



# THE PATIENT'S ADVOCATE

A Quarterly Update from a National Leader in Home-Based Medicine



*Jason and Olivia take a moment from their whirlwind adventure to strike a pose with Mickey.*

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## Wish comes true for young hospice patient

“Sometimes people come into our lives for a short time but make a lasting impact,” says Housecall Providers Hospice Nurse Nancy Jean Sill. “Jason was that person for many of us.”

For hospice team members who traditionally care for individuals at the latter stage of their lives — people who have, for the most part, come to terms with their mortality — providing end-of-life care to a 22-year-old changed the dynamics.

“Jason loved life and was a fighter because he had so much to live for. His relationship with Olivia was first on the list,” says Nancy Jean.

Jason’s main caregiver and love, Olivia Bonnar, met Jason two years ago — one month before he received his diagnosis of sacral cancer. Since that initial meeting, the two had been almost inseparable. This past summer, they had a commitment ceremony at a bed-and-breakfast atop beautiful Chehalem Mountain in Newberg, OR.

“Our ceremony was nothing like we thought it would be, and honestly, I am so thankful it wasn’t,” says Olivia. “It was small and intimate and we were relieved of the pressure and expectation to put on a show or entertain so we could just concentrate on us.”

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# CEO Report

## Rebecca Ramsay

I cannot remember a time when “fixing” the U.S. health care system wasn’t one of the top three campaign promises. Politicians strategically align themselves with the views of millions of Americans who are tired of spending such a large portion of their income on health care, and who are concerned that their dollars should be buying higher-quality care.

From a health professional viewpoint, there are literally thousands of health care quality metrics (like blood pressure and cholesterol level) that are collected, monitored and reported to health care systems all over the country. By and large, however, these metrics represent quality from a provider and insurer viewpoint and not what is important to the individual receiving the care.

What does high-quality health care mean to you? Does it mean that your blood pressure reading and cholesterol level are within the normal range, that symptoms are managed effectively to minimize pain and discomfort, or that your health care provider takes the time to listen to your concerns and answer your questions?

At Housecall Providers, it is “D – All of the above.” Recently, we had the privilege to hear survey results from over 300 primary care patients and family members, as well as those served by our hospice, about what we do well and where we could improve our care.

By a large margin, you told us that you are happy with the care provided, and 96 percent of you would recommend our primary care services to

your family or friends. Additionally, 92 percent of hospice survey respondents gave an overall positive rating of care. This is a wonderful compliment

and encourages us to keep working to provide, fine-tune and expand this care. Feedback was also given on what we could do to improve, and we are reviewing those comments when we consider improvements to our care model.

It is very important to all of us that our patients, families and caregivers have a voice to tell us how we are doing so I want to thank you for taking the time to fill out the survey. Our goal in 2019 is to continue to provide high-quality care that you value, paying close attention that our care teams are listening to your goals, needs and concerns at every visit.

My sincere hope is that Housecall Providers, along with other home-based practices across the nation, inspire new, higher standards related to patient satisfaction. Together, we can work to bridge the divide between what quality care means to a provider or insurer and the patient receiving the care.



Survey results on the following page

## CEO Report (cont.)

Some comments received from both surveys:

*"My provider is flexible in coming at a time of day that works well with my schedule. She is prompt and a good listener. She takes time to hear all my concerns and explains clearly (sometimes several times) until I am confident in my understanding."*

*"Don't assume you always know better than the patients. Often times, patients have newer and more extensive knowledge."*

*"[You] relate well with patients and patient's families. My PCP has a large grasp on problems and medications as well as the ability to show empathy in addition to presenting facts in non-threatening and concise manner. She is a godsend."*

*"I feel, for the first time in my life, that I truly have a partner in my health care."*

*"Seeing my family member in the home is huge. Going to an outside doctor's appointment was exhausting and traumatic. Now she is seen without being upset. I felt that I was shown respect and not just treated as a number."*

*"I find the care providers easy to understand, but my mother (95) sometimes has trouble because they are not speaking slowly enough."*



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## Give the gift of home-based medicine

If you have ever considered supporting Housecall Providers, now is the time! While we are continually improving our care model to be as effective and efficient as possible, we still need our community's support to ensure that Housecall Providers remains an asset for the Portland metro area's homebound and chronically ill people.

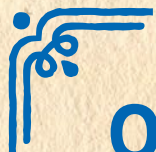


Has a member of our care team made a difference to you? Our Gifts of Gratitude program provides a way to show your appreciation to the special individual or team members who cared for you or a loved one. You can visit [www.housecallproviders.org/giftsofgratitude](http://www.housecallproviders.org/giftsofgratitude) and we will share your comments with those who made an impact in your life.

Please use the attached envelope or visit [www.housecallproviders.org/donate-now](http://www.housecallproviders.org/donate-now)

**Thank you for supporting  
our mission!**





## OUR MISSION MOVING FORWARD

We are pleased to announce that Housecall Providers has a new mission statement that we hope will guide the nonprofit for years if not decades to come. It was created after months of reflection, planning, review and wordsmithing to arrive at a statement that was not just accepted but embraced by staff. We used the tagline from our logo to anchor the statement, and our aim was to get at the heart of why we exist in as few words as possible. In doing so, we hope we have equipped our supporters with an easy way

to talk about the unique service we bring to our community.

This move comes almost a year and a half after our leadership assembled together for three days to review our history, milestones, successes and failures. This time allowed us the opportunity to choose the five values that would guide our organization's thinking, behaviors and actions moving forward. From that foundation we settled in to craft our vision statement and created what we know will one day be our desired state.



### MISSION

Improving lives by bringing  
health care home



### VISION

To sustainably transform home-based medicine so all homebound adults and those living with serious illness have access to care that improves their quality of life



### VALUES

Compassion and respect,  
authentic relationships,  
collaboration, courage and  
social justice



We would love to hear what you think of our new mission statement, or other thoughts you might have about our vision and values. **Send comments to: [info@housecallproviders.org](mailto:info@housecallproviders.org)**



# IAH Results

Third-year results from the five-year Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Independence at Home (IAH) Demonstration Project were recently released. Housecall Providers was once again one of the highest-performing sites with a savings of 23.7 percent in patient health costs compared to a local control group that did not receive home-based primary care. This constitutes a savings of \$535 per patient every month.

Seven out of 15 participating practices saved 4.7 percent, equating to \$16.3 million, an average of \$1,431 per applicable beneficiary. IAH continues to be the most successful Medicare demonstration ever implemented.

In this third year, 11,382 beneficiaries were enrolled in the demonstration, up from 10,000 the previous year. Additionally, 14 of the 15 practices improved on at least one quality measure from Performance Year Two. Housecall Providers was one of the five practices that met the performance thresholds for all six quality measures, and in doing so received an incentive payment totaling \$570,777.

**“I am extremely proud of our staff that we once again achieved all of the quality measures,” says Housecall Providers CEO Rebecca Ramsay. “That we are able to save money by delivering home-based primary care without sacrificing quality speaks to the effectiveness and efficiency of this model.”**

IAH tests a service delivery and payment incentive model designed to improve health outcomes for people with chronic conditions through the utilization of home-based primary care teams. In the study’s first two years, Housecall Providers showed a 32 percent savings, and the following year reported a 24 percent savings over the control group.

“Members of the IAH consortium are further encouraged that these promising results will continue to move the national conversation toward the necessity of instituting a permanent, value-based payment model, so all who need home-based care will one day be able to receive it,” says Ramsay.



## 2018 Year In Review

Admitted more than 650 new patients and **made over 10,000 primary care house calls.**

**Average age of our primary care patients is 77**

(median is 81) and we usually have 30 patients who are at least 100 years old.

**Hospice patient satisfaction scores are more than 5% above** the national, urban and Pacific averages.

**Housecall Providers has a budget of over \$15 million** and employs a staff of nearly 110.

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## Join our volunteer team!

Next training in May.

Contact Todd Lawrence  
**971-202-5515**

[volunteers@housecallproviders.org](mailto:volunteers@housecallproviders.org)

**housecall  
providers**  
bringing health care home

## Meet our advice nurse Jessie Head

This past year, Housecall Providers hired its first advice (triage) nurse, Jessie Head, RN, to offer support to our primary care patients and team members. This service allows our patients and caregivers to receive a timely assessment over the phone when a sudden health issue arises.



*Advice (triage) nurse, Jessie Head, RN*

“Just about anything that can happen to a human being will come across the advice line,” says Jessie. “We get a lot of conditions that are prevalent in people who are chronically ill like diabetes, COPD, congestive heart failure and the usual suspects, too, like stomach issues, colds and flu.”

Jessie, who handles anywhere from 15 – 30 calls a day, is somewhat of a health care detective. Since losing 60 percent of her hearing to meningitis as a child, Jessie had to hone her listening skills to include not just the words she was hearing but the pauses and silence that surround them. This ability she says has helped her so much as a telephone advice nurse because she is not just listening to the words; she is listening to everything within the conversation.

“I’ve been called a psychic before, because I just know things that other people have not figured out.

It’s not because I have a special power, it’s just that I pick up on cues,” says Jessie.

Housecall Providers created this position out of the desire to offer the highest level of care. Patients and families who call in needing help with what Jessie terms the “nuts and bolts of health care”: getting equipment, prescriptions, referrals to specialists, and questions about labs and X-rays are sent to their provider’s care coordinator for assistance. Those with an acute health concern are routed to Jessie so she can interpret the information received and recommend a course of action. At times, the intervention might be providing education and more context about the patient’s condition so symptoms can be managed at home. Other times, she might determine it is necessary to involve the primary care provider (PCP) or another member of the care team.

This screening allows our PCPs to respond to serious needs quicker because they have a team of nurses behind them to manage the prep work on an acute issue. This team-based care model allows the providers to work at the top of their license and have all the pertinent information necessary to make an accurate diagnosis and start the appropriate plan of care.

✦ “Just about anything that can happen to a human being will come across the advice line,” says Jessie. ✦

“Sometimes though, all that is needed is a listening ear, and I am happy to supply whatever our patients or caregivers might need in any given day,” says Jessie.

# Wish comes true for young hospice patient (cont.)

Since Jason's immediate family wasn't part of his care team, he found guidance, companionship and loving support in the faces of his hospice team, particularly nurse Nancy Jean and social worker Steve Sehm.

"Nurse Nancy has been there for us pretty much 24/7," Jason remarked in November when asked to talk about the impact of his care team. "Steve has been awesome and has been one of the nicest guys ever. He deals with situations a lot better than most people."

Over the course of visiting Jason and getting to know him better, Steve found out that it had been Jason's long-desired wish to visit Disneyland. The social worker had heard about organizations that granted final wishes, so he made it his goal to see if he could make it happen for Jason.

"I did some research and came across the Dream Foundation, and in no time they got back to me with a 'yes,'" says Steve. "I could barely wait to tell them the good news."

While Jason was thrilled at the news that he and Olivia would be able to have this experience, the reality soon set in that this would be his last trip.

"While it's unbelievable, it's also bittersweet because the trip is signaling how close I am to

departing, and it's scary," said Jason. "I think that is the hardest part."

The gift from the Dream Foundation covered airfare, accommodations and a pair of three-day passes to Disneyland. What was still needed was money for food, travel costs and incidentals like a scooter to get around the park, because Jason

was wheelchair bound. Staff put their heads together and contacted Gifted Wishes, formerly the Pacific NW Hospice Foundation, which donated \$500 in Visa gift cards to help make up the difference.

With the departure date looming, Jason began battling nausea and vomiting, and it was touch-and-go whether the airline would let him fly in that condition. "We had all done so much

to get to this point that if Jason was still eager to go, we weren't going to let much get in the way," says Nancy Jean. Armed with anti-nausea medication and positive attitudes, the two boarded the flight heading to "the happiest place on Earth."

"The first day I met Jason we talked about wanting to go to Disneyland," says Olivia. "We were just blown away by that gift and generosity. Seeing Jason so happy was definitely my favorite part of the trip."



*Hospice team members Steve Sehm and Nancy Jean Sill surprise their patient Jason Dawson with a party before his trip to Disneyland.*

Cont. on back page

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## Wish comes true for hospice patient (cont.)

Although Jason said he was “bummed” not to be able to go on any rides, he loved meeting Darth Vader and characters from his favorite movies:

*Tangled, Rapunzel and Flynn Ryder.*

“His favorite place to eat in Disneyland was Pizza Planet from *Toy Story*,” recalls Olivia. “Since it is his favorite food, we ended up going there twice, which I was more than willing to do because it was actually something he was willing to eat.”

Once the adventure was in the rearview mirror and the daily routine returned to normal, Olivia and Jason began what would be their final month together.

“It became increasingly difficult mentally and emotionally to care for him as he required more and more help,” says Olivia. “I tried the best I could, and the help I received from my mom and the amazing nurse Nancy made all the difference.”

Approximately a week before he passed, Jason was admitted to Legacy’s Hopewell House in Southwest Portland to initiate IV opioids to better

control his spiking pain. The plan was that once his pain was under control, he would return home. It was a promise he had made to Olivia.

“I was so torn because I was losing the love of my life,” says Olivia, “but Jason was gaining peace and his pain was finally ceasing.”

Fulfilling his promise, Jason did return home and died peacefully the next day. “There was no struggle, and he had a small smile on his face,” remembers Olivia. “It is as if he knew he was finally at peace.”

Many can only imagine what it must feel like to have such an enormous burden placed on them at such a young age. For Olivia, what made it all bearable was the support she received from her family and the hospice team.

“Jason and I were just so thankful that we were referred to Housecall Providers Hospice,” says Olivia. “I can’t thank them enough and the rest of the staff for the kindness they showed and how they went above and beyond for us.”

