

"Best Place to Work" and "Best Physical Therapy" in Windham County



For the second year in a row, Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital has been awarded the "Best Place to Work" and "Best Physical Therapy" in the Brattleboro Reformer's 2018 Readers Choice Awards! And, for the first time, Grace Cottage's Dr. Maurice Geurts was awarded "Best Doctor," in a three-way tie with

two physicians who practice in Brattleboro. Dr. Geurts has been at Grace Cottage since 2003.

Dr. Ronald Vallario Joining Grace Cottage Family Health



Dr. Ronald Vallario will be seeing patients at Grace Cottage Family Health beginning on October 1st. A native of New Jersey, Dr. Vallario is a graduate of Rutgers University (B.A. in Psychology), University of South Carolina (Masters of Social Work), and Robert Wood Johnson Medical School; he completed his family medicine residency at

North Carolina Memorial Hospital in Chapel Hill. He is an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, MA. Before joining Grace Cottage, he was Associate Medical Director/Geriatrician at Summit ElderCare/Fallon Health in Worcester, MA, and, prior to that, he was the Medical Director and a Clinician at Mountain Valley Medical Clinic in Londonderry, VT (2005-2014), and an ER physician at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital (2004-2009).

Dr. Vallario and his wife, Michele live in Bondville, VT and have three grown children. His hobbies are running, tennis, and photography.

"I have always been impressed with the history of Grace Cottage and its commitment to its community and its patients, and I have heard only good things about the hospital and its outstanding team of professionals," said Dr. Vallario. "I am also looking forward to working in the community where I live!"

Grace Cottage Now Provides Custom Orthotics



Grace Cottage Hospital's Rehabilitation Services Department now offers orthotics consultations. Custom orthotics are specifically-created devices to support and comfort your feet, as opposed to over-the-counter options that try to fit the average foot type.

Custom-molded orthotics can be obtained by first speaking with your doctor for a referral. The next step

is to visit with a physical therapist to discuss your medical issues, lifestyle, and foot problems. The therapist will conduct a specific foot evaluation, which will include looking at your posture, gait, flexibility, and foot condition. A plaster cast of your foot in the corrected position will be made, along with a written prescription of your needs. This will all be sent to an orthotics lab for the construction of the device.

Your visit for the evaluation is generally covered by most insurances (be sure to verify this coverage with your own insurance), but the orthotics themselves are not covered, although they are reasonably priced. Call 802-365-3637 for more information.

Margaret van den Bergh earned her degree in Physical Therapy from the University of Vermont and has over 25 years of experience in the field of foot orthotics and over 40 years as a therapist. She joined Grace Cottage in 2017.

Vermont Ranked #1

Don't take our word for it, just ask CNBC, which recently ranked Vermont as the #1 Best State to Live in the U.S. (up from #2 in 2017):

"The Green Mountain State has America's second-lowest violent-crime rate, a healthy population, a pristine environment, and strong anti-discrimination laws to make sure all can enjoy the place. No wonder nearly 77 percent of those surveyed tell Gallup they feel 'active and productive' — the highest rate in the nation. Vermont is not exactly a magnet for tourists, suggesting there may sometimes be a shortage of things to do. But Vermonters will tell you that is just part of the idyllic charm of America's Top State to live in for 2018."

2018 Quality of Life score: 268 out of 300 points (Grade: A+)

Strengths: Well-being, low crime, health

Weakness: Attractions

(Hawaii moved to the #2 position, followed by Minnesota, and North Dakota, with New Hampshire and the state of Washington tied for 5th place.)

A Word From the CEO

A grateful patient writes:

"To the ENTIRE staff at Grace Cottage that took such great care of me during my stay, God please continue to bless Grace Cottage and all the wonderful, loving, caring, and kind staff – this includes everyone that has a part in patient care from the cleaning people, the people that do the laundry, the nursing staff, secretaries, hospitalists, Dr. Geurts (for sure), social services, maintenance, ER staff, office people, the food service staff (meals were great) and the therapists. **If you don't get better here you can't get better anywhere!** Grace Cottage is the best hospital in the world and I am truly grateful for all that each and every one of you have done to help me during my stay."

— *Gay Larson*, Wardsboro, VT



As I reflect upon my first eight months as Grace Cottage's CEO, I continue to be amazed and humbled by Grace Cottage's dedicated, devoted, and professional employees. Everyone here understands that the most important aspect of healthcare, even with all the high-tech equipment available today, may very well be the word "care."

Those of you who faithfully read Cottage Door have seen the numerous patient testimonials that we receive, and those are earned, not given. I see it every day here, as medical providers, nurses, housekeeping, dietary, therapists, and behind-the-scenes staff members envelop each and every one of our patients with care and concern, whether in the doctors' offices, outpatient Rehab, the retail pharmacy, the Community Health Team, the hospital, and the ER.

Healthcare employees everywhere are doing very tough work in an extremely challenging and constantly-changing environment, and the fact that our employees have made it possible for Grace Cottage to again be awarded "Top 20 Hospital in the U.S. for Patient Satisfaction" among all 1,332 Critical Access Hospitals (and the only one to achieve this distinction in the eastern U.S.) shows that our model of personal and professional care is not just working, but is also being recognized nationally.

My job is to make it as easy as possible for all of Grace Cottage's employees to do what they do best, no matter which aspect of patient care they're focused on (and to stay out of their way, but to cheerlead from the sidelines as they do it!). Increasing patient access, controlling costs, and leveraging donations from a supportive community have all been the primary focus of my attention since February, and we're on an upward trend that makes me very optimistic.

I have met quite a few people who support Grace Cottage in so many ways, but if I haven't met you yet, I'd be delighted to sit down over a cup of coffee (or one of our great Grace Cottage lunches!) to answer your questions and/or address your concerns. Just call 802-365-3615 so that we can arrange a mutually-convenient time to talk. I look forward to meeting and thanking you in person.

— *Doug DiVello*, CEO

Welcome, Lisa Moulton



Family Nurse Practitioner Lisa Moulton is seeing patients on Wednesdays at Grace Cottage Family Health.

A native of Barre, MA, Moulton graduated from St. Vincent Hospital School of Nursing in Worcester, MA, in 1986, and worked as an RN at Gifford Medical Center in Randolph, VT, and Mount Ascutney Hospital in Windsor, VT from 1987-2004. She then became a Trauma Clinical Resource Case Manager (2004-2007), a Clinical Coordinator (2007-2010) and a Cystic Fibrosis Research Nurse Manager at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, NH (2010-2014). Moulton worked as an RN Case Manager for Vermont/New Hampshire Visiting Nurse Association, and at Bayada Hospice in Brattleboro, while a per diem RN for Southwestern Vermont Mountain Medical Services at Mount Snow. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Graceland University in 2014 and her

Family Nurse Practitioner degree in 2016, and began working at Southwestern Vermont Medical Center in Bennington, VT in 2017, where she will continue to see patients three days a week.

A resident of Whitingham, VT, Moulton and her husband, David, have five children and five grandchildren. Her hobbies are yoga, running, and hiking, and taking care of their two horses (she calls them "lawn ornaments," since they aren't ridden).

"I did my Family Nurse Practitioner rotation here for 6 months in 2015-16," said Lisa, "and I knew I wanted to come back here to work. Grace Cottage is such a wonderful place with a medical team that understands the importance of collaboration and teamwork!"



Wishes Granted...

- Larry & Miriam Lanata of Putney, VT made a donation for the purchase of various sizes of heating pads for rehab patients.
- Tink & June Severance of Brattleboro, VT; Dick DesRochers of Grafton, VT; Stanley Knapp of Jericho, VT; and the Londonderry Tri-Mountain Lions Club all donated funds to purchase blood pressure cuffs, which are being loaned out to patients for use at home during the time that their blood pressure is being monitored by the Community Health Team nurses.
- An anonymous donor made a gift for the purchase of cutting boards and knives for the Dietary Department.
- The Polio Family Foundation made a grant to Grace Cottage Hospital.
- Norm & Carol Pacun of Chatham, MA; The West River Westies; Marge Bernache of Farmington, CT; Margaret MacDonald of South Newfane, VT; and Ernie Friedli of Windham, VT, all made donations towards the purchase of a total of six Emergency Room supply carts.



Thanks to a grant from the Rotary Club of Deerfield Valley (presented by president Crista Gannon to Grace Cottage's Andrea Seaton) two new heavy-duty wheelchairs were purchased for the hospital.



Wishes Made...

- The inpatient pharmacy needs two temperature/humidity monitoring devices for their pharmaceutical refrigeration units, which keep medications cool and dry for hospital patient use. \$558 each.
- The medical staff at Grace Cottage Family Health is in need of an additional commercial-grade temporal thermometer. \$350.
- The Grace Cottage Housekeeping Department employees would benefit from a heavy-duty stepladder, \$134, and a collapsible housekeeping cart, \$50.
- The Rehab Department needs a variety of Theraband exercise bands for use with patients, \$186; Compression Sleeve/Stocking donning devices, \$137; and a NuStep Recumbent cross trainer, \$6,480.
- The Dietary Department needs a portion-control cereal dispenser, \$101; a lemonade dispenser, \$85; a stainless steel stockpot, \$207; and six stainless steel steam table pans, \$166.
- An updated cardiac monitoring system is needed for the ER and inpatient use, and donations of any amount are appreciated towards the total telemetry cost of \$76,000.

Grace Cottage's Wish List is updated monthly on our website, at www.gracecottage.org, or call 802-365-9109 for more information.

Helping to Put Healthy Food on the Table

Vermonters are known as hardworking people, but the high costs of housing, food, fuel and other necessities can make it tough to meet basic needs. Thanks to 3SquaresVT more Vermonters are able to buy healthy food for themselves and their families. Grace Cottage Resource Advocate Jane Wheeler is available to help West River Valley area residents gain access to this valuable program.



3SquaresVT helps people with a limited income buy more food, like fresh veggies, fruits, and whole grains. Over 77,000 Vermonters get benefits, but many more qualify and don't know it. The income limit is \$1,860 per month for one person; it's \$3,793 per month for a family of four.

If you or someone you know in Vermont is struggling to make ends meet, apply for 3SquaresVT. If you are a patient at Grace Cottage or live in southeastern Vermont, Resource Advocate Wheeler can help with the application process. Wheeler also helps clients apply for health insurance, reduced fee services, fuel assistance, and more.

To schedule a free, one-on-one appointment, call Jane at 802-365-3770.

Grateful patients write:

"At Grace Cottage I had as much fun as anyone can have in a hospital. Everyone who works there was so nice, so friendly, and so accommodating!"

— Jonathan Altman, Putney, VT



"Dear Family of Grace Cottage: A big thank you and deep appreciation to all who cared for me as I stayed there, traveling through rehab! Everyone wanted the very best for me, and I felt their kindness, patience, and understanding at all times.

I love every one of you!"

— Sue Holsman, Manchester, VT

9th Annual Tee It Up for Health



Grace Cottage's 9th Annual *Tee It Up for Health* golf benefit was probably the best ever, in terms of weather, fun, and money raised for Grace Cottage! 31 teams played at the Mount Snow Golf Club on Saturday, June 9th, and \$32,000 was raised, after expenses, for Grace Cottage's Patient Care Fund. Save the date and come join us on Saturday, June 8, 2019, at the Mount Snow Golf Club!

Event Sponsors: The Richards Group; Mount Snow Golf Club.

Platinum Sponsors: Elizabeth Walker; Eileen Ranslow.

Gold Sponsors: Bennington Subaru; Cerner Corporation.

Silver Sponsors: Andy & Linda Barber; Brattleboro Memorial Hospital; Coverys; Lawrence & Lober; People's United Bank.

Hole Sponsors: Advance Notice; Baker Newman Noyes; Durand Motors; Howard Printing; Irving Energy; Multiview; Northeast Delta Dental; Primmer Piper Eggleston & Cramer; River Valley Credit Union; Southern Vermont Podiatry; West River Family Dental; Windham Foundation; and WW Building Supply & Home Center.

Bronze Sponsors: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont; Lawton Floor Design; and Leader Beverage.

Flag Sponsors: Deerfield Valley News; Five Maples; Four Seasons Sotheby's International; RSI Flooring; Gateway Travel; Northwestern Mutual; Red Fox Shop; TC's Restaurant; Two Tannery Road Restaurant; Tracy J. Sloan, CPA; and W&B Maintenance.

13th Annual Tour de Grace



An all-time record number of riders participated in this year's *Tour de Grace* on July 9th, a picture-perfect Vermont summer's day. Ranging in age from 6 to at least 7 decades, 141 riders made their way along the North Branch Brook, through the village of Jamaica, then through the woods and along the West River (where a baby bald eagle was spotted), up the stone steps at the Townshend Dam (with the help of Leland & Gray's boys' soccer team stars!), through the Scott Covered Bridge, and to Grace Cottage. After event expenses, \$5,133 was raised for Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital!

Tour de Grace is sponsored by Stratton Resort; Solstice at Stratton; Cota & Cota; C&S Wholesale Grocers; D&K's Jamaica Grocery; Equipe Sport; Gravel Tours; Howard Printing; Three Mountain Inn; Von Barga's Jewelry and Winot Works. Safety services were provided by the Vermont State Police and Kyle LaPointe and Brady Walsh of Rescue, Inc.

20th Annual Poker Walk

In celebration of National Physical Therapy Month, Grace Cottage's 20th Annual Poker Walk will be held on Wednesday, October 10th. This fun, relatively flat walk begins at Grace Cottage's Wolff Outpatient Building in Townshend, and the half-way point is one mile north on Route 35. Volunteers are located every half-mile along the route to hand out poker cards, and the best poker hand wins a grand prize, with other prizes for "full house," "flush," etc. Come join in, anytime between 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. There is no charge to participate, advance registration is not needed, and it's a great way to get some exercise while having fun!



Townshend Elementary School students and teachers proudly display their first cards collected at last year's Poker Walk.

A grateful patient writes:

"I arrived at Grace Cottage's ER at a very busy time, yet the staff were very adept at promptly taking care of my important issue. They were absolutely excellent. We feel so fortunate to live near the best small hospital that has the equipment and trained personnel to do the many types of testing that are needed to reach a diagnosis. Thank you one and all."

— Ellie Lemire, Townshend, VT

Fair Day a Big Success!



"On Saturday, August 4th, I had the pleasure of attending an event that I will never forget. With all of the advance feedback I had received about Grace Cottage Fair Day, I knew ahead of time that I was in for a treat. Boy, is that an understatement!

I am at a loss for words to describe how a small community health care organization can pull off such an amazing "party" that is the pride of thousands of southern Vermonters and out-of-state visitors. During the day, I had the pleasure of speaking with people from near and far, who recognize Fair Day as the centerpiece of their summer celebrations. Despite some rain our loyal supporters were not discouraged. And when the sun broke through around mid-day, the activity quickly reached a crescendo.

"It's been a pure joy to work with all of these dedicated volunteers during my first year as Fair Day Co-chair," said Eileen Fahey. "Everyone was giving 120% in everything that they did to set up, run, and take down booths and complete the thousands of other tasks that go into a successful Fair Day!"



It clearly takes an 'army' of volunteers and paid staff to put on Hospital Fair Day, and I'd like to thank all volunteers and employees who helped out. It's a lot of work, and it all paid off, in spades. Fair Day revenues were about the same as last year, which is no small feat, in view of the challenging weather conditions on Friday and Saturday.

I want to thank the Fair Day Committee and Foundation employees who attended to the thousands of details that it takes to organize this huge event throughout the year; our wonderful Facilities department and volunteers who worked so hard to set up and take down

Fair Day (the Common was pristine by Sunday afternoon – you're miracle workers!); all who baked 150 pies on Friday; those who donated, picked up, sorted and moved Auction and White Elephant items, books, jewelry, and toys; Booth Chairs who dedicated their time and expertise to organize their booth or activity in the best possible way given the inclement weather; those who solicited gift certificates and items from area businesses; business and individuals that gave donations; all who worked behind the scenes, counting money and running credit cards; performers who shared their wonderful talent with fairgoers at no charge; those who helped with traffic control and parking; volunteers who sold raffle tickets and t-shirts at other venues before the Fair; those who donate space in their homes/barns/trailers for storage; the Townshend Selectboard for allowing the use of the green; The Townshend Church for use of their space; the list goes on and on.



Donations of items from the community for Fair Day are incredible, ranging from baked goods to cars (the 1980 Jaguar went for \$2,800). And last, but not least, we thank fairgoers who come to celebrate and support their community hospital by buying all that's available for purchase on this day.

Grace Cottage is so fortunate that it has the admiration and support of the communities it serves. And Fair Day is a shining example of that tradition — of helping, sharing, volunteering, giving, embracing and celebrating. It could not happen without our community's dedication and generosity."

— Doug DiVello, CEO, Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital

"I am so very pleased to be part of the Grace Cottage community. By the looks of the number of wonderful Fair Day volunteers, I am not alone in my belief that we make a difference when we work together. Thank you to everyone who supported Fair Day 2018!" ~ Dot Maggio, Fair Day Co-chair

Honoring Our Volunteers



More than 300 generous and talented individuals donate their time to Grace Cottage as Couriers, Grace Greeters, Board members, office assistants, gardeners, and event volunteers. Last year, they collectively donated over 6,000 valuable hours of their time!

Pictured here, a representation of the larger group gathered in the Garden of Grace following the annual Grace Cottage Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast at the end of July.

#GIVINGTUESDAY



For the past four years, Grace Cottage has participated in Giving Tuesday, a national day of charitable donations, held on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, once the dust has settled from Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday. Last year, over \$15,000 was raised in one day, which allowed us to purchase a Non-Invasive Ventilator for the ER and hospital and a new state-of-the-art microscope for the lab, with funds left over for the Patient Care Fund. Donations came from supporters in 13 different states and Grace Cottage employees as well.

Giving Tuesday will be on November 27th this year, and funds will go towards cardiac monitors for Grace Cottage's Emergency Department. With the number of patients with cardiac issues being seen every year, these monitors are essential. For more details, go to www.gracecottage.org.

A grateful patient writes:

"My husband and I recently retired to Vermont from Braintree, MA, where I was a Nurse Practitioner. I certainly didn't expect to need the services of Grace Cottage's ER so soon, but I fell and cut my head while gardening. I received immediate attention and the staff, from beginning to end, were courteous, knowledgeable, and engaged with me as a patient. I would not change a thing!"

— Rosemary Byrne, Newfane, VT

SAVE THE DATES:

Grace Cottage's Cabin Fever Online Auction will be live at www.32auctions.com/gracecottage from February 14-28, 2019.

Cottage Door

is published by Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital
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gracecottage.org

Grace Cottage Hospital & Grace Cottage Foundation are 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations.
The mission of Grace Cottage Foundation is to raise funds on behalf of Grace Cottage.

Donations to Grace Cottage Foundation are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. Grace Cottage Foundation's Federal Tax ID # is: 03-0343282.

Donations may be made by cash, credit card, check, stocks, bonds, or other tangible assets.
Call Andrea Seaton, at (802) 365-9109.

A grateful patient writes:

"When I was mowing my lawn this summer I went over an embankment, and my riding lawnmower landed on top of me. I ended up with broken ribs, a fractured vertebrae in my back, and banged up legs. It's the first time in my 89 ½ years that I've been in a hospital, but Grace Cottage was great and I sure would highly recommend it to others. All the people who work there are so nice, and they helped me recover as quickly as possible!" — *Robert King, Brattleboro, VT*

The Gift of Giving

"We make a living by what we get,
but we make a life by what we give."
Winston Churchill



Grace Cottage has been so blessed, throughout our 70-year history, to have been the recipient of many bequests left by people who believe that the long-term survival of this small, community hospital is crucial to the health of the residents, second-homeowners, and visitors in southeastern Vermont.

What are the advantages of making a bequest to you?

- The donation costs you nothing now. You maintain control of your assets while you are alive.
- You can change your mind at any time.
- A bequest is one of the easiest gifts to make to a charity.
- Your donation may provide your heirs with tax savings, or reduce their tax burden.
- You can restrict your bequest for a specific purpose: Grace Cottage Hospital, Grace Cottage Family Health, Grace Cottage Rehabilitation Services, Grace Cottage Hospice Care. Some people designate an alternate beneficiary if, for some unlikely reason, Grace Cottage is no longer in business at the time of your death.

A bequest may be made in several ways; be sure to speak with your attorney when you are creating or revising your will.

- Percentage bequest – make a gift of a percentage of your estate.
- Specific bequest – make a gift of a specific dollar amount or a specific asset.
- Residual bequest – make a gift from the balance, or residue, of your estate after your loved ones have been provided for.
- Contingent bequest – make a gift if your primary beneficiary (often a relative) does not survive you.

Sample language: "I hereby give, devise, and bequeath \$_____ to Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital, a nonprofit organization located at 185 Grafton Road, Townshend, VT 05353, Federal Tax ID 03-0177161, for this charity's general use and purpose" OR "I hereby give, devise, and bequeath __ percent (___%) of my total estate, determined as of the date of my death, to Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital (see language above).

Several people have given to Grace Cottage by designating any remaining balance in their retirement plan to Grace Cottage. By using your retirement plan's successor beneficiary form, and designating the remainder directly to Grace Cottage (or any other charity), you can avoid having these funds included in your taxable estate.

Grace Cottage's Tax ID number (under the Carlos G. Otis Health Care Center, our official name) is 03-0177161.

If you have any questions about a bequest or another planned gift, please call Andrea Seaton at 802-365-9109. Any discussion will be held in the strictest confidence.

Donations Were Recently Received In Honor Of:

Dr. Robert Backus ♦ Grace Cottage Volunteers ♦ Ellen Hamilton ♦ Catherine Nemchek ♦ Suzanne Welch

Memorial Gifts

Donations have been received between May 29th and August 22nd in memory of the following individuals:

Joyce Ameden ♦ Russ Barber ♦ Cecil Bills ♦ Susan W. Bristol ♦ Gladys Brown ♦ Chris Coleman ♦ Phil Coleman ♦ Alfred Dunklee
Ann Marie Dustin ♦ Don Elliott ♦ Nat & Irene Fillow ♦ John Kenneth & Catherine Galbraith ♦ Roland Gould
Frank & Frances Grout ♦ Joseph Hamilton ♦ John & Ruth Hanlon ♦ Vance Hosford ♦ Bert & Louise Howard
Joel Johnson ♦ Tom Kimbrough ♦ Richard Lang ♦ Richard Lapan ♦ Joann Liller ♦ Barbara Litchfield
Bernard Luskin ♦ Jeanne Marion ♦ Larry Martin ♦ Bruce Matthees ♦ Florence Moore ♦ Irene Phelps ♦ Annabelle Shine
Elizabeth Spencer ♦ Leona Tabell ♦ Lillian Thayer ♦ Yvan Vachon ♦ George White ♦ Marguerite Wyman ♦ Helen Young

We extend our sympathy to the families and friends of these loved ones, and our appreciation to those who have given in their memories. When memorial gifts are received by Grace Cottage, the donor is thanked, and the next of kin is notified of the gift. (The amount given is never divulged.)



"It was our first time going to Grace Cottage. Even though the ER was over capacity they opened a room on the 1st floor

so we didn't have to wait. Staff were friendly, empathetic, and very knowledgeable. We were in and out rather quickly and were amazed by our experience. Grace Cottage is the way ALL hospitals should be."

— Larry LaBarge, Brattleboro, VT



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Doc, Should I Go to the ER?

By Dr. Kenneth Rudd, MD, MPH, MHCDs

How do you know when it is time to go to a Hospital Emergency Room versus seeking care elsewhere?

The ER is there for you when you need it—whenever you have an Emergency. Every ER can determine what is needed, perform comprehensive work-ups in real time, and will address your needs either then and there, or by stabilizing you and transferring you to a higher level of care, or arranging for a future outpatient work up.

The ER is for anything potentially life- or limb-threatening or severe or that can't wait. You can only live three minutes without oxygen, so for anything affecting breathing and/or circulation (like asthma or COPD, allergic reactions affecting your airway, chest pain, severe or GI bleeding), call 911 to take you to the ER because you might not make it driving. Also, because your brain is so important, things like stroke symptoms, vision loss, speech problems, paralysis, seizures, mental status changes, passing out, and severe headaches all qualify as emergencies. Unbearable pain, severe dehydration, continual vomiting, significant trauma, and suicidality can also be life and limb threatening and thus warrant a trip to the ER.

But don't go to the ER if you don't need it. My main advice is to see your primary care provider (PCP) if what you're experiencing isn't life-threatening and limb-threatening. What doctor knows you best? Where do you have relationship and trust? If it isn't with your PCP, then find a provider that is a good fit for you and build this. The relationship that develops between you and your PCP is your

key to long-term health. No one knows your health status and your treatment preferences better. No one is more familiar with your life circumstances and your common stresses. No one has better access to your health history. No one can better put your present ailment into the context of you. Your PCP is the best one situated to make complex and difficult diagnoses.

There are drawbacks to the ER.

First, your PCP will generally give you the best possible care for you (sound familiar?) Second, the ER is the most expensive place to get your care, regardless of your medical problem. This may not seem important if you have insurance that will cover you wherever you go for care, but the reality is that we all ultimately bear the cost for wasteful spending on medical care, usually through escalating insurance premiums, so unnecessary expenditures do come back to bite us in a very real way. We should all be the best stewards we can be of every healthcare dollar we spend, whether insurance "is covering it" or not.



Dr. Kenneth Rudd graduated from Princeton University, and earned his M.D. and Masters of Public Health degrees from the University of Connecticut. After completing an Academic Medicine Fellowship at the In His Image Family Medicine Residency Program in Tulsa, OK, he received a Master of Health Care Delivery Science from Dartmouth College.