

Breathe Easy

Why do we breathe? Simply, it is the process that moves the air in and out of the lungs. Breathing nourishes the body with oxygen and removes carbon dioxide. The oxygen is transferred to the blood, and the heart pumps the blood to the rest of the body. But, since we're human, even the simplest things can go wrong.

As a pulmonologist and critical-care physician, Dr. Sidharth Bagga covers a wide range of lung disorders such as asthma, pneumonia, bronchitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). COPD can be a devastating illness, and unfortunately is one of the most common lung diseases. "Most of the people with COPD that I see have a combination of chronic bronchitis and emphysema, which involves destruction of the lungs over time," Dr. Bagga says.

Some of these illnesses are in our genes, they're inherited; some come to us by chance, like pneumonia. Others we get from our own poor choices.

Because many of Dr. Bagga's patients suffer from smoking-related diseases, he is a true advocate for preventative medicine. "Helping a

patient to quit smoking is a real passion of mine," he said. "This can be the most important step in their treatment. For patients who won't quit smoking the results can be very bleak. Those who won't quit can be looking at lung reduction or a lung transplant ... or worse."

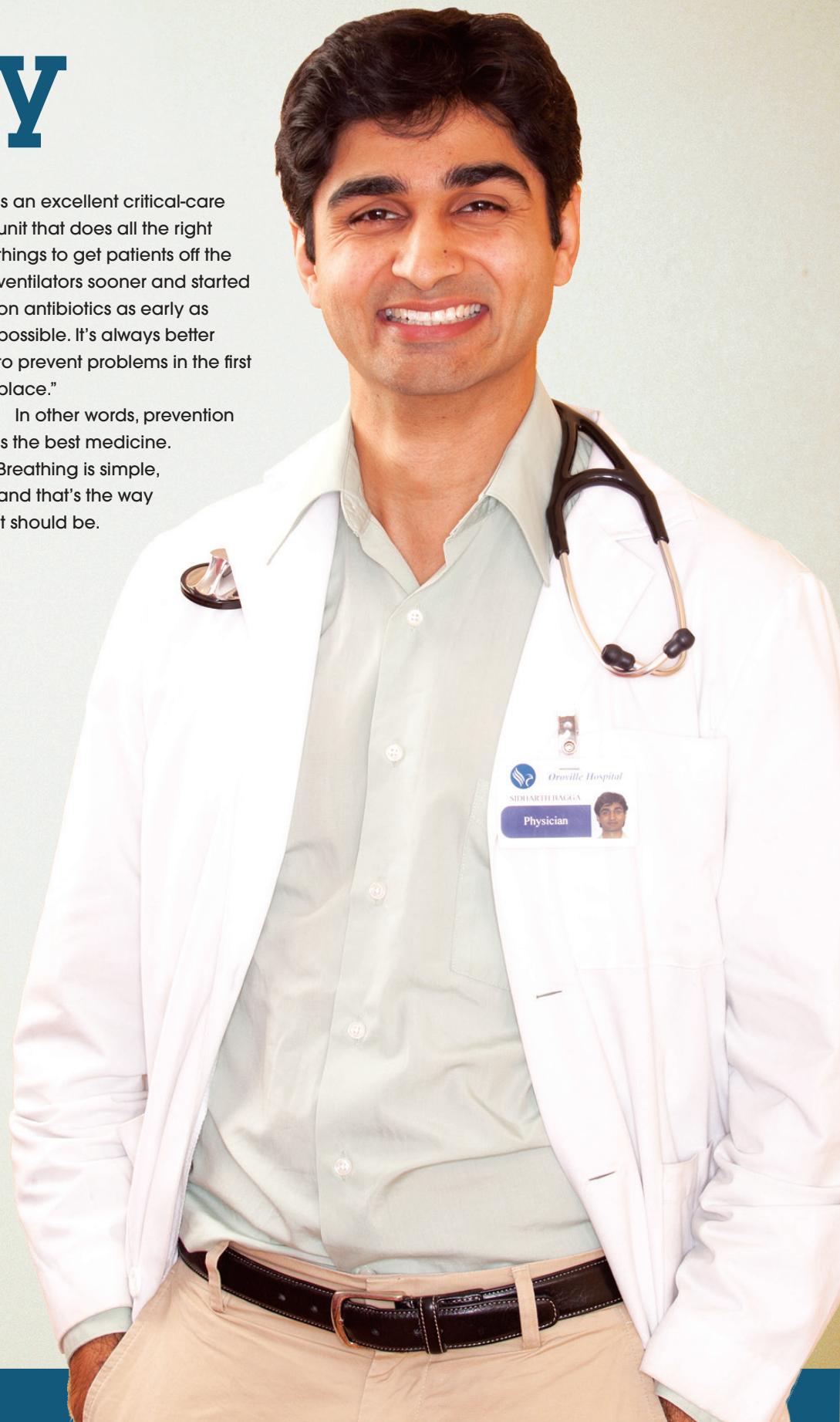
Dr. Bagga, who moved to the United States when he was 13 and speaks Hindi, Punjabi, and Spanish, understands that it is difficult to quit cold turkey. "There are many new options available that are quite effective that many people may not be aware of. And if one doesn't work, then we will try another until we do find something that works."

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The passion for prevention has its roots in Dr. Bagga's work as a critical-care physician, working with patients in the ICU who are on ventilators for life support. "We see the sickest of the sick," he said, adding, "although this

is an excellent critical-care unit that does all the right things to get patients off the ventilators sooner and started on antibiotics as early as possible. It's always better to prevent problems in the first place."

In other words, prevention is the best medicine. Breathing is simple, and that's the way it should be.



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