

Massachusetts Health Care Spending Surge Comes At “Time Of Disruption”

A new report estimates that per capita health care expenditures in Massachusetts shot up 9 percent in 2021 after having dropped 2.3 percent in 2020, giving elected officials and policymakers fresh data two days ahead of hearing that could consider how the health costs oversight system put in place by a 2012 cost control law can account for the myriad changes brought on or exacerbated by the pandemic.

The Center for Health Information and Analysis, created under that 2012 law, released its annual report on Monday examining health care spending trends in 2021. The independent agency estimated total health care spending in Massachusetts at \$67.9 billion in 2021, and a per capita health care expenditure of \$9,715 per resident.

Use of the health care system and spending on it were held down in 2020 when routine care and scheduled procedures were put on hold to focus on reacting to the onset of the pandemic. As society and the economy inched back open in 2021, people sought more care and the intensity of the services needed was up. CHIA said that led to faster spending growth and strain on capacity across the health care system.

“Adding to financial pressures, 2021 saw the expiration of federal provider relief funds, and payers recorded losses due to claims costs exceeding premium revenues. At the same time, Massachusetts residents continued to face affordability challenges accessing needed care,” CHIA wrote in its report.

Massachusetts considers itself a model for health care reform, and since a 2006 law signed by Gov. Mitt Romney, the state has required most residents to obtain at least a minimum level of

insurance coverage or pay a tax penalty.

A 2022 survey found that nearly 90 percent of Bay Staters are satisfied with the quality of care, their own health plan and the ease of access to care, but costs remain a significant issue and regular barrier to actually seeking care.

Sixty-three percent said the cost of co-pays and bills have been a problem for their family's finances, ranking third behind only the costs of groceries and gas in the survey conducted by Beacon Research. Prescription drug prices and monthly health insurance premiums have each been problematic for 57 percent of people. And 42 percent said that they at least occasionally put off seeing a doctor, getting a test or having a procedure because of the cost.

CHIA Executive Director Lauren Peters said the report released ahead of Wednesday's Joint Committee on Health Care Financing and Health Policy Commission hearing provides a snapshot of "a time of disruption and evolving challenges for patients, consumers and the health care system at large."

"The unprecedented impact of COVID-19 is evidenced by the reversal of many historical trends related to health care spending and utilization in 2020 and a rebounding effect in 2021," Peters said. Because of "the anomalous nature of this period," the report that CHIA released Monday focused on the three-year period from 2019 through 2021 to "provide a more accurate and contextualized picture of the health care system in the Commonwealth," Peters said.

CHIA said that per resident health care expenditures increased at an annualized rate of 3.2 percent from 2019 through 2021 with increases in all service categories.

Pharmacy spending outpaced all other categories though, rising 9.6 percent from \$10.6 billion in 2019 to \$12.7 billion in 2021 before accounting for prescription drug rebates. In 2021 alone, gross prescription drug expenditures grew 11.1 percent.

Rebates reduced pharmacy spending by \$3.1 billion in 2021, to \$9.7 billion. Prescription drug rebates are estimated to have grown from \$2.3 billion in 2019 to \$3.1 billion over the last three years. After those rebates, spending for prescription drugs increased at an annualized rate of 7.5 percent from 2019 to 2021, CHIA said.

Between 2019 and 2021, premiums climbed at an annualized rate of 4.7 percent and claims covered by payers and employers increased at a rate of 5.7 percent, surpassing growth in wages and salaries (3.6 percent) and regional inflation (2.2 percent), CHIA said.

Member cost-sharing among private health plans rose 16.9 percent in 2021 to \$58 per member per month. Enrollment in high deductible health plans, under which patients pay more out of pocket before insurance kicks in, grew by 4.1 percent and now accounts for 42.7 percent of enrollments in the private market, the report said.

The CHIA report found that overall acute hospital profitability, measured by the median total margin, was 5.2 percent in hospital fiscal year 2021 – up 2.6 percentage points on the year. The statewide median operating margin was 1.1 percent, a decrease of 0.2 percentage points, and the median non-operating margin was 3 percent, up 2.5 percentage points. Hospitals counted \$386 million in federal and state relief funding in their operating revenue in HFY 2021 compared to \$2.1 billion in HFY 2020, CHIA said.

Also Monday, the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association said that its own recent survey found that hospitals spent \$1.3 billion more for temporary staffing in fiscal year 2022 (\$1.52 billion) than they did pre-pandemic in fiscal 2019 (\$204 million). Seventy-seven percent of the spending was on temporary nurses.

Well short of the number of workers needed, hospitals are also

offering big signing and retention bonuses, and have increased average hourly wages for in-house staff from 13 percent to 20 percent, MHA said.

“The healthcare workforce market in Massachusetts and around the U.S. has been upended and it is unclear where the change is taking us,” MHA President and CEO Steve Walsh said. “The traveler agencies and temporary-worker trend has introduced a highly volatile variable in the budgeting and forecasting models hospitals use to remain financially stable and accessible to patients. Any state effort to analyze and constrain healthcare cost growth must recognize this dramatic workforce shift now occurring. This is a trend that demands our collective policy focus.”

Massachusetts Association of Health Plans President and CEO Lora Pellegrini said that insurers took financial losses in 2021 because premium revenue could not keep pace with claims costs as people again sought care in-person and expanded coverage requirements stayed in place.

She specifically pointed to prescription drug spending as “a significant and ongoing challenge to containing health care costs” and lamented that the area is “absent from accountability to the state’s cost growth benchmark.”

“As health insurance premiums reflect the cost of care, it is critical that the state take action to address these rising health care costs. In conjunction with a strong benchmark, we urge the state to take steps to hold all entities accountable for cost growth, enhancing competition, and correcting market dysfunction,” Pellegrini said.

Although the Legislature approved some major reforms including a landmark mental health access bill last session, the governor, House and Senate each prioritized a different aspect of the health care world, leaving numerous loose ends that lawmakers could elect to pick back up between now and July

2024.

The House last session approved legislation that would update the regulatory process for large health care providers trying to expand into markets covered by smaller, financially vulnerable community hospitals. In part, the House leadership priority bill would have allowed the HPC to examine not just merger and acquisition costs and impacts but also probe the market impacts of hospital expansions.

The Senate never took it up for a debate or a vote.

Meanwhile, the House never took up a Senate-approved bill that would cap out-of-pocket insulin spending at \$25 per month, require pharmaceutical companies to notify the state before significant price increases or rolling out new drugs, and subject drug manufacturers and pharmacy benefit managers to both the HPC's annual cost trend hearings and to examination by CHIA.

The HPC itself has been vocal about its desire to see lawmakers ramp up its regulatory might, subject medical industry power players to additional scrutiny and limitations, and lessen the burden residents face from health insurance premiums and cost-sharing.

"Entering the new session, there is no real starting point for the next round of reform, but growing realization that action is necessary to prevent system closures and spiraling costs," the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation wrote in a memo earlier this year previewing topics likely up for debate on Beacon Hill this session.

[Michael P. Norton contributed to this report.]

OPINION: “In my line of work New Bedford has the most disgusting, worst catch basins I’ve seen”

“Hey, I just wanted to share a picture from North Street, New Bedford next to ‘SoCo Cycle.’ I’m from out of town. but work all over the state and was working a job in the city.

We have to pop these covers up in our line of work. By far, New Bedford has the worst catch basins I’ve seen in years of opening manholes. Something to mention, environmental issues are a problem everywhere but New Bedford is a major area of inlet/outlet. This is disgusting for the [DPW] ‘works’ and city to not tackle!

I rarely reach out to local agencies, but this was just a telltale sign that indicates the condition of the other open drop basins. Please keep me anonymous.”



Southcoast Health Reduces In-Home Care Costs and Hospital

Readmissions with Virtual Visits and Remote Patient Monitoring

The Southcoast Health Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) saved an average of four in-home nursing visits annually, and generated over \$500,000 in cost savings over the last 16 months by leveraging remote patient monitoring (RPM) and a virtual visit program.

With the goals of improving clinicians' workload and patient care transition, the Southcoast VNA began their partnership with Health Recovery Solutions (HRS) for RPM in 2017. Patients enrolled in the program are monitored daily, with clinicians responding to risk alerts based on their reported vitals and symptoms. To quickly evaluate patients and address any concerns, providers can contact patients directly via a virtual visit or text messaging. The virtual visit program began in 2021 leveraging the video conferencing feature of HRS for patients on RPM.

This innovative care model replaces at least one in-person visit a week with a virtual visit, and the additional touchpoint has significantly improved physician-patient trust and communication, while decreasing care costs and staff workload by avoiding unnecessary in-home visits and exacerbations. The program can also incorporate a patient's primary care physician in a virtual visit to meet the face-to-face CMS home health requirement.

"Our partnership with HRS and incorporating video visits into our daily routine has allowed us to provide care outside of the patients home as well as improve outcomes in term of hospitalization and cost savings," says Jessica Magalhaes, Southcoast VNA's Telehealth and Transitional Care Team Leader.

“Having the tools to connect with a patient daily and monitor their vital signs closely has allowed many of our patients to remain at home with an improved quality of life.”

From October of 2021 until January of 2023, the Southcoast VNA’s RPM program has achieved a low 30-day readmission rate at seven percent for 2,621 high-risk patients.

The Southcoast VNA additionally offers a specialized RPM program for high-risk chronic care patients not enrolled in home health services. Patients identified were enrolled in the RPM program for a minimum of six months to help them develop self-management skills and reduce care costs for the health system and ACO.

The chronic-care RPM program has also demonstrated incredible success throughout the last 16 months, averaging another low hospital admission rate of 3 percent for 988 patients, with daily adherence and satisfaction scores each above 90 percent.

Beginning in 2002, the Southcoast VNA became an early adopter of telehealth and remote patient monitoring, launching a small program aimed at reducing hospital readmission for high-risk patients. In 2017, Southcoast partnered with Health Recovery Solutions (HRS), the KLAS-leader in remote patient monitoring, to expand their targeted patient populations and program objectives.

“Southcoast Health has always been an innovative and exciting partner to work with,” says Jarret Bauer, HRS’s Co-Founder and Chairman. “Improving patient care is at the crux of everything they do—whether it’s expanding to new patient populations or launching new care models—the impact of their community always comes first.”

By expanding their RPM partnerships across the health system, and developing new partnerships within their ACO to meet the needs of their patients, Southcoast has shifted the goals of its RPM program to address growing challenges in the

healthcare industry—including staff retention and value-based care. In the coming months, Southcoast looks to develop new partnerships with health plans and providers that will collaborate with them to treat patients in need of the round-the-clock care offered by their RPM team.

To learn more about the Southcoast Health Visiting Nurse Association please visit [Southcoast Visiting Nurse Association in MA & RI | Supportive Care](#).

Southcoast Health recognized for excellence through the 2022 Digital Health Most Wired Survey

“The College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME), has released their coveted Digital Health Most Wired Survey results for the 2022 data collection period. This year, Southcoast Health earned a Level 9 achievement for both the acute (hospital) and ambulatory setting survey selections, officials announced.

“We are proud to be recognized by the Most Wired Survey for the fourth year in a row,” said Jim Feen, Senior Vice President, Chief Digital & Information Officer at Southcoast Health. “This is a complete team effort, and I want to thank and congratulate all our clinical and business partners, and our digital health services teams for their ongoing dedication to innovation, and effort to embrace technology and health analytics to improve how we care for our community.”

Among the more than 38,000 organizations surveyed by CHIME, Southcoast Health ranked above peers in categories like analytics and data management, population health, infrastructure, and patient engagement. The survey assessed the adoption, integration, and impact of technologies in healthcare organizations at all stages of development, from early development to industry leading.

Only eight organizations worldwide earned the highest achievement of Level 10, and 70 organizations earned a Level 9. Among the Level 9 recipients, Southcoast Health is the only health system in Massachusetts and Rhode Island to be recognized at this level.

“Healthcare has been in a state of persistent disruption and uncertainty, but one thing that is crystal clear – charting a course through the digital health frontier is a can’t proposition,” said Dr. Jay Lawrence, Senior Vice President, Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer and Physician-in-Chief for Primary Care and Urgent Care at Southcoast Health. “I’m very proud to be a part of an organization with both the commitment and capability to succeed through innovation.”

The Digital Health Most Wired survey and recognition program serves as a comprehensive “Digital Health Check-up” for healthcare organizations across the world. As success in digital health increasingly determines the quality of patient care, the scope of the CHIME Digital Health Most Wired survey reflects the progress of leading healthcare providers as they reinvent healthcare for a new century.

“As we continue to implement new technology into our model of care, we recognize advances spurred by the pandemic such as telehealth appointments are a big part of this. We learned a lot about how to use these tools throughout that time, and these advancements are continuing to change how we provide care,” said Feen.

To learn more about Digital Health Most Wired Survey please visit: Digital Health Most Wired – Healthcare IT – CHIME (chimecentral.org)

About Southcoast Health

For more than 25 years, Southcoast Health has served communities across southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island as the largest provider of primary and specialty care in the region. The not-for-profit, charitable system includes three acute care hospitals – Charlton Memorial in Fall River, St. Luke's in New Bedford (a Level II Trauma Center), and Tobey in Wareham – as well as a network of over 700 physicians, hospitalists, and midlevel practitioners.

Southcoast Health has established seven Urgent Care Centers, two Cancer Centers, a Visiting Nurse Association, and numerous ambulatory facilities that ensure convenient access to services for 725,000 residents in 33 communities covering 900 square miles. In addition, the system partners with Acadia Healthcare to offer expanded resources at Southcoast Behavioral Health in Dartmouth.

Southcoast Health is a Newsweek's World's Best Hospital in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. In 2021, St. Luke's was named to Newsweek and Leapfrog's Best Maternity Hospitals for the second consecutive year, while US News ranked Southcoast among the 10 best hospitals in Massachusetts, and 2nd among those in the Providence Metro area. For three straight years, Southcoast Health has earned Best Hospitals and Best Place to Work in SouthCoast Media Group's Best of the Best Awards, voted on by residents and readers.

With upward of 7,500 employees, Southcoast Health is the largest employer in southeastern Massachusetts, and one of the largest employers in the Commonwealth, according to the Boston

Business Journal. More information is available online at www.southcoast.org. Connect to Southcoast Health through social media on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Southcoast® is a registered trademark of Southcoast Health System.

About CHIME

The College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME) is an executive organization dedicated to serving chief information officers (CIOs), chief medical information officers (CMIOs), chief nursing information officers (CNIOs), chief innovation officers (CIOs), chief digital officers (CDOs) and other senior healthcare IT leaders. With more than 5,000 members in 58 countries plus two U.S. territories and over 190 healthcare IT business partners and professional services firms, CHIME and its three associations provide a highly interactive, trusted environment enabling senior professional and industry leaders to collaborate, exchange best practices, address professional development needs and advocate the effective use of information management to improve the health and care in the communities they serve. For more information, please visit chimecentral.org."

New Bedford Health Department to host forum on health

disparities in the region

The New Bedford Health Department and the Health Equity Compact (HEC) will be hosting the Color of Care – Southeastern MA Health Equity Forum to discuss solutions to health disparities in our region. The event will take place on Tuesday, November 1st, 2022, at the New Bedford Whaling Museum at 18 Johnny Cake Hill, New Bedford, MA.

Event Details

- 4:00pm: Screening of Oprah Winfrey's documentary – Color of Care
- 5:30pm: Dinner and a special recognition of Dr. Patricia Andrade for her years of service with the New Bedford Board of Health and advocacy of health equity within the greater New Bedford community.
- 6:30pm: HEC presentation and regional listening session for the Health Care and Health Equity Bill, sponsored by the Health Equity Compact and the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers

The documentary will be offered in English with Spanish subtitles and presentations and discussions will be provided in English and Spanish.

The event is free, open to all, and childcare will be available.

Please register by Tuesday, October 25th through the following QR code or by calling the health department at 508-991-6199."



Massachusetts Company Issues Recall on Candy Corn

Arcade Snacks of Auburn, MA is recalling its 15 ounce packages of Candy Corn because they may contain undeclared egg. People who have allergies to egg run the risk of serious or life-threatening allergic reaction if they consume these products. Just another good reason to never eat candy corn!

Candy Corn was distributed in Massachusetts and Connecticut at the following locations:

Johnson Roadside Farm Market in Swansea, Massachusetts

Donelan's Supermarkets in Massachusetts

Fieldstone Farm Market in Marion, Massachusetts

Foodies in Massachusetts

Windfall Market in Falmouth, Massachusetts

Highland Park Market in Glastonbury, Connecticut

The product comes in a 15 ounce, clear plastic container marked with UPC #0 18586 00114 4 and a best by date of

3/8/2023 on the label on the back panel.

No illnesses have been reported to date in connection with this problem.

The recall was initiated after it was discovered that the egg-containing product was distributed in packaging that did not reveal the presence of egg.

Consumers who have purchased 15 ounce packages of Candy Corn are urged to return them to the place of purchase for a full refund. Consumers with questions may contact the company at 1-508-832-6300 Monday – Friday 8am – 5pm ET.

Candy Corn

Nutritional Facts Servings: 14, **Serv. size: 18pcs (30g)** Amount per serving: **Calories 110**, **Total Fat** 0g (0% DV), **Sat. Fat** 0g (0% DV), **Trans Fat** 0g, **Cholest.** 0mg (0% DV), **Sodium** 50mg (2% DV), **Total Carb.** 29g (11% DV), **Fiber** 0g (0% DV), **Total Sugars** 23g (Incl. 23g Added Sugars, 46% DV), **Protein** 0g, **Vit. D** (0% DV), **Calcium** (0% DV), **Iron** (0% DV), **Potas.** (0% DV)

Ingredients: Sugar, Corn Syrup, and less than 2% of the following: Dextrose, Honey, Confectioners Glaze, Salt, Acacia Gum, Artificial Flavor, Rice Protein, Carnauba Wax, Modified Potato Starch, Potato Protein, Yellow 5, Yellow 6, Red 40.

Product of Mexico

Contains a bioengineered food ingredient

Processed in a facility that handles tree nuts (almond, brazil, cashew, coconut, hazel, macadamia, pecan, pine, pistachio, walnut), peanuts, wheat, sesame, soy and milk products.

Best By: 3/8/2023

NET WT: 15oz. (425g)

PACKED FOR: SHAPIRO PRODUCE
15 COMMERCIAL STREET
EVERETT, MA 02149



Southcoast Health Now Offering Updated Bivalent COVID-19 Boosters

Southcoast Health is now offering the updated COVID-19 booster vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech for people ages 12 years and older, as well as updated boosters from Moderna for people ages 18 years and older.

As of September 1, 2022, both of the new bivalent COVID-19 boosters were authorized by the FDA and recommended by the CDC.

According to the FDA, a single booster dose with an updated bivalent COVID-19 vaccine will provide broad protection against COVID-19 and better protection against illness caused by the Omicron variant.

Southcoast Health is offering the vaccines at each of the not-for-profit community health system's clinics in Dartmouth, Fall River, and Wareham. It is recommended that anyone age 12 or older who has completed a primary COVID-19 vaccination series or received a booster dose at least two months ago receive an updated booster.

Individuals can book an appointment through MyChart or Southcoast Health's online **COVID-19 vaccine scheduling portal**. You do not need a Southcoast Health primary care provider to make an appointment.

"Southcoast Health is proud to continue to offer COVID-19 vaccination, including the bivalent boosters, to all eligible members of our community and encourages ongoing vaccination to protect against severe illness related to COVID-19," said Tonya Johnson, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for Southcoast Hospitals Group.

With the new boosters available, there are **different recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines** for those who are moderately or severely immunocompromised.

Please **click here** to view the latest CDC booster shot recommendations.

U.S. Department of Food Safety Issues Public Health Alert for HelloFresh Meal Kits

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is issuing a public health alert due to concerns that ground beef products in HelloFresh meal kits may be associated with Escherichia coli (E. coli) 0157:H7 illness. **A recall was not requested because the products are no longer available for purchase.**

The meal kits containing ground beef for this public health alert were shipped to consumers from July 2-21, 2022. The following products are subject to the public health alert [view label]:

10-oz. plastic vacuum-packed packages containing "GROUND BEEF 85% LEAN/15% FAT" with codes "EST#46841 L1 22 155" or "EST#46841 L5 22 155" on the side of the packaging.

The ground beef packages bear "EST.46841" inside the USDA mark of inspection and on the plastic ground beef package.

FSIS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and

state public health partners are investigating an outbreak of E. coli 0157:H7 and raw ground beef is the probable source of the reported illnesses. Traceback information identified that multiple case-patients received ground beef produced at establishment M46841 and distributed by HelloFresh in meal kits from July 2-21, 2022. Traceback of materials used to produce the ground beef is ongoing and FSIS continues to work with suppliers and public health partners on the investigation.

FSIS is concerned that some product may be in consumers' freezers. Consumers who have purchased these products are urged not to consume them. These products should be thrown away.

FSIS advises all consumers to safely prepare their raw meat products, including fresh and frozen, and only consume ground beef that has been cooked to a temperature of 160 F. The only way to confirm that ground beef is cooked to a temperature high enough to kill harmful bacteria is to use a food thermometer that measures internal temperature, <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/safetempchart>.

Media and consumers with questions regarding the public health alert can contact hello@hellofresh.com or by live chat.

Consumers with food safety questions can call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 888-MPHotline (888-674-6854) or live chat via Ask USDA from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Eastern Time) Monday through Friday. Consumers can also browse food safety messages at Ask USDA or send a question via email to MPHotline@usda.gov. For consumers that need to report a problem with a meat, poultry, or egg product, the online Electronic Consumer Complaint Monitoring System can be accessed 24 hours a day at <https://foodcomplaint.fsis.usda.gov/eCCF/>.

All Three Southcoast Health Hospitals Recognized for Advanced Stroke Care

Charlton Memorial, St. Luke's and Tobey Hospitals all earned recognition with the American Heart Association's Get with the Guidelines 2022 Awards, officials announced today.

St. Luke's and Tobey were named recipients of the Get with The Guidelines-Stroke Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award with Target: Stroke® Honor Roll Elite, while Charlton Memorial earned Silver Plus Quality Achievement Award with Target: Stroke® Honor Roll Elite designation.

"We are honored to be recognized by the American Heart Association, verifying our commitment to providing excellent stroke care in the region," said Ray Kruger, MD, President and CEO of Southcoast Health. "I would also like to thank the outstanding clinical teams at all three Southcoast Health hospitals for their work toward achieving these remarkable goals."

Hospitals receiving the Get with the Guidelines Gold Plus Achievement Award have reached a goal of treating patients with an 85 percent or higher compliance to core standard levels of care as outlined by the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association for 2 consecutive calendar years. In addition, these hospitals have demonstrated 75 percent compliance (four out of ten heart failure quality measures or four out of seven stroke quality measures) during the 12-month period.

Further displaying exceptional care, St. Luke's Hospital and

Tobey Hospital earned recognition from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health with awards from the Paul Coverdell Stroke Systems of Care Collaborative.

Both hospitals earned the Modified Rankin Scale Award, reflecting documentation of the Modified Rankin Scale at discharge for at least 95 percent of admitted stroke patients. St. Luke's was additionally recognized for Achieving Door to CT award for completing door to CT processes in less than or equal to 25 minutes from arrival for at least 75 percent of stroke patients.

"When someone experiences a stroke, proving treatment quickly is critical for optimal patient outcomes," said Daniel Sacchetti, DO, Stroke Director at Southcoast Health. "Receiving these significant awards demonstrates Southcoast Health's commitment to delivering high-quality stroke care to our patients close to home. I am tremendously proud of the entire Southcoast team of physicians, providers, nurses and staff who provide top-notch stroke care every day at our hospitals."

According to the CDC, stroke is a leading cause of death and adult disability in the United States. Learning the warning signs and symptoms of a stroke can help individuals identify if someone is experiencing a stroke and get them the medical attention they need in an emergency.

To learn more about stroke care at Southcoast Health, please visit [Stroke Care Services MA | Southcoast Health](#).

Southcoast Health Announces Dr. Christian Pope as New Chief of Obstetrics & Gynecology

Southcoast Health announced today that the not-for-profit community health system has named Christian S. Pope, DO, FACOG Chief of Obstetrics & Gynecology.

A long-standing medical staff member at St. Luke's Hospital, Dr. Pope specializes in providing high-quality women's health care with clinical interests in medical complications of pregnancy, along with teaching and education in the field.

"For the past 19 years, I have had the opportunity of serving the community at St. Luke's," Dr. Pope said. "Since graduating from residency, I have established a large community of patients and am now helping care for the next generation. I've been able to successfully do this with the collaboration of my colleagues, nurses and staff alike. While continuing medical care, I am honored to be given the privilege to be the Chief of Obstetrics & Gynecology for Southcoast Health, where I plan to continue our organization's mission and commitment to providing excellent comprehensive women's health care."

Dr. Pope earned his medical degree from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. Following his medical internship at Eastern Maine Medical Center, he completed his medical education with residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, Mass., through Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston.

"We are delighted to announce Dr. Pope's new role at Southcoast Health," said Ray Kruger, MD, FACS, President and CEO of Southcoast Health. "With his clinical expertise,

experience and leadership, we believe Dr. Pope will help Southcoast Health continue to advance our Obstetrics & Gynecology services and continue to provide exceptional care to patients in our region.”

In addition to his role at Southcoast Health, Dr. Pope serves on the Faculty at Brown University School of Medicine, where he teaches at the Women and Infant’s Hospital in Providence, RI as an Assistant Clinical Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology.

Dr. Pope has authored articles in notable peer-reviewed journals and books. He serves as an editorial reviewer for the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology and is board certified in Obstetrics and Gynecology, while also serving as a Fellow of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

He is also a contributing member in several organizations and societies such as The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, American Society of Reproductive Medicine, The Massachusetts Medical Society and The Society of Critical Care Medicine.

To learn more about Obstetrics & Gynecology at Southcoast Health, please visit [Southcoast Health Obstetrics & Gynecology](#).