
Funding the Future: Retired Physician Donation Helping Confluence Health Bring State-of-the-Art Medical Technology for Training and Patient Care to North Central Washington

Wenatchee, WA: The main entrance lobby of Confluence Health Hospital’s Central Campus was abuzz on Tuesday morning this week but, despite the neatly stacked blue-frosted cupcakes, it wasn’t over excitement for baked treats. Staff, community members, and members of the board were instead on hand to celebrate a ribbon cutting to inaugurate the new virtual patient monitoring system – sometimes called ‘virtual sitter’ or ‘telesitter’ technology – at Confluence Health. Additionally, a few weeks earlier nursing and care staff also met to celebrate – in a less public way – new patient simulators that would allow for state-of-the-art emergency care and trauma training designed to put teams into challenging scenarios to better respond in actual emergencies.

The purchase of the equipment for both incredible new programs was funded by a generous donation from Dr. Chris Stahler to the Confluence Health Foundation which works to enhance and support Confluence Health’s ability to provide safe and superior healthcare close to home. A retired general, vascular, and chest surgeon, Dr. Stahler had reached out to the Confluence Health Foundation with a simple but important question: “How can I help you develop and support our healthcare workforce?”

“Dr. Stahler understands the challenges and shortages in the healthcare workforce nationwide, and that it is felt acutely in rural areas,” explained Suzanne Carté-Cocroft, vice president of philanthropy at Confluence Health. “Having spent his career in the Wenatchee Valley and now being retired, he wanted to make an investment aimed at addressing staffing resources and efficiencies through training. These initiatives are expected to have a broad and immediate effect on care delivery.”

Historically, patients who needed close observation would require a certified nursing assistant (CNA) to sit – hence the common industry term for the role of “sitter” – at their bedside constantly to monitor the patient. Virtual patient monitoring continues this needed care but uses technology from [CareView](#), such as predictive fall monitoring, live-feed views, two-way communication, and more, to allow one staff member to monitor multiple patients needing this intensive observation. This suite of tools not only allows for quicker response time and enhanced safety, but also gives other CNAs and staff more flexibility to care for more patients during their shifts. After hearing about this program’s vision and impact from Chief Nursing Officer Kelly Allen and Vice President of Philanthropy Suzanne Carté-Cocroft, and how this would help staff to even better care for patients, Dr. Stahler decided to help by funding the equipment purchase.

“Launching the telesitter program is a major milestone for Confluence Health, and thanks are owed to many people who came together to make this a reality, especially Dr. Chris Stahler,” added Carté-Cocroft.

In addition to the new monitoring system, Dr. Stahler’s generous contribution also funded something less visible to patients but nonetheless crucial to ensuring the best in care: state-of-the-art emergency care and trauma patient simulators. Three different simulators from [Laerdal](#), a healthcare education company, were purchased, including SimMan Critical Care, which is an adult-sized simulator mannequin that provides respiratory and critical care training from pre-hospital to ICU; SimNewB, a newborn-sized mannequin to train in neonatal resuscitation, stabilization, and airway management; and Resusci Anne Simulator, an adult-sized simulator for in-situ resuscitation training. In addition

to these new sim devices, six manual blood pressure practice arms, as well as six IV insertion practice limbs, were also purchased through Dr. Stahler's donation to the Confluence Health Foundation for staff training.

"Our previous equipment, though well-loved and used often, had become outdated," explained Dave Shanley, clinical development and eLearning manager at Confluence Health. "These sophisticated new devices will advance our learning in simulated critical care patient events, assisting the learning for all our professionals who provide care, but most especially our excellent registered nurses (RNs), certified nursing assistants (CNAs), respiratory therapists, surgeons and trauma specialists, and all of those that work in emergency medicine."

On the day the new equipment was first available for training, Dr. Stahler was able to join in to see it in action and talk with nurses about the impact this new technology will have on them and the growth of their clinical expertise. Confluence Health is believed to be one of the first places in the nation with access to this new technology and equipment, allowing medical staff to develop and hone the critical skills needed during actual emergency care.

"The simulation equipment provides a state-of-the-art training experience for virtually every area of the organization, improving confidence and quality at the bedside," continued Carté-Cocroft. "In addition, the telesitter technology enhances efficiency and patient safety by enabling continuous monitoring and two-way communication for up to 12 rooms by one caregiver, which is a phenomenal improvement in care when constant observation is required."

Through the incredible generosity of Dr. Stahler and his hope to help advance the future of medicine in our community through partnering with the Confluence Health Foundation, the latest in medical technology is now available and being used for care right here in North Central Washington.

About Confluence Health

Confluence Health serves the largest geographic region of any healthcare system in Washington State, covering over 12,000 square miles of Okanogan, Grant, Douglas, and Chelan counties. Confluence Health is one of only two locally-lead healthcare systems in the state with the purpose of maintaining availability and access to high-quality, cost-effective healthcare services for North Central Washington. The Confluence Health Board of Directors provides governance for Confluence Health and includes nine community board members and six physician board members.

For More Information

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