

Community Update

Fall 2009

Letter from Dennis Vonderfecht

Over the past few weeks, hospitals in Tennessee and Virginia have received the news that TennCare and Medicaid reimbursement will likely be severely cut due to the poor financial conditions that our states are experiencing. For hospitals, this means that these programs, which already reimburse us at significantly less than cost, will now see an increased gap between cost and reimbursement.



These projected cuts in TennCare and Medicaid are being discussed at the same time that Congress is debating a healthcare reform bill that may contain a public option. A public option would move some segment of our patient base from commercial insurance reimbursement to Medicare rates, which again reimburses hospitals at less than cost. With the aging of the Baby Boomers population, it appears to be a certainty that for an increasingly larger portion of our patient base, we will be reimbursed at rates that currently do not fully cover our costs.

As we face this likely future, it will be important for MSHA to place an even stronger focus on expense reduction, with a goal to reduce our costs so that we break even on the care being provided to Medicare patients. Currently, MSHA is reimbursed approximately 92% of our costs for Medicare patients. Obviously, this gap must be reduced if we are to be a viable organization under a reformed healthcare system.

The good news out of all of this is that there are opportunities to reduce cost

through standardization of processes, both clinical and non-clinical, that will result in improved efficiency and improved quality. From the clinical side, development and use of standardized physician order sets based upon evidenced-based medicine will enable the adoption of best practices across MSHA, which in turn will lower costs. The adoption of these standardized order sets will be enabled by the implementation of the electronic health record, or Project: Safety First, as it is known within MSHA.

Other opportunities for cost savings will occur through an ongoing review of services provided at each of our facilities to ensure that unnecessary duplication is eliminated. A recent example of a decision aimed at reducing duplication occurred with the closing of the psych services of Indian Path Pavilion, consolidating underperforming services at two behavioral health inpatient facilities into one facility--Woodridge Hospital. The past has seen much change within MSHA, and the future of healthcare reform dictates even more changes in the months and years ahead. This future will no doubt be very challenging, but working together as a team with our community will allow MSHA continued success in meeting the healthcare needs of our region.

Best wishes,

Dennis Vonderfecht, FACHE
President/CEO

IPMC Auxiliary supports new surgery waiting room at IPMC

The Indian Path Medical Center Auxiliary Board of Directors donated \$5,000 Sept. 9 to be used to furnish a new surgery waiting room at IPMC.

The \$5,000 check was presented to Monty McLaurin, vice president and CEO of IPMC, by Frances Adams, the new Auxiliary president.

The new waiting room is an area for surgery patients' families to have a cup of coffee and a cookie, obtain patient updates and speak privately with their family member's surgeon.

"On behalf of Indian Path Medical Center, we are incredibly pleased with the continued support our Auxiliary provides," McLaurin said. "The Auxiliary has made several projects in the past possible, and through their continued support we are able to sustain our commitment to patient-centered care."



Photo ID: Left to right, Cora Christian and Jo Christian, volunteers for the IPMC Auxiliary; Monty McLaurin, vice president and CEO for IPMC; and Rick Heaton, director of Plant Operations at IPMC.

Dispensary of Hope now seeing the uninsured

The free pharmacy for the uninsured in Washington County, Tenn., is now filling prescriptions.

The Dispensary of Hope, part of a statewide network of free pharmacies that offer non-narcotic medications to those without pharmaceutical insurance, opened its doors earlier this summer with initial efforts at gathering donated medications from area physicians and pharmacies. The Dispensary collected enough medications over the summer that it has now opened its doors to start filling prescriptions for those in need.

“We have collected more than \$50,000 worth of medications since May,” said Dr. Joy Weikle-Waddell, the Dispensary’s pharmacist. “The support has been great, but the need is greater, and we are still working hard to increase the support from local physicians and pharmacists.”

While the Dispensary is an independent entity, Mountain States Health Alliance is supplying \$500,000 over the next four

years as seed money until the pharmacy increases local fundraising. Mountain States is also providing support services, such as the clinical staff at the pharmacy. The ETSU College of Pharmacy is providing student volunteers for the Dispensary.

“Part of our goal is to decrease the burden on local emergency rooms by working to help people avoid getting sick because they don’t have the medications they need,” Weikle-Waddell said.

The Dispensary is a not-for-profit organization providing short- and long-term assistance for Washington County residents who are uninsured.

“So far, as we have been seeing our first patients this month, many of our requests have been for maintenance medications to treat high blood pressure, diabetes and things like that,” the pharmacist said. “We’ve also had requests for Epi-pens, which serve as emergency treatment for those who

suffer from severe allergic reactions. That’s something you can’t get patient assistance for and that the drug reps don’t have to donate.”

Those in need of prescriptions must be Washington County, Tenn., residents, or have been discharged from a Johnson City hospital recently. Referrals must be made by a private healthcare provider or from an organization such as the Washington County Department of Health or the Johnson City Downtown Clinic and may be referred for a screening at Appalachia Project Access, which provides additional medical assistance. The Dispensary also helps patients enroll in Patient Assistance Programs through pharmacy companies. Once approved, there is no charge for the medication.

The Dispensary is located at 401 Elm St., Johnson City, near the Downtown Clinic. For more information, call 423-431-1570.

Einstein Bros. opens second location inside JCMC

The comforting scents of coffee brewing and pastries baking now greet visitors to Johnson City Medical Center.

Einstein Bros. Bagels has opened a new location inside JCMC, offering a full menu to patients, their families, hospital team members and other customers.

Although the new location opened earlier this summer, its grand opening event on Sept. 17 allowed customers to try samples and enter a door prize drawing.

The new eatery offers frozen blended drinks, espressos, bagel dogs, hot sandwiches, soup, pizza bagels, breakfast sandwiches and more. Breakfast is served all day.

The new location of Einstein Bros., like the first one located on the lower level of JCMC, is run by the JCMC Auxiliary.

“All profit goes back to the Auxiliary, which in turn goes back into the

hospital,” said Tommy Lawson, Einstein Bros. general manager. “That benefits things like buying equipment for the hospital and Niswonger Children’s Hospital, as well as nursing scholarships.”

Donation jars at the two Einstein Bros. locations have already raised more than \$5,000 for Niswonger Children’s Hospital, Lawson said.

One big draw to Einstein Bros. is the coffee.

“Our coffee is very good blends - premium, fair trade coffees,” Lawson said. Bagels and pastries are baked on site on a daily basis.

Many JCMC team members have become “regulars” at the new Einstein Bros.

“The frozen drinks are excellent,” said Becky Trout, a clinical appeals nurse. “The frozen mocha is to die for, especially if you have a sweet tooth.”

Linda Jones, also a clinical appeals nurse, said, “The mixed berry coffee cake is excellent.”

For lunch, Lawson recommends the sandwiches. “My personal favorite is the Italian chicken,” he said. But, “our biggest seller is the pizza bagels.”

For the diet-conscious, Einstein Bros. offers salads and parfaits, and most coffee drinks can be made with skim milk and sugar-free syrup.

Einstein Bros. also caters inside and outside the hospital in the Johnson City area.

Although seating is limited in the immediate Einstein Bros. area, tables are available in the JCMC lobby.

For more information about Einstein Bros., visit www.einsteinbros.com.

New MRIs installed at Johnson City Medical Center

Johnson City Medical Center recently installed a new 3.0 Tesla MRI scanner in its Diagnostic Imaging Department, replacing its 1.5T MRI scanner.

“The power of the 3.0 Tesla system provides expanded capabilities with outstanding image quality. It has exquisite image resolution,” said Linda Frazier, director of diagnostic imaging at Mountain States Health Alliance. “The system helps us simplify operations by improving efficiencies in order to spend more time focusing on what’s most important: the needs of our patients and image quality.”

JCMC also has a 1.0T Open MRI scanner, giving the hospital two new units to better serve the emergency department as well as inpatient and outpatient populations. The Panorama High Field Open MRI of the 1.0T scanner provides a 360-degree panoramic viewing angle and spacious 160 cm-wide opening, ensuring a comfortable, relaxing MRI experience for anxious, elderly, obese or

claustrophobic patients.

JCMC also utilizes the Philips Ambient Experience, which helps calm the patient by allowing him or her to personalize the clinical environment. The patients have greater involvement in their own treatment, which reduces anxiety and procedure time. Part of the Ambient Experience at JCMC is focused on children with the addition of a “Kitten Scanner.” The Kitten Scanner is designed to provide a playful setting to prepare children before the scan.

The child can choose a toy, place it on the miniature patient table and slide it into the Kitten Scanner. This triggers an animated story that explains why the toy is being scanned and how a scanner works. As children play with the scanner, they’re less likely to worry about the upcoming procedure. Because playing is associated with positive feelings, the child can relax and feel more comfortable.

For more information, call the JCMC MRI Department at 423-431-6188.

Niswonger Children’s Hospital receives book donation

More than \$1,000 worth of new books were donated to Niswonger Children’s Hospital by customers of the Kingsport Waldenbooks location through the store’s Fall Book Drive.

“The books are chosen by our customers and collected by us,” said Karen Christian, manager of Waldenbooks in the Kingsport Town Center. “We are so grateful for their generosity. They recognize the importance of reading to kids and get excited about sharing their favorite books.”

The Kingsport book store holds book drives several times during the year and donates the collected items to regional nonprofits. The books are then distributed by the receiving group free of charge. The 10 boxes of books donated to Niswonger were for a variety of ages and reading

levels, as well as diverse interest groups.

The books are being placed in the waiting area of the Children’s Emergency Department to be used by patients coming for treatment and visitors. The Children’s Emergency Department, part of Niswonger Children’s Hospital, and located next to Johnson City Medical Center’s Emergency Department, is the only such emergency room in the region designed only for kids.

“Coming to the ER can be intimidating for children, and having positive distractions such as these donated books really is beneficial,” said Lisa Smithgall, vice president for Women’s and Children’s Services at Mountain States Health Alliance, the parent company for Niswonger Children’s and JCMC.

Kohl’s continues partnership with hospital at jump rope clinic

Heavy rains Sept. 26 didn’t diminish the excitement as Niswonger Children’s Hospital held a jump rope clinic and received a large donation from Kohl’s in Johnson City as part of the Kohl’s Cares for Kids program.

“Niswonger Children’s Hospital is very excited to continue our partnership with Kohl’s Cares for Kids,” said Lisa Smithgall, vice president of Women’s and Children’s Services for Mountain States Health Alliance, who accepted the \$42,231 check from the Kohl’s team. “Obesity and efforts to improve habits of children have been ongoing concerns in our local community. Kohl’s Kids on the Move has been a visible program in the community for the past two years.”

As part of the effort to get kids moving, Tri-Force, a competitive jump rope team from Cary, N.C., led the 30 children who came out to participate in the jump rope clinic.

“The coach and jumpers gave a demonstration highlighting their skills and explaining basics about jump roping and competitive jumping,” said Joanna Swinehart, communications and outreach coordinator for Niswonger. “Then the Tri-Force team partnered with Fit Kids at the skills stations during the clinic. Tri-Force also provided instructor training to the Fit Kids instructors after the event. We had lots of interest from our participants to start a local jump rope team, and Coach Sh’ay from Tri-Force is providing us with information to help us do this as well.”

Schools and children’s organizations interested in having a jump rope clinic are encouraged to call Swinehart at 423-431-1014 to have a trainer come help their kids get into the swing.

Dragon Boat brings out paddlers, donors to help children

Thousands of spectators and 46 teams came together Sept. 19 to raise nearly \$100,000 for Niswonger Children's Hospital at the 2009 Mountain States Dragon Boat Festival.

"We are really pleased with the continued support of the community and how they come out to be a part of this wonderful event," said Tammy Bishop, chair of the Dragon Boat Committee, organized by Mountain States Foundation.

A total of \$94,099 was raised by the event involving teams of 21 participants representing churches, businesses and regional organizations. The race took place at Winged Deer Park with craft and food vendors as well as live music, a children's play area and plenty of socializing.

"The dollars raised are going to go toward what's called the Kangaroo Rocker Recliners," said MSF President Pat

Holtsclaw, adding the recliners can also be used as sleeper chairs, which creates a second space in each pediatric patient room for a parent or family member to sleep overnight with the child.

The Mitch Cox Development Firecrackers came out on top with the first-place prize. Laughlin, a team from Greeneville, finished in second place, and the James H. & Cecile C. Quillen Rehabilitation Hospital's Rehab Warriors finished in third place. Second Wind, a team from Smyth County Community Hospital in Marion, Va., was awarded the Drag-On-And-On-And-On Award for coming in last place during the race.

Patty Bolton, MSF director of events, said it takes volunteers a year of work to prepare for each festival. A professional Dragon Boat company from Nova Scotia comes down in the fall to coach local teams the week before the race and to pilot the boats the day of the race.

"This is truly a unique and exciting event for our region. Thousands of people come out to watch, enjoy the weather and help raise funds for the region's children's hospital," Bolton said.



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