

Surgical Solutions

Jefferson Burn Center to Set Standard for Comprehensive Care



Dr. William Hughes has been treating construction worker Nick Kisarewich (second from left) for extensive burns after being accidentally buried up to his waist in asphalt in October. Nick is now able to walk again and recently returned to the Center with his wife, Kate (left), to show his gratitude and speak with Stephanie Stahl of CBS 3 about his recovery.

William B. Hughes, MD, and Michelle Hughes, RN, have spent most of their careers caring for burn patients. Since launching the Jefferson Burn Center in November 2017, they have been instilling their unique experience and expertise within Jefferson's Level 1 Trauma Center – and have a vision to be the region's premier provider of comprehensive clinical care and related services to burn patients.

Dr. Hughes discovered the burn care specialty during a residency rotation at St. Agnes Hospital, which was Philadelphia's burn center at that time. The director became his mentor and eventually recruited Dr. Hughes to the hospital. From there, Dr. Hughes went on to lead the burn center at Temple University, where he spent 20 years and treated every possible type of burn – from minor cooking accidents to large industrial burns.

As Dr. Hughes explains, burn care was one of the first specialties to embrace truly multi-disciplinary care. That

approach continues at the Jefferson Burn Center, which combines expertise in surgery, nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, nutrition and social work to address each patient's needs.

"A burn can be a devastating injury, but we work hard to get people back to their pre-injury status and function," Dr. Hughes explains. "While these patients can be challenging cases, seeing them get better is very rewarding."

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One such patient is Nick Kisarewich, 31, of Collingswood, NJ, who was severely burned in an industrial accident last fall. He spent months as an inpatient and is still receiving outpatient care to support his long-term recovery. On Valentine's Day,

he and his wife, Kate, returned to Jefferson with baked goods to thank the clinicians who had cared for him during his hospital stay. He plans to continue expressing his gratitude by serving as a peer mentor to other burn victims.

"When you're going through treatment for a burn, it's like nothing you've ever experienced," says Kisarewich. "To have someone be able to truly relate to what you're feeling physically and emotionally and to see people who have overcome it gives you hope that you can get through it, too."

Formal peer support networks are part of the Survivors Offering Assistance in Recovery (SOAR) Program coordinated by the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors. Occupational Therapist Karena Landin and Michelle Hughes coordinate the program at the Jefferson Burn Center (see sidebar).

In addition to supporting patients at Jefferson's Center City campus, Dr. Hughes and his team are educating nurses, JeffSTAT and other emergency medical personnel and reaching out to local fire stations about the burn center. They are also connected with the Trauma Survivors Network at Jefferson (a program of the American Trauma Society) to ensure that all patients receive the support services they need. And they are doing outreach to local homeless shelters, providing information on frostbite and ensuring that staff know how to get in touch with the center.

"We are excited about what the Jefferson Burn Center offers today – and even more excited about how the center will continue to grow and evolve in the months and years ahead," Dr. Hughes says.

Nursing Notes



Helping Patients SOAR

"SOAR stands for Survivors Offering Assistance in Recovery – a program of the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors. The Phoenix Society was founded in 1977 by Alan Breslau, a resident of Levittown, PA, who had suffered extensive burns in a commercial airline crash in the early 1960s.

"Through the SOAR program, we're connecting people who share the experience of a burn injury. That includes burn survivors themselves, as well as their loved ones. Through one-to-one interactions and support groups with survivors, new burn victims are given hope and firsthand information from the only people who fully understand what they are experiencing."

Michelle Hughes, RN
Burn Nurse Coordinator

Learn more about the
Jefferson Burn Center – visit
JeffersonHealth.org/BurnCenter

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