



Pediatric Transport

On December 12, 2009, West Michigan Air Care was called to Three Rivers Health Emergency Department for a tiny 20-day-old female in respiratory distress. What follows is her mother's testimonial of events and the story of her flight with Air Care.

The Little Bundle Comes Home

Little Ally Pritchard was born slightly past term on November 11, 2009 with *meconium-stained amniotic fluid. Her mother, Angela Pritchard, was thankful that her course progressed normally to discharge home without further complication except minor "nostril inflammation". During the following weeks, Ally and her family settled in a comfortable routine punctuated only by an episode of bacterial conjunctivitis.



Angela holds her tiny new daughter Ally at her home near Constantine.

Note:

*Meconium is normally stored in the infant's intestines until after birth, but sometimes (often in response to fetal distress) it is expelled into the amniotic fluid prior to birth, or during labor. If the baby then inhales the contaminated fluid, respiratory problems may occur.

A Mother's Intuition

On December 12, Angela thought Ally was working too hard to breathe and was growing concerned. Luckily, Ally's father, Walter Pritchard, arrived home early that day. Angela asked Walter to watch their other young daughter, Emmy, and took Ally to Three Rivers Health Urgent Care. Karan Thomas, NP, immediately sensed Ally's distress and agreed with her mother's assessment.

Angela recalls, "Karan looked at Ally and told me, 'You need to go next door to the Emergency Room.'" Ally was quickly moved to the E.R. and none too soon, according to her mother.

"Within two minutes after (Dr. Theresa Kordish) walked in there, Ally totally crashed."

"Just do whatever you need to do."

As the staff of Three Rivers Health supported Ally's breathing and Dr. Kordish proceeded with endotracheal intubation, Bronson Methodist Hospital was quickly notified and West Michigan Air Care was activated. The flight team included flight nurses Nick Wright and Dawn Johnston, Bronson pediatric transport nurse Dorothy Mack, and pilot Krystian Zygowiec.

Just minutes prior to Air Care's arrival Ally had a restless episode in which her endotracheal tube became

dislodged. The E.R. staff of Three Rivers Health continued to effectively manage Ally's airway with a bag-valve-mask as the Air Care team arrived and assumed care. The E.R. staff remained in assistance as Ally was reintubated. Wary of another restless episode, the Air Care crew kept Ally sedated and used a neuromuscular blocker after intubation. Since Ally's chest x-ray indicated pneumonia, the crew retrieved antibiotic therapy



The quick-thinking care providers at Three Rivers Health, left to right: Kim Duell, RN, Holli Buscher, RN, Dr. Theresa Kordish, D.O., Karan Thomas, N.P., and Heather Lukowski, RN

from the E.R. staff to begin in transport. As Ally was prepared for transport, Dorothy quickly called Bronson PICU to provide an update and estimated time of arrival.

Swaddled in blankets and a pediatric immobilization device, Ally received good-bye kisses from her family and the Air Care crew received orders from Angela: "Just do whatever you need to do."

Rapid Critical Care Transport

During the 10-minute flight, the medical crew continued to manage Ally's airway and carefully monitor her condition as they administered

(continued on page 2)

Pediatric Transport *(continued from page 1)*

needed medications. The medical crew called a radio alert to Bronson E.R. to request helipad assistance and provide a report of Ally's condition.

Upon landing at Bronson Methodist Hospital, Ally was transferred to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) and then carefully moved to a specialty crib. Nursing and respiratory therapy staff assisted Dr. Tammy Drew in Ally's care.



Dr. Tammy Drew, D.O. managed Ally's care and recovery at Bronson's Pediatric Intensive Care Unit.

Bronson's Pediatric Specialty Services

Angela lost track of day and night as 4 days went by in the PICU. She greatly appreciated the Bronson staff's support during this time.

"Nurses do not get the credit they deserve. I could ask the same question 20 times and they didn't mind," Angela said. "I didn't know how they could come in every day being happy... they cared for Ally like she was their own child."

Slowly Ally began to improve and was extubated. She was moved to the pediatric general floor. On day 6 she was discharged home with her family.



Angela Kinnell, RN. Ally's mother praised Bronson pediatric nurses like Angela for their patience and for treating Ally as if she were their own child.

"Everyone at Bronson was so wonderful," said Angela, who asked that RNs Angela Kinnell and Keri Wiersma be given special recognition.

A System That "Rocks"

Angela and her family are also grateful for Air Care's critical care transport system that connects Southwest Michigan's hospitals and provided the needed bridge of care for Ally. This is the advantage Air Care brings to regional hospitals by acting as an extension of their resources when the need is urgent.

"The system rocks, obviously," said Angela. "People just don't realize it. The whole system worked out great for us that night. When Ally wakes up every morning, I know how lucky we are. There are no words that I can say."



*By Dawn Johnston, RN, NREMT-P, CFRN
Flight Nurse
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West Michigan Air Care Welcomes New Pilot, Krystian Zygowiec



Krystian has called southwest Michigan "home" for most of his life growing up in Berrien Springs. Knowing he wanted to pursue a career in aviation he enrolled at Andrews University for a Bachelor's of Technology in aviation flight and maintenance. Just prior to completing his degree at Andrews, a ride-along with West Michigan Air Care made him realize that he had to pursue his dream of becoming an EMS helicopter pilot.

After his training was complete, Krystian was hired as instructor at Bristow Academy teaching FAA and JAA students. After about a year Krystian progressed into flying for Era Helicopters in Louisiana. The job consisted of providing helicopter support to oil platforms located in the Gulf of Mexico. Working offshore offered an excellent learning experience in how to manage your fuel, helicopter weight, and weather decisions to complete a safe and efficient mission. While at Era, Krystian flew EC-120's and AS-350's on busy contracts which helped to rapidly build his turbine time.

Following a year of flying offshore Krystian accumulated the flight time and experience that's required to apply for an EMS pilot job. He was delighted when Omniflight Helicopters offered him a position in Saginaw, MI flying a BK-117 at a single pilot VFR program. While finishing up his first year in Saginaw, he was informed of an open position for a single pilot Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) EMS program. Having always wanted the additional challenge of an IFR program he was quick to apply and very happy to accept their offer of a position.

When a pilot position opened up at Air Care in Kalamazoo, Krystian and his wife were happy to have the chance to move back closer to family and old friends. He also now enjoys flying the same helicopter that inspired him years ago to pursue a career as an EMS pilot.

"In my opinion flying EMS is an excellent career choice for someone who does not want to go into work and follow the same routine day after day," says Krystian. "I couldn't think of a more rewarding way to utilize my skills as a helicopter pilot."

During his off time Krystian enjoys spending time with his wife Julie and their daughter Ava. In April they are expecting the addition of a son to the family. His hobbies include skydiving, scuba diving, kayaking and anything else in the outdoors.

Bronson Methodist Hospital's PICU Transport Nurses Share a Seat on the Helicopter

Who's that extra member of the medical crew? Is it an observer? A physician resident? No, it's a Bronson PICU transport nurse, and that means Air Care is flying to pick up a pediatric patient from a regional hospital in the southwest Michigan area.

When West Michigan Air Care is called to a scene involving pediatric trauma, the medical crew manages this patient as per normal operations. In other cases, when a regional hospital calls Bronson Methodist Hospital to request a pediatric patient transfer, the receiving physician will often send a PICU transport nurse along when Air Care is activated.

Each of these highly skilled pediatric ICU transport nurses is a valuable asset to patient care during Air Care transports. This arrangement combines the critical care skills of both teams for the benefit of emergent pediatric patients in the region.

During a typical pediatric flight, the 3-member crew is flown to a regional facility and performs patient care as a team. Duties are divided to assure an efficient turnaround time back to Bronson PICU. After evaluation and critical interventions are complete, the PICU transport nurse calls a final report to the receiving physician before the patient is flown back to Bronson Hospital.

Janet Barnes, RN, a PICU transport nurse at Bronson, said she appreciates her flights with West Michigan Air Care.

"It's one of my favorite things to do," said Janet. "When the doc calls and says 'OK, Janet. You're going on a flight with Air Care,' I get so excited.

We all enjoy it," she said, referring to the other PICU transport nurses. "It's nice working with the crew."

Initial training for these specialized nurses to become a part of the West

Michigan Air Care, Bronson's PICU transport nurses are available to provide ground transport for pediatric referrals from the surrounding



The PICU Transport Nurses at Bronson Methodist Hospital. Shown left to right: Dorothy Mack, RN, Nancy Eaton, RN, Valarie Roach, RN, Janet Barnes, RN, Jessalynn Colbert, RN (Not pictured: Peggy Landon)

Michigan Air Care team takes place over a 3-month period. The trainees are schooled in flight safety, flight physiology, egress training and in-flight patient emergencies as they become acquainted with Air Care's procedures and equipment. Air Care also provides annual continuing education in these areas for PICU transport nurses.

Dorothy Mack, RN, a veteran PICU transport nurse of 17 years at Bronson said she appreciates getting to know other health care professionals from the region during transports. "I think we all learn from each other. There isn't a day I don't learn something. We all have different backgrounds. If you look, there's always an opportunity to learn something to make you a better nurse."

region. When there are no transport requests, their many duties at Bronson include placing PICC lines and difficult IVs, responding to codes, assisting with conscious sedation procedures and trauma call downs in the emergency room.

West Michigan Air Care is proud to share the sky with Bronson's PICU transport nurses. It is an honor to deliver emergency pediatric care to southwest Michigan alongside these dedicated professionals.

*Ideas? Comments? Photos?
Send them all to
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The Difficult Airway Course: EMS™ Returns to Kalamazoo

West Michigan Air Care will once again host The Difficult Airway Course: EMS™ on March 29 – 30 in Kalamazoo! This intensive 2-day course provides 15 EMS credits and includes lectures, workshops and hands-on skills stations.



The course is designed for all advanced EMS providers and critical care transport professionals. Attendees will learn how to predict the more difficult airways in adult and pediatric patients and then manage them using RSI, capnography and the full spectrum of airway devices, including proven extraglottic devices.

For more information visit www.theairwaysite.com or to register call toll-free (866) 924-7929.

West Michigan Air Care Now Landing at Spectrum-Butterworth Rooftop Helipad

Air Care is now utilizing the new rooftop helipad at Spectrum-Butterworth Hospital in Grand Rapids. This eliminates the former temporary ground transport leg from the airport allowing Air Care to resume efficient operations to Spectrum-Butterworth. We are proud to provide back-up air medical services to this region.

West Michigan Air Care Associate to Speak at Bronson Cardiac Workshop



Air Care is pleased to announce that Kevin Franklin, RN, BS, CFRN, EMT-P will be a guest speaker at Bronson's

2010 Cardiac Workshop. On February 8, Kevin will present "Induced Hypothermia for Post-arrest." The presentation details how to implement the new therapy that improves neurologic outcomes in post-arrest patients.


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