Not All Who Wander Are Lost
He’s taken on the world’s toughest hikes – with no sight, but a limitless vision

MIND OVER MATTER
Now part of your regular checkup? Mental health checks

GUT CHECK
Good germs can fight fatigue, depression and weight gain

NURTURING GOOD HEALTH
A community garden is helping one doctor build a brighter future
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ON THE COVER:
Michael McCulloch is shown atop the summit of Machu Picchu. McCulloch is sightless and recovering from a torn meniscus – but that hasn’t stopped him from tackling some of the world’s greatest physical feats. (Photo courtesy of Michael McCulloch)
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We Want to Know
Our January/February issue of Beyond will focus on building a healthier community. Send your answer to the following question to mhcommunications@memorialhermann.org for a chance to be featured in our next edition: What does a healthy community look like to you?
In my first several weeks as President and CEO, I visited campuses across the System and talked to the people who work here – from nurses to lab techs, security officers to speech pathologists. From those conversations, I’ve learned some reasons why Memorial Hermann is such a special place.

This issue of Beyond reflects the Memorial Hermann I have come to know so far: An organization full of inspiration – passionately hurtling toward the future of medical treatment, while still compassionately caring for patients as the people they are.

The following pages feature the stories of people who are doing, or benefiting from, Memorial Hermann’s best work every day.

You’ll read the story of Michael Lawrence, who had open heart surgery earlier this year at Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Medical Center. He and his family encountered such kindness and competence along the way, they were moved to write a letter of thanks, calling out everyone who treated Michael by name.

You also can experience a day in the life of Dr. Laura Armstrong, a family practice physician who has brought her passion for gardening and healthy eating to work with her. She’s built a community garden that is feeding her patients and helping them live healthier lives.

And this month’s cover story features a patient whose determination is an inspiration to all, even his own surgeon.

Michael McCulloch came to us for a knee injury – he’d torn his meniscus while training to hike Machu Picchu. He is legally blind, but with the help of guides, he still hikes, skis, goes rafting and rides a bicycle – the kind of activities that make for a healthy, adventurous life. We admire that strength, and we’re grateful for patients like Michael who show us what is possible to achieve, in spite of possible temporary limitations or challenges.

I hope we will all keep this in mind as we enter the busy holiday season. It’s easy to get distracted by all the events and our ridiculously long to-do lists, but something about the spirit of the holidays also tends to bring out the best in people. So let’s make sure we’re taking the time to look around us and appreciate the many sources of inspiration – the monumental successes, like a patient who has been given a new lease on life, but also the ordinary moments. And always remember, the impact you make today may be someone else’s inspiration tomorrow.

I look forward to reading more inspiring stories about our people and our patients in the months and years to come. Do you have a story you’d like to share with us? If so, please email us at MHCommunications@memorialhermann.org. We’d love to hear from you.

Thanks to each and all of you for the important work you do every day. From my family to the entire Memorial Hermann family, we wish everyone a happy and healthy holiday season.

Talk soon,

David L. Callender, MD
President and CEO
Memorial Hermann Health System
Dr. Laura Armstrong loves to plant a seed and watch it thrive. She knows how to foster a fledgling carrot crop or tend a vine until it’s teeming with tomatoes.

She puts those same skills to use in her daily work, as well, whether she’s treating patients or training new doctors. She is cultivating good health, offering nourishment, tending to people and helping them grow.

Dr. Armstrong, a family practice physician, sees patients at Memorial Hermann Medical Group’s Physicians at Sugar Creek, a primary care center in Sugar Land that serves as a clinic location for family medicine residents. There, she also oversees medical students and newly minted doctors as a faculty physician for Memorial Hermann’s Memorial Family Medicine Residency Program.

And on a patch of ground behind the Sugar Creek clinic, Dr. Armstrong has found a way to combine two of her greatest passions: She installed a vegetable garden that is yielding piles of fresh produce – accessible to patients in need and the community-at-large – in a move that further cements Memorial Hermann’s efforts to influence health beyond the walls of its clinics and hospitals.

From helping guide a new resident on her first day on the labor and delivery unit at the hospital, to diagnosing sore throats and ear infections – and occasionally dashing
outside to peek in on her garden – Dr. Armstrong’s job underscores the future of Memorial Hermann and its commitment to fostering healthier communities.

6:45 A.M. BREAKFAST AT HOME
Mornings are a bit hectic for Dr. Armstrong and her husband, who have three kids. Breakfast is usually whatever’s quick and easy. This morning it’s cereal, and then it’s time to get the kids out the door to school and the youngest – baby Aurora – to her grandparents, who take care of her during the day.

Even when they’re pressed for time, Dr. Armstrong tries to stress the importance of healthy eating with her family. They have their own vegetable garden in a corner of the back yard.

“The way I teach my kids to eat vegetables is in the garden,” she says. Her children know about what grows in a garden, and helping plant seeds and harvest the produce makes them more willing to try a bite. She’s seen her eldest, 6-year-old Logan, eat carrots straight out of the dirt.

9:34 A.M. TEACHING INTERNS AND EXAMINING BABIES
Dr. Armstrong’s first stop is at Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital, where she sits at a computer next to Dr. Ranna Al-Dossari, an intern who has just made her first round of patient visits. Dr. Al-Dossari delivers a quick run-through of her notes about each mother and baby, and the two soon head out into the hallways to visit the patients together. For the next hour or so, they move from room to room; Dr. Armstrong gives each newborn a head-to-toe exam, and she and her intern consult with new moms who are having trouble breastfeeding.

“In the first couple of days, a lot of mothers are anxious and don’t think that they can successfully breastfeed,” she says. “They feel their body is not enough when it really is. So a lot of times my job is to just help them calm their anxiety and tell them they’re doing great.”

Today, every newborn they visit is healthy and thriving. Dr. Al-Dossari follows her instructor from patient to patient, watching as she reassures new moms that they’re doing just fine.

“Luckily, everything this morning was fairly straightforward,” Dr. Armstrong says as they return to an office behind the nursery. She shows Dr. Al-Dossari how to file discharge orders, then gets ready to leave for her next appointment. “Do you feel pretty comfortable with everything you’ve got to do for the rest of the afternoon?”

Dr. Al-Dossari nods. Dr. Armstrong will be back in the labor and delivery unit the next morning – but for now, she’s headed to Physicians at Sugar Creek.

12:07 P.M. PEEKING IN ON THE PRODUCE
Dr. Armstrong has a few free minutes before a lunch meeting, so she slips out the clinic’s back door to check on the garden.

Tall, sinewy okra grows thick near a batch of purple kale. A few plump cherry tomatoes are ripe for the picking, as is a deep purple eggplant.

This garden is a group effort – physicians, residents and patients all help maintain it and are rewarded in produce. Dr. Armstrong usually schedules community work days a few Saturdays a year – but often, at unscheduled times, she says, “I look out the window and see people.”

Many of the clinic’s patients are low-income with limited resources, Dr. Armstrong says. That’s why there’s often a basket at the clinic’s front desk stuffed with lettuce and onions, carrots and kale. “Take whatever you will eat,” a sign tells patients.

Dr. Armstrong came up with the idea for the garden about three years ago. She was inspired by a community garden in Montrose, her own Houston neighborhood. There, neighbors tended their personal plots and shared with each other; she’d see older folks teaching neighborhood kids about growing plants.

“I’ve had lots and lots of good conversations with residents out in the garden.”

Continued on Page 6
That’s when Dr. Armstrong started eyeing an unused strip of land just behind the Sugar Creek practice, a grassy area that slopes down to a small creek. She recruited residents and faculty, even patients to help her turn that strip of grass into a series of rectangular beds. A bake sale raised the money to install an underground watering system.

Now, Dr. Armstrong says, patients get excited about the idea of eating veggies. She used to see patients feeding their kids Skittles and vending machine cupcakes. Now, they bring her seeds they’d like to plant and request vegetables they want to add to their families’ diets.

The garden has also been a therapeutic place for young residents – many of whom are new to Houston and living in apartments with no green spaces of their own.

“I do a lot of activities with the residents to focus on their own personal wellness,” Dr. Armstrong says. Working in the garden offers an opportunity for long conversations, whether they’re adjusting to a new city or coping with the demands of their new roles. “I’ve had lots and lots of good conversations with residents out in the garden.”

1:32 P.M. AN AFTERNOON OF APPOINTMENTS

After lunch with an advisee, Dr. Armstrong has a full schedule of appointments with patients. It’s different from the morning’s instructing, but in many ways it’s the same.

In a similar manner that Dr. Armstrong uses the garden as a teaching tool, she treats every interaction with patients as an opportunity to advocate about healthier lifestyles.

“Seeing patients is education, too,” Dr. Armstrong says – especially the way she does it. She’s determined to help her patients live healthier lives, and often that means teaching them better ways to feed themselves and their families.

6:14 P.M. FRESH TOMATOES FOR DINNER

At home, Dr. Armstrong and her husband, Trey, are preparing dinner. She sends her two older kids, Logan and 3-year-old Fiona, out to play in the backyard – and gives them instructions to find as many ripe cherry tomatoes as they can.

“Now it’s a hide-and-go-seek game with the vegetables,” Dr. Armstrong says. “They’ll almost compete over the tomatoes.” Logan has discovered he can climb the back fence and sit in the low branches of a loquat tree, picking and eating loquats right from the tree.

“I want my kids involved in seeing where their food comes from and being willing to eat it,” she says.

Dr. Armstrong’s passion for gardening is winning over her patients and her young children, making fresh produce attractive and enticing. “Excitement’s always contagious,” she says, and she is nurturing that excitement at work and at home.
What was supposed to be another quiet day at home turned into a series of miracles for Michael Lawrence.

At the nudging of his family, Lawrence went to the Emergency Center at Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Medical Center to get treated for his chest pain and shortness of breath. He thought he’d walk in, get a prescription to manage his problem and return home.

Instead, he discovered that his symptoms were the result of a very serious health issue – he had a 99 percent blockage of his left main heart artery. He needed surgery, quickly.

What happened next amazed Lawrence’s family.

His daughter, Kelly, was so moved by the kindness of the care team that she penned a letter to hospital leadership chronicling her appreciation.

“Although it was an incredibly stressful and fast-developing situation, everyone we interacted with was kind, knowledgeable and reassuring,” she wrote.

Continued on Page 8
During Lawrence’s care journey, he met several new faces, and even saw a familiar one – Dr. Stephen Maniscalco, a cardiothoracic and vascular surgeon affiliated with Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Medical Center. He was the same doctor who saved Lawrence’s mother’s life 15 years prior when she underwent surgery following an aortic dissection.

From the Emergency Center to the cath lab, to the nurses on the floor, and every point in between, Lawrence was cared for with compassion and kindness all along the way, his daughter, Kelly, said. The following is her account of what happened, in her own words, edited for clarity.

In the Emergency Center, Brett Tracy and Ashley Simon were very knowledgeable and took the time to gently communicate the urgency of the situation. Dr. Rayomond Mody, an anesthesiologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann could not have been more calm or confident. His demeanor made our entire family feel at ease.

After determining that a heart catheter needed to be placed to determine the next steps of treatment, Roger Rosebraugh, Carmen Wheeler, Dr. Marwan Jumean, a cardiovascular disease specialist at McGovern Medical School at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston who is affiliated with Memorial Hermann, and Dr. David Kuten, a cardiovascular disease cardiologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann, moved quickly to diagnose my dad and get him help.

He was then transported to the Intermediate Care Unit (IMU) and scheduled for open heart surgery early the next morning. While there, he was cared for by Meg O’Neal and Liza Gonzalez, both critical care registered nurses. Liza in particular was a ray of positivity and made my dad feel extremely at ease. Her patient care was incredible.

Early Tuesday morning, he was greeted by one of the friendliest faces in the hospital. Elaine Music, a senior patient care assistant, was very warm and friendly. She explained what he would experience in surgery and said she would be right by his side. Again, we knew he was in good hands.

Following his surgery, Critical Care Nurses Samantha Jones and Allana Graham took amazing care of him. As he was waking up from anesthesia, they demonstrated so much compassion and skill that it was almost overwhelming. Shannon Molina, the respiratory therapist, was able to help him breathe on his own, which helped all of us breathe a sigh of relief. Erika Soles, a critical care registered nurse, was incredibly kind and clearly built for a role in critical care. Heather Maurer, a critical care registered nurse, as well, left a permanent mark on our family. She was so compassionate and smart, and what we appreciated more than anything was her candor. We felt as though she was caring for him like he was a member of her own family.

Other staff members that resonated included critical care nurses Roy Neal Compton, Meredith McDonough and Traci Beard. Jason Kearby, who coordinated my dad’s meals, was incredibly patient and accommodating – and made it a point to bring grapes and pineapple after noticing my dad had not touched his fruit cup. Small actions like this may have gone unnoticed in any other situation, but it meant the world to us.

We have been in other hospitals for similar situations and have never experienced the level of care and support as we did with the Memorial Hermann team.
He Sees No Barriers

A Houston man loses his sight but not his sense of adventure
Michael McCulloch has always been an adventurer. As a boy, he rode his bike fast and flew off steep ramps; he jumped off the roof using a sheet as a parachute. But he most liked to climb to the top of a cottonwood tree his dad had planted in the yard.

When a thunderstorm rolled through, he’d clamber into its uppermost branches and close his eyes, pretending he was at sea, the wind splashing water against his face. “After a little while I would hear my mom calling, ‘Michael, get yourself in the house before lightning strikes you!’” he recalls.

McCulloch is now 64. He has lost his vision, injured his knee and retired from an aerospace engineering career. But he still loves a good adventure, and so far nothing – not blindness, not his ensuing depression, not a torn meniscus – has curtailed his daredevil exploits.

McCulloch still kayaks, jogs, hikes, cycles and skydives. Last summer, he hiked the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, traversing the 14,000-foot mountain passes with the help of guides. Next, he’s planned a hike through the Grand Canyon that includes a seven-day rafting trip down the Colorado River. He tracks his adventures on his blog, SeeNoBarriers.org, and one day hopes to produce a documentary film.

“I really love being up in the mountains – just the sense of it,” he says. “When I’m hiking, I can hear nature itself – of course, birds and other animals, but there are times when there’s just wind blowing through the mountains. When I feel that – the wind rushing on my face – or when I hear the sounds of rustling grasses, those senses kick in and allow me to enjoy the things I used to be able to see.”

To McCulloch, it’s important that other people with vision impairments know that they, too, can have adventures. They can hike and ride horses, kayak and skydive – it just takes some assistance and determination.

McCulloch started losing his vision in his late 20s due to glaucoma.

“My mother went blind in my teenage years, and her mother – my grandmother – also lost her vision due to glaucoma,” he says. “I kind of knew it was in my genes.”

“It was a real slow progression, losing my sight,” McCulloch recalls. Until about 2006, he still had one good eye and could drive, work and read. But since then, he’s been legally blind with light perception, able to see only some shadows.

“At that point, I got really depressed, thinking my life was over. I wasn’t going to be able to do anything anymore,” McCulloch says. “Some days, I’d just sit at home in the dark all day long.”

But after several months, he decided he needed to figure out a different way to live.

“I couldn’t just sit there and do nothing,” he says. “I wanted to figure out alternative ways to do the things I loved.”

McCulloch got active with local disability support groups; he even founded iBUG Today, a group for blind smartphone users to help them make the most of the adaptive features on their devices.
But life really changed when he got involved with Achilles International Houston, a nonprofit dedicated to helping people with disabilities stay active and get involved in mainstream sports. Achilles pairs people with able-bodied athletes to work out weekly. Many of them prepare for local races; others try swimming, axe-throwing, kayaking or Crossfit.

McCulloch enjoys running 5K and 10K races. “They’ll pair me up with a sighted guide, and we’ll use a leash and run side by side,” he says.

In April 2018, McCulloch started training for a trip to Peru to hike Machu Picchu. On training trips to Colorado with friends, he practiced hiking long distances, uphill and over rough terrain at high altitudes.

“I’d been having some knee pain,” McCulloch says, which he had managed with occasional steroid shots. But about a month before his trip to Peru, he got bad news: He’d torn his meniscus and had virtually no cartilage beneath his right kneecap.

McCulloch consulted with a couple of doctors, then decided he wouldn’t cancel his trip. He’d hike Machu Picchu with a torn meniscus, wearing a brace and taking some pain medication to minimize his misery.

“I chose to do that,” McCulloch says – and he’s not sorry.

“I waited until like two days before the trip” before he told his guides, McCulloch says. “They were worried that we weren’t going to be able to go at all, but I assured them I’d gotten several doctors’ opinions that everything was going to be OK.”

In June, McCulloch traveled to Peru with his guides and spent several days hiking the Classic Inca Trail, the most famous (and most crowded) trail at Machu Picchu.

The trek was a challenge for McCulloch and for his guides.

“Sighted people often think if they take a wrong step on the trail, they’re certain to fall to their death,” he says – and he hiked it using just his trekking poles and verbal directions from his guides.

As soon as he returned to the U.S., McCulloch scheduled knee surgery with Dr. Evan Meeks, an affiliated orthopedic surgeon with UT Physicians who operates at Memorial Hermann hospitals.

“We got him cleaned up and repaired,” Dr. Meeks says. McCulloch, who’s now doing physical therapy at the Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Sports Medicine Institute, needs to build back some strength after surgery, but Dr. Meeks sees no reason he won’t be able to hike the Grand Canyon or go cross-country skiing in 2020.

McCulloch has known blind friends who died too young because of inactivity and poor diets. He wants to inspire other people with disabilities to go out and get healthy and experience new things, even if they need some assistance. He believes that “anything is possible, one step at a time.”

“He’s a huge inspiration for me – and I hope for other people – to not let things hold you back,” Dr. Meeks says. “Find a way around it. Adapt and just go for it.”
Early Intervention
How Memorial Hermann is Putting Mental Health Top of Mind
Forty-seven million.

That’s the number of U.S. adults who experienced a mental illness in 2018, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. While depression and anxiety disorders are among the most common conditions experienced, schizophrenia, bipolar mood disorder, personality disorders, trauma and eating disorders can also interfere with daily activities and productivity if left unchecked.

In fact, even though one in every five adults experienced a mental illness in 2018, only 43 percent of those ever received treatment. With depression being the leading cause of disability worldwide, it is particularly troubling when treatment is not sought. Many mental illnesses can manifest into serious health problems when left untreated. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, people with depression, for example, have a 40 percent higher risk of developing cardiovascular and metabolic diseases than the general population.

As the link between mental health and physical health comes increasingly into focus, health systems like Memorial Hermann are working to meet patients’ needs by helping diagnose and treat behavioral health conditions before they become expensive and debilitating complications. People like Sierra*, a 29-year-old woman who left work one day knowing something was wrong. It was hard for her to put into words exactly what she was feeling, but she knew that she needed immediate medical attention.

Luckily, she was able to get a same-day appointment with her primary care physician. As her physician asked a series of questions, Sierra became concerned; she didn’t have any physical ailments or aches, but she didn’t feel like her normal self. For more than a month she had felt an overwhelming sense of hopelessness. When she wasn’t at work she found herself curled up in bed sleeping, even on the weekends. She declined offers to social activities with friends and family, and even stopped participating in her favorite pastimes. It had become common for her to go an entire day and forget to eat; she didn’t have an appetite.

As she sat across from her physician, Sierra realized his questions had stopped. She and her doctor locked eyes. He had a look of deep concern on his face, one Sierra had never seen before.

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“Let me get someone in here to speak with you about the next steps,” he said. He left the room and a short time later a woman entered. Sierra silently read the woman’s employee badge, Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

“Hello Ms. Sierra, I’m Blaine, a Clinical Social Worker here. I’ve read your doctor’s notes. Can you tell me a little bit about what brings you in today?”

While Sierra’s story is just one of countless others, it’s an example of how health systems are striving to provide early interventions to curtail bigger problems later on. For Memorial Hermann, the intervention now starts at the first place where patients interact with a medical provider: The office of their primary care physicians.

Memorial Hermann has embedded behavioral health specialists in several Memorial Hermann Medical Group clinics, as well as in the Memorial Hermann Neighborhood Health Center - Greater Heights. Every patient undergoes screening for mental health issues during his or her visit, and those identified as needing more intervention are immediately connected with a specialist who is trained to help.
“Our primary care physicians and specialists are able to utilize evidence-based screening tools to identify early signs and symptoms of emotional distress and mental illness and initiate treatment that provides for the integration of physical and mental health care in one setting,” says Theresa Fawvor, Memorial Hermann’s Vice President, Behavioral Health Services. “If a patient presents with signs and symptoms of a mental health illness, there is an immediate handoff between the patient’s physician and the licensed clinical social worker at the clinic. If the social worker is with another patient at the time, a referral is provided and the social worker follows up with the patient.”

The approach aims to help destigmatize mental illness and reach those who previously went untreated.

Fawvor says screening patients for behavioral health issues is best practice for healthcare providers and promotes overall wellness. It’s a care delivery model that makes sense, she says, since providers, especially primary care physicians, often have established relationships with their patients, and have fostered a level of trust that allows them to open up in ways that may not feel comfortable doing otherwise.

The concept of embedding behavioral health workers into the primary care space has been years in the making at Memorial Hermann, and was finally made possible in part by a federal program that is designed to increase access to health care, improve the quality of care, and enhance the health of patients and their families.

Memorial Hermann first started integrating behavioral health services with a pilot project in 2017 and has since expanded the model, which has proven to be successful. Among those who have been seen by behavioral health specialists within the primary care space, Memorial Hermann has documented a noticeable decrease in depression and anxiety symptoms in patients treated via integrated care.

Being able to provide mental health clinicians on-demand in many instances at Memorial Hermann Medical Group clinics is also helping to quell occurrences of patients experiencing unchecked mental health emergencies that escalate into emergency room visits. That’s especially important right now, as suicide rates across the country reach their highest levels since World War II. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, researchers have documented a 33 percent rise in instances of suicide in the past two decades – driven higher by multiple factors, including the nation’s opioid crisis, heightened stress levels and an increase in cyberbullying via social media. With mental health crises reaching a crescendo, it’s critically important to reach people as early as possible.

“By embedding licensed clinical social workers in our clinics, we are helping patients get healthy and lower the cost of their care by allowing them to avoid costly ER visits,” Fawvor says. “Our goal is to make sure patients have the necessary resources available to ensure their overall wellness – mind and body.”

For people like Sierra, the results can be transformative. She’s now back to work, finding joy in life’s simple pleasures and feeling like her old self again.

*Name and details have been changed to protect confidentiality.
Most of us have had at least one run-in with a belly-based bug—think stomach flu or food poisoning. But what you might not realize is that within your gut, there are also important, “good-guy” germs. These germs not only digest food and absorb nutrients, but can even fight fatigue, depression and weight gain.

“A healthy gut means overall good health,” says Dr. Shaheryar Siddiqui, gastroenterologist with Memorial Hermann Medical Group. “Even if someone is otherwise physically fit and eats an apparently healthy diet, the gut’s microbiome may not be optimal and affects the overall health, including weight and wellbeing.”

Think of your microbiome as the home within your intestines where billions of microscopic bugs thrive. You don’t have a single gut flora (AKA microbiota), but a symphony of good guys and bad guys that play instrumental roles, some harmonizing your health and others disruptively playing off-key.

GUT CHECK. DO YOU FEEL CRUMMY?
A lack of good gut flora can potentially cause inflammation and chronic disease. It also can ignite chronic pain, fatigue, anxiety, depression, asthma and autoimmune disorders such as lupus.
Obesity is a major epidemic in the U.S., and that’s due in part to an unhealthy gut,” Dr. Siddiqui says.

AN IMBALANCED GUT MAY MAKE YOU GAIN WEIGHT

“Obesity is a major epidemic in the U.S., and that’s due in part to an unhealthy gut,” Dr. Siddiqui says.

A lack of beneficial bugs alters how nutrition is used within the body, potentially hiking hunger and partially extinguishing metabolism, your inner calorie-burning furnace.

“If you’re watching your diet and exercising yet remain obese, your doctor may need to examine how your gut is working,” he says.

Your family practice or internal medicine physician should be able to help. “If not, you need to be referred to a gastroenterologist to improve your quality of life,” adds Dr. Siddiqui.

When diet and soluble fibers mixed with water or juice fail to soften stools, lubricate intestines or stimulate bowel movements, a more extensive workup should be done.

“There’s prescription medication and colonoscopy go hand in hand,” he says. “You make sure there are no mechanical issues before proceeding with pharmaceuticals.”

STOP SOME PILL-POPPING—NOT ALL
Just because probiotic supplements are widely proclaimed doesn’t mean all are effective.

According to Dr. Siddiqui, you should not waste your time on probiotic capsules and the like found outside the fridge. “Probiotics have to be alive to make a difference—and that mostly requires refrigeration,” he says.

Also, don’t push your doctor for antibiotics. Yes, they kill bad germs, but they also squash good ones.

Be aware that some medications you need should be taken even though they may contribute to constipation or diarrhea.

WHAT YOU MUNCH MATTERS

Your diet can be your salvation. Good bugs—such as bifidobacteria and lactobacilli—are found not only in yogurt, but also fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kimchi, pickled gherkins and fermented veggies and drinks, such as kombucha and kefir.

Foods that promote good germ growth also should be consumed: cranberries, raspberries, asparagus, leeks, lentils, artichokes, broccoli, garlic and onions.

In contrast, artificial sweeteners such as aspartame should be avoided. They’re found to boost blood sugar and to impair insulin response, precursors to diabetes. Such calorie-free sweeteners also hike counts of disease-fueling bad bugs.

“One thing to avoid is diet sodas with artificial sweeteners should not be consumed on a daily basis,” he says. “Maybe have one cola, once a week.”

Obesity is a major epidemic in the U.S., and that’s due in part to an unhealthy gut.
THREE MEMORIAL HERMANN HOSPITALS EARN NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR QUALITY AND SAFETY

Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center, Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Medical Center and Memorial Hermann Katy Hospital earned national recognition as top performers for excellence in delivering high-quality care by the Vizient Quality and Accountability Ranking at the 2019 Vizient Connections Education Summit in Las Vegas on Sept. 19.

Memorial Hermann-TMC received the 2019 Bernard A. Birnbaum, MD, Quality Leadership Award for Academic Medical Centers, and ranked seventh of 93 participating academic medical centers. Memorial Hermann The Woodlands received the 2019 Bernard A. Birnbaum, MD, Quality Leadership Award for Large, Specialized Complex Care Medical Centers and ranked fifth among 79 participating institutions in that category. Memorial Hermann Katy received the 2019 Bernard A. Birnbaum, MD, Quality Leadership Award for Complex Care Medical Centers and ranked sixth of 82 participating hospitals.

“This is an incredible honor and I am proud of our entire workforce and affiliated physicians who made this recognition possible,” said Memorial Hermann President and CEO Dr. David Callender. “We’re dedicated to improving the health of the communities we serve and our success is dependent on the quality of every aspect of care.”

MEMORIAL HERMANN HIRES NEW CHIEF CONSUMER EXPERIENCE OFFICER

Nationally recognized for quality and safety, Memorial Hermann is bolstering efforts to further personalize care in order to deliver consistently exceptional experiences for patients, their families and its caregivers. In a newly created role for the System, Alex Greengold has been hired as Sr. Vice President and Chief Consumer Experience Officer, and will be charged with leading these efforts.

“Memorial Hermann is clear about its mission to personalize the care experience of each patient,” Greengold said. “The goal is to search for the problem points of existing patients and discover solutions to fix them. We will put an emphasis on redesigning digital interactions to enhance the life and journey of the patient. It’s important to explore both new and traditional avenues in creating the most welcoming environment possible for patients, families and visitors.”

MEMORIAL HERMANN PEARLAND HOSPITAL EARN LEVEL IV TRAUMA DESIGNATION

Memorial Hermann Pearland Hospital has been designated as a Level IV Trauma Center by the Texas Department of State Health Services after consistently demonstrating its ability to provide advanced trauma life support, evaluation, stabilization and diagnostic services.

“We are excited to receive this new trauma designation and we know how important this is to Pearland and surrounding communities, as it confirms our team is now able to manage trauma cases as they arrive,” said Sr. Vice President and CEO of Memorial Hermann Pearland and Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital Kyle Price.

Memorial Hermann Pearland is part of Memorial Hermann Health System’s integrated trauma network, the only such system in Greater Houston. The integrated trauma network, which includes Memorial Hermann Life Flight®, provides life-saving care for trauma victims before, during and after their injuries.
Providing trusted care, all across Greater Houston.

If you need urgent care, turn to Memorial Hermann's experienced medical professionals for care for minor injuries, rashes, cuts and scrapes, minor illnesses, earaches and more. If you come down with the flu, we can get you on the road to recovery with care that’s convenient, trusted and affordable.

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