conneaut Medical Center is a general medical and surgical facility, and a teaching hospital.

To reach the pharmacy, 158 W. Main Road, Conneaut, call 440-593-0183.

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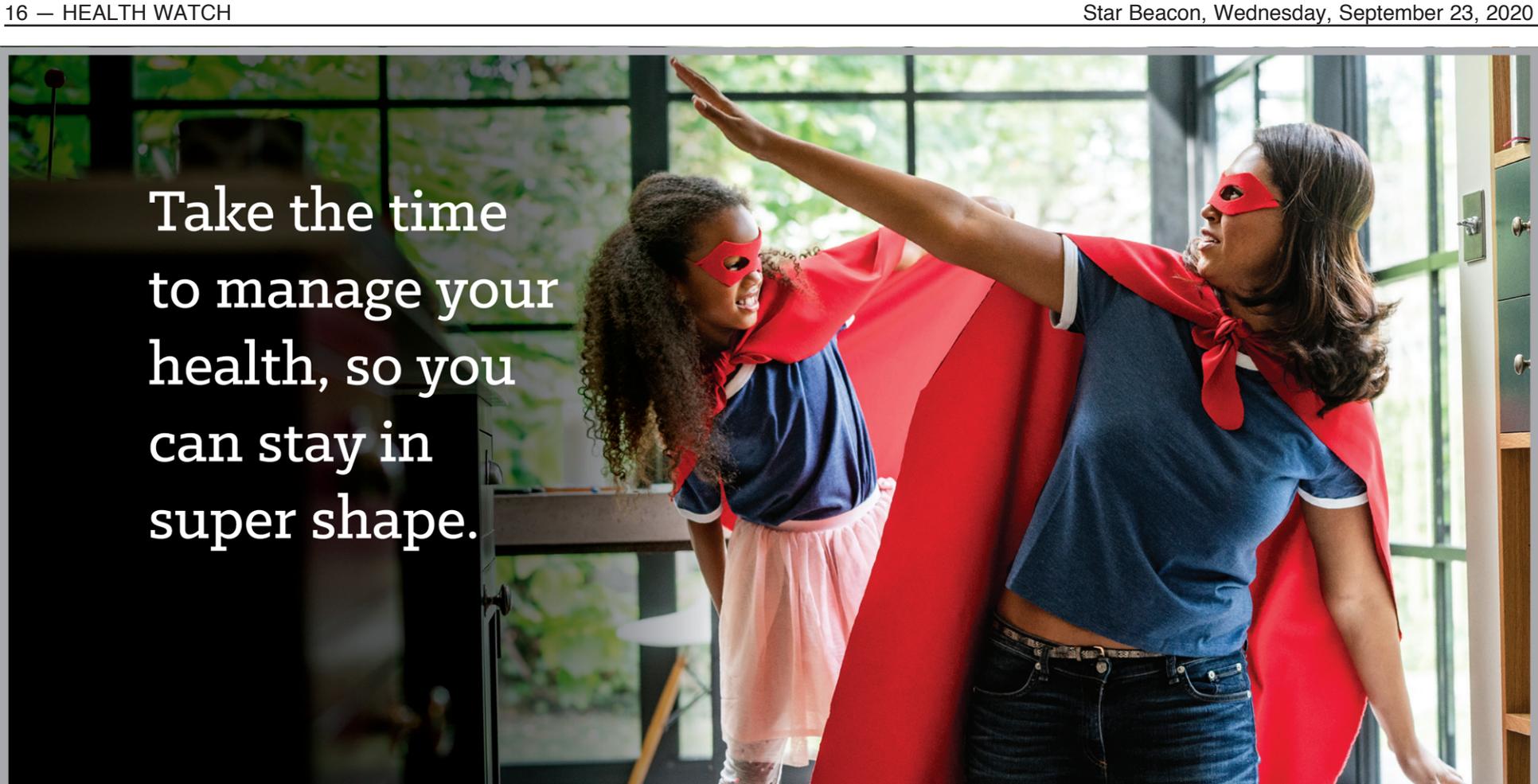
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