

Connections

A health and lifestyle publication from NorthShore University HealthSystem | Fall/Winter 2021 | northshore.org/connections



Inspiring Cardio Confidence

**Tailored Treatment Options
for Your Special Needs** Page 6

Q&A

New Community Connection to Breakthrough Treatments

Centralized Clinical Trials Center Opens
Access to Healthcare Innovation

As part of NorthShore Research Institute, a new Clinical Trials Center recently opened in Skokie as an exciting hub for groundbreaking clinical research trials. It expands NorthShore's research capabilities for testing leading-edge treatments and therapies. And for participating patients across the growing NorthShore system, it offers easier access in one, single, convenient location.

To find out more about the Center's capabilities, we talked with NorthShore Dermatologist Stephanie Mehlis, MD, Clinical Trials Center Director, and Liana Billings, MD, MMSc, Endocrinologist and Vice Chair of Research and Education in the Department of Medicine.

Q Why is this new Clinical Trials Center so important for patients?

Dr. Billings: It gives our patients and the larger community the opportunity to access the latest treatments for a variety of medical conditions that either are not yet approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or have FDA approval and are now being evaluated for treating other medical conditions beyond their initial approval.

Dr. Mehlis: Also, as NorthShore participates in more clinical research, the Center creates added convenience for participating patients by pulling together all of our trials within one centralized location. It's an exciting expansion of space, personnel and equipment for our physicians and investigators to collaborate and further grow our clinical trials programs to benefit all of us.



Dermatologist **Dr. Stephanie Mehlis** (left) and Endocrinologist **Dr. Liana Billings** are testing promising new treatments at NorthShore's new Clinical Trials Center.

Q Can you describe some of the studies currently underway at the Center?

Dr. Mehlis: The Center brings to the forefront the amazing research already going on at NorthShore on the efficacy and safety of many new treatment options. One important and timely trial is with the National Institutes of Health. We're evaluating how patients with a history of allergic reaction to vaccines respond to COVID-19 vaccines.

Dr. Billings: We're also studying new therapies and technologies for patients with diabetes, psoriasis and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. Overall, the Center is involved in more than 30 outpatient clinical trials involving hundreds of participants in the fields of dermatology, diabetes, cardiometabolic conditions, infectious diseases, rheumatology and allergy. This is just a subset of some 550 active clinical trials across NorthShore.

Q How does the Clinical Trials Center impact the future of patient care?

Dr. Mehlis: One of the impacts of COVID-19 has been realizing how important clinical trials are in getting effective medications and therapies approved to treat disease. Our new Center gives NorthShore and our communities the unique opportunity to ultimately improve how medicine will be practiced in the future. These trials also can be a win-win for patients whose diseases aren't controlled with conventional medication by giving them access to potentially more effective treatments before they're FDA-approved.

Q How can a patient get into a clinical trial?

Dr. Billings: Email us at ctc@northshore.org to inquire about a NorthShore clinical research trial that may be appropriate for treating a particular medical condition. Participating patients must meet certain eligibility requirements. We also regularly update NorthShore clinical trials and studies on our website at northshore.org/e1.

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ON THE COVER: **Elizabeth Bhatt** enjoys loving interactions with her labradoodle Greta. Her AFib is now under control thanks to an advanced heart device implanted at NorthShore.

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TytoCare's home diagnostic tools send real-time physical exam data directly to your doctor during a telehealth visit.

Get Your Discount

Go online to order your own TytoCare diagnostic kit and receive \$100 off using discount code **Connections** at checkout. You also can watch a video that further explains how NorthShore's enhanced telehealth powered by TytoCare works. Visit northshore.org/e2.



WATCH A VIDEO

High-Tech Health

As part of an ongoing NorthShore podcast series featuring the impact of new technology on care delivery, Family Medicine Physician **Nadim Ilbawi, MD**, explains the TytoCare telehealth advantage. Listen in at northshore.org/e3.

Home Diagnostic Tools Boost Telehealth

Get Special Pricing for *Connections* Readers

By Barb Hailey

During the height of COVID-19 last year, telehealth emerged as a critical resource for healthcare delivery. But even outside of the peaks and valleys of the pandemic, telehealth continues to be a secure and convenient option for busy people to stay on top of their health without scheduling an in-person visit for a variety of urgent care needs.

Now, NorthShore has partnered with TytoCare to offer you a much more enhanced telehealth experience. By purchasing your own medical exam kit, you can now give your care provider **real-time physical exam data** through a set of easy-to-use hand-held diagnostic tools connected to your smartphone, tablet or computer. It is all done from the safety, comfort and convenience of your home!

TURNKEY TECHNOLOGY

A TytoCare kit retails for \$299.99, but *Connections* readers get a \$100 discount. While not covered by health insurance, it is Health Savings Account (HSA)/Flexible Spending Account (FSA)-eligible. Once purchased, you can:

- Send heart and lung sounds, or ear and throat pictures in real time directly from your smart device to your care team.
- Get a more complete diagnosis and treatment plan—including prescriptions—without leaving home.

- Consult virtually with immediate care and pediatric providers initially, with plans to expand to primary and specialty care services.

“The integrity of the exam is very high quality,” explained NorthShore Family Medicine Physician Nadim Ilbawi, MD. “The real-time information provides crisp images and sound quality equal to those at an in-person doctor visit. The fact that we can transmit this information from the home is impressive, and it opens a lot of doors for convenient, yet thorough treatment.”

A DREAM FOR BUSY PARENTS

Consider this. After your initial investment, TytoCare:

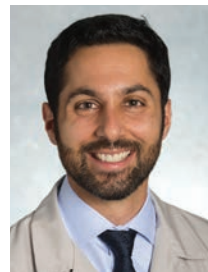
- Makes life easier for working moms, dads and caregivers who otherwise might have to leave work or rearrange schedules.
- Eliminates travel time to office visits or scheduling last-minute child care for siblings.
- Provides quick diagnoses, such as a suspected ear infection in a child, with any needed prescriptions ordered right away.
- Offers faster relief for your ailing loved ones—children, adults and senior parents.

PEACE OF MIND

NorthShore-enhanced telehealth powered by TytoCare provides on-demand access from the comfort and safety of your home. The most commonly treated conditions include:

- Allergies
- Animal/insect bite
- Asthma
- Burns (minor)
- Cold, congestion
- Ear infections
- Eye injuries
- Fever
- Flu
- Pink eye
- Rash
- Sinus problems
- Skin issues (minor irritations like poison ivy/oak, dermatitis)
- Sore throat

“It’s not meant to replace yearly exams,” added Dr. Ilbawi. “Rather, it’s a way to help our patients manage their personal health in a more robust way when an urgent need arises.”



“The real-time information provides crisp images and sound quality equal to those at an in-person doctor visit.”
Family Medicine Physician
Dr. Nadim Ilbawi

‘Nothing Short of Miraculous’

Skull-Based Tumor Removed Through Keyhole-Sized Incision

By Brian Justice

“My mother always told me, ‘Health is everything!’ and I took her excellent advice.”

For more than 25 years, Stephen Steinhaus of Highland Park followed that wise guidance. The industrial psychologist has been meticulous about his health, exercise and diet. Even subtle changes in his body did not go unnoticed, including some strange symptoms that developed out of the blue.

“I had an odd feeling in my feet and felt some pressure in my head,” Steinhaus, 66, recalled. “I didn’t waste any time scheduling an MRI to see what was going on.”

What was going on was a potentially dangerous tumor.

FINDING THE RIGHT CARE PARTNER

Initially seen by the neuro-oncology team at NorthShore Neurological Institute, Steinhaus was diagnosed with a benign tumor called a meningioma. The tumor does not form within the brain itself, but on its lining. But because the skull is rigid, the tumor can grow inward and push on the brain, nerves and blood vessels.

Fortunately, Steinhaus did not require immediate surgery, just an annual MRI to closely monitor his condition. “I remember my wife and I walking down the hallway doing a kind of happy dance,” he said. “No immediate brain surgery!”

But that changed several years later. A follow-up MRI revealed that the tumor had grown large enough to potentially put

pressure on his optic nerve. Something would have to be done within the next six months.

Steinhaus initially consulted a surgeon at another health system who recommended a large, highly invasive surgery with a recovery time of six months. Steinhaus thought it over and went for a second opinion with NorthShore Neurosurgeon Ricky Wong, MD, who specializes in leading-edge minimally invasive techniques.

TINY INCISION, MIGHTY RESULTS

Dr. Wong recommended a surgery that involves making a tiny incision along the side of his eye and a small hole in the skull no larger than a quarter. Then, using microscopes and endoscopes, the surgeon removes the tumor without ever touching the brain. Steinhaus was all in.

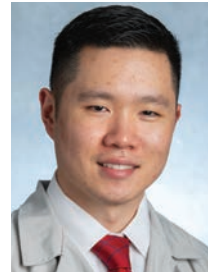
“We pioneer new technologies to make our surgeries smaller and much less invasive so we can safely remove tumors while saving and preserving parts of the brain with critical function,” explained Dr. Wong, who holds an academic appointment at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine.

Steinhaus is still in awe of his accelerated recovery. Two days after the so-called “keyhole” surgery, he was out of the hospital. A week later, he was able to drive and return to work. “It was nothing short of miraculous,” he said. Steinhaus also is back to his regular routine, including frequent exercise.

“We’ll continue to monitor Stephen periodically,” added Dr. Wong. “But we

consider the successful removal of this type of tumor to be completely curative.”

“This was above and beyond anything I could have hoped for,” said Steinhaus. “I’m



eternally grateful to Dr. Wong and the entire NorthShore team.”

NorthShore Neurosurgeon **Dr. Ricky Wong** pioneers tiny-incision techniques in brain surgery.

On His Mind

Stephen Steinhaus shares more about his journey through minimally invasive tumor surgery in a new video. Tune in at northshore.org/stephensstory.



WATCH A VIDEO

Connecting Our Best for You

As part of clinical integration with our newest partners, neurosurgery subspecialists from NorthShore Neurological Institute are now seeing patients at Swedish and Northwest Community Hospitals. Visit northshore.org/e4 to read about our advancements in minimally invasive brain surgeries. To make an appointment, please call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1274).

Swedish Hospital

Part of NorthShore

Part of NorthShore

“This was above and beyond anything I could have hoped for,” said **Stephen Steinhaus**, who is back to regular exercise after minimally invasive brain tumor surgery.



Elizabeth Bhatt's irregular heartbeat is under control after a trio of specialists at NorthShore Cardiovascular Institute created a customized way to treat her complex AFib.



CUSTOMIZED CARDIAC CARE

Minimally Invasive Surgical Team Gets Creative to Treat Complex AFib

By Susan J. White

E

lizabeth Bhatt has overcome an array of serious health challenges in her seven decades, yet she perseveres with a positive attitude and tremendous faith. So when Bhatt was confronted with a threatening heart condition, she had full confidence she would prevail once again.

And she has, thanks to a team of specialists at NorthShore Cardiovascular Institute. They pushed the envelope in her treatment using an innovative procedure—with additional customization—to bring her atrial fibrillation (AFib) under control.

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Watchful WATCHMAN

Cardiac Electrophysiologist

Mark Metzl, MD, explains how the WATCHMAN device is easing AFib and stroke risk without the use of blood thinners. Watch the video at northshore.org/watchman.



WATCH A VIDEO

At the Heart of Collaborative Care

Our Cardiovascular Institute specialists offer in-person appointments and telehealth consults all designed to keep our patients and team safe and healthy. Specialty appointments are available at many locations, including Swedish Hospital. Visit northshore.org/e5 or call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1275).

Swedish Hospital
Part of  NorthShore

"It all went so smoothly, and we have absolutely no complaints," said Elizabeth Bhatt's husband "Ashi," who has been at her side for nearly 50 years.



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ADVANCED IMPLANT

AFib is a heart rhythm disorder that can lead to increased stroke risk. Since Bhatt's own father was debilitated by a stroke, she was determined—along with her care team—to ensure she would not suffer a similar fate.

After a consultation with NorthShore Cardiac Electrophysiologists Jose Nazari, MD, and Mark Metzl, MD, it was clear that Bhatt was a good candidate for a device called a WATCHMAN, which is implanted in the top-left chamber of the heart to prevent blood clotting without the use of blood thinners.

But the 77-year-old Bhatt of Skokie, who was born with severe arthritis and has a completely fused neck and spine, was not a candidate for the traditional WATCHMAN procedure. Her rigid anatomy prevented the use of an ultrasound

probe through her esophagus for real-time imaging to properly position the implant.

TAILORED TREATMENT

Drs. Nazari and Metzl were determined to accommodate Bhatt's special needs, consulting with other subspecialists across the country to find an alternative imaging technique to help implant the device given Bhatt's unique challenges.

"Dr. Nazari was so positive and confident they could do the procedure a different way," recalled Bhatt. "I wasn't scared at all."

So in April 2021, Bhatt became the first NorthShore patient to be implanted with a WATCHMAN using an intracardiac echo—a unique imaging approach that provides real-time visuals of the heart via a catheter passed through

the bloodstream instead of the esophagus.

"We were able to use techniques familiar to us in the Electrophysiology Lab that combined the probe with 3D mapping techniques for perfect placement," explained Dr. Nazari.

OUTSTANDING OUTCOME

"It went really, really well," noted Dr. Metzl, who along with Dr. Nazari partnered with a third interventional cardiologist Jonathan Rosenberg, MD, to perform the procedure. It went so well, in fact, that the trio has used this same technique on dozens of other patients who benefit from the less invasive imaging, which also requires less anesthesia. All three physicians hold academic appointments at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine.

“When I woke up after the procedure, I didn’t even feel like anything had been done,” said Bhatt. “Nothing bothered me, and I felt great! The nurse came to me and said, ‘You made history.’”

“The WATCHMAN implant protects Elizabeth from a stroke and eliminates the need for blood thinners, which are problematic for her,” explained Dr. Nazari.

“Nothing stops her. Elizabeth has a strong mind and a strong spirit,” said Bhatt’s husband Yashivant, or “Ashi,” who has been at her side for close to 50 years. “She wanted to get better and get back to keeping everything in order at home.”

A meticulous housekeeper and gardener, Bhatt is known to pick up every stray leaf by hand in her yard and wouldn’t dream of leaving the house without her hair done perfectly, joked her spouse. His devotion to his wife and gratitude for her doctors are obvious.

Elizabeth Bhatt’s cardiac care team includes (from left) **Dr. Jonathan Rosenberg**, **Dr. Mark Metzl** and **Dr. Jose Nazari**.



CONNECTING OUR BEST FOR YOU

“Every doctor and every nurse was nice and helped explain everything so well. It all went so smoothly, and we have absolutely no complaints,” he added.

“This was one of those times where we had the right family for the right circumstance,” said Dr. Nazari. “We were able to explain things to the Bhatt’s, and they could visualize how this would make her life so much easier. We’re fortunate as doctors that we can help people in this way.”

Both Drs. Nazari and Metzl also stressed the collaborative nature of the specialized care offered through NorthShore Cardiovascular Institute and the AFib program.

“It’s gratifying as a physician to be on a team that truly works together to improve patient care. NorthShore encourages collaboration and puts resources into programs that lead to better outcomes for our patients,” said Dr. Metzl.



Learn how your donations advance cardiovascular care at northshore.org/giving.

New Subspecialty Cardio Programs

NorthShore Cardiovascular Institute is home to two new specialized programs redefining heart care. NorthShore’s cardio-oncology program provides highly specialized care for patients who may face enhanced cardiac risks due to certain chemotherapy medications and radiation. Our cardio-oncology experts work closely with the Kellogg Cancer Center team through our cancer survivorship program.

The Institute also recently established a cardio-obstetrics program featuring a care team experienced in working with pregnant (or soon to be pregnant) women. They collaborate closely with our Maternal-Fetal Medicine experts to ensure the best outcomes for mother and baby. Learn about these important new programs at northshore.org/e6.

Don’t Miss a Beat

Millions of Americans experience AFib and irregular heartbeats, but it’s not always easy to catch and some people don’t even experience symptoms. Get the latest insights on current diagnostic techniques and treatments in a *Healthy You* blog at northshore.org/e7.



Here for You 24/7

With **NorthShoreConnect**, easily schedule appointments, check lab results and refill prescriptions. Download our mobile app at the **Apple App Store** or **Google Play**, or sign up at northshore.org/e8.





My Journey with Ovarian Cancer

'I'm Sharing My Story
to Inspire Others'

By Janice Aull

As part of her treatment plan, **Janice Aull** received guidance on taking care of her spiritual and emotional needs.

Finding Strength from Within

"Janice has been very inspirational and positive right from the start," observed Gynecologic Oncologist Elena Moore, MD. "Using PARP inhibitors as a maintenance therapy, particularly for women like Janice with BRCA mutations, has revolutionized the landscape for ovarian cancer. It's one of the most major advances we've had in a long time."

When I first learned that I had ovarian cancer, it had already metastasized across my abdomen, and I knew my life would change dramatically. My first thought was death is near, yet I had no idea of the journey I was about to take.

It started with what I thought were gastrointestinal issues. I went to the Emergency Department at NorthShore Highland Park Hospital because my pain was so intense it prevented me from sitting or standing for long periods of time. The CAT scan revealed a very different reality.

My husband and I realized the life we had known was no more. It was the beginning of a new reality and a new path we needed to embrace.

TREATMENT PLAN

It was about 11 p.m. that night when I first met Kellogg Cancer Center Gynecologic Oncologist Dr. Elena Moore. While we asked about second opinions, we knew right away that Dr. Moore was the one. She's been phenomenal throughout my entire journey. I really do believe Dr. Moore saved my life.

One of the things I appreciate most at NorthShore is that everyone is working together. I truly felt connected to everyone on the care team. They approached me with the attitude that we all have a role to play and an eye toward what we could do to make this successful.

Exploratory surgery was scheduled in the hopes of tumor removal. But because my cancer had aggressively spread, we went with Plan B: nine weeks of chemotherapy, then surgery, followed by nine more weeks of chemo.

FOLLOW-UP TESTING

Once diagnosed, my care plan included genetic testing. It confirmed I carry the BRCA2 genetic mutation that puts me at a higher cancer risk. That's why I'm now on a PARP inhibitor—a targeted therapy that works on DNA repair to hopefully prevent a recurrence.

I accept that ovarian cancer has a high rate of mortality and it could come back. But Dr. Moore has told me those are just statistics and there are outliers. I will not let cancer kill my spirit.

Dr. Moore also connected me to her colleague Dr. Allison DePersia, who specializes in high-risk screening and preventive care strategies, including annual

breast MRI in addition to annual mammogram, to help stay ahead of any issues.

TOGETHER WITH ME

My team of doctors and nurses are so accommodating and encouraging. Support also came from Dr. Leslie Mendoza Temple and the Integrative Medicine team. Their lessons inspired me to switch to a plant-based diet and eliminate processed foods.

My last chemo treatment was November 2019. I continue to take care of myself mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally. I truly feel I'm in my best health ever. Dr. Moore told me that I was her rock star.

I'm focused on what I can control to live my best life now, especially spending time outdoors and connecting with nature. I'm a much better person today, and cancer has

helped me focus on my priorities. I can't say enough about the fabulous people on the NorthShore team who've been with me on this journey.



Gynecologic Oncologist **Dr. Elena Moore** and High-Risk Breast Cancer Specialist **Dr. Allison DePersia** collaborated on Janice Aull's care plan.



Proactive, Personalized Care

NorthShore's Mark R. Neaman Center for Personalized Medicine offers a unique Advanced Primary Care approach that integrates genetics into each patient's care and has now expanded to Swedish Hospital Medical Group. Please visit northshore.org/e13, or to make an appointment, please call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1277).



Inspired by spending time in her garden, **Janice Aull** switched to a plant-based diet and eliminated processed foods.

Surgery Was Music to His Ears

Precision Robotics Drive Speedy Recovery from Hernia Repair

By Brian Justice

Jamaican-born Percival Davis is a 63-year-old Chicago taxi driver and a professional reggae musician. Comfortable juggling his two jobs, Davis was understandably startled to discover an odd swelling in his groin area. Initially, it was not painful. Thinking it would just go away, Davis kept to his usual routine of driving and performing. But over the course of a year, the discomfort worsened, and so did his worry.

U-TURN FOR HELP

"I said to myself, 'I need to take care of this,'" Davis recalled. He paid a visit to his primary care physician who quickly referred him to Swedish Hospital General Surgeon Benjamin Johnson, MD, now part of NorthShore Medical Group.

Dr. Johnson diagnosed Davis with an inguinal hernia, a weakness in the abdominal wall that results in a protrusion that can become unsightly and uncomfortable—and often painful. Dr. Johnson recommended minimally invasive robotic surgery to repair it.

"Robotic surgery is becoming the optimal technique for treating inguinal hernias," Dr. Johnson explained. "But it's still hard to find physicians who use it routinely. All four of our surgeons at Swedish are almost

exclusively repairing this type of hernia with robotics."

The benefit for surgeons is a higher degree of precision. For patients, it means a faster healing and recovery, a lower risk of infection, reduced blood loss and less pain medication.

HITTING A HIGH NOTE

"I was amazed!" exclaimed Davis. "From the very first day, I could get up and walk around, and within a month, I could drive my car again."

He is equally full of praise for Dr. Johnson and the surgical team at Swedish. "Dr. Johnson is a total pro and did a great job," Davis added. "Everybody made me feel special, and man, it was just a great overall experience."

"Percival's prognosis is excellent," noted Dr. Johnson. "He should be living his life without worries about this hernia."

Completely pain-free, Davis is excited to get back to work and making music, where he performs under the stage name "George from Yard."

"Not everything's back to normal just yet with live music because of COVID-19," he said. "But we're moving in that direction, and you can bet I'll be sure to let Dr. Johnson know when he can come and see me perform!"



General Surgeon
Dr. Benjamin Johnson

Together with You for Optimal Outcomes

We're pioneering minimally invasive surgical options for faster recovery and reduced scarring. Jump online at northshore.org/e14, or to make an appointment, please call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1278).

Swedish Hospital
Part of  NorthShore

He's Got the Beat Under the stage name Jeorge from Yard, Percival Davis has a passion for reggae. Take a listen to some of his music at northshore.org/georgefromyard.

Get Up, Stand Up, Know the Warning Signs

An inguinal hernia can happen at any age, but you're at greater risk if you:

- Are male
- Are obese
- Are a pregnant woman
- Have a family history of inguinal hernias
- Smoke

Learn about the symptoms on *Healthy You*, NorthShore's online resource for health and wellness news at northshore.org/e15.

"Dr. Johnson is a total pro and did a great job," said Percival Davis following robotic hernia surgery at Swedish Hospital.





Molly Pierson is thrilled to be back on her bike after successful treatment for her advanced thyroid eye disease.

Sight for Sore Eyes

Breakthrough Treatment Tackles Debilitating Eye Disease

By Martha Floberg

When she is not working out at the gym or riding her bike, Molly Pierson is busy taking care of others as a nurse. But when the 46-year-old from Lake Bluff became nauseous, developed double vision and experienced other unusual symptoms, her bike riding and the job she loved came to an abrupt halt.

“I had to take a medical leave because my symptoms interfered with my ability to do my job,” said Pierson. “In addition to double vision, my eyes were bulging and the eyelashes on my swollen eyelids were rolling inward. It was extremely painful.”

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

Pierson, who suffers from a condition known as Graves’ disease, turned to the NorthShore Ophthalmology team, which offers specialized expertise from everyday eye exams to the latest advanced procedures to treat diseases and long-term eye conditions.

Graves’ disease is an autoimmune disorder that can lead to hyperthyroidism and inflammation of the muscles and fatty tissue behind the eye. Until recently, patients required surgery to reduce symptoms of thyroid eye disease.

“In some patients with Graves’ disease, a rare manifestation of advanced thyroid eye

disease can occur called epiblepharon, which can cause significant discomfort when the eyes push forward and eyelashes brush up against their surface,” explained Paras Shah, MD, NorthShore Division Chief of Ophthalmology. “Patients with Asian heritage can have natural skin folds in the lower eyelids that can predispose them to these more severe signs of the disease.”

RECOVERY IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE

Pierson was the perfect candidate for Tepezza®, the first drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat symptoms like hers and now available at NorthShore. According to Dr. Shah, the drug is administered over several weeks during 60- to 90-minute-long appointments at the NorthShore Infusion Center. Tepezza has tolerable side effects for most patients, and after only three of Pierson’s eight treatments, she saw significant symptom improvement.

“This medication is amazing—and the NorthShore team is awesome!” Pierson added. She has returned to work and is back on her bike as part of her regular exercise routine. “I can’t say enough about how excellent my care was at NorthShore. They took time to answer all my questions. Thankfully, my life is back to normal!”



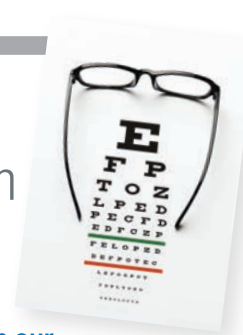
Division Chief of Ophthalmology
Dr. Paras Shah

Connect Through Our Lens

From cataracts to macular degeneration, we create a personalized approach for each patient’s needs. Meet our specialists at northshore.org/e16. To make an appointment, please call (847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1279).

Eye on Vision Health

Do you suffer from low vision? NorthShore may be able to help through our outpatient occupational therapy low-vision services. Learn more about it and get tips on coping with vision issues on *Healthy You*, your online source for timely health and wellness news at northshore.org/e17.



TOGETHER WITH YOU IN COVID-19 RECOVERY

Swedish and NorthShore Programs Aim to Ease Persistent Symptoms

By Susan J. White

Relationships Matter

New to the area or wanting to make a change? Call to find a doctor near you at **(847) 492-5700 (Ext. 1280)**, or search online at **northshore.org/e18**.

Recovering COVID-19 patient **Donald Kehr** has made steady progress after working out with Exercise Physiologist **Courtney Carlson** at Swedish Hospital's Galter LifeCenter.



NorthShore Physical Therapist **Polina Burshteyn** leads a six-week group program to help COVID-19 patients regain strength and stamina.



Donald Kehr was ready to put COVID-19 behind him. After testing positive for the virus in April 2020, the Elmwood Park resident stayed home for about a month to recover. Yet when the 62-year-old returned to his supervisory position at a Chicago manufacturing plant, he continued to feel fatigued—to the point of exhaustion. Then, in July 2020, he was hospitalized with pneumonia.

SEEKING HOPE

Kehr's longtime physician at Swedish Hospital recommended cardiopulmonary rehabilitation to help his suffering patient work through lingering COVID-19 symptoms, including fatigue and shortness of breath.

While Kehr was initially reluctant, he soon changed his mind thanks to gentle persuasion from Swedish Hospital Exercise Physiologist Courtney Carlson. She felt he was a perfect candidate for the hospital's new rehab program to help a growing number of "long COVID" or "long-haul COVID" patients manage persistent health challenges.

"We know that exercise is medicine, and it does help," explained Carlson, co-leader of a team of professionals who tap into their cardiopulmonary rehab expertise to guide COVID-19 recovery patients back to health. Kehr was the first participant to graduate from the Swedish 12-week program and is quick to express gratitude for his gradual return to health.

"In the beginning, it was very tiring—but I have the drive to get better," said Kehr. "I was tired of feeling tired."

MEASURABLE IMPACT

Data from the program, supported by Swedish Hospital Foundation, is still being analyzed. But initial results show that the 12-week exercise program helps patients improve

functional capacity, shortness of breath and overall quality of life.

"This is a new medical phenomenon, so it's a learning experience for patients and caregivers alike," added Carlson, "and it's been great that we're seeing a positive impact."

One of the goals is for patients to continue exercising on their own after completing the program, something Kehr is happily pursuing regularly at the hospital's renowned fitness facility Galter LifeCenter.

"Courtney and the whole group are great and made me feel so comfortable," noted Kehr. "I've made slow and steady progress. They knew how to push me without pushing me too hard. I wouldn't be where I am today without them."

HERE WHEN YOU NEED US

In addition to the Swedish team, NorthShore Rehab Services also offers a six-week group program to help COVID-19 recovery patients regain strength and stamina.

"Our multidisciplinary team includes licensed physical, speech and occupational therapists who address fatigue, lack of energy, brain fog and other lingering symptoms," said Physical Therapist Polina Burshteyn. NorthShore's Integrative Medicine team also offers group acupuncture after the class for additional support.

"We hear over and over from these patients that they just don't feel like themselves," emphasized Burshteyn. "Our program provides the resources they need to feel better."

The program includes strategies for safely resuming exercise, including deep breathing, along with ways to conserve energy and improve memory function.

"We want people who are still suffering from the effects of COVID to reach out to us," added Burshteyn. "We can help facilitate their recovery."

Brain Fog and Beyond: COVID-19's Lasting Impact

Did you know the latest research indicates up to 35% of patients with COVID-19 can experience a range of symptoms that last for up to six months, or even longer? Common long-term symptoms include:

 **Fatigue**

Heart palpitations



 **Shortness of breath**

Loss of smell and/or taste



 **Brain fog**

Depression and anxiety



NorthShore offers six-week COVID-19 recovery group classes on a regular basis. Visit northshore.org/e20 for more information and to sign up online.

Join the Conversation

Swedish Hospital Exercise Physiologist Courtney Carlson answers your questions about managing long-term COVID-19 symptoms. Join us for a live chat on **Wednesday, Dec. 8, from 11 a.m. to noon**. Submit your questions early and set a reminder at northshore.org/e19.

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