

The BEAT

Cardiac Department Gets to the Heart of Care with New Clinic

By John F. Martinez

Seeing an opportunity to deliver personalized outpatient cardiac care, leaders of the Cardiac Services Department at Ben Taub General Hospital introduced a new approach that gets to the heart of the matter – improving our patients’ care experience.

The approach takes patients out of the second-floor outpatient clinics and puts them in the center of the Cardiac Services Department on the hospital’s sixth floor.

Where else could cardiac patients get the best in expertise and state-of-the-art equipment, thought Dr. Nasser Lakkis, chief of Cardiology, and Donna Quin, manager of Cardiac Services.

For years, outpatient cardiac referrals from the Community Health Program would schedule up to 150 appointments into a four-hour cardiac clinic on Wednesdays. The half-day clinical service created a backlog of patients and caused delays on needed patient heart studies such as echocardiograms, Holter monitors, treadmill and nuclear stress tests.

“In the old model, patient care would see delays because so many people were accessing our system at the same time,” Quin said.

Something needed to be done.

In July 2008, the duo lobbied and successfully launched the Cardiac Specialty Clinic within their department.

The new clinic uses HCHD’s commitment to academic teaching and weaves it into a private practice model. Each patient is seen by a team of doctors, an attending and a fellow. This means the patient will always see the attending physician.

“The model benefits everyone,” Lakkis added. “The teaching experience for fellows

is better because they have direct interaction with patients under the watchful eye of an attending physician. And patients get direct contact with their attending so they can build a long-lasting relationship.”

The new clinic has three dedicated exam rooms and operates eight hours a day Monday through Friday. Each pairing of physicians sees 15-20 patients a day.

So far, reviews by both patients and staff are overwhelmingly positive.

Lakkis and Quin admit the new clinic approach could have been difficult for most departments to undertake.

“For us, it was easy because our staff have successfully implemented other re-engineering efforts such as the chest pain unit in 2007, where we’ve been able to take care of patients more efficiently and provide better care,” Quin said.

The clinic offers a full electrophysiology clinic on Thursdays and Fridays. The flexible schedules for physicians allow them to see



Dr. Nasser Lakkis, left, and Donna Quin spearhead a new approach to taking care of ambulatory cardiac patients. The new outpatient cardiac clinic is now an outgrowth of the Cardiac Department on the sixth floor at Ben Taub General Hospital.

emergency patients. Additionally, a nurse practitioner can accommodate urgent care patients. Plans call for increasing the number of exam rooms to eight.

“This is one of the most efficient outpatient cardiac services in the Texas Medical Center. I would come to be seen here without a doubt,” Lakkis said. “Our ultimate goal, which we’re accomplishing, is to have healthy, happy patients who won’t need hospitalization.”

HCHD Maps the Way to Achieve System's Vision

By Bryan McLeod

In recent months, the district's board and executive leadership team have been busy creating the agenda for the future growth and direction of the organization. To help focus

the organization's leadership on achieving the district's vision of becoming one of America's best community-owned health care systems, the Board of Managers endorsed five strategic priorities, which include:

- Provide Exceptional Health Care;
- Improve Patient Satisfaction;

- Meet Community Needs through Redesign and Growth;
 - Hire and Retain Excellent People; and
 - Improve Financial Strength and Stability.
- "Our board has been very clear about

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Strategic Capital Initiatives:

Complete architectural and engineering design and begin construction of new Emergency Center at Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital.

Complete architectural and engineering design and begin construction of Specialty Clinics, Radiation Therapy, Diagnostic Imaging Center, Breast Center of Excellence, and Parking Garage at the Holly Hall Campus.

Continue construction of new Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) and Alief Community Health Centers.

Complete architectural and engineering design and begin construction of new Eligibility Centers at the MLK and Alief Campuses.

Complete architectural and engineering design of the Specialty Clinic and Diagnostic Imaging Building at Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital.

Complete architectural and engineering design for use of the Old Ben Taub Building.

Complete architectural and engineering design of a new Physical Therapy/ Occupational Therapy Gym at the Quentin Mease Community Hospital.

Negotiate with Metro for additional land for the future expansion of the Casa de Amigos Community Health Center. Purchase or lease a building for additional administrative/clinical support space.

Purchase land to replace People's Community Health Center. Initiate Phase 3 of the Emergency Center Master Plan at Ben Taub General Hospital.

Operational Goals:

Develop, implement, and maintain a balanced scorecard addressing quality, satisfaction (patient, employee, and physician), strategic priorities, and financial strength of the district.

Reduce patient appointment wait times by 10% throughout the district.

Improve overall patient satisfaction scores to the national average.

Improve overall physician satisfaction scores by 10%.

Improve overall employee satisfaction scores by 10%.

Maintain a 4-6% net margin.

Reduce staffing agency utilization by 10%.

Achieve benchmark performance in productivity.

Achieve benchmark performance in resource consumption and supply chain processes. Increase overall patient volume by 10% and the number of unduplicated patients by 10%.

Achieve accreditation standards six months before the required implementation date.

Comply with current Joint Commission and other regulatory required quality initiatives.

Nursing Research: It's All in the Mix

By Nicole M. Benningfield

What kind of cookie is the best – chocolate chip, oatmeal or sugar?

That's what 58 nurses will have fun deciding during HCHD's first Great American Cookie Experiment, a creative way to introduce nurses to the research process. In an evidence-based environment, nurses must know how to critically evaluate research study results and apply them to their day-to-day practice. In the Great American Cookie Experiment, they engage in hands-on quantitative and qualitative activity, while shedding the fear factor some might hold toward research.

"It's a creative teaching strategy to educate and engage nurses in research by providing hands-on experience as researchers or study participants. It's also a way to bring nursing research and evidence-based practice to

the bedside," said JoAnn Mick, director of nursing research and clinical outcomes.

Nurses will learn the research process—from defining a study aim or purpose to data collection and budget and grant writing—and will develop a study protocol for submission to the HCHD Institutional Review Board, along with a proposal and budget for grant funding. Then they will conduct the study—by tasting all those delicious cookies—and analyze and disseminate the results: the winner of the Great American Cookie Experiment.

"Over the years, staff nurses have participated in data collection activities for physician and nursing colleagues," said Beth Cloyd, executive vice president and chief nurse executive. "With the new emphasis on

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where they want to take the hospital district in the future – to a health system of recognized excellence,” said David Lopez, president and chief executive officer. “It’s now up to us, as members of the staff, to help make their vision a reality.”

Lopez has presented a series of goals to leadership that are based on the strategic priorities, which offer staff a challenge to tackle and an annual benchmark for success.

“These goals will determine how we spend our money, allocate our personnel, and evolve

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evidence-based practice, staff must know how to critically evaluate research study results and apply them to practice.”

HCHD is on the path to earn Magnet status, a national, prestigious recognition awarded by the American Nurses Credentialing Center to healthcare institutions for nursing excellence in providing patients with safe and high quality care. By demonstrating the creation and sustained growth of a practice environment that integrates nursing research and evidence-based practice into the decision making and delivery of nursing care, HCHD will move closer to its goal.

When registered nurse Torie Thibodeaux found out about the Great American Cookie Experiment she jumped at the chance to participate.

“I enjoyed the research class I took in school, so when this opportunity arose, I knew I wanted to be a part of it,” Thibodeaux said. “By the hospital district giving nurses the opportunity to have a research course and a real research project, I hope to gain more knowledge and use it in my future endeavors.”

Nursing director Nikki Campos decided to participate to not only set an example for her staff, but also learn more about research.

“I hope to learn more formal research methods to implement in my own departments,” Campos said. “I also want to be a resource to help guide nurses in my department that are eager to do more in this field. There are so many nurses here that are motivated to change things in the direction of evidence-based practice.”

In the future, nurses will develop and conduct their own research, taking the lead role of principal investigator.

The Great American Cookie Experiment will be repeated every year. For more information, contact JoAnn Mick at 713-566-2049.

our workforce,” said Lopez. “They will be the basis for all our priority decisions.”

“As an organization, we do want to get to a specific destination, so it is helpful to have goals and objectives as our roadmap and milestones on our journey,” said Gretchen Gemeinhardt, director of the HCHD Leadership Institute. “It’s also important that organizational goals be discussed often, so as to be sure that the organization stays on track.”

“Topics presented at future Leadership

Forums will reinforce the district’s strategic initiatives and goals,” said Carol Oddo, vice president of patient and public affairs.

District leadership is in the process of developing a series of objectives that are expected to help the organization attain its annual goals set forth by the CEO. Following a leadership retreat retreat scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 17, the goals will be finalized and distributed to management to communicate with staff.

A New Nursing Program Brings a Bit of CSI to HCHD

By John F. Martinez

Nothing compares to working among the living for Stacey Mitchell.

For six years, the 18-year nursing veteran worked with cadavers at the Harris County Medical Examiner’s Office, where she created from scratch a forensic nursing program.

Today, Mitchell heads a similar effort with the Harris County Hospital District as it launches into CSI (the popular crime scene investigation television series) territory.

“It’s a little like CSI – in that we’re constantly looking for clues – but without all of the TV drama,” she said.

Forensic nursing is a new addition to the district’s Clinical Case Management Department. In December, the program began at Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital to aid patients of violence, abuse and neglect.

With a staff of three nurses, patients

receive one-on-one assistance throughout their visit. The follow-through with patients could range from 4-8 hours.

“Forensic nursing is a welcome addition to the continuum of care we provide,” said Martha Stancil, nursing director of the emergency center at LBJ, and proponent of the program at the hospital. “Victims come into our hospital so we can take care of their health care needs, and we do. But we’re also looking at the big picture by helping with the police investigations.”

When a patient is identified for forensic care, a nurse is assigned who oversees all aspects of care including immediate crisis counseling and evidence gathering. The nurses are trained on the dynamics of forensic medicine and proper evidence collection. This includes detailing injuries, taking photos, and securing hair and specimen samples.

“We want to make sure we collect as much information that can be used by the district attorney and police,” Mitchell said.

Mitchell has a long history of successfully starting forensic programs. Her first effort came while she worked as an emergency nurse in Richmond, Virginia.

She has high hopes for HCHD’s burgeoning program. In fact, five more nurses will soon join the forensic team as it expands later this year to Ben Taub General Hospital and the health centers of the Community Health Program.

“We’re there to really focus on that patient so that the rest of the staff can focus on other emergency center patients,” Mitchell said. “It’s a great team effort.”



Stacey Mitchell shows off a vital part of forensic nurse’s arsenal, a Cannon 40D EOS digital camera equipped with a high-power macro lens. The team uses these cameras to document injuries, cuts and abrasions as part of evidence gathering for violence, abuse or neglect cases.

service FIRST Heroes:

By Heather Sessions

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

Sherrian Mansker, RN – Medical Intensive Care Unit, Ben Taub

Sherrian Mansker, RN, in Ben Taub's medical intensive care unit, knows the importance of making a patient's family feel at ease during critical times. Her gentle nature and attentive care are among the qualities that got her nominated for ServiceFIRST Hero in the first place.

According to the mother of one of the patients she cared for, Sherrian tended to her son as if he were her own.

"Sherrian's compassionate demeanor made the whole family feel comfortable. I could rest at night knowing that he was in capable hands."

The patient's mother recalls the anxiety of the situation – a time when only family members were permitted to visit her son due to the extreme nature of his injuries.

"She made him feel safe even though he was scared and not feeling well. Nurse Mansker is knowledgeable of her patient's needs. She was able to fill a void during a difficult time through her gentle care, attention to detail, reassuring voice and comforting words."

Rashawn Livingston – Guest Transportation Services, LBJ

Rashawn Livingston, guest transporter at LBJ, hits the ground running when it comes to getting patients where they need to go.

Although he is often seen zipping back and forth through the hospital assisting patients, he always remembers to slow down and to make sure all patients receive the individualized customer service they deserve.

One employee describes Rashawn as exhibiting ServiceFIRST qualities every day he comes to work.

"Rashawn is patient and courteous to all visitors," said Seidra Whitley, concierge services program manager. "On numerous occasions I have seen him assist wheelchair-bound patients to help them get to their destinations."

According to Whitley, Rashawn goes out of his way to make sure that all patients who

come to LBJ have a positive experience during their stay. She recalls seeing him make sure a thirsty patient got a drink from the gift shop before going home.

"He asked me to get a drink for the patient while he waited with her," she said. "The patient had severe inflammation in her hands and Rashawn held the drink for her while she sipped."

The patient also expressed her gratitude for his compassion and understanding after he helped her get a cab ride home.

"Rashawn was backed up with patients due to a delay with the cab. However, in order to continue his duties and assist all patients, he asked a coworker to wait with me until my ride arrived and I was safely inside."

Dishia Porter – Environmental Services Tech, LBJ

Dishia Porter is often seen scouring the halls of LBJ making sure trash cans are emptied and the facility clean, but the people who work closely with her say that she does so much more.

She was nominated for ServiceFIRST Hero by Loraine Charles, RN, who says Dishia continually goes above and beyond the scope of her duties to ensure that their unit both looks and smells clean.

"She is a delightful person who always has a smile on her face. She is always pleasant, courteous and willing to heed requests whenever asked."

Loraine says that the entire team notices her commitment and dedication to doing the best job possible.

"The night shift employees cannot say enough to express how much they appreciate

**Sherrian Mansker, Rashawn Livingston,
Dishia Porter, Chris Ighalo**

Dishia. She truly exemplifies the characteristics any employer would want in an employee."



Chris Ighalo

Chris Ighalo – Psych Tech/nursing assistant, Ben Taub

"I came to the hospital thinking life was not worth living," wrote one patient.

That was before coming into contact with Chris Ighalo, psych tech/nursing assistant at Ben Taub.

According to the patient, Chris gave him the support he needed to make it through a very emotional time. Chris was nominated for ServiceFIRST Hero by the patient who says he opened his eyes to the blessings life has to offer.

"Chris taught me that life is precious and suicide is not an option under any circumstance."

The patient left the hospital just before the New Year, and reportedly has a completely new outlook on life.

"I left Ben Taub with a different mind set. When I look back, I can't imagine why I was thinking that way. Chris is a genuine human being, and I am a better person for having met him."

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

ACCOLADES

Dana Bjarnason, PhD, RN, CNA, chief nursing officer at Ben Taub General Hospital, presented a poster titled "Belief Systems and End-of-life Care" at the Texas Organization of Nurse Executives (TONE) Leadership Conference in Austin.

Jeff Benavides, health educator at Thomas Street Health Center, was elected co-chair to Community Planning Group for the City of Houston Health and Human

Services Department HIV/STD Prevention for 2009-2011. He also was elected co-chair to the Latino HIV Task Force for the City of Houston and Harris County Area for 2009-2010.

Dinah Godwin, LCSW, interim program coordinator at Ben Taub General Hospital, was elected to the Texas Board of Society of Social Work Leadership in Healthcare (SSWLHC).