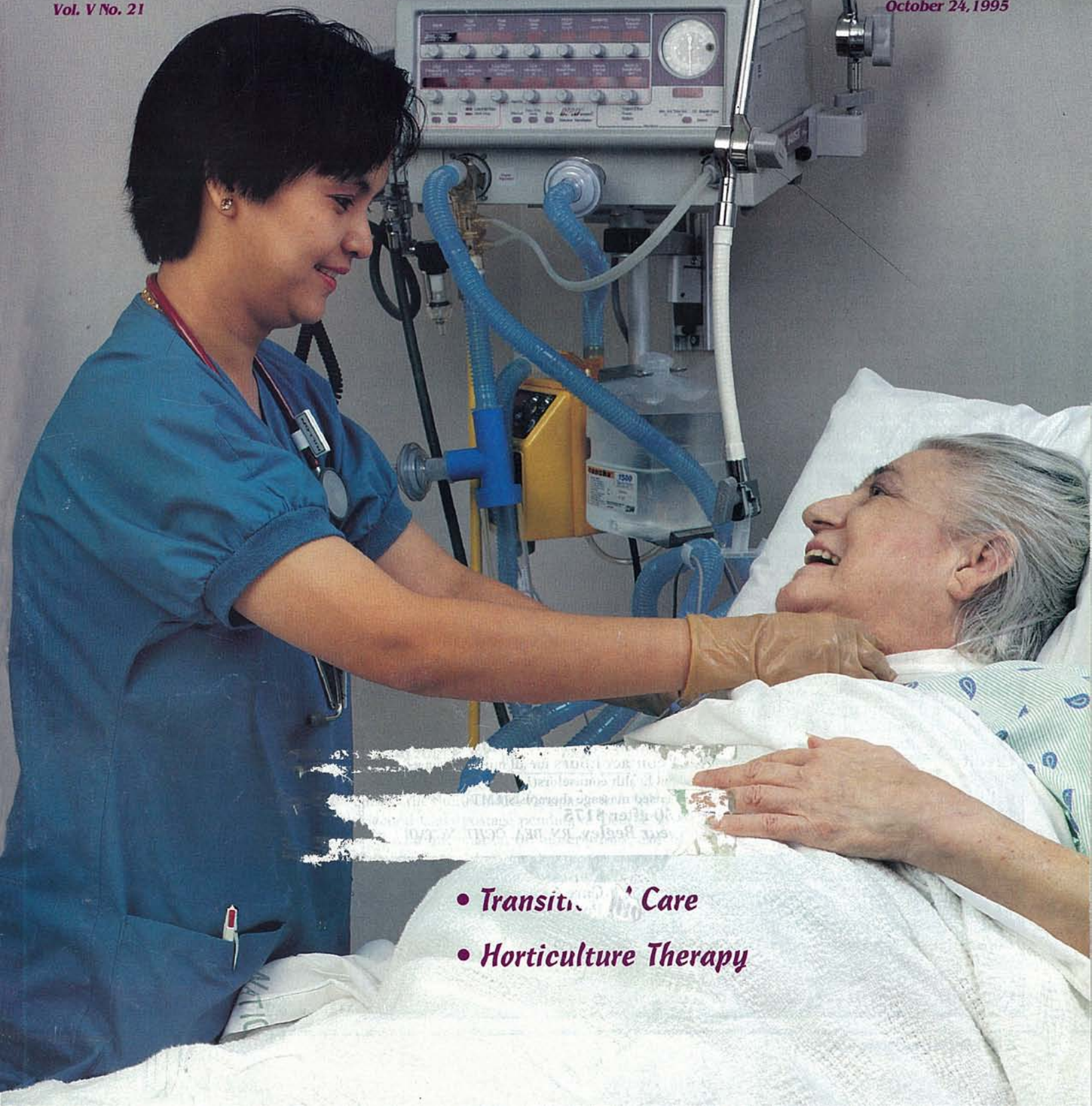


The Pulse Of Florida's Health Care Opportunities

VITAL SIGNS

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- *Transitional Care*
- *Horticulture Therapy*

Implanting Horticulture Therapy

The diminutive woman carefully dug several small holes in the soil. She then placed a basil plant in each space and packed the earth around it . . . It could be any woman working in her garden on a Sunday morning, but this woman is participating in a new type of therapy that encourages working with her hands in a nurturing, stress-free environment.

Horticulture therapy offers another avenue of expression for patients at The Renfrew Center, a comprehensive women's mental health care facility in Coconut Creek.

"Horticulture therapy is

the use of plants to improve the mind, body and spirit," said Robert Bornstein, HTR, horticulture therapist for The Renfrew Center and Sunrise resident. "By nurturing a plant, patients turn outward from their ailments."

At The Renfrew Center, women are treated for depression, compulsive behaviors, eating disorders, abuse, substance dependencies, anxiety and other mental health problems.

Horticulture therapy is offered to women at The Renfrew Center because "we

provide a variety of therapies so that our patients have different ways to get in touch with their feelings," said Barbara Peterson, administrator of The Center, where art therapy, movement therapy and psychodrama is also offered. "Many times the women who come to us have deeply buried feelings, and working with the soil can be cathartic. Expression is one of the first steps toward healing."

Patients also learn to nurture plants and that helps boost self esteem.

"Sometimes patients need to learn to nurture, to care for

something else. This provides a sense of purpose and decreases depression, frustration and feelings of helplessness."

In horticulture therapy, there's emphasis on sensory awareness. "Touching, tasting and smelling all bring memories that patients need to consider or express," said Bornstein. Patients also learn about the culinary and medicinal aspects of herbs, as they create a herb garden. At Renfrew, patients have planted mint, basil, chives, thyme, parsley and sage.



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