



## News Release

### Media Contacts

Phil Bridges 919-457-6347  
[phil.bridges@unchealth.unc.edu](mailto:phil.bridges@unchealth.unc.edu)

Brandy Popp 252-633-8154  
[bpopp@carolinaeasthealth.com](mailto:bpopp@carolinaeasthealth.com)

## CarolinaEast Health System Signs Affiliation Agreement with UNC Health

*Collaboration will expand local access to more high-quality specialty services*

**NEW BERN, N.C. / CHAPEL HILL, N.C.** (May 12, 2021) – The CarolinaEast Health System (CarolinaEast) Board of Directors and the UNC Health Board of Directors announced approval today of an agreement for CarolinaEast to become part of the UNC Health family through a comprehensive affiliation. Together, the two organizations will manage access to high-quality medical services for the citizens of eastern North Carolina while leveraging the resources of a large health system.

“Affiliating with UNC Health and working toward becoming a healthcare hub in this region is a tremendous opportunity for CarolinaEast and the people we serve,” said **Ray Leggett**, President and CEO of CarolinaEast Health System. “We look forward to working with UNC Health entities in Eastern North Carolina including Onslow, Wayne and Lenoir hospitals.

“The prospect of expanding on health education capabilities offered at UNC and welcoming residents, fellows and med students to our facilities will no doubt make us even better and stronger for our region,” Leggett continued.

“Working alongside an outstanding institution like UNC Health to improve the care and expand the services available to our patient population is absolutely the right direction for the future of our health system.”

Under the terms of the arrangement, CarolinaEast remains a separate legal entity under the authority of its own Board of Directors. The authority of the Craven County Board of Commissioners to approve CarolinaEast Board appointments remains unchanged. The affiliation between UNC Health and New Bern, NC-based CarolinaEast will enhance the quality of healthcare in the Eastern Region while simultaneously growing specialty services in Craven County and beyond.

“On behalf of the Board of Directors of CarolinaEast, we welcome this opportunity to remain locally owned and operated, while at the same time benefiting from affiliation with a globally renowned health system. The affiliation with UNC Health will be mutually valuable to both organizations, but most importantly to the people that call Eastern North Carolina home,” said **Allen Hardison**, Chairman of CarolinaEast Health System Board of Directors.



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The development of this affiliation underscores both UNC Health's and CarolinaEast's commitment to rural healthcare and will help focus the organization on delivering an even higher level of care throughout the region. CarolinaEast will become part of North Carolina's leading public academic health system that currently includes 12 other hospitals and hundreds of clinics throughout the state.

**CarolinaEast Health System is a** multi-facility healthcare provider to Eastern North Carolina. In addition to the system's flagship, 350 bed CarolinaEast Medical Center, CarolinaEast includes a rehabilitation hospital, free-standing surgery center, the SECU Comprehensive Cancer Center, and numerous CarolinaEast Physician practices providing primary and specialty care for all phases of life from offices in four counties.

CarolinaEast is unique in the special care the system takes to maintain a community feel while offering a level of care one would expect only from larger medical centers in metropolitan areas. For more than 55 years, the families of Eastern North Carolina have trusted CarolinaEast with their healthcare.

"I stand by the statement that there is no greater success story in Craven County than CarolinaEast Health System. From the 100 bed Craven County Hospital in 1963, to the multi-facility, top-ranked organization that touches over 400,000 lives per year that it is today. We believe this affiliation with UNC Health will continue to grow our legacy and help make Eastern NC a place that people love to call home," said Leggett.

Since 2014, CarolinaEast and UNC Health Care have partnered to make world-class cancer treatment available in Eastern North Carolina. This collaboration gave CarolinaEast access to the latest advances in prevention, detection and treatment coming from UNC Cancer Care—a top-tier comprehensive cancer center.

The 80,000 square feet SECU Comprehensive Cancer Center at CarolinaEast Medical Center opened its doors in January 2020 and its first year saw just over 34,000 patient visits, some of which may have had to travel elsewhere for the quality cancer care received right in Eastern NC. The Cancer Center currently has 262 clinical trial participants enrolled, made possible in large part due to the collaboration with UNC Health and the ability to leverage the resources of a large academic health system.

UNC Health and CarolinaEast share a commitment to improving rural healthcare in southeastern North Carolina and envision further improving access to high-quality healthcare close to home for the region. The collaboration will also increase primary and specialty services while growing access to an expanded network of care in the surrounding community.

Joining UNC Health will help CarolinaEast strengthen rural healthcare throughout the Eastern Region. This will take place through enhancements of CarolinaEast's medical capabilities and expanding the range of services CarolinaEast offers today.



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Among other initiatives and operations, UNC Health and CarolinaEast plan to:

- Form a high-performing network of facilities and clinicians focused on elevating public health, and keeping more care local by increasing access to primary and higher-level specialty services;
- Enhance and grow CarolinaEast's clinical programs and service lines;
- Improve access to research and clinical trials for patients across Eastern North Carolina;
- Leverage UNC Health's existing population health solutions to the benefit of the residents of the region;
- Explore rural healthcare models; and
- Transition CarolinaEast to the Epic® electronic health records system.

"We have long maintained that a robust, coordinated rural healthcare network is critical to the health of all North Carolinians," said **Wesley Burks**, MD, CEO of UNC Health. "Having CarolinaEast join our team will enhance our ability to provide high-quality healthcare that is locally accessible. We share a commitment to rural healthcare, which makes CarolinaEast's addition to our care delivery network a natural fit, benefitting the entire Eastern Region of the state."

#### **About CarolinaEast**

CarolinaEast Health System is the name given to the entire service line of CarolinaEast, a multi-faceted, multi-facility service, all of which is devoted to patient care. Under the CarolinaEast Health System organization, patients will find CarolinaEast Medical Center, CarolinaEast Surgery Center, CarolinaEast Diagnostic Center, CarolinaEast Emergency Care, CarolinaEast Home Care, CarolinaEast Rehabilitation Hospital, CarolinaEast Physicians and many more services with patients at the heart of all we do.

#### **About UNC Health**

UNC Health is an integrated health care system owned by the state of North Carolina and based in Chapel Hill. It exists to further the teaching mission of the University of North Carolina and to provide state-of-the-art patient care.

UNC Health is comprised of [UNC Hospitals](#) at Chapel Hill, ranked consistently among the best medical centers in the country; the [UNC School of Medicine](#), a nationally eminent research institution; [Pardee UNC Health Care](#) in Hendersonville; [Chatham Hospital](#) in Siler City; [Johnston Health](#) in Clayton and Smithfield; [UNC Lenoir Health Care](#) in Kinston; [Wayne UNC Health Care](#) in Goldsboro; [Caldwell UNC Health Care](#) in Lenoir; [Nash UNC Health Care](#) in Rocky Mount; [UNC Rockingham Health Care](#) in Eden, [Onslow Memorial Hospital](#) in Jacksonville, [UNC Health Southeastern](#) in Lumberton, [UNC REX Healthcare](#) and its provider network in Wake County; and the [UNC Physicians Network](#). For more information, please visit [www.unchealth.org](http://www.unchealth.org)

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