

## **Ozarks Community Hospital's Pain Management and Suboxone Team Southwest Missouri**

***The Pain Management and Suboxone Team's nomination read:***

### **Who your nominee is (Name of Team)**

Ozarks Community Hospital's Pain Management and Suboxone-certified providers

- Dr. Chris Billings, pain management
- Dr. Charles Cantrell, pain management
- Dr. Jay Baker, pain management
- Dr. K. Marcus Poemoceah, family medicine
- Dr. Donnie Holden, psychiatry
- Dr. Marty Witucki, psychiatry
- Dr. Adonia Holden-Dunivan, licensed professional counselor
- Amelia "Amy" Jackson, nurse practitioner
- Dr. Arthur Jo Cohn, internal medicine
- Dr. Jackie Beene, family medicine
- Dr. John Kaicher, family medicine
- Gregory Forrester, nurse practitioner
- Amelia "Amy" Jackson, nurse practitioner
- Carol Curless, nurse practitioner
- Paul Taylor, CEO of Ozarks Community Hospital
- More than a dozen nurses and other provider-support members who care for Missourians in need of pain management and opioid addiction treatment.

### **What your team has done to be Rural Health Champions**

More than 1,100 Missourians died because of opioid-related overdoses last year, and preliminary data from the Centers for Disease Control projects that, from 2017 to 2018, Missouri saw around a 16 percent increase in overdose deaths. State and national leaders consider this nothing less than a public health crisis, and Ozarks Community Hospital has accepted this challenge to help rural residents of Missouri through their significant pain management opioid addiction problems. We've made meaningful progress because of the unwavering commitment of the men and women who serve our patients who have chronic pain, treating more than 2,000 patients each month who are suffering and need not only relief from pain, but in many cases an alternative to opioid medication.

OCH has adapted facilities and resources to provide basic healthcare for patients in the rural Ozarks who have difficult access to care—specifically including those who suffer from chronic pain and opioid addiction. We have ten (10) Rural Health Clinics in Missouri, addressing pain management, opioid addiction and the mental health conditions exacerbating pain and addiction through direct care and referrals to OCH providers in other facilities. In addition to those Missouri RHCs, we have facilities in northwest Arkansas and north Springfield, Missouri, which treat a significant number of rural Missourians. For example, the OCH facility in Gravette, Arkansas is close to the Missouri border and often sees a higher number of Missouri Medicaid patients than Arkansas Medicaid. The patients we serve in north Springfield are primarily low-income and/or elderly ... and rural. Our location in north Springfield near the intersection of I-44 and Glenstone provides rural patients access to healthcare without driving into the city.

**Where your Team is Located (Town or Community/County where they work and live)**

Our OCH Pain Management clinics are in Gravette, Arkansas (Benton County), Carthage (Jasper County) and north Springfield (Greene County). We have providers treating patients suffering from opioid addiction through Suboxone medication assisted therapy in Gravette, north Springfield, Sparta (Webster County), and Webb City (Jasper County). We have mental healthcare providers in most of our Missouri RHCs as well as Gravette and north Springfield.

**When your team became Rural Health Champions (Time frame in Days/months/years)**

Ozarks Community Hospital has been operating in more than a dozen rural communities throughout Southwest Missouri for more than two decades.

**How your team is uniquely qualified for this award**

Due to the increased scrutiny focused on pain management practices, many pain management providers in rural Missouri quit treating patients with chronic pain. OCH providers refused to abandon those patients. While recognizing the need to find alternatives to opioid medication and to reduce the prescribed dosages for those patients who have no alternative to opioid management of pain, OCH has expanded the number of providers, resources and facilities willing and able to address the complex issues surrounding chronic pain. Swimming against the tide has not been easy for OCH and its community of providers. The “knee jerk” reaction to the very real opioid crisis resulted in the stigmatization of both pain patients and the providers who have been treated patients for pain. Increased regulatory scrutiny by state and federal agencies threatening civil and criminal penalties led many providers to view pain patients more as a threat to their practice than human beings in need of care.

**Why our nominee is the best team for the Rural Health Champion Team Award**

Opioid addiction is a problem, as is the life-altering condition of living with chronic pain. Our providers see many new patients who walk in the door addicted to opioids. They see the destruction this is causing in their patients’ lives and in the lives of their families. Our providers listen to those patients and create specific plans for those patients, significantly reducing their need for pain medication while working hard to find other ways to provide pain relief. They understand they are on the front lines in fighting this health crisis and they have proudly accepted this challenge. They have seen lives changed and potentially saved. Our OCH team is committed to help patients in pain to reduce or eliminate their dependence on opioids and get them on the path to a better quality of life. This is our mission!