

# ER

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## Why they're busy

Northwest General and Redford Community hospitals closed, which is one reason for the increase of patients, hospital officials said.

Botsford is one of the few hospitals in the area equipped to handle pediatric emergency cases.

The Farmington area also has a disproportionate number of nursing homes, Vieder said.

Botsford cares for indigent patients, too. For those, emergency room doctors turn into primary care physicians.

Still, Vieder finds Botsford's increased patient load something of an enigma. It certainly offers a contrast to the Farmington area where he grew up.

The 1989 Harrison High graduate started at Botsford as an intern in 1986. Vieder went to Michigan State to study architecture but went into medicine instead.

An ER physician has to make spot diagnoses — often lifesaving — and be well-versed in all areas of medicine. Not knowing what they'll encounter is part of the job's lure.

"We're probably all a little bit of adrenalin junkies," he said.

An average burnout rate for an ER physician is estimated to be around seven years. That may be changing, though.

## Trained for pressure

While emergency rooms have been around forever, emergency medicine as a specialty has not. Now doctors and staff are trained and certified in the high-pressure area.

"I tell my residents that stress is a function of what you don't know," Vieder said. "... a majority of times it's not stressful because you know what to do."

"We're mentally prepared for it."

Some things are not too easy. Being from Farmington Hills, Vieder occasionally runs across patients he knows.

Most times it's not a problem, he said. If it is, he'll have someone else take over.

He's also had the unpleasant task of delivering bad news to family members when a loved one has died.

"There are degrees, though," he said. "It's one thing when you tell a family with a 91-year-old grandma who dies and they say, 'Thank

**'I tell my residents that stress is a function of what you don't know... A majority of times it's not stressful because you know what to do.'**

Dr. Sandy Vieder

you, Lord. She's now at peace. She's been in a nursing home for 10 years and hasn't recognized anyone in the last five years."

"When you see the premature deaths... children... there's no way to overcome that," said Vieder, who is married with two children ages 5 and 1. "Can you prepare for it? No. When you have kids, you never prepare for it."

## 'Tight-knit group'

Botsford has 12 attending physicians and 14 residents. Anywhere from seven to eight nurses and three to four aides supplement the ER contingent.

"I think we're a pretty tight-knit group," said Gail Kress, a registered nurse. "We trust each other. It's not us vs. them."

Contrary to the TV depiction where doctors work around the clock, Botsford's ER personnel put in 10-hour shifts and work no more than two days in a row.

The work is draining as evidenced by the coffee machine in a downstairs staff cafeteria. Along with the regular made stuff for mortals, a button for strongly brewed is available.

The East Pavilion — with new emergency and urgent care departments — opened in 1993. That doubled the space in the emergency department.

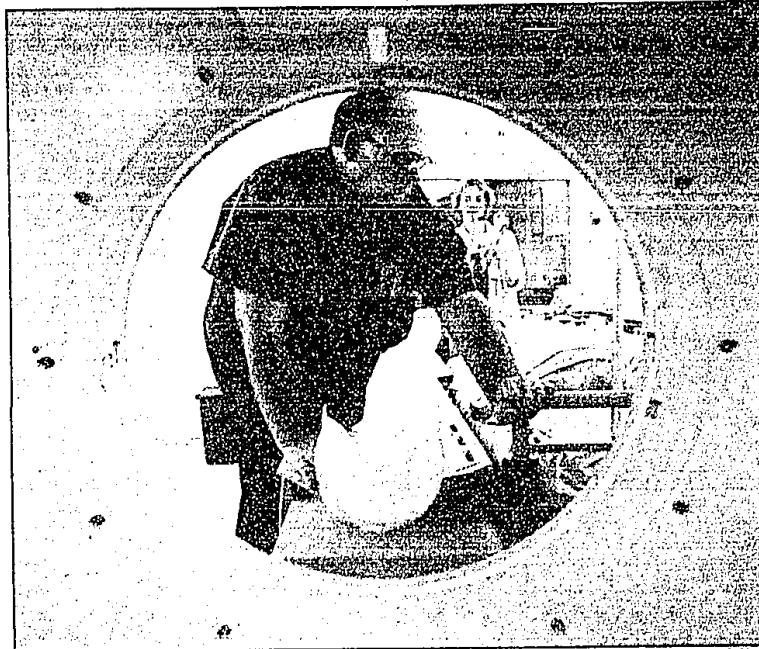
Staffing has not kept up with the increased load, Vieder said.

"Some nights it's OK," Vieder said. "There are nights when we look at each other and think we're all in over our heads."

"Things are under control on this night."

A cacophony of beeps from monitors and the scratchy rat-tat-tat from a printer punctuate the uneasy calm. Above the din, a physician recites a medical chart in rapid-fire staccato over the phone.

An ear-piercing beep from the radio room sends people into motion. A dispatcher informs a



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMMON

nurse that a man, 85, who is having trouble breathing, is being brought in by ambulance.

A few minutes later the ambulance arrives. The man is transported to one of the 18 beds.

He looks disoriented as two nurses begin attaching wires to a heart monitor. Vieder approaches with a stethoscope and begins asking questions.

"Ralph, Ralph... how you doing?" asks Vieder checking for vital signs.

A patient in the next bed snores loudly.



Coming through: Shirl Davis, a registered nurse, helps wheel in a patient, with Karen Bailey in Botsford Hospital's emergency Room.



Behind the desk: Emergency room personnel (from left) Registered Nurse Shirl Davis, Dr. Anita Ceraig and Dr. Jackie McParlane keep busy during a Friday night shift.

Examine and ask: Dr. Sandy Vieder (right) examines aching legs and asks questions of an emergency room patient. At left is a resident, Dr. Jack Field.



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