

The DEEAT

Harris County Hospital District, Medical School Partners Sign New Agreement

By Shannon Rasp

The Harris County Hospital District, Baylor College of Medicine, and The University of Texas Medical School at Houston have renewed their operating contracts with Affiliated Medical Services (AMS), ensuring that the hospital district will continue to offer its patients access to many of the most respected medical care providers in the country.

The deal between the Harris County Hospital District and AMS, which represents the hospital district's two medical school partners, is budgeted at over \$121 million for the period between July 2007 and June 2008. The contract continues the longstanding arrangement of the medical schools' physicians practicing in the district's hospitals and clinics.

However, in the years since the previous agreement was signed in 1990, many changes have occurred in the health care environment that necessitated an extensive re-evaluation of the terms of the agreement. Some of the significant changes that are incorporated into this new agreement include:

- Conversion of the current contracting payment methodology from a full-time equivalent basis to a productivity-based scale;
- Providing the hospital district with an option to utilize non-medical school providers in the delivery of health care, when necessary;
- Changing the agreement from a fixed 20-year term to a rolling five-year period;



Hospital district President and CEO David S. Lopez, left, celebrated the signing of a new agreement between the hospital district and Affiliated Medical Services at the March 29 board meeting with Dr. Jose Garcia, right, general director of AMS and an associate professor of pediatrics at UT-Houston.

- Performance and quality indicators are incorporated into the agreement, establishing an objective accountability system that will measure the effectiveness of services provided;

- Incentives to providers who achieve or exceed performance-based goals, as well as disincentives or discounted rates of payment for subcontractors' or providers' non-compliance with standards of patient care.

"Affiliated Medical Services is pleased to renew its longtime partnership with the Harris County Hospital District by signing a new affiliation agreement," said Jose Garcia, general director of AMS and a UT-Houston associate professor of pediatrics. "AMS

will continue to partner with the hospital district to provide quality medical care to the residents of Harris County."

"The hospital district and both medical schools share a dedication to providing quality medical services to patients, the promotion of personal and community health, and the education and training of medical students, interns, residents, fellows, and other health and hospital personnel," said HCHD President and CEO David S. Lopez. "The revised agreement allows HCHD and AMS to continue working collaboratively to meet the health care needs of Harris County residents."

HCHD to Require Direct Deposit of Paychecks

By Shannon Rasp

As part of its continued dedication to becoming a Most Efficient Organization, the Harris County Hospital District will convert to a completely automated distribution of employee pay by April 30.

"This is how almost all major organizations, including Harris County, handle their pay distribution," said Gwen Huskey, controller of fiscal operations for the hospital district.

"Many organizations in the public and private sector have mandatory automated distribution of employee paychecks such

as direct deposit," said Liz Alhand, chief financial officer. "All new employees of the district are required to utilize direct deposit, and now all employees will be required to do so."

The major convenience of direct deposit is that employees do not have to go to the bank to personally deposit paychecks. Another advantage is that employees will be able to access their pay in the event of a major disaster, as the physical printing and distribution of pay checks may not be possible in those situations. The payroll can

be processed offsite if necessary, and the pay is electronically deposited to the employee's bank account.

All employees who do not currently use direct deposit will receive a letter in the mail along with a form to fill out and return to the Payroll Department. Once they return the form, payroll will verify the employee's bank information with the next paycheck. The paycheck after that will be directly deposited into the employee's bank account. For any questions or more information, contact Lois Parker at 713-566-6743.

Display Raises Colorectal Cancer Awareness

By Connie Chavez

On March 9, representatives from the Ben Taub Cancer Resource Center and the Cancer Registry Department hit the pavement outside of the hospital to raise awareness about colorectal cancer and the importance of regular screenings. The Super Colon, a 25-foot interactive model of the human colon, was also on display to help guests understand the physiological implications of the disease.

Colorectal cancer primarily affects men and women 50 years and older, and it is the second most common cancer killer in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, most colorectal cancer deaths can be prevented through regular screenings.

"There are patients who don't want to be screened because they're afraid of what doctors may find," said Laura Pena, cancer resource coordinator, who was among those

talking to visitors about the disease. "What they don't realize is how important it is to have regular screenings and how it can improve their outcomes in case there is something to be concerned about."

Interactive and self-guided tours of the Super Colon provided a visual representation of what a healthy colon looks like, as well as one with varying stages of cancer. Pena and other health care professionals were also available to provide additional information and answer questions.

The Super Colon exhibit travels across the



Cancer resource coordinator Laura Pena (center) talked to visitors outside of Ben Taub General Hospital about the importance of getting regular screenings for colorectal cancer for those 50 and older. The Super Colon exhibit and education fair on March 9 marked Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

country raising awareness of colorectal cancer and is provided courtesy of The Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation and Sanofi Aventis.

Ben Taub Trauma Outreach and Prevention Benefit from "Kick It Up" Trail Ride

By John F. Martinez

About 30 horses, four roosters and a goat comprised the livestock participating in the Ben Taub General Hospital Trauma Services Department's Kick It Up for Injury Prevention trail ride and "go western"-themed weekend celebration March 23-24, benefiting the Harris County Hospital District's trauma outreach and prevention.

The fund raiser raised about \$2,800, which will be received and then distributed by the HCHD Foundation. It featured a 16-mile trail ride with nearly 100 participants, some riding in covered wagons. Other festivities during the weekend included dinners, dances and a live auction at the Pasadena Convention Center and Fairgrounds. In all, about 150 people attended the events.

"Trauma Services does not utilize budget funds, which are designated to care for the ill or injured residents of Harris County, to carry out our outreach and injury prevention activities," said Sheila Henderson, trauma



Jeff Webster, left, administrator at Ben Taub General Hospital, wished good luck to Joe Boone, biomed specialist with LBJ General Hospital and a member of the Southwest Trail Ride, as the caravan of horses and vehicles left the Pasadena Convention Center and Fairgrounds at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, March 24. The 16-mile ride was part of the Kick It Up for Injury Prevention fundraiser benefiting the trauma and outreach efforts of Ben Taub.

injury prevention and outreach coordinator. "We depend upon donations and grants for funding. The trail ride fund raiser was one

of our largest activities, and provided a fun and safe family environment for HCHD employees and their families as well as residents of Harris County to show their support for injury prevention activities."

The money raised will fund future outreach and injury prevention activities in Harris County, including "Shattered Dreams," a program that addresses the consequences of drinking and driving for high school juniors and seniors, and Helmet Safety, a program geared toward fourth- and fifth-graders that teaches bicycle safety.

Jeff Webster, administrator of Ben Taub, greeted the trail ride as it left the fairgrounds. Participants included members of the Saltgrass Trail Ride, one of the premiere participating groups from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Trail ride Grand Marshall Dr. Matt Carrick, trauma surgeon at the Ginni and Richard Mithoff Trauma Center and Emergency Center at Ben Taub, rode in a sponsor truck provided by Dodge.

"It's not often that you can dress western for a good cause," he said. "Getting the word out and helping our injury prevention outreach in the community is always a good thing."



Steve Peardon, nursing director of medicine at Ben Taub General Hospital, was at ease in the saddle during the 16-mile trail ride. Peardon's ongoing work with the Saltgrass Trail Ride, one of the premiere participants in the annual Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, inspired the fundraiser.



David S. Lopez, left, president and CEO of the hospital district, and Evans Atwell, right, chairman of the HCHD Board of Managers, received a check for \$1.9 million from Community Health Choice representatives at the March 29 board meeting. This marked the final payment of a loan the hospital district made to CHC several years ago. Representing CHC were Dr. Glen Johnson, second from right, CEO, and Charlie Moore, chairman of the CHC's board.

District-Wide Innovation Network Launched

By Nicole Aguilar Benningfield

Who could know that an idea from Wal-Mart, when adopted as a best practice by the Harris County Hospital District, would improve services at both Ben Taub and LBJ general hospitals?

That is exactly what happened when materials management noted the superstore's practice of stocking merchandise at night and began doing the same thing with medical supplies at the hospitals. This innovation in supply stocking has successfully relieved hospital elevator and hallway congestion during the day. It also has provided timelier and higher-quality service to patient care units.

This simple innovation in process redesign increased patient and staff satisfaction, as well as increased efficiency of operations for materials management.

Do you have an innovative idea that could save the hospital district money or streamline an unwieldy process? If so, you are invited to submit your idea to the Innovation Network, the hospital district's new suggestion program.

The HCHD Innovation Network encourages employees to think about ways to improve patient care, processes and/or the environment. Previously, Ben Taub and LBJ each operated their own innovation programs. Hospital district administration then decided that one program would better serve the district and our patients, and launched the HCHD Innovation Network.

"We have 7,000 employees, and we know



Students from Horn Academy performed square dancing routines for HCHD employees at the launch of the HCHD Innovation Network at Holly Hall March 9.

you all have ideas that could improve our organization," said George Masi, COO, at the March 9 Innovation Network kick-off event at Holly Hall.

For instance, at Aldine Health Center, staff cut patient wait time for the STAT Prenatal Urinalysis test from 27.9 minutes to 13.6 minutes by re-engineering a process.

"This shows you our employees have a wealth of knowledge and information," said Andrea Kelley, the HCHD Innovation Network coordinator. "Often they can tell us the best way to fix a problem or how to do something better, and through the Innovation Network, the hospital district is committed to listening to them."

With the Innovation Network, employees are encouraged to propose their suggestions to "innovation champions." These are the designated Innovation Network liaisons who will evaluate how the proposed innovation will improve patient care, processes and/or the environment. Once the idea is reviewed, the innovation champion will facilitate the adoption and implementation of the idea.

If an innovation can be applied to other

organizational elements, it may be adopted as a best practice at other facilities as well.

"Working as a team, we can improve our organization," said David S. Lopez, president and CEO. "I want to challenge everyone – individuals or teams – to come up with an innovation that will help us improve patient care, the environment or a process."

For more information about the Innovation Network, call Andrea Kelley at 713-873-6100.



Jesse Ruiz, Ben Taub assistant administrator (left), Gloria Montross, LBJ assistant administrator, and Dr. Lester Martinez-Lopez, LBJ administrator, showed their support for the students from Horn Academy, who entertained HCHD employees by square dancing at the launch of the HCHD Innovation Network.



Andrea Kelley (center), HCHD Innovation Network coordinator, joined George Masi, COO, and David S. Lopez, president and CEO, in enjoying the March 9 launch of the HCHD Innovation Network.

Employee Recognition Program Revamped

By Nicole Aguilar Benningfield

The Employee Recognition Program has been revamped, enabling patients, guests, physicians and volunteers, along with Harris County Hospital District employees, to nominate staffers as ServiceFIRST Heroes and employees of the quarter.

"We're here to serve our patients," said Lesa McLeod, manager of patient satisfaction and customer service. "Their opinion is important to us, and we feel it's important they have a part in choosing our ServiceFIRST Heroes and employees of the quarter."

That's not the only change – to be an employee of the quarter, a person must now be chosen as a ServiceFIRST Hero first.

The hospital district's goal is to create a culture of service excellence. To achieve that goal, ServiceFIRST was created to define the behaviors that employees are expected to demonstrate to ensure a

positive patient experience.

The ServiceFIRST Hero nominee should exemplify the ServiceFIRST standards of behavior – friendliness, integrity, responsibility, satisfaction and teamwork.

So if you know someone who exemplifies the standards, pick up a nomination form, which are printed in both English and Spanish and readily available on wall-mounted posters and countertop displays throughout all hospital district facilities.

Nominators will be asked to explain how the employee went above and beyond, exceeded expectations, and provided outstanding customer service.

Each facility has a designated drop box, which is periodically emptied. The nominations forms are then reviewed by the ServiceFIRST Hero selection committee.

If chosen as a ServiceFIRST Hero, the person will then be eligible for consideration

as an employee of the quarter at the end of the quarter in which they received their award.

Every quarter there will be 16 ServiceFIRST Heroes chosen as the employees of the quarter – four from Ben Taub General Hospital and Quentin Mease Community Hospital, four from LBJ General Hospital, four from Holly Hall, the eligibility centers and information technology, and four from the Community Health Program.

"We are introducing the program to our customers and patients with eye-catching posters and nomination forms," McLeod said. "Our intent is for those ordinary employees who do extraordinary things every day to get the recognition they deserve."

Recipients will be recognized at a quarterly luncheon. They will receive a plaque, a \$100 award, free parking for the following quarter, and will be featured in a special insert of The Beat.

By Nicole Aguilar Benningfield

Jan. 16, 2007, was a cold, wet, miserable day. The weather forecasters advised Houstonians to stay off the roads if at all possible, because the combination of cold temperatures and rain could be hazardous. The Harris County Hospital District even shut down its health centers during the icy weather.

With the rain coming down non-stop, the parking lot at Acres Home Health Center was quickly turning into a lake. The water was rising, and a blockage in the drain basin meant it had nowhere to go.

"If we have a freeze tonight, this will be hazardous for staff and patients," wrote Barbara Prince, director of Acres Home, in an e-mail to facilities management. "Many patients that ride the bus had to walk through the water just to get into the center."

Meanwhile, water in the employee parking lot already was up to mid-calf. Employees had to park as close as possible to the building, where water had yet to collect.

Luckily, Ed Hubbard, director of engineering, was on hand to assess the

situation. The City of Houston's Public Works Department came by, but told Hubbard they couldn't do anything because the blockage was on Acres' side of the drain, not the city's.

After laboring for hours in the cold, wet rain, HCHD Engineering, with the help of a plumbing company, was finally able to remove the blockage at 10 p.m. Hubbard discovered that the basin and pipes were full of leaves, bottles, sticks and trash, which resulted in the clogged system.

Once the crisis had passed, Hubbard recommended installing small mesh grates over the drain basins to prevent trash from getting into the drains, which was promptly done. Facilities management also plans to "jet" the pipes once a year to prevent trash collecting in the drains.

Two months later, Hubbard responded to another emergency at Robert Carrasco School-Based Clinic, where a burst pipe had flooded the clinic. Within 15 minutes of being notified, Hubbard was on-site and stopped the flooding.

"Ed Hubbard has been an asset to our program and staff," wrote Christina Mintner, director of school-based clinics and the mobile program, in a commendation letter. "His willingness to assist and provide guidance in the areas of facility improvement, regulatory compliance, and emergency situations has been invaluable."

"Mr. Hubbard truly exemplifies what a ServiceFIRST Hero is," said Lesa McLeod, manager of patient satisfaction and customer service. "He not only took responsibility for solving a problem that affected our patients and employees, he went above and beyond expectations by making sure the job was done correctly and completely."



Ed Hubbard

ACCOLADES

Mabelen Austria, nurse manager at Ben Taub General Hospital, was awarded a \$2,000 grant from the Houston Organization of Nurse Executives to conduct her study, "Comparison of self-reported and perceived leadership behaviors and practices upon employee satisfaction and organizational commitment."

William (Bill) Hendrix from the vascular laboratory at Ben Taub General Hospital will present an abstract, "Recurrent Varicose Veins in a Hispanic Patient Population: Knowledge of Venous Embryology Essential to Diagnosis and Treatment," at the Society for Vascular Ultrasound's 30th Anniversary Annual Conference June 7-9 in Baltimore, Maryland.

Dr. Margo Hilliard-Alford, senior vice president of community services, will receive the Clark-Curran Award in Medical Administration from her alma mater, the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center. The award recognizes alumni who demonstrate outstanding teaching

ability and contribute greatly to medical administration. The award will be given to Hilliard on April 28 in Brooklyn, New York.

Carol Oddo, vice president of Patient and Public Affairs, has been selected to participate in the National Association of Public Hospitals Fellows Program. This honor is shared by just 28 professionals from safety net hospitals across the country. Each fellow will work to advance this year's program theme, "Strengthening the Voice of Public Hospitals through Advocacy Training."

Kenn Kirksey, director of nursing research and clinical outcomes, had an abstract he co-authored, "Health Literacy and Health Outcomes in HIV Seropositive Persons," accepted for poster presentation at the Institute of Healthcare Advancement's 6th Annual Health Literacy Conference, to be held in May in Irvine, California.

Ralph Pleasant of Information Technology was honored as a Friends of Friends 2007

Positive Influential African-American Male. The award is given to African-American men who are positive role models in the community.

The 30 members of **Team Thomas Street Health Center** raised \$4,700 by participating in the March 11 AIDS Walk Houston 2007. The team included staff, patients, friends and family members. The money will assist AIDS Foundation Houston in supporting the needs of HIV/AIDS patients in Harris County. This was the largest participation from Thomas Street in six years. Top staff fund raiser was Deb Trimble, nurse practitioner, who raised \$1,000.

Karen White, nursing director of ambulatory care at LBJ General Hospital, was elected to the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses' (AORN) National Nominating Committee from Texas for 2007-2008 at the 54th AORN Congress held in Orlando, Florida. She was also a featured speaker on the topic, "On Call: Is It Safe or Unsafe?"

May Service Standard: Teamwork

1. Be supportive and respectful of one another. Set each other up for success.
2. Cooperate in combined efforts to exceed what can be accomplished individually by willingly contributing your talents.
3. Conduct yourself as a professional and treat every colleague as a professional. Recognize that we each have areas of expertise.
4. Welcome new employees by being supportive, offering help and setting an example of cooperation.
5. If we all work hard to make one another look good, our strength as a whole will be seen and appreciated by all in our care.

The Beat is published by the Harris County Hospital District's Department of Corporate Communications.

For comments or questions, e-mail news@hchd.tmc.edu