



How the Arizona Burn Center at Valleywise Health Continues to be the Pinnacle for Burn Care

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Many individuals in the medical world are aware of Arizona's largest safety-net healthcare system, the Arizona Burn Center at Valleywise Health. It is the foremost leader in burn care both in Arizona and throughout the Western United States.

Yet, many physicians and hospitals remain unaware of the life-saving work that the Center conducts. More importantly, the resources that they offer outside of the hospital to educate and prepare others to treat burns on the front lines.

Taking a look at the Center by the numbers, directed by Dr. Kevin Foster, treats nearly 10,000 burn patients each year, many at their outpatient Burn Clinic. The most common burns continue to be scalding from hot liquids, and then closely followed by flame, chemical, and electrical burns. Additionally, they also treat skin diseases like Necrotizing fasciitis and Stevens-Johnson Syndrome. Sadly, of the thousands of burns, they treat each year, roughly a third are pediatric related.

Dr. Foster cites that 80% of patients are from Maricopa County, with an additional 15% from around the state, and 5% from outside Arizona. Much of the 5% is with a high concentration from Western New Mexico. Though the Center is well known for treating some of the most horrific burns from car and plane accidents, home fires, and other catastrophic events, according to Foster, it is the smaller burns that can be just as challenging and cause irreparable damage.

As part of the state's foremost teaching healthcare system, the Arizona Burn Center at Valleywise Health prides itself on making educational opportunities available for their residents and

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participating in community outreach programs. This effort is made to ensure that those on the front lines have the tools to correctly triage and treat burns prior to hospitalization.

EMPOWERING AND EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY

Facilitated by Suzanne Buchanan MSN, RN, CCRN, the Arizona Burn Center at Valleywise Health's outreach program educates fire, police,



emergency departments, and medical clinics to arm them with the latest on how to diagnose burns, treat them, and when needed, consult Dr. Foster and his staff. In partnering with these entities, a trusted system has been developed so each party is speaking the same language, even before that patient arrives at the Arizona Burn Center or another treatment facility.

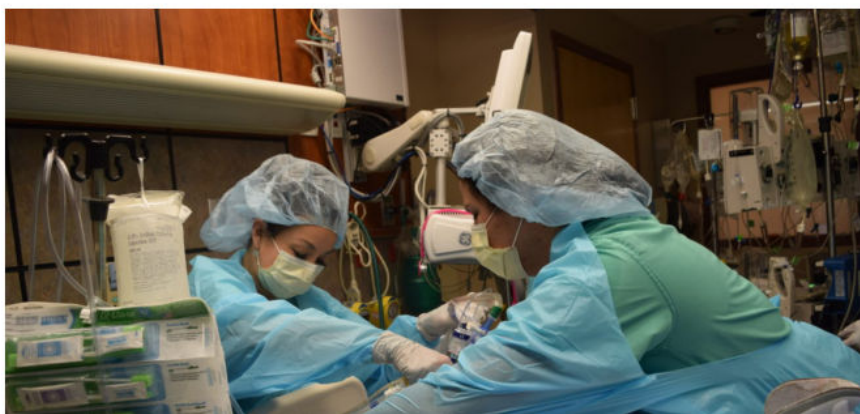
Foster cited that many of the doctors working in ER's throughout the Valley have trained at Valleywise Health and have a solid foundation related to burn care, yet someone on his staff is always available 24/7, 365 to answer questions.

"We are always available to consult with physicians who have questions on a burn whether it is severe or more common to help them make the most informed decision," says Dr. Foster. "And if they feel the care is beyond their knowledge base, we are lucky enough to have an administration at Valleywise Health that understands the unique care that burns require and have never turned down a patient and never will."

Foster noted that each burn is so unique and for many physicians who don't work with them day-in and day-out, just cannot project what a burn might look like 24 or 48 hours after the initial injury. Although not a misdiagnosis, they may not take the course of action appropriate to avoid further damage.

"Many times, a small burn on someone's hand may not look all that serious but can manifest a few days later and end up affecting the functionality of that person's hand," says Dr. Foster. "This is why I cannot emphasize enough that referring patients to us, or calling to consult, is of great importance."

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES



As a leader in the industry, Dr. Foster and his staff



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As a leader in the industry, Dr. Foster and his staff



continually look for ways to improve care by partnering with dressing and drug manufacturers. This partnership includes both consulting and clinical trials. Specific to advancements in burn dressings, Foster cited that treatment of outpatient burns has become 'simpler' as improvements have been made. New dressings contain silver as the anti-microbial agent and therefore allows for the dressing to stay in place for a day or two versus the older methods of needing to be changed twice a day.

Another industry advancement that Dr. Foster and his team of physicians were involved in was the advent of spray-on-skin through clinical trials. The product, introduced by **ReCell**, was originally slated to treat severe burns, but Dr. Foster and the team saw the opportunity for broader use. A special clinical trial was introduced for use on a young couple who had both sustained burns to 60% of their bodies. It was in this trial they saw the efficacy of the less severe burns that propelled FDA approval of the product.

"The foresight of companies like ReCell to involve physicians at the ground floor is refreshing as we have the opportunity to partner and create products that ultimately improve patient care and minimize pain," says Dr. Foster. "One of the toughest parts of treating burns is that we have to hurt our patients to help them heal, but advancements in wound dressings and technologies like spray-on-skin have leveled that 'hurt-to-heal' equation."

A HEALTH SYSTEM THAT CARES

The Arizona Burn Center is only one department at Valleywise Health, but one that sees some of the most at-risk patients with life-threatening injuries; ones that are not inexpensive to treat.

"When I say that we have not, and never will turn away a burn patient, I can confidently say that because we have an administration that understands that if not for us, who will treat these individuals," says Dr. Foster. "Burn care is very expensive, but we never deny care for worry of who is going to pay the bills."

In the spirit of community, the Arizona Burn Center and Valleywise Health Foundation host an annual Burn Symposium in late-October. This symposium is open to anyone who would like to attend, learn about the latest in care and gain invaluable knowledge of how to diagnose and treat burns. Foster cited that he values having those first responders, emergency department staffers, and clinicians in the audience, but welcomes individuals from the restaurant industry who experience frequent burns and even school administrators who see burns to children at school. If interested in attending the 2020 symposium, please contact Paula Walker at 602-344-5624.

For more information on the Arizona Burn Center at Valleywise Health, please visit <https://valleywisehealth.org/arizona-burn-center-valleywise-health/>.