



An Intensive Focus on Care

McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine affiliated faculty member [Derek Angus, MD](#), Professor and Chair of Critical Care Medicine, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, was named by *HealthLeaders* magazine as one of the “20 People Who Make Healthcare Better—2014.” In its annual HealthLeaders 20, the magazine profiles individuals who are changing healthcare for the better. Some that are named are longtime industry fixtures; others would clearly be considered outsiders. Some are revered; others would not win many popularity contests. All in all, those on the list are making a difference in healthcare.



As reported by *HealthLeaders* magazine’s Cheryl Clark, Dr. Angus has distinguished himself as an expert in the operations, cost, and efficiency of the intensive care unit, especially as it cares for patients with sepsis and septic shock, which strikes more than a million Americans a year.

“Sepsis is a huge public health problem, a sleeping giant because people don’t even hear the word. It’s essentially what kills you from bacterial infections,” he says.

An emerging topic of Dr. Angus’ team research is related to ICU psychosis, the phenomenon of hallucinations and delirium that mysteriously affects some ICU patients, usually those with longer lengths of stay. “They often have vivid nightmares about the terrible things happening to the people in the beds next to them,” Dr. Angus says. It’s a frightening experience for everyone, and wears down doctors and staff trying to reassure and explain the symptoms to these patients and their families.

The cause is poorly understood, but Dr. Angus believes sepsis plays a role, including the actual biological process of brain inflammation. “It steepens your subsequent rate of cognition decline. It’s not every patient, but some patients who develop ICU psychosis never return to baseline, and even 6 months later have attention-, memory-, and other deficit disorders,” he says.

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