

The BEAT

HCHD Opens Diagnostic Medical Sonography Program

By Nicole M. Benningfeld

The Harris County Hospital District's School of Diagnostic Medical Imaging is opening a Diagnostic Medical Sonography Program, which begins its inaugural class in September 2008.

The new program, prepares students for a career in diagnostic medical sonography – more commonly known as ultrasound.

Sonography is a dynamic profession that has grown significantly during the past 20 years, due to the advances in technology.

"This field is competitive," said Dr. Cleveland Black, director of the hospital district's school of diagnostic medical imaging. "There are only 13 accredited ultrasound programs in the State of Texas, each of those generally graduate 10 sonographers a year."

Black saw the success rate of the hospital district's school of medical radiography educational program and realized the hospital district could do the same with sonography.

Currently, the hospital district uses agency sonographers or recent sonography graduates to fill vacant positions. Once they are hired, it

takes an additional six months to orient them to the hospital district.

"With our new program, we'll have students who hopefully will choose to stay with us upon graduation, just as the radiography students do," Black said.

The advantage of hiring graduates from the hospital district's program is that they're already familiar with the hospital district work environment, which saves staff valuable training time.

On average, 90 percent of the School of Radiography graduates choose to work with the hospital district.

The first class is an accelerated one-year curriculum designed for applicants who are graduates of a two year healthcare program such as radiography, nursing, physical therapy, or graduates who hold a bachelor's degree.

Starting the second year, the program will transition into a full-time two-year curriculum.

The program offers students the valuable opportunity to train using leading-edge

technology, and to learn alongside physicians affiliated with The University of Texas Medical School at Houston and Baylor College of Medicine.

Students will spend time in the classroom, lab and in clinical rotations at Ben Taub and Lyndon B. Johnson general hospitals, as well as Casa de Amigos Health Center.

In 2010, the hospital district plans to open a new diagnostic imaging center, which calls for 20 sonographers. Black hopes the positions will be filled by the graduates from the sonography program.

"Our goal for the first class is to have all our students successfully pass their board examination and to get the program accredited," Black said.

It takes 18 months for the program to become accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP).

The program is accepting applications from April through June 2008. ■

Hospital District Hosts TMC Administrative Fellows

By Jason Kunnacherry

For two days, the Harris County Hospital District hosted 16 administrative fellows from various hospitals in the Texas Medical Center, as part of an educational opportunity for the group of aspiring healthcare administrators to learn about the hospital district.

Administrative fellows are Master's prepared in healthcare administration and spend the first year after course work observing and learning how hospitals are operated.

During the fellows visit, Feb. 19-20, senior leadership led a series of roundtable discussions, in which participants had the opportunity to learn about HCHD's mission, daily operations, financial model, government relations, successes and challenges, as well as the hospital district's future expansion projects. Participants also visited hospital district administration, Ben Taub and LBJ general hospitals and Thomas Street Health Center.

"I was quite impressed with the



Fellows from Texas Children's Hospital, The Methodist Hospital, M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Shriners Hospitals for Children, and St. Luke's Episcopal Health System attended the two-day event.

operations at the hospital district," said Rodney David, administrative fellow at Texas Children's Hospital.

David S. Lopez, president and CEO,

spoke to the group on the importance of possessing the passion necessary to be a strong healthcare leader.

Continued on page 3

Seven Inpatient Units Score Above National Average

By Lesa McLeod

Inpatient satisfaction scores for the fourth quarter (October – December 2007) show that seven inpatient units' scores are above the national average.

The seven units are Ben Taub General Hospital's 3A Obstetrics, 3B Obstetrics, 6D Medical, 5A Surgical and 5C Medical and Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital's 2A Postpartum and 2B Surgical & OB/Gyn Surgical.

The Harris County Hospital District scored 60.1 percent in inpatient satisfaction, which is eight percent higher than the previous quarter and just above the national average of 59.6 percent.

Out of the 17 inpatient units surveyed, 12 units showed improvement.

The obstetrics units at Ben Taub – 3A and 3B – scored 84.8 percent and 82.7 percent respectively. These scores are some of the highest in the nation and rank in the 97th percentile.

"The goal of our women and infants service is to make sure that Ben Taub is the hospital of choice for women to have their birthing experiences," said Rachelle Nurse, director of women and infants services. "Our associates own the process and are constantly seeking ways to improve the patient experience for the women and children in their care. These scores are truly a reflection of their hard work and devotion to the patients they serve."

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) developed the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey to provide a standardized survey and data collection for measuring patients' perspectives on hospital care.

The hospital district's scores will be reported publicly on the Hospital Compare Web site (www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov) along with other publicly reported hospital quality measures in June 2008. It is the first time that patients' perceptions of their care have ever been used as a quality measure.

Due to the public reporting of scores, a stronger emphasis has been placed on improving scores. In response, the Patient Satisfaction and Customer Service Department has made some changes to the way they operate.

Last month, patient satisfaction project specialists John Wilson and John Gillard were placed at Ben Taub and LBJ hospitals respectively. One of their main duties is to collect and respond to "real-time" patient satisfaction data by speaking with patients every day.

By being on location, Wilson and Gillard are able to quickly address any issues that may lead to dissatisfaction and offer service recovery as needed. They are also able to recognize efforts that lead to satisfaction and those staff members whose actions are positively impacting the patient experience.

"We look at this like studying for the test," said George V. Masi, COO. "When we were students, we always wanted to know what was on the test. Well, we know what our patients are asked on this survey. We want to make sure we are providing great service and meeting their needs. Therefore, we need to know this information immediately, so that we can be responsive."

Expect to see more on this issue as HCHD prepares for the public reporting period scheduled for June 2008. ■

Adult Inpatient Units – At or Above National Average

Ben Taub

3A Obstetrics, 3B Obstetrics, 6D Medical, 5A Surgical and 5C Medical

LBJ

2A Postpartum and 2B Surgical & OB/Gyn Surgical

Pediatric Inpatient – At or Above National Average

Ben Taub

5E Pediatric, 3B Nursery

Pediatric Emergency – At or Above National Average

Ben Taub

Pediatric Office Visit – At or Above National Average

E.A. "Squatty" Lyons Health Center

Martin Luther King Health Center

Smiley School-Based Clinic

Circle of Survival Trauma Conference Shares HCHD Expertise

By John F. Martinez

When is seeing something up close not good for you? Apparently, when you witness the events of your own traumatic incident and it leads to your suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It's more likely for someone to develop PTSD if the person has a vivid image of the incident, said a medical expert during the Harris County Hospital District's Circle of Survival Trauma Conference in March.

"If you're in a car accident and you see the car about to hit you, you are more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder," said Dr. Brad Scott, trauma medical director of Ben Taub General Hospital. "People who are surprised by the incident, front or backseat passengers, are less likely because they didn't see the chain of events leading up to the crash."

Scott was a featured speaker, "PTSD, Depression and Anxiety after Trauma," at the sixth annual trauma conference held at the United Way Community Resource Center.

Other interesting facts about PTSD are that more women than men are afflicted.

"Emotions do play a role, but it's women's

better memories that increase their chances," Scott said. "When a man is asked about a car accident, he tends to describe the time of day, the terrain, the color of the cars involved, but women are asked the same question, they tell you how they were feeling at the time because they had just had a fight with their husband, were thinking about taking Junior to his soccer game or had errands to do."

The emotional memory has a lasting effect, he said.

The one-day conference provided registered nurses and other health care professionals with the latest information on the management of various types of trauma. Among the topics at the conference are trauma system development, management of shotgun wounds, treatment of snake bites and caring for traumatic brain injuries and acute spinal cord injuries.

Among the experts were physicians and nurses from The Ginni and Richard Mithoff Trauma Center at Ben Taub General Hospital, the busiest level I trauma center in Houston. The center takes care of about 3,000 trauma cases and more than 89,000

emergency patient visits each year.

"This all-in-one approach of gathering renowned trauma experts to share their knowledge and skills was a great way to educate health care providers who deal with serious injuries," said Robin Garza, coordinator for Ben Taub's Trauma Services Department. ■



HCHD Welcomes New Vice President of Corporate Compliance

By Bryan McLeod

During February, the Harris County Hospital District welcomed Phil Eubanks as its new vice president and corporate compliance officer.

Eubanks brings more than 30 years experience in compliance, financial management, and auditing to the hospital district. Most recently, he served as the chief compliance officer for the Memorial Hermann Healthcare System, where he was instrumental in creating, organizing and developing that system's Corporate Compliance Program. While there, Eubanks established an operational internal audit methodology that resulted in a \$43 million increase in net income over a seven year period, and his leadership opened the door to good working relationships with senior U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (OIG) agents, the Assistant U.S. Attorney for Healthcare in Houston, and the U.S. Secret Service High Tech Task Force, which asked him to become a member of its advisory group.

With a responsibility to ensure regulatory billing compliance on more than \$1 billion in collectible charges, and the oversight of other regulatory compliance enforcement, Eubanks has a busy agenda. Recently, he sat down to answer a few questions posed by The BEAT about his career and vision for HCHD Compliance.

Q. *You've been here just a few weeks, but what impresses you about HCHD, and what are the unique challenges the organization faces that you haven't seen elsewhere in regard to compliance and privacy matters?*

A. What impresses me with HCHD is the team effort I have seen among top management. No big egos and no "silos." All organizations have challenges in compliance and they are mostly the same – only they vary in degrees from organization to organization. The biggest challenge they all have is to instill a "culture of compliance." The best way to instill this is from "top-down modeling." HCHD is doing the right things and shows "best practices" by having a Compliance Committee of the Board of Managers, and also the Executive Compliance Committee consists of top management from various key parts of the organization.

Q. *How many years have you been in the compliance profession, and how has it changed during that time?*

Continued from page 1. — Hospital District Hosts TMC Administrative Fellows

Participants enjoyed this dialogue with Lopez as they felt the externship did more than just provide an educational opportunity, but also personal and career advice which they will keep with them as they develop their careers.

George Masi, COO, spoke about where the hospital district has been, where it is going and the importance of becoming a most efficient organization.

Meanwhile, Jeff Webster, senior vice president and Ben Taub administrator; Johnnie Stein, interim senior vice president and LBJ administrator; Dr. Robert Trenchel,

A. I've been in health care compliance since it began in 1998 with the OIG's Hospital

Q. *If you had to pick one word to describe your vision for compliance at the hospital district, which word would you choose and why?*

A. One word would be "Effective." The Department of Justice (DOJ) and OIG guidance on health care compliance emphasizes over and over that a compliance program must be "Effective." In simple terms, this means that the organization must "Do" compliance in a manner that mitigates and minimizes any potential fraud or abuse, as opposed to having a compliance program that has all of the bells and whistles in policies/procedures/training, but it is only "window dressing." "Doing" compliance in an effective manner is "substance above form." The DOJ and OIG are looking for actual substance in order to prove that an organization has an "Effective" compliance program.

Q. *Do any computer systems need to be implemented to support new compliance standards?*

A. As a part of the Deficit Reduction Act, Medicaid will have approximately \$160 million more per year to do provider auditing and monitoring. There will be at least three new auditing groups going into effect from the government starting this year. They will have very sophisticated data-mining tools available to do real-time risk assessments, comparisons of providers, and basically will know a great deal about all health care providers. With this tool, they will be able to easily spot variations and hone in on particular high-risk areas within particular health care providers. We need those types of analytical tools ourselves so that we can spot any potential high risk areas that may have potential errors and correct potential errors before they pop up on the government auditors' radar screens. Our Executive Corporate Compliance Committee and I will be working with the IT group on this.

Q. *Are there ingrained cultural issues that you see as something you have to address?*

A. All organizations have various ingrained cultures that need some correction, as well as some good cultural habits. I have been here only one month, but I see some very good cultural habits and some that overtime we can improve on.

senior vice president and CHP administrator; Dr. Ken Mattox, Ben Taub chief of staff; and Dr. Steven Brown, LBJ chief of staff, spoke about their roles, the services provided and relationships with medical staff.

"I think you have a very dynamic team – they are very inspirational and open," said Jyric Sims, administrative fellow M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

Kajal Singh, from St. Luke's, said "You not only gave us information, but reminded us of how important public health is and how we, as future health care administrators, should concern ourselves with these issues."



Phil Eubanks

Q. *What do you see as the standard of success in regards to HCHD's current and future compliance efforts?*

A. Complying in an effective manner with all seven elements of a compliance program in accordance with the U.S. Federal Sentencing Guidelines published by the Department of Justice, as well as the requirements of our CCA. ■

Corporate Compliance four-step reporting process

You are encouraged to follow this four step process to ask questions and/or report any compliance concerns or violations:

1. Discuss the question or concern with your direct supervisor.
2. Contact a member of the management team if you are not comfortable contacting your supervisor or feel that you did not receive an adequate response.
3. Contact the Compliance Officer at 713-566-6461.
4. Call the confidential Compliance Hotline at 1-800-500-0333 if you wish to remain anonymous.

The hospital district has been a strong advocate of administrative fellowships, in providing a training ground for future healthcare leaders and exposing them to real issues and scenarios to help them understand the complexities of healthcare delivery.

There are currently two fellows at the hospital district, Jason Kunnacherry from the University of Houston – Clear Lake, and Joe Dygert from Trinity University.

Anyone interested in learning more about the administrative fellowship program can contact Kunnacherry at 713 566-6406 or Dygert at 713-566-4324. ■

By Nicole M. Benningfield

Three individuals who exemplify the ServiceFIRST standards of Friendliness, Integrity, Responsibility, Satisfaction, and Teamwork are being recognized this month as ServiceFIRST Heroes.



Maria Franco

Maria Franco – Ben Taub, LBJ, Community Health Centers

Pregnancy can cause several emotions – from joy to nervousness. But to ease first time moms and even experienced moms’ anxieties, the

Harris County Hospital District offers prenatal education classes.

For the past 12 years, Maria Franco has taught patients at all hospital district facilities the importance of prenatal care and healthy living. Franco teaches seven classes a week in English and Spanish, covering everything from breastfeeding to Lamaze.

“I was very satisfied with the class,” wrote a patient. “I lost fear and nervousness I had with respect to the delivery. I’m very happy there are excellent people like Ms. Maria. She is an excellent educator. Thank you very much for

having an employee like her.”

Another patient wrote, “It was a pleasant experience to share ideas and doubts with the classmates, but above all with the educator. She informed us about our next procedure and cleared up our doubts. She is friendly and professional.”



Tammy Zapalac

Tammy Zapalac – Ben Taub General Hospital

The operating room environment is always busy, and as a chief certified surgical technologist, Tammy Zapalac has to be prepared for any case that

comes her way.

She was nominated for ServiceFIRST Hero by Dr. Matt Wall, who wrote, “Ms. Zapalac performed in an outstanding way, helping above and beyond her job description. Her dedication and superior technical skills helped us successfully perform several high risk surgical procedures. She was probably the major factor in the success of the procedures, one in a million and the absolute best surgical technician I have been honored to work with.”



Dr. Shinil K. Shah

Dr. Shinil K. Shah – Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital

As a second year resident at LBJ General Hospital, Dr. Shinil K. Shah made a lasting impression on a patient and her family.

“Dr. Shah is extremely nice and patient. He always answered every question I had and explained everything to me,” wrote the patient. “I have a lot of trust in him. Thanks to him, I have my leg, he saved my life.”

Even though Shah had several patients, he made this family feel like they were the only one.

“Thank you for being so attentive, friendly and patient,” wrote the patient’s mother. “We always asked for Dr. Shah. We understood he was busy, yet he always cared for my daughter. For that reason, he is a hero to us.”

“Dr. Shah was always very amiable and answered all of our questions. And up to now the outcome has been as he told us,” wrote the patient’s father. “My family and I are very grateful.”

ACCOLADES

Eileen Briggs has been named director of nursing for medical surgical services at Ben Taub General Hospital. She brings a wealth of nursing administration experience to HCHD, most recently as the clinical administrative director of the Nellie B. Connally Breast Center at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

Michael Brown, Ben Taub patient liaison, was recognized as a Minority Achiever during the 40th Annual Minority Achievers Awards Gala hosted by the YMCA of Greater Houston at the Marriott Westchase Hotel. The award recognizes the most outstanding minority individuals of Houston for their extraordinary achievements, and who serve as role models for high-school students in Y-achievers.

Kathi Evertsz, RN, was hired to perform PICC line placements for patients at Ben

Taub General Hospital. She joins HCHD with more than five years of experience in the insertion and training of personnel in placement of PICC lines.

Congratulations to HCHD departments rated “free of high-risk negative findings” for 2007 by the Environment of Care/ Safety Department.

Top departments by quarter are:

1st Qtr 2007:
Ben Taub – 4D, 4F
Baytown Health Center (CHP)

2nd Qtr 2007:
Quentin Mease – Radiology/
Mammography, Eye Clinic, Business Office,
OT/PT, Speech Services

3rd Qtr 2007:
Ben Taub – 6B, 6D

4th Qtr 2007:

Ben Taub – Materials Management/Central Supply, EEG/EKG
MLK – Executive Nursing Administration
Quentin Mease – Inpatient Rehab/PM&R, Speech Services, Materials Management/
Central Supply
LBJ – EVS/Gift Shop, Inpatient/Outpatient Pharmacy, 3rd floor Respiratory Care, Medicine/Oncology Clinic

Thomas Street pharmacist **Emily Simmons** received Community Preceptor of the Year Award and LBJ Hospital pharmacy operations manager **Shaji Varghese** received the Hospital Preceptor of the Year Award from Texas Southern University. Simmons and Varghese were awarded for their work with pharmacy student interns.

May Service Standard: Teamwork

1. Teamwork is the ability to unselfishly work with others toward a common goal and vision.
2. Set each other up for success by being supportive and respectful of one another.
3. Willingly contribute your talents to other cooperative efforts to help a team exceed beyond what can be accomplished individually.
4. Look beyond assigned tasks. Your responsibility doesn't end where a coworker's responsibility begins.
5. Welcome new employees by being supportive, offering help and setting an example of cooperation.

For more information about ServiceFIRST, call 713-566-6063.

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