

VOICES OF CHANGE; RENO WIDOW INSPIRES NEW PATIENT SUPPORTER VISITOR POLICY FOR RENOWN HOSPITAL PATIENTS-INCLUDING THOSE WITH COVID-19

Renown hospitals are among the first in the country to lift visitor restrictions for patients with COVID-19 and encourage family to be at the patient's bedside.



RENO, Nev. (Feb. 2, 2021) – True treasure hunters, Dr. Dave and Darlene found joy in exploring antique shops and garage sales to find damaged or discarded vintage pieces. After hauling the item home, Dave would spend many hours scraping it clean, sanding and refinishing it, until it gleamed and became a polished, functional and beautiful piece of furniture. Every piece in their home rekindles a memory and has a story to tell.

On Thanksgiving, when Dave was too ill to gather around their antique dining room table, Darlene called the ambulance. Dave had been ill with COVID-19 for two weeks and had not been improving. When the EMTs reached her home and asked Darlene what underlying conditions he had, she said, “all of them.”

David was seriously ill. Hospitalized for COVID-19, their communications options were limited. The only way Darlene could communicate with Dave was on a video call, or by telephone. Dave spent 17 days hospitalized at Renown Regional Medical Center in Reno. Darlene spent 17 days waiting by the phone for more information. Darlene said he had “up days and down days,” but thought he might be home, sitting at their antique dinner table for Christmas.

[David Ivan Randolph](#) was born in Boston, MA on August 29, 1936. He grew up in Roxbury and graduated from the prestigious Boston Latin Boys School. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts in General Psychology, an MA in Experimental Psychology from Northeastern University and a PhD in Sensory Psychology & Physiology from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. While in university he joined ROTC and upon graduation was commissioned as a First Lieutenant in the Army Medical Specialist Corp. After basic training at the Fort Sam Houston Medical Training School he was assigned as a Captain, Research Psychologist to the [US Army at the Pioneering Research Division in Natick, MA](#). Over the next 30 years, he conducted vision research at Fort Knox, KY; Philadelphia, PA and then with the newly constructed [Letterman Army Institute of Research \(LAIR\), Division of Ocular Hazards at the Presidio of San Francisco, CA](#). David continued his vision research at LAIR until his retirement in 1992 when the Presidio was decommissioned.

Dr. Randolph's [research findings in flash blindness and night vision](#) made him a sought-after presenter at research conferences in the US and abroad. In a PBS documentary he was interviewed as part of the team that developed goggles that protect soldiers from laser eye damage.

Dr. David Randolph lost his battle with COVID-19 on December 13, 2020, and died as he slept in a hospital bed. When Darlene wrote [his obituary for the newspaper](#), she gave thanks to the “tremendous nurses and doctors at Renown Regional Medical Center, for providing his care during a time when family could not be with him.”

Darlene wished she could have been there. Over their 45-year marriage, she had always been there. Darlene said, “I had always been at his bedside, as his advocate, to help communicate and straighten things out.” As a registered dietician, she worked in hospitals and knew the protocol. She knew, like hospitals across the globe, Renown had restricted family members from visiting in order to stop the spread

of the virus- to other patients, staff and their family members. Still, she wished she could have spent more time with him.

On Christmas Eve, she sat down and wrote to [Dr. Anthony Slonim](#), president and chief executive officer of Renown Health in Reno, NV. “Dear Doctor Slonim, as the wife of a COVID patient who recently passed away in your hospital, I want to express my thanks to you and your staff for the care he was given in the last days of his life. I am aware that the nurses and staff are working under dangerous conditions and risking their health and lives by caring for multiple COVID patients. The staff was gracious, concerned and did everything they could for my husband and myself.” She continued, “I know procedures are changing every hour to try to stay ahead of this dangerous virus and I am sharing my experiences hoping they will be helpful when establishing policies that impact families.” Darlene explained that despite receiving assurances that Dave’s nurse or even a doctor would call daily, sometimes they would forget. She explained in her letter, “how important it was, in these times when family cannot visit, and has only infrequent communication and is anxiously waiting at home for word of their loved one, how much it means to get a call from someone caring for him at the hospital.” Darlene asked, “If there is any way you can help to assure that nurses have time to make calls or assist patients to make calls, because it is an important part of patient care.”

After receiving her letter, Dr. Slonim called Mrs. David Randolph, to thank her, to offer his sympathies and to ask if Renown could help in any way. Darlene asked if he might reconsider allowing families to visit hospital patients being treated for COVID-19. Dr. Slonim, who had also lost his father to COVID-19 back in April at a hospital in New Jersey, asked his leadership team to review Mrs. Randolph’s request and make a recommendation.

The hospital leadership team made a recommendation to Dr. Slonim that was immediately approved. As the COVID-19 situation has evolved, the policy has as well. With a high percentage of [Renown](#) hospital staff [now vaccinated against COVID-19](#), [declining hospitalizations of patients with COVID-19](#), and understanding that the [best communications are in-person](#), **as of Wednesday morning, Jan. 27, 2021, Renown hospitals and medical practices now encourage limited visitors for all patients, including those diagnosed with COVID-19.** Renown continues to have extra safety measures in place to protect the health of patients, visitors and healthcare employees, and as the situation changes with COVID-19, these guidelines are subject to change.

“As of today, one healthy adult [Patient Supporter](#) may now accompany every patient to their Renown medical visit or hospital stay,” Tony Slonim, MD, DrPH, President & CEO of Renown said, “[We live by our values of caring, integrity, collaboration and excellence](#). We thank Darlene for reminding us that the best care is ‘[person-centered care](#),’ an approach that embraces the perspective of the patient and their loved ones, while promoting a healthy, encouraging environment for caregivers and addressing the health needs of our community.”

“At Renown, the definition of “family” is defined by the patient,” says [Debra Adornetto-Garcia, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, AOCN, Chief Nursing Officer, Acute Services](#). “Our patients may designate anyone they choose as their Patient Supporter. The Patient Supporter is incredibly important and part of the care team. The Patient Supporter will be asked to partner with the patient’s health care team to assist in communicating to other family members and friends, participating in training and education activities and assisting the patient with complying with care and medication instructions.”

“When it comes to healing and recovery, everyone’s role is important,” emphasizes [Paul Sierzenski, MD, MSHQS, CPE, FACEP, Chief Medical Officer, Acute Services](#). “What we can do together to support patient care and excellent outcomes is greater than what any of us can do alone. This belief shapes our work, our services and the care we provide to patients, their families and friends at Renown.”



Contact: Renown Public Relations
M: 775-691-7308 **E:** news@renown.org

"I am pleased that Renown Health has modified the visitation policies so that each patient can have a designated visitor. As a former ICU patient and current ICU physician, I know the importance of having a loved one's support in the hospital and I am thrilled we are able to accommodate this incredibly important aspect of patient care," says [Jacob B Keeperman, MD](#), FACEP, FAAEM, FAEMS, FCCM, Medical Director, Renown Regional Transfer and Operations Center, Intensivist.

When Darlene was told that her letter inspired this shift in visitor policies for patients with COVID-19, she was very pleased and said, "I have always tried to think of ways I could help other families, especially those senior couples where one has been hospitalized and the other is home. My wish is to help others."

In alignment with the [national guidelines](#), as of 1/27/2021, one Patient Supporter per patient will be able to access [Renown Regional Medical Center](#) and [Renown South Meadows Medical Center](#) as noted:

- Visiting hours for all patients, including those diagnosed with COVID-19 will be extended to 8 am – 8 pm (previously 3-8 pm).
- All patients are now encouraged to designate up to two Patient Supporters. Due to space constraints, we ask that Patient Supporters visit one at a time.)
- Patients will provide Names of up to two Patient Supporters during patient admission/registration. Patient Supporter names will be entered in to the patient's electronic medical record for patient privacy and security.

[Renown Children's Hospital](#): Open access. (Two parents and/or guardians may be designated as Patient Supporters, however, due to current space constraints, we ask that you visit one at a time).

For more detailed information on the Patient Supporter program visit <https://www.renown.org/interact/>

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About Renown Health

Renown Health is the region's largest, locally owned and governed, not-for-profit integrated healthcare network serving Nevada, Lake Tahoe and northeast California. With a diverse workforce of more than 7,000 employees, Renown has fostered a longstanding culture of excellence, determination and innovation. The organization comprises a trauma center, two acute care hospitals, a children's hospital, a rehabilitation hospital, a medical group and urgent care network, and the region's largest, locally owned not-for-profit insurance company, Hometown Health. Renown's institute model addresses social determinants of health and includes: Child Health, Behavioral Health & Addiction, Healthy Aging and Health Innovation. Clinical institutes include: Cancer, Heart and Vascular Health and Neurosciences. Renown is currently enrolling participants in the world's largest community-based genetic population health study, the Healthy Nevada Project®. For more information, visit renown.org.