

Community Health Needs Assessment Implementation Plan 2020-2022

2022 Progress Report



Northeast Georgia Medical Center

Northeast Georgia Medical Center Gainesville/Braselton

Northeast Georgia Medical Center Barrow

Northeast Georgia Medical Center Lumpkin

Table of Contents

03 | Priority: Mental & Behavioral Health

06 | Priority: Diabetes

07 | Priority: Access to Care

12 | Priority: Cardiovascular Disease

14 | Priority: Sepsis

16 | Covid Response

**17 | Health Equity and Social
Determinants of Health**



Through a comprehensive Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) conducted in 2019, and in partnership with community stakeholders, Northeast Georgia Medical Center hospitals identified five important health priorities and corresponding outcome measures:

- **Mental & Behavioral Health**
- **Diabetes**
- **Access to Care**
- **Cardiovascular Disease**
- **Sepsis**

This report provides 2022 progress in reaching the stated goals of the 2020-2022 CHNA Implementation Plan. To view the original implementation strategy, please visit nghs.com/2021-plan.

In this report, we discuss the efforts of:

- **NGMC Gainesville/Braselton (NGMC G/B)**
- **NGMC Barrow**
- **NGMC Lumpkin**

Our Communities

Collectively, NGMC hospitals serve the following counties:

- Banks
- Barrow
- Dawson
- Franklin
- Forsyth
- Gwinnett
- Habersham
- Hall
- Hart
- Jackson
- Lumpkin
- Rabun

- Stephens
- Towns
- Union
- White



Mental & Behavioral Health

Goal:

Through United Way's One Hall Mental & Behavioral Health subcommittee, create a comprehensive system of integrated services that recognizes and treats the mental and behavioral health needs of people when and where they need care, focusing on Access, Collaboration, and Education.

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. Included within mental health are indicators related to suicide and substance abuse.

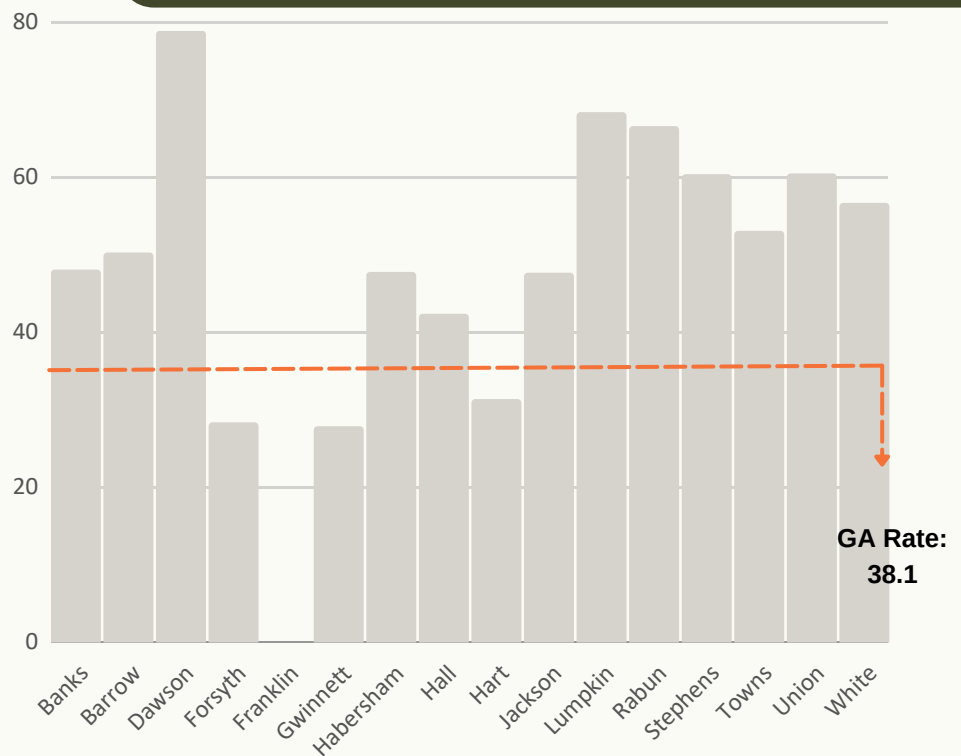
Outcome Measure

According to the most recent data available, in 2020, 12 out of the 16 counties in northeast Georgia witnessed rates of deaths of despair higher than the state average. Deaths of despair are deaths related to suicide, alcohol-related disease, and/or drug overdose. In 2021, the average rate for these deaths within the NGMC service area was 37.2 deaths for every 100,000 people each year on average between 2016 to 2020.

The graph to right shows the deaths of despair age-adjusted rate per county compared to the Georgia state average. Age-adjusted rates are used to make fairer comparisons between groups of different age ranges.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Vital Statistics System. 2016-2020.

deaths of despair per every 100,000 people, 2016-2020



81%

Communities within the full service area have a higher death of despair rate than the Georgia state average

Strategy Updates

Partnering in the Community

- **Supported The Jeffrey Dallas Gay Jr. Recovery Center**, known as J's Place, to help foster a supportive environment for those seeking and in long-term recovery, promoting healthier, substance-free lifestyles (NGMC G/B)
- **Helped support Gateway Domestic Violence Center**, contributing to crisis intervention, comprehensive support, and violence prevention for members of the community; NGMC leadership also serves on its board (NGMC G/B)
- **Raised funds through the Medical Center Open for the Gainesville Police Department co-responder program** to support police in their response to mental health crises within the community (NGMC G/B)
- **See page 18, information on Unite Us**
- **Teamed up with United Way's One Hall** initiative to enhance community mental and behavioral health, reduce stigma, educate and provide resources for Mental Health First Aid (NGMC G/B)
- **Continued the Peer Coach Program, thanks to a grant from the Georgia Council of Substance Abuse** in the Emergency Department (ED) for the sixth year and in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for the fourth year. This innovative approach of using PEER coaches to assist victims of substance abuse is unique. NGHS' ED program is the only one of its kind in Georgia and the NICU program is the only one in the nation. (NGMC G/B)



Community Events & Education

- **Offered QPR Suicide Prevention Training**, empowering around 300 individuals with essential skills to identify and assist those at risk (NGMC G/B, NGMC Barrow)
- **Helped support the Out of the Darkness Walk**, raising funds for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, benefiting research, programs, education and advocacy for Barrow County. (NGMC Barrow)
- **Expanded Psychiatry Residency Program through GME studies**, with an expected six residency slots growth every year until 2025 (NGMC G/B)

Mental & Behavioral Health

Youth Development

- **Helped support Hall County School District's Project AWARE** to increase mental health awareness among youth (NGMC G/B)
- **Helped support the "The Fight Against Drugs, Alcohol & Violence in Our Community" program through the Lumpkin County Sheriff's Office**, educating youth in Lumpkin County Schools on making safe and responsible choices (NGMC Lumpkin)
- **Helped support The Children's Center for Hope and Healing** Northeast Georgia Trauma Conference (NGMC G/B)
- **Helped support Center Point's mentorship, teen and family programs** for at-risk youth in Hall County (NGMC G/B)
- **Contributed to Eagle Ranch**, which offers a home for youth in need of a stronger family support system (NGMC G/B)
- **Helped support The Tree House, Inc.** in their mission to reduce the occurrence and impact of child abuse. NGMC Barrow leadership serves on its board of directors (NGMC Barrow)
- **Sponsored the South Enotah Child Advocacy Center**, which serves abused and neglected children in Lumpkin and White County (NGMC Lumpkin)
- **Helped support the Edmondson-Telford Center for Children** to provide safe and child-friendly places for child abuse victims (NGMC G/B)
- **Donated to Piedmont CASA**, or Court Appointed Special Advocates, which promotes the best interests of children in the juvenile court system (NGMC Barrow)



Achievements

- **Newtown Florist Club honored NGMC Board Chair Phillippa Lewis Moss and NGHS Advisory Council Vice Chair Andrew Davenport** for their dedication to civil and human rights and for inspiring the community to advocate for justice and equality (NGMC G/B)
- **The Georgia Academy of Family Physicians celebrated Family Medicine Residency Program Director Monica Newton, D.O.**, as Educator of the Year for her positive impact and significant contributions to medical education and patient care (NGMC G/B)
- **Both Phillippa Lewis Moss and Monica Newton served** as co-chairs in NGMC's CHNA process

Diabetes

Goal:

Reduce preventable instances of diabetes in adults and gestational diabetes in mothers, giving unborn children a better chance for more positive outcomes.

Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects how your body turns food into energy, or blood glucose. For diabetics, the body makes too much blood glucose, potentially causing serious damage to organs and limbs or, in too many cases, death.

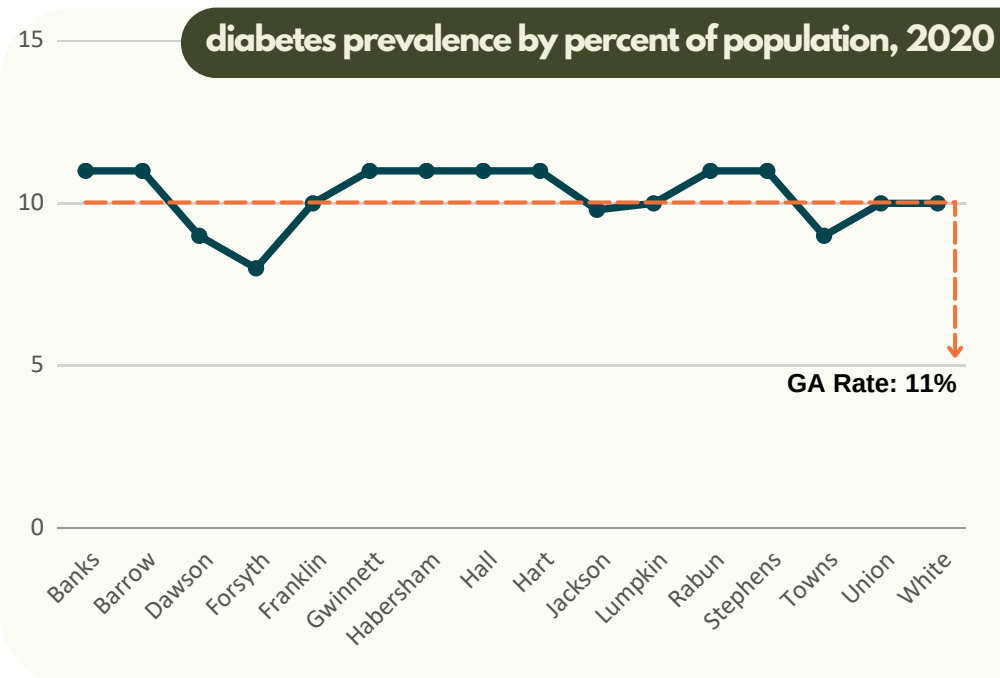
Outcome Measure

According to the most recent data available, in 2020, more than half of the counties in NGMC's service area experienced diabetes rates among adults aged 20 and older on par with the state average of 11 percent. The graph on the right illustrates the diabetes rates for adults aged 20 and older, by county.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. 2020.

Strategy Updates

- **Evaluated evidence-based programming to support additional gestational diabetes and adult Type 1 and 2 clinical pathways**, providing to patients better outcomes at lower costs
- **Provided free diabetes education and screenings** for more than 190 community members through pre-diabetic seminars and health fairs (NGMC G/B)
- **Hosted health education events with The Georgia Club Foundation**, including a Pre-Diabetes Seminar, Cardiovascular Health Presentation, and Preventive Health Checkup (NGMC Barrow)
- **Offered diabetes support groups to the community** where community members learned how to manage their diabetes, shared experiences, and celebrated achievements with others (NGMC G/B)



Access to Care

Goal:

Graduate Medical Education (GME) residency filled slots working toward 200 residency slots in various specialties by 2023. The expansion of GME programs will help ensure more physicians are trained in the region to provide quality care to the community.

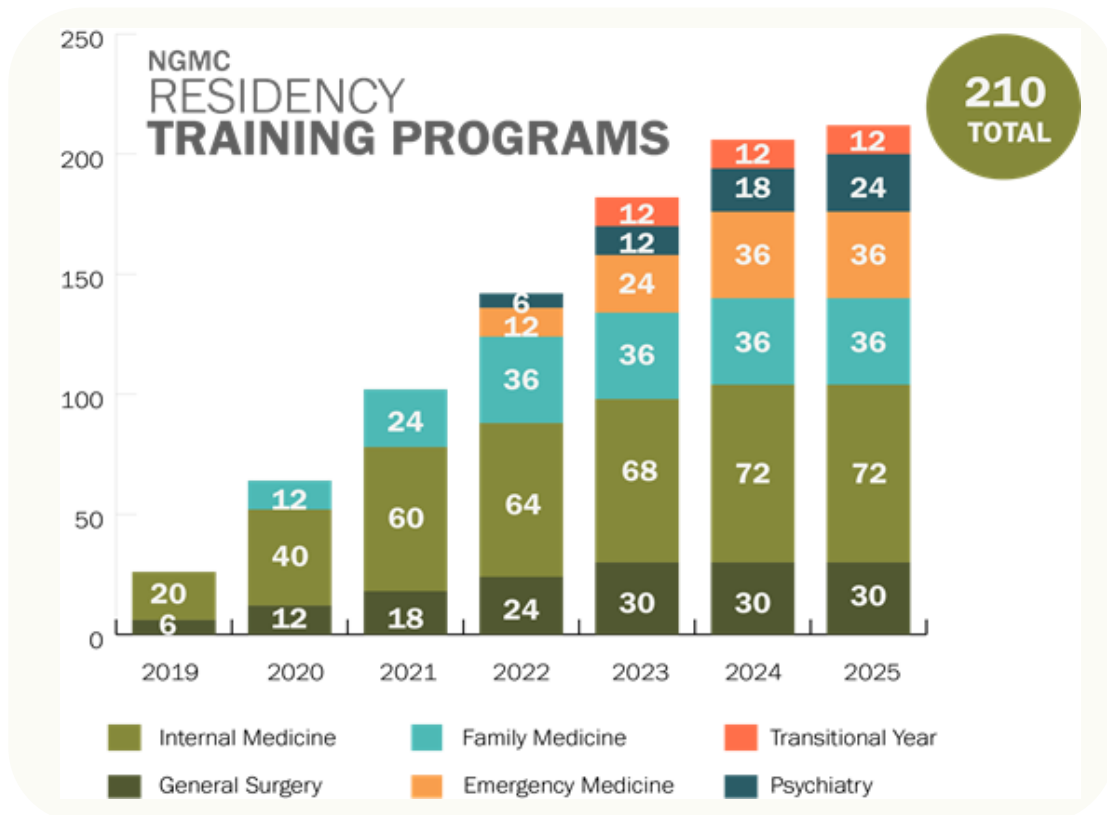
Access to care addresses barriers community members may face, including lack of providers, transportation, and limited services for low-income populations.

Outcome Measure

At its start in 2019, the Graduate Medical Education (GME) residency was projected to have 168 residents across six specialties by 2024, making it one of the largest in the state.

Since then, GME has filled slots working toward an increased 210 residency slots in various specialties by 2025.

Source: NGHS Internal Data, July 2022.



Residency programs are significant as it increases the likelihood of homegrown talent staying within the community, increasing the number of providers actively practicing and expanding access to care for Northeast Georgia.

Strategy Updates

Partnering in the Community

- **Helped support**

Good News

Clinics in their mission to



GOOD NEWS
CLINICS

provide free medical and dental care to low-income, uninsured community members (NGMC G/B)

- **Provided financial and staff support to Community Helping Place**, which offers medical and dental services to vulnerable populations in Lumpkin County (NGMC Lumpkin)
- **Hosted 18 blood drives** with more than 400 participants donating 400 pints of blood (NGMC G/B)

- **Donated office space to Good Shepherd Clinic of Dawson County**, aiding in providing healthcare for those in need (NGMC Lumpkin)

- **Encouraged physicians to volunteer at local charitable clinics** and participate in community outreach (NGMC G/B)

- **Helped support**

Mercy Health

Center to address mental and behavioral health needs for the low-income uninsured population (NGMC Barrow)



Patient Support

- **Supported cancer patients through a patient navigation program**, providing guidance and support for around 14,500 people throughout their care (NGMC G/B, NGMC Barrow)
- **Provided free transportation for low-income patients** needing to get to their doctor's appointments (NGMC G/B)
- **Aided uninsured and underinsured patients through Financial Navigators** to help patients access necessary care (NGMC G/B, NGMC Barrow)
- **Provided financial support to around 270 low-income NGMC patients** needing help with medication and transportation after leaving the hospital (NGMC G/B)

Education and Workforce Development

- **Funded internal programming to support providers** in meeting community health needs during the global pandemic (NGMC G/B)
- **Sponsored nursing education programs** through NGMC's Nursing Excellence Department (NGMC G/B).
- **Guided residents through the Graduate Medical Education Program**, providing hands-on training in one of six specialties through nearly 230 positions (NGMC G/B)
- **Provided clinical rotations and education for more than 1,000 allied health students** with NGMC staff (NGMC G/B, NGMC Barrow, NGMC Lumpkin)
- **Presented simulation learning for more than 200 healthcare professionals**, promoting patient safety, communication, collaboration, and evidence-based practice (NGMC G/B)
- **Coordinated clinical rotations for more than 4,000 nursing students** at NGMC campuses, including faculty and student orientation, educational affiliation agreement maintenance and health/legal requirements completion (NGMC G/B, NGMC Barrow, NGMC Lumpkin)
- **Hosted the Northeast Georgia Region 2 Trauma Symposium** for over 480 rural health professionals, while actively participating in the Regional Trauma Advisory Committee (RTAC) to manage injury prevention and control for the community (NGMC G/B)
- **Supported Foothills AHEC to increase healthcare providers** in underserved areas, serving 31 counties in Northeast Georgia (NGMC G/B)



Access to Care

Youth Development

- **Provided high school students with hands-on healthcare experience** through the Youth Apprenticeship Program and participation in the UGA Foothills 2022 Health Careers Conference, encouraging students to consider further education in health-related fields.
- **Promoted real-life healthcare career experience for junior and senior high school students** through mentorship and programming, in partnership with the Hall County School System (NGMC G/B)
- **Supported Project SEARCH**, which offers employment and education opportunities for individuals with mild to moderate disabilities through a one-year High School Transition Program (NGMC G/B)
- **Collaborated with local high schools through Partners in Education**, supporting projects related to healthcare and early preparation for students pursuing medical careers (NGMC G/B)

Achievements

- **Inpatient Pharmacy Clinical Coordinator Amy Knauss, PharmD, BCPS, was honored with the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy as the 2021-22 Preceptor of the Year award** for the North Georgia area; NGMC and NGPG pharmacy teams precept up to four second-year pharmacy students and up to 20 fourth-year pharmacy students each year
- **Awarded Most Wired Level 9 by the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives**, which recognized NGMC for its efforts in utilizing technology to improve healthcare quality and cost; was included in the list of Healthcare's Most Wired for eight consecutive years (NGMC G/B)
- **Kelsey Keith, NGPG's Patient-Centered Medical Home manager, was celebrated as a PCMH Certified Content Expert** – one of just three people across the nation to win this award in FY22



Access to Care

Affordable Care

- **Provided charity care in the community at the cost of an estimated \$84.2 million** and received no local tax revenue from Hall County or any other counties to support operations or care provided to indigent residents. The charity care policy provides financial assistance up to 300 percent of the poverty level.

NGMC Gainesville/Braselton: \$79.6m

NGMC Barrow: \$3.8m

NGMC Lumpkin: \$800,000

- **Partnered with The Longstreet Clinic and Hall County Health Department to increase prenatal care** for uninsured, low-income, and underinsured pregnant women through the Health Department's primary care clinic (NGMC G/B)

- **Funded and staffed a primary care clinic at the Hall County Health Department**, ensuring improved access to healthcare for low-income community members (NGMC G/B)

- **Gave essential paramedic care, resources and follow-up services** to about 320 community members through the Paramedics Improving the Community's Health, or P.I.T.C.H., Program (NGMC G/B)



- **Provided free cancer screenings and education** throughout our communities

Growth in Services

- **Expanded local hospital care in rural North Georgia through an annual five-year investment in Habersham Medical Center** to maintain and expand services (NGMC G/B)
- **Broke ground on a new hospital in Dahlonega**, enhancing access to healthcare services for area residents (NGMC Lumpkin)



Cardiovascular Disease

Goal: Reduce cardiovascular disease deaths throughout the region, with a focus on Lumpkin County, which experiences heart health outcomes far worse than the state average.

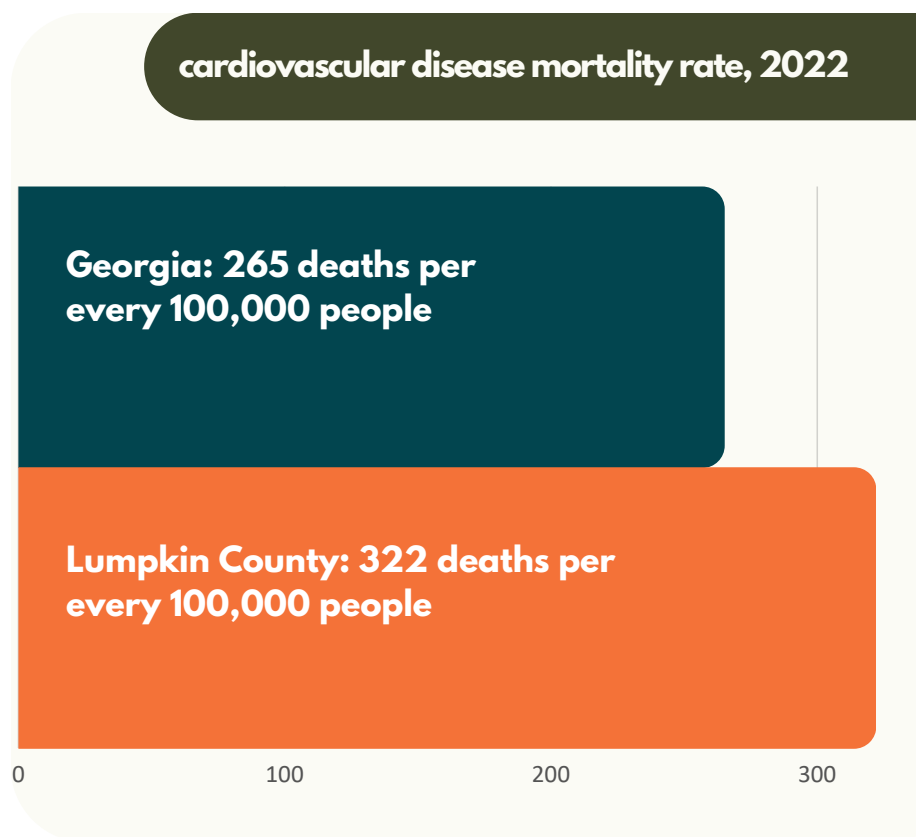
Cardiovascular disease are conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels. Heart disease can be caused by unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking and excessive alcohol use, or medical conditions, like diabetes or high blood pressure.

Outcome Measure

In 2022, members of the Lumpkin County community experienced a significantly higher rate of deaths due to major cardiovascular disease compared to the state average. There were 322 deaths per every 100,000 people in Lumpkin County, in contrast to 265 deaths per every 100,000 people throughout Georgia.

Heart disease deaths are generally the leading cause of death in most Georgia communities, with some areas being harder hit than others due to health behaviors and other chronic conditions.

Source: Georgia Department of Public Health, 2022, Accessed via DPH's Online Analytical Statistical Information System (OASIS).



Lumpkin County residents experienced heart disease deaths at a rate that was

22% higher

than the Georgia average for these types of deaths

Cardiovascular Disease

Achievements

- **Awarded Remote Treatment Stroke Center designation by the Georgia DPH**, improving stroke care accessibility and outcomes (NGMC Lumpkin)
- **Received five American Heart Association and American Stroke Association achievement awards** for commitment to up-to-date guidelines for heart disease and stroke treatment (NGMC G/B)
- **Attained accreditation as a Comprehensive Center with Obesity Medicine Qualifications** (NGMC G/B)
- **Earned Comprehensive Stroke Center certification** as Primary Stroke Centers (NGMC G/B, NGMC Barrow)
- **Celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Interventional Program and the opening of the catheterization lab**, with more than 50,000 procedures performed (NGMC G/B)
- **Conducted clinical trial research studies on cancer and cardiology care for community patients**, leading to a raised standard of care (NGMC G/B)

Community Events and Education

- **Relaunched telecardiology at NGMC Lumpkin in March 2023**, expanding access to vital cardiology services for community members
- **Hosted the inaugural Georgia Heart & Vascular Symposium**, promoting knowledge sharing among healthcare professionals in cardiovascular medicine (NGMC Lumpkin, NGMC G/B, NGMC Barrow)
- **Supported The American Heart Association's Heart Walk and Go Red for Women Luncheon**, contributing to research and community education (NGMC G/B)
- **Conducted educational demonstrations on stroke prevention, symptoms, and risk factors** at regional events, enhancing stroke awareness and preparedness in the community (NGMC Barrow)
- **Partnered with Barrow County Schools for "Tar Wars"** which educated more than 1,600 fourth and fifth-grade students about tobacco dangers and promoting a tobacco-free community in FY22 (NGMC Barrow)



Goal: Decrease the number of deaths due to sepsis.

Sepsis happens when an infection you already have triggers a chain reaction throughout your body, potentially leading to organ failure or even death.

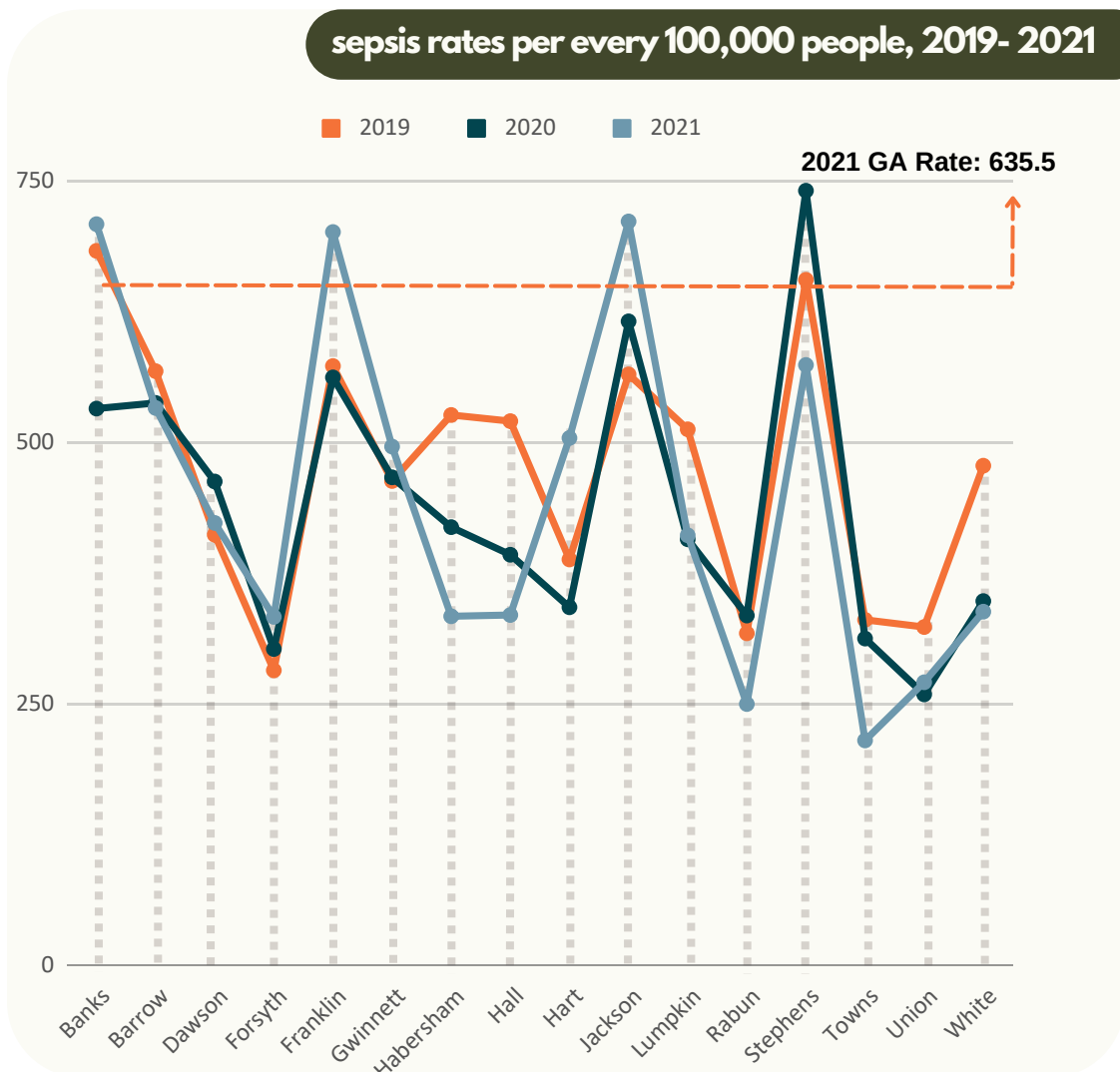
Outcome Measure

In 2021, only three out of the 16 counties within the NGMC service area experienced sepsis rates higher than the state average of 635.5 cases per 100,000 people.

During that same year, the overall average sepsis rate within the NGMC service area remained consistently below the state average for the third consecutive year, standing at 440 cases per 100,000 people.

In FY22, the total NGMC service area experienced 558 deaths due to sepsis.

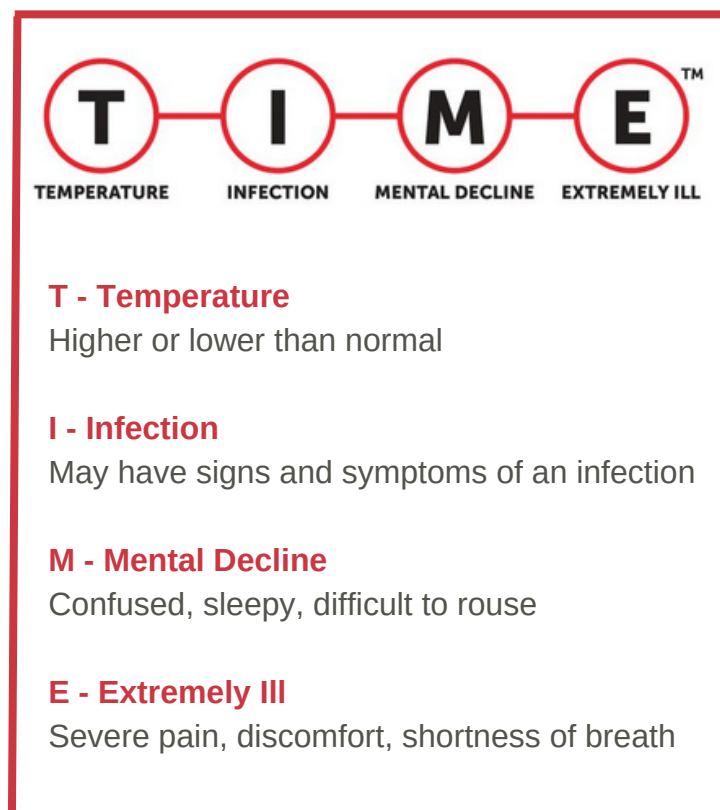
Source: Georgia Department of Public Health, 2022, Accessed via DPH's Online Analytical Statistical Information System (OASIS).



Strategy Updates

- **Continued our diligence in monitoring NGMC patients with infections** to prevent hospital-acquired sepsis and ensure best practice treatment for infection and sepsis
- **Promoted the necessity of TIME in sepsis emergencies** via our website and printed materials, emphasizing the importance of quick treatment to reduce the risk of death
- **Provided sepsis education at local health fairs and seminars** to increase awareness and promote timely treatment within the local community (NGMC G/B)

The 2022 mortality rate for NGMC was 11.16 deaths per every 100,000 patients, a 27 percent decrease from the prior year. About 200 of these deaths were related to patients who were also diagnosed with COVID-19.



- **Assisted other healthcare organizations in developing sepsis navigation programs**, improving care and reducing sepsis rates within the community (NGMC G/B)
- **Initiated outpatient sepsis navigation through implementation of a new regional EMS Sepsis Alert program** and implementation of the Pneumonia Readmission Discharge program (NGMC G/B)
- **Presented the Northeast Georgia Regional Infection Prevention Symposium**, a conference for over 400 healthcare professionals in the region
- **Spoke and shared insights on a case study at the Sepsis Alliance Summit**, entitled "Sepsis Navigation: Extending Care Beyond Acute Care."

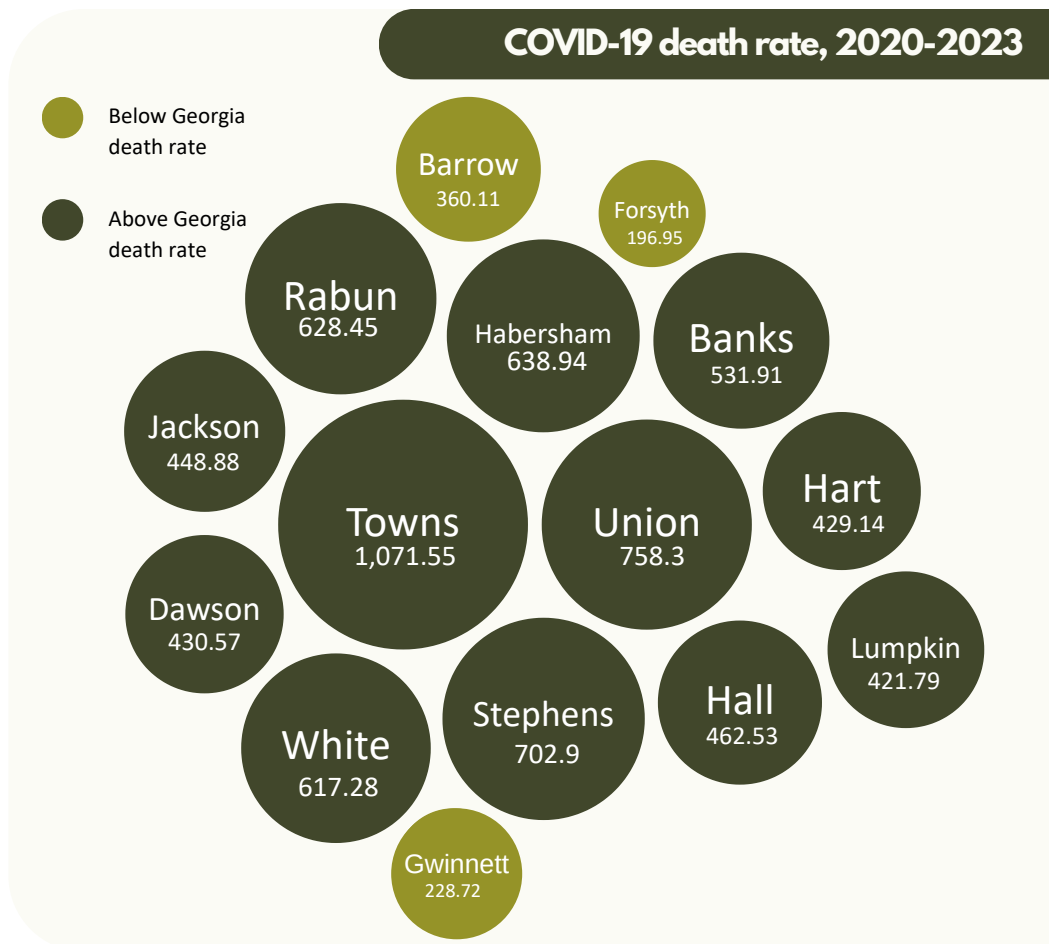
Covid Response

As in all parts of the world, the communities served by the NGMC hospitals were tremendously impacted by COVID-19, including high rates of infections and deaths in some communities, shuttered social and government services, school closures and the mental impact of the pandemic itself.

Between January 2020 and March 2023, among the 16 counties within the hospitals' service areas, only three had COVID-19 related death rates lower than the state average of 338.17 cases per 100,000 people. This is noted in the graphic to the right - the larger the bubble, the more deaths that community endured.

By September 2020, the vaccination rate for the NGMC service area was 61.30 percent on average, slightly surpassing the state average of 59.58 percent.

Source: Johns Hopkins University.
Accessed via ESRI. Tracking dates span January 21, 2020, to March 10, 2023.



- **Organized the annual Jennings Lectureship, showcasing "Finding Structure in Chaos: Protecting the Healthcare Workforce in COVID-19 and Beyond,"** informing healthcare personnel on crucial public mental health principles and practices for well-being during the pandemic (NGMC G/B)
- **Recognized as one of the nation's top 24 hospitals for exceptional COVID-19 care by Healthgrades,** NGMC Gainesville's commitment to providing care during extreme circumstances was honored nationally (NGMC G/B)

Health Equity and Social Determinants of Health

For each priority, NGMC partnered with people and organizations in our communities to achieve greater health equity by reducing the impact of social determinants of health and other socioeconomic indicators as to help all community members get -- and stay -- healthy.

Social Determinants of Health



The conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age. This includes income, education, literacy rates, employment, housing, neighborhood conditions, transportation systems and social connections.

Health Equity



The state in which everyone has the opportunity to attain full health potential, and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or any other socially defined circumstance.

Youth Development

- **Sponsored Adventure Bags Inc.**, a local nonprofit helping the community's displaced children with bags containing clothes, overnight essentials, and personal care items (NGMC Barrow)
- **Supported Lumpkin County Family Connection**, which prevents child abuse and neglect through the clothing and shoe donations, food distribution, the provision of school supplies, and mentoring for at-need students (NGMC Lumpkin)
- **Collaborated with United Way's Read Learn Succeed program** by providing "Welcome to the World" books to babies born at NGMC, encouraging daily reading from birth (NGMC G/B)
- **Through We Are Targeting Community Health (WATCH)**, the NGMC employee giving club; Books for Babies began, a program that provides NICU families with books throughout the child's first year to support healthy learning (NGMC G/B)

Health Equity and Social Determinants of Health

Partnerships

- **Partnered with Newtown Florist Club and the Gainesville-Hall County Black History Society to provide health resources during the Juneteenth Celebration in Gainesville;** activities included health panels, education and free screenings (NGMC G/B)
- **Secured grant funding for maternal cardiac program initiatives** to reduce mortality rates among minorities within the community (NGMC G/B)
- **Supported the John Jarrard Foundation,** furthering support of the Boys and Girls Club of Hall County, Good News Clinics, Good News at Noon Shelter and the Georgia Mountain Food Bank (NGMC G/B)
- **Collaborated with the Hispanic Alliance,** sponsoring scholarships to community members (NGMC G/B)
- **Received the Technology Improvement Award Grant from National Network of Libraries of Medicine,** focusing on enhancing patient care in underserved communities through digital equity and technological advancement (NGMC G/B)
- **Supported the groundwork to implement Unite Us,** the leading SDOH referral platform, in partnership with the United Way; Unite Us is a shared data platform that creates a coordinated care network with partners working together to provide a broad range of services such as housing, employment, food assistance and more (NGMC G/B)
- **Sponsored the Empty Bowl event,** benefiting the Georgia Mountain Food Bank's efforts to provide food resources to community members in need (NGMC G/B)
- **Contributed to the Barrow County Farmers Market** with a donation to promote healthy lifestyles (NGMC Barrow)
- **Donated to The Lumpkin County Literacy Coalition's mission** to increase adult and childhood literacy in Lumpkin County (NGMC Lumpkin)





Northeast Georgia Medical Center

*Improving the health of our community in
all we do.*



www.nghs.com/community-benefit-resources