



# U P F R O N T

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PRESIDENT AND CEO



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Throughout this flu season, the entire nation experienced a much larger number of people infected with influenza, sadly along with more deaths. The final numbers will take time to collect and report, but most of the deaths occurred in the unvaccinated population.

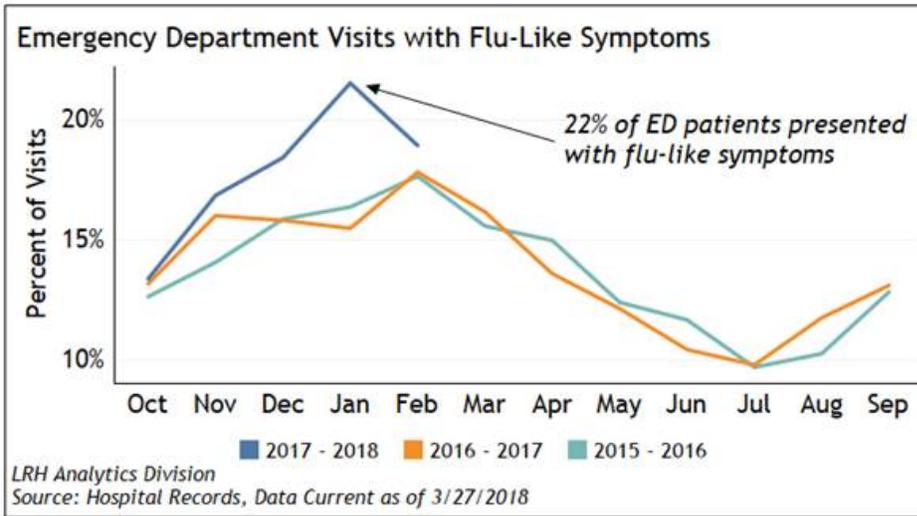
During the height of this year's flu season, Lakeland Regional Health experienced one of our busiest times in recent history. In January, we saw 19,800 [emergency department](#) visits and had 3,700 adult admissions. The [Lakeland Regional Health Physician Group](#) also saw a record high number of visits in January, with nearly 25,000 appointments for all offices combined.

Due to our strong emphasis on hand washing, staying home while sick, and through the protection of yearly vaccinations, Lakeland Regional Health maintained strong preparedness to deal with a bad flu season. I was deeply inspired by the way our outpatient, hospital, support and administrative teams came together during a time of peak patient volumes to handle a higher than usual need to provide coverage for ill colleagues.

Being advocates for public safety means both providing care when it is needed and educating the public about important health issues. Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an annual seasonal flu vaccine is the best way to reduce your risk of getting sick with seasonal flu and spreading it to others. I'm proud that our team, with over 98% vaccinated against the flu, set an example of how taking positive preventive steps can often save a life.

Further, we made a significant impact in community health by administering vaccinations at our hospital and outpatient locations. Though this year's publicly reported CMS Hospital Compare flu vaccination data is not yet available, our Medical Center last year assessed and provided flu vaccinations for an impressive 95% of patients, 2% higher than the national average. We expect strong performance again this year. We were particularly pleased to note a substantial positive impact for those we serve at our [Family Health Center](#), increasing the number of flu vaccinations administered this year to date versus the prior year by an outstanding 92%.

Below is a graphic that shows the severity of this year's flu season versus prior years, as reflected in the percent of flu-like symptom visits to the LRH Medical Center Emergency Department. You'll note that the volume of visits was dramatically higher than that of the prior two years.



As a safety-net provider for Polk County and surrounding communities, Lakeland Regional Health is pleased to provide hospital services to all those in need of essential care, regardless of the ability to pay. We are proud and privileged to provide care to the patients and families we are privileged to serve.

While we certainly wish this season of flu activity had not been so severe, we are thankful for the dedicated team of professionals who stepped up to the tremendous task of caring for those who were ill.