



# InFlight

Summer 2020

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
FOR FRIENDS OF HEALTHNET  
AEROMEDICAL SERVICES, INC.

## Improving Emergency Medical Services in the Mountain State



HealthNet  
Aeromedical Services

# On the Cover

West Virginia's first EMS physician response vehicle at the ready to transport highly trained clinicians and lifesaving equipment to medical emergencies in rural areas.



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# CELESTIAL SPOTTING

Using night vision goggles, Base 1 pilot Carmen Martucci captured comet NEOWISE as it graced the night sky over Morgantown, West Virginia. The comet will not be visible from Earth for another 6,800 years!



# Customer Profile



Located in Madison West Virginia, Boone Memorial Hospital (BMH) is a 25-bed critical access hospital employing approximately 360 people. The facility has grown exponentially since it first opened its doors in 1964 with just 38 employees and 5 physicians.



The current upgraded critical access facility opened its doors in 2016 with the latest in radiology and laboratory equipment, an onsite pharmacy as well as additional surgery suites, emergency treatment rooms, and triage rooms. Patients have access to specialty providers and services including cardiology, dermatology, psychiatry, pulmonary rehabilitation, the black lung center and a substance and mental health treatment program.

Designated as a level IV trauma center, the emergency department has implemented a sophisticated information system to enhance patient care, safety, and communication. The facility remains up to date on both advanced cardiac life support and pediatric advanced life support and has an excellent stroke team.

BMH values its relationship with HealthNet Aeromedical Services and the program's dedication to providing high quality air medical transport services to patients within the community. BMH physicians also receive yearly training from the program's Education Department, ensuring staff have the necessary skills for basic and emergency medical procedures.

Years before towns and college campuses started going "smoke free" across the country, BMH became the first smoke-free hospital in West Virginia, underscoring their dedication to the overall health and wellness of the community. The hospital's Healthy Lifestyle Program offers classes teaching nutrition, stress reduction, healthy living, and diabetes prevention.

Employees support their community through various efforts such as the Backpack Buddy Program, Read Aloud Program, Go Red for Women activities, and organizing blood drives.

BMH prides itself on Bringing Medicine Home. The hospital remains focused on creating an environment in which healthcare professionals work together to provide high quality, compassionate, accessible, and cost-effective health care services in an atmosphere of love and concern. \*

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# A Message From Our President/CEO

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**T**hroughout its nearly 35 years of history HealthNet Aeromedical Services has often found itself on the front edge of emergency care. Our leaders and team members steadfastly embrace change and look for ways to bring healthcare improvement to the residents of central Appalachia. I am proud to say it is happening again.

As you will read in this edition of InFlight, our program is playing a key role in a project to place emergency medicine physicians alongside local EMS providers in rural West Virginia. A longtime vision of HealthNet Aeromedical Services Associate Medical Director P.S. Martin, MD, this innovative approach to prehospital care is now reality.

Coordinated through the Department of Emergency Medicine's Division of Prehospital Medicine at West Virginia University this project serves to improve outcomes for patients and enhance the capabilities of local EMS providers. The physicians will not only respond to emergencies with these clinicians, they will spend considerable time educating and networking with them. Efforts such as these can bridge the divide which sometimes exist between the care provided inside and outside of the hospital.

The role our team played in this project was centered on acquisition of the EMS Physician Response Vehicle and

equipping it with critical lifesaving and communication devices. Additionally, leaders from the HealthNet Aeromedical Services' Safety Department provided the Emergency Vehicle Operator's Course to physicians assigned to the vehicle while our executive collaborated with the West Virginia Office of EMS on matters related to licensure. There was much to accomplish but the outcomes will be well worth the investment.

Our organization's vision statement is simple; "To be the premier provider of critical care transport services." Being premier means many things but at its center it means finding innovative ways to serve. That is exactly what occurred with this effort and it is another example of that which we deliver; consistently driving improvement in rural emergency medical services.

On behalf of our board of directors and three owner academic medical centers, thank you for your continued confidence in us.\*

**Clinton V. Burley**  
**HealthNet Aeromedical Services, Inc.**  
**President/CEO**



## West Virginia's First EMS Physician Response Team Launched to Improve Critical Care in Rural Areas

Access to critical emergency care in rural West Virginia communities is improving through a new and innovative project launched by the West Virginia University School of Medicine in partnership with the DTE Energy Foundation.

The DTE Energy Foundation awarded a \$300,000 grant to the Department of Emergency Medicine's Division of Prehospital Medicine to establish West Virginia's first emergency medical services (EMS) physician response program. Through this program, a physician-led team will work with existing EMS resources to provide emergency medical treatment that was previously unavailable prior to arriving at hospitals.

"West Virginia's rural setting makes our state a perfect place for this kind of program," said Dr. P.S. Martin, director of the Division of Prehospital Medicine and associate professor of emergency medicine. "Having a physician on scene to direct or perform critical interventions can improve healthcare outcomes in areas where transport to the nearest advanced care facility may take hours. We can make a big difference by being out in these communities."

Participating physicians will respond to emergencies in a custom quick-response vehicle outfitted with specialized equipment. Physicians will have the ability to conduct diagnostic ultrasounds, administer blood products, perform life-saving field amputations and more.

"This grant, which will deliver leading-edge medical care to West Virginians in rural areas, is an opportunity for us to give back to the

Mountain State – home to DTE Energy's Midstream pipeline business – and for us to live our commitment to be a force for growth in the communities where we live and serve," said Lynette Dowler, president of the DTE Foundation.

As Associate Medical Director for HealthNet Aeromedical Services, Dr. Martin reached out to the critical care transport program to assist with securing, equipping, and providing space to house the EMS physician response vehicle.

In July 2020, the program launched in Marion and Tucker counties. The program is expected to gradually expand to rural communities statewide as more resources become available. The program will also track data including response times, cardiac arrest outcomes, intubation success rates, unnecessary transports avoided and EMS feedback.

In addition to enhancing patient care and research, the program will provide important learning opportunities for health sciences students, emergency medicine residents and physicians participating in an intensive one-year EMS fellowship tentatively slated to welcome its first class in 2021. The fellowship will prepare physicians who have completed their emergency medicine residency for EMS subspecialty certification.

Dr. Martin believes the educational component of the EMS physician response program will help produce highly trained physicians with valuable skills derived from field experience, ultimately enhancing future prehospital patient care in West Virginia and beyond. \*

# Wetzel County Hospital Becomes Full Member of the West Virginia University Health System

By Angela Jones-Knopf  
Corporate Director of Media Relations and Public Affairs  
WVU Medicine

**W**etzel County Hospital in New Martinsville, West Virginia officially joined the West Virginia University Health System on July 1, 2020.

“We are excited to officially welcome Wetzel County Hospital into the WVU Medicine family and to continue our work serving the people of New Martinsville and the surrounding region,” Albert L. Wright, Jr., president and CEO of the WVU Health System, said. “During this unprecedented time, it is critically important to ensure that people have access to high quality healthcare in their communities, and we are honored to provide that service in Wetzel County.”

In January, Wetzel County Hospital signed a letter of intent to join the WVU Health System and a Certificate of Need (CON) application was filed with the West Virginia Health Care Authority. The CON was approved in April. At that time, the WVU Health System signed a long-term lease to assume operation of the hospital.

David Hess, M.D., will continue to serve as the CEO of Wetzel County Hospital as he has since October 2018 pursuant to WVU Hospitals’ management agreement with Wetzel County Hospital. Dr. Hess will also continue to serve as president and CEO of WVU Medicine Reynolds Memorial Hospital in Glen Dale.

“We are happy to welcome the WVU Health System into our community. Our area residents look forward to a new era of healthcare that will benefit generations to come,” Lawrence Lemon, president of the Wetzel County Commission, said. “We thank WVU for the investment, and we are better for it.”

Established in 1920, Wetzel County Hospital is a 58-bed facility that employs 235 people. It offers a variety of inpatient and outpatient services, including cardiopulmonary, emergency, general surgery, radiology, and cardiac rehabilitation, physical, occupational, and speech therapy. ■



# Mountain Health Network Urges Public Not to Postpone Surgical Procedures

By Lisa Chamberlin Stump  
Chief Strategy Officer  
Mountain Health Network

**M**ountain Health Network (MHN) and its hospitals, Cabell Huntington Hospital (CHH) and St. Mary's Medical Center (SMMC), are urging the community not to postpone surgical procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"While some surgical conditions may be safely postponed, delaying surgery may allow certain surgical conditions to progress and become more complicated or life-threatening. For most surgical conditions, earlier operations produce better outcomes" said Hoyt Burdick, MD, chief clinical officer, MHN. "For those patients who are considering elective surgery, we are now able to provide timely screening for COVID-19 and to more confidently assure their protection and safe recovery".

New national research by ReviveHealth found more than a third of patients do not feel comfortable seeking medical care due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, those delays could cause serious harm to patients.

"We want the community to know that the Cabell Huntington Hospital and St. Mary's Operating Rooms are following guidelines for resuming elective surgery that were set forth by the American College of Surgeons in a plan approved by the State of West Virginia. We are taking additional precautions necessary to ensure the highest level of protection and safety for patients," Burdick said. "This is not the time to wait for a surgical problem to become an emergency."

"Our hospitals have always been focused on patient safety, and that is now truer than ever. We want to assure patients that we are taking extensive safety precautions," said Joseph P. Assaley, MD, FACOG,

executive medical director of perioperative services, CHH. "Many surgeries have already been delayed a month or more, so we urge patients not to delay their procedures any longer."

"Many illnesses and or surgeries are far less serious and less complicated when diagnosed and treated early," said Jeffrey Leaberry, MD, executive director of surgical services, SMMC. "Waiting for symptoms and/or conditions to worsen could lead to increased complications or less than optimal outcomes."

Patients can expect to be screened before entering the hospital and again before their procedure. Additional precautions the ORs are taking include:

- Testing patients for COVID-19 before surgery
- Vigorously cleaning and sanitizing surfaces
- Requiring all staff members to wear masks at all times
- Requiring all surgical staff members to wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Enhancing patient safety and patient flow processes

In addition, masks are required for all patients and visitors throughout their time in the hospitals and restricted visitation policies for inpatient and outpatient surgeries have been implemented. For a complete overview of the screenings and visitation policy, please visit [mountainhealthnetwork.org/](https://mountainhealthnetwork.org/). ■



Charleston Area  
Medical Center



# CAMC Among First in U.S. to Use Innovative Technology for Lung Cancer Diagnosis

By Dale Witte  
Marketing & Public Affairs  
Charleston Area Medical Center

Physicians practicing medicine at Charleston Area Medical Center are using a new innovation that holds promise to fight lung cancer.

Used to view the inside of the lungs and obtain a tissue sample for biopsy, the Monarch™ Platform from Auris Health could enable earlier and more-accurate diagnosis of small and hard-to-reach nodules in the periphery of the lung.

The technology integrates the latest advancements in robotics, software, data science and endoscopy (the use of small cameras and tools to enter the body through its natural openings). CAMC is one of the first hospitals in the United States to use the platform, which was recently cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

“This is a brand new era in pulmonary medicine, and we’re really excited about it,” said Tom Takubo, DO, pulmonologist. “We can steer the robot and see into these deep recesses of the lungs that we’ve never seen before. We should be able to get to these lesions, biopsy them and find out if this is something bad or not without having to do more invasive procedures where someone would have to be surgically opened.”

The Monarch Platform utilizes a familiar controller-like interface that physicians use to navigate the flexible robotic endoscope to the periphery of the lung. Combining traditional endoscopic views into the lung with computer-assisted navigation based on 3-D models of the patient’s own lung anatomy, the Monarch Platform provides physicians with continuous bronchoscope vision throughout the entire procedure.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths, in part because it has no symptoms in its early stages. This robotic technology can improve vision and control for bronchoscopic procedures and may help doctors make a diagnosis earlier.

“Unfortunately right now if you are diagnosed with lung cancer, there’s only about a 15% chance for survival,” Takubo said.

The new robotic technology incorporates the electromagnetic navigational bronchoscopy with real live camera feedback. Takubo said this allows him to see all the way to the lining of the lung in many instances and the camera lets him see what’s out there, giving him a more precise biopsy.

“The hope with this new technology and robotics that we have here at CAMC is that we’ll be able to navigate to these lesions and diagnose them at a much earlier stage than what we’ve ever been able to do in the past and shift the diagnosis more to early stage lung cancer than late stage,” Takubo said. “If you catch lung cancer early in stage 1 or 2, the chance of survival goes up to 88 to 92%.” ■



Tom Takubo, DO; Kathy Bragg, RN; Tracy Slater, Surgical Tech 2

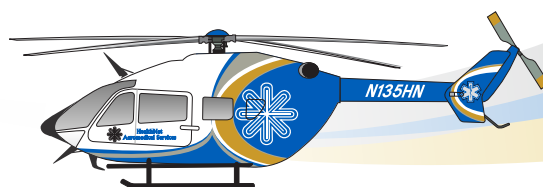
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# We're improving our fleet!

On August 26, 2020, HealthNet Aeromedical Services will welcome a new EC-145e to the Beckley, West Virginia base to serve patients in support of Charleston Area Medical Center.

### EC145e Features:

- Instrument Flight Rules capability
- Two patient transport capability
- Increased payload
- Live EKG data transmissions
- Bariatric transport capability
- ECMO and complex specialty transport capability

*This \$7.3 million investment represents our dedication to providing high-quality critical care transport to patients across Southern and Central West Virginia!*



**HealthNet  
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Medical Center**