

# Prescription for Progress

By Symone C. Skrzycki

## Northeast Regional Initiative Gains Early Momentum

**T**he new doesn't necessarily mean the end of the old. Especially in Fort Wayne, where Parkview Hospital is partnering with several local education institutions to host workforce development training, applied research and business incubation at its "old" downtown Randallia campus after opening its "new" regional medical center this spring.

A group called the Life Science Education and Research Consortium of Northeast Indiana is launching the project. Along with Parkview, members are Huntington University, Ivy Tech Community College-Northeast, Trine University, the University of Saint Francis and Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS).

Students will be able to choose from a variety of offerings revolving around life sciences and health care. Programs will feature a mix of existing and new curricula that spans high school through doctoral levels.

Among highlights (details have not yet been finalized) are masters and doctoral degrees in occupational therapy from Huntington University; the introduction of a certificate in rehabilitation counseling from the University of Saint Francis; associate degree programs in nursing, respiratory care and health care information technology from Ivy Tech-Northeast; a physical therapy doctoral degree from Trine; and medical assisting, certified nursing assisting and biomedical sciences training from FWCS.

"The Consortium is a way for institutions to come together and share infrastructure," explains Sue Ehinger, chief operating officer at Parkview. "When we started talking with other education institutions (about collaborating), it was almost like a think tank on, 'What are the gaps? What are the needs we have in health care?'"

"What we found was that our centers of excellence here on the campus could become senior care, rehabilitation and behavioral health."



Approximately 1,000 students are expected to participate in the first round of offerings at Parkview Hospital's Randallia campus this fall.

### Domino effect

In addition to unique academic opportunities, Ehinger emphasizes that the Consortium can bring another powerful asset to the region: jobs.

"It's a form of economic development because for each of these new services, that means you have new faculty members who come on campus who look for housing, who are going to restaurants and who are buying things," she comments.

Following the relocation of Parkview's headquarters, the hospital will continue to provide many of its current services at the Randallia campus. They include a minimum of 120 beds (all in private rooms), a full-service emergency department, family birthing services, surgery suites, physicians' offices, outpatient care and more.

"There is no one across the nation doing anything like this," Ehinger reveals. "We have the perfect opportunity today to use some existing buildings and create something that provides economic development and professional growth in our community. That's what we're all so excited about."

### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** Sue Ehinger, Parkview Health, at [www.parkview.com](http://www.parkview.com)

## Physicians Tap Into New Research Opportunities

**I**t starts with a few keystrokes.

Logging onto INResearch.org is the first step volunteers are taking to help researchers discover new medical treatments and cures for a variety of health conditions and diseases. The Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (ICTSI) – a statewide collaboration among Indiana University, Purdue University and the University of Notre Dame – launched the online

registry last summer.

Here's how it works: First, participants create online health profiles listing their conditions (if any; healthy volunteers also are invited to take part), medications and more. Then, qualifying individuals are matched with research studies.

Parents and caregivers can create accounts for children and other dependents.

There are typically 1,500 to 1,800 clinical trials taking place at any given time. Conditions range from cancer, blood disorders and mental health to children's health, infectious diseases and more. Volunteer activities include telephone surveys, questionnaires, taking physicals and trying a new treatment or medication.

Most studies are conducted on the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) campus.

### What's different about INResearch.org?

Unlike most online registries, INResearch.org isn't disease specific.

"The concept was to provide a secure, web-based access point to people who are interested in becoming research participants.

"There's no (other) place where a person can volunteer themselves irrespective of what disease condition they have," notes Anantha Shekhar, director of the ICTSI and associate dean for research at the Indiana University School of Medicine. "The other thing that's good about the site is that you can say when and how you want to be contacted."

Shekhar contends that INResearch.org offers advantages for individuals and for the state as a whole.

"For the individuals who are participating, we can provide cutting-edge treatments for diseases they might have. In some of the studies, there could be monetary rewards. There's obviously free medical care during these kinds of trials. And they get a lot more education and support (than they would otherwise)," he reflects.

"For the state, what we think this could do is really create a very attractive environment for researchers and research programs to relocate here and assist the biotech industry in the state. In that sense, it provides a significant boost to the economy."

#### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** Anantha Shekhar, Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute, at [www.indianactsi.org](http://www.indianactsi.org)

## First Schools of Public Health Taking Shape

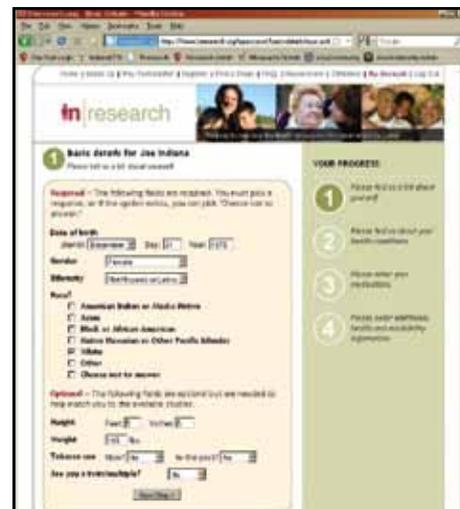
**T**he good news: You're a researcher with innovative ideas to advance Hoosiers' health. The bad news: The absence of schools of public health in Indiana puts you at a disadvantage when it comes to competing for grant money.

That's about to change as Indiana University prepares to launch the IU School of Public Health-Bloomington (transitioning from the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation) and the IU School of Public Health-Indianapolis at IUPUI.

Ed Marshall, IU vice president for diversity, equity and multicultural affairs and an optometry professor, chairs the university's Public Health Coordinating Council, which is overseeing the initiative.

"These schools will work collaboratively with other schools within the university and elsewhere because sciences like epidemiology and biostatistics (core areas within public health, along with health behavior, environmental health and health policy administration) are becoming more critical to various types of planning and research."

The Bloomington campus will have a rural focus, and



**INResearch.org connects volunteers with clinical trials – and potentially new treatments – by tracking health information such as family history, current medications and medical conditions.**

**Indiana University's schools of public health will help train students for careers in disease prevention, research, education and more.**



emphasize health behavior and epidemiology, while the Indianapolis location will concentrate on urban issues in the areas of epidemiology, health policy and biostatistics.

### Economic impact

A recent Gallup report revealed that Indiana ranks 46th among 50 states for overall well-being. “Indiana has one of the most morbid health indices in the country,” Marshall remarks. “We’re toward the bottom in terms of some of the main metrics: diabetes, cancer, obesity. We’re also toward the bottom in terms of our public health workforce. Nationally, I think the latest data I saw (indicated that) there were 138 public health workers per 100,000 population. In Indiana, we have 46 (for every 100,000 people).

“There was a report that came out recently from the (Indiana) State Department of Health that spoke to the need for increasing the public health infrastructure, saying that a lot of issues in terms of not being able to adequately address these challenges came from the fact that we don’t have an efficient public health workforce.”

There are also financial implications for businesses.

“In terms of economic development, an unhealthy population is not a population that serves anyone – including the corporate community,” Marshall asserts. “The healthier the population, the lower the cost of health care. Plus, when we have a healthier workforce, we tend to have much more efficient workers.”

In October, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education approved Indiana University’s project request. The next step is to make a formal application to the accrediting body, the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), which acts on proposals twice a year.

#### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** Ed Marshall, Indiana University, at [www.indiana.edu](http://www.indiana.edu)

## Health Care Hub Helps Combat Nursing Shortage

**Kim Harper, executive director of the Indiana Center for Nursing, says the organization can help produce a “well-qualified, well-trained supply of nurses for the future of Indiana.”**



**R**eady or not, here it comes. “Today, we don’t have a nursing shortage, but tomorrow we will – and it will hit harder than any in the past,” states Kimberly Harper, executive director of the recently established Indiana Center for Nursing (ICN).

“We’re looking at a perfect storm that’s going in the wrong direction.”

Launched in July, the ICN is helping to ensure that Hoosier health care providers are prepared when the wave strikes. Serving as a centralized statewide resource for nurses, it offers scholarships and tuition assistance (at the undergraduate and graduate levels), career development services and access to valuable data.

The new organization merges three existing entities: Nursing 2000, Nursing 2000 North and the Indiana Nursing Workforce Development Coalition.

“One of the issues we have to address is making sure we continue to educate an adequate number of nurses,” Harper contends. “There are challenges on that front. Many of our nurse educators are getting close to retirement age and there aren’t a lot of nursing educators who are younger coming behind them.”

### Prescription for success

The ICN’s main goals are to promote the state as a magnet for nursing education and practice and to “maintain a huge philanthropy push.”

“One of the things we’re pushing for with that is that we would earmark a number of scholarships for graduate-level education. We need to have the proper (number of professionals) doctorally prepared,” Harper stresses.

Previously, the three organizations that comprise ICN raised more than \$1 million in nursing scholarships. The ICN also is working on several initiatives through its involvement with the Indiana Action Coalition on transforming health care.

“About a year ago, the Institute of Medicine released a landmark report on what should change within nursing in America for the future,” Harper relates. (In response), there’s an organized effort to have action coalitions for nursing across the country (to implement its recommendations).

Indiana was one of the first few states to be accepted.”

Enhancing patient safety, nursing practice models, nursing education and the advancement of inter-professional education and practice throughout Indiana are the top priorities.

#### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** Kimberly Harper, Indiana Center for Nursing, at (317) 574-1325 or [www.IC4N.org](http://www.IC4N.org)

## Consumers Reap Rewards for ‘Smart’ Health Care Shopping

If you plan to invest in a new car, home or other major purchase, would you make a decision without comparing costs? Probably not, but it happens every day in the health care world, where the charges for medical procedures vary widely depending on where they’re performed.

New Hampshire-based Compass Healthcare Advisors is helping consumers proactively manage outpatient health care expenses through its SmartShopper™ employer-based program.

“We offer an extremely user-friendly service. You can shop with us over the phone or online and get information about what specific services cost in or around your area. If you choose to go to a cost-effective location, you qualify for a financial incentive. We will literally send you a check in the mail,” remarks president and CEO Rob Graybill.

“Anyone who has insurance is a potential client for us.”

Compass pays the financial incentive, which comes from a pool of money set up by the employer.

This fall Compass expanded the program (launched in 2010) to Indiana and several other states. Clients represent industries such as law firms, financial services, municipalities and manufacturing. The company currently serves two Hoosier clients, Anderson University and Jay School Corporation (located in Portland). Jointly, they represent 1,800 members.

### Location, location, location

Graybill says the program is all about engagement.

“We’ve been talking about engagement for health care consumers for decades,” he observes. “Sixty percent of the people who shop with Compass choose to go to a cost-effective provider. These are authorized, high-quality providers. We have some clients where that number is as high as seven out of 10 people.”

Shoppers can receive up to \$250 in incentives based on the cost of the procedure. Mammograms, for instance, are relatively inexpensive. Consequently, the incentive amount (approximately \$25) is lower than more invasive services such as gall bladder or lower back surgery.

Employee participation is voluntary and confidential.

“We have to be able to keep the prices under control in order to have a sustainable health care market,” Graybill cautions. “If we just let the prices go up by medical inflation and double every five to 10 years, no one will be able to afford health care insurance.”

Graybill shares an example of cost disparity resulting from location.

“The exact same MRI of the knee performed on the exact same piece of equipment and sent to the same radiologist to read – no difference in quality – cost \$750 vs. \$2,250.

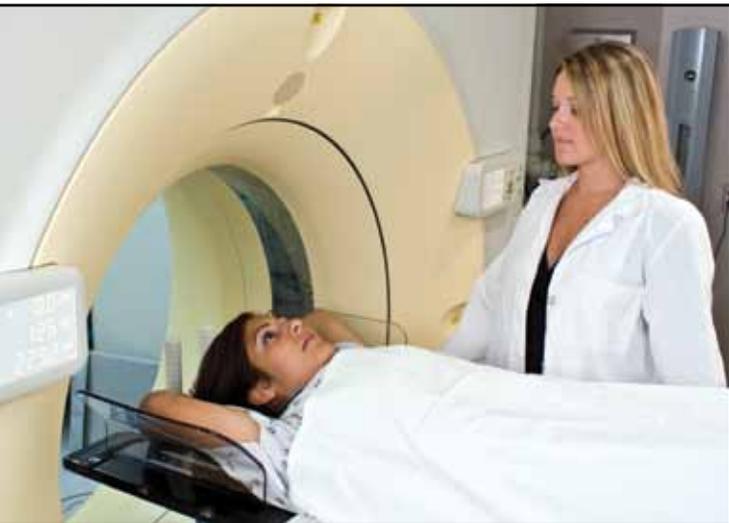
“Those (settings) were 2.1 miles apart. That’s a \$1,500 difference, essentially \$750 a mile.”

Here in Indiana, a member saved over \$2,000 using SmartShopper to help choose a cost-effective location for a colonoscopy.

Graybill declares, “That’s just one simple procedure.”

#### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** Rob Graybill, Compass Healthcare Advisors, at (800) 824-9127 or [www.compassmartshopper.com](http://www.compassmartshopper.com)



**The SmartShopper program offered by Compass Healthcare Advisors provides financial incentives to individuals who choose cost-effective locations for common medical procedures.**