Patient Care Records: No Paper Needed

An Information Revolution is transforming the American healthcare system and Martha’s Vineyard Hospital is a part of it. On Oct. 1, the Hospital marked an important milestone on its path to change, going live with a new system that captures inpatient records electronically rather than on the clipboard charts that have been the standard in healthcare for generations.

Mike Cosgrave, information systems manager at the Hospital, has had the date circled on his calendar for almost two years – ever since the software vendor, MEDITECH, signed a contract that set the Hospital on a path toward the Electronic Health Care Record, the new standard set by the federal government.

Gearing up for the Hospital’s shift to electronic records has been intense. This fall’s transition happened in two stages – first going paperless with all inpatient records taken by nurses, aides, respiratory and physical therapists, and social services staff. In mid-November, all doctors seeing patients in the Hospital went paperless as well.

In addition to preparing new software and training staff, a hefty investment in new hardware has been involved: “We’ve more than doubled our amount of equipment to make this transition happen,” Mr. Cosgrave says. On just one day late in September, the IT staff took delivery of 21 new laptops and carts for deployment around the Hospital.

But this transition to electronic medical records isn’t about using computers for the sake of using computers. It’s part of a national push to improve both the quality and the safety of the healthcare system. A fully functional electronic medical record allows for quick access to patient records from in-hospital and remote locations, eventually allowing for a portable electronic record that can be transmitted nationwide.

Patient safety benefits greatly from electronic records, says Mr. Cosgrave. “It’s been proven this reduces medical errors.” When medications are ordered electronically, the system can catch a duplicate prescription and warn if a patient has an allergy or might experience an adverse effect because they are on another medicine.

Privacy is much stronger with electronic records, says Mr. Cosgrave: “When there’s a chart floating around, you don’t know who’s been looking at it. But once your record is electronic, we can run a list of every person who’s ever accessed it to...

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In 1970, Dr. Louis W. Sullivan and his wife Ginger settled on the habit of regular walking as a form of enjoyable exercise that would also improve their health. In 1989, newly appointed as U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services and summering in Oak Bluffs, he decided to organize a community walk to promote healthy habits and raise money for Martha's Vineyard Hospital.

That small summer outing, which drew 57 people in its first year, celebrated its 25th anniversary this past August with an event that has grown to attract over two hundred runners and walkers for a sprightly and sociable spin along East Chop Drive.

Now known as the Sullivan 5K Run/Walk, this Island tradition has raised over $350,000 for Martha's Vineyard Hospital while spreading Dr. Sullivan's message about the importance of building healthy habits for life.

This year, the 25th annual Run/Walk featured a crowd-pleasing first. At the finish line, Shawn Ballou of Merrimack, N.H., waited for Noelle McKeon and there, on bended knee, offered her an engagement ring and asked her to marry him. She accepted his proposal on the spot.

Dr. Sullivan, who celebrated his 80th birthday this November, always opens the event with a brief talk on the importance of good nutrition and exercise. "Twenty years ago this would have been considered a feel-good activity," Dr. Sullivan told the Vineyard Gazette. "There is now a solid body of science that shows this has a real health benefit."

Reflecting on the anniversary, he said: "The first race I came in third. The next year I came in ninth. Now it's 25 years later and I usually come in towards the end. I think the races have become faster and I've become slower, but I enjoy it just as much."
Music & Memory Program at Winemere

A N AMBITIOUS round of exterior renovations is wrapping up this fall at Winemere Nursing & Rehabilitation Center.

The roof and all the windows have been replaced, new siding and trim are up and all the exterior doors are new. “Our contractor, Columbia Construction, has done a terrific job with a minimum of disruption for our residents,” says Ken Chisholm, Winemere’s director.

Winemere’s overhaul began with an application to the state five years ago. Although taking care of the facility is important, the essence of Winemere is the care delivered inside its freshly painted walls. This summer Winemere’s director of nursing, Marie Zadeh, came back to the Island from a conference with news of an exciting new program for residents in the Alzheimer’s and dementia unit. It’s the creation of a New York-based nonprofit, Music & Memory, and uses portable music players like the iPod to connect residents to the music they loved in their youth. Staff meet with residents’ families to find out what kinds of music they enjoyed in their younger years. Then the players are loaded with that music for them to enjoy.

Ten members of the Winemere staff have completed the Music & Memory training, learning how to set up personalized music playlists that tap into deep memories not lost to dementia. Results from this program across the nation suggest that music can help clients struggling with Alzheimer’s and dementia to reconnect with the world and feel more like themselves again.

It’s fine to have new furniture, new boilers, air-conditioners and a building that looks like new, says Mr. Chisholm. But the real mission of Winemere plays out in the care that’s delivered every day. “We’re always looking,” he says, “for ways to improve the programs and services that enrich the lives of our residents.”

Dialysis Unit to Have New Home

PLANS for major renovations to Martha’s Vineyard Hospital’s Dialysis Unit are awaiting final approval from the state Department of Public Health, and the Hospital hopes to be able to start work on the project soon.

The Unit will then move to a newly renovated space in the former Hospital building, now named the Hospital Annex. Along with more room for patients - more square footage per chair - the space will be a lot brighter and more appealing. The unit will have three dialysis machines.

This service has seen increasing demand in recent years, including seasonal peaks as patients needing regular dialysis treatment come to the Vineyard to vacation. “In a given summer week, our number of patients can be as many as 18,” says Rich Huffam, the department’s nurse manager. To meet this demand the department expanded its schedule from three days a week to six days a week earlier this year.

Dialysis involves treatments lasting from two to five hours, sometimes as frequently as every other day, so the quality of the environment in which it happens makes a big difference to patients.

Welcome Dr. Dana Guyer

T HIS SEPTEMBER Martha’s Vineyard Hospital welcomed Dana Guyer, M.D., to its medical staff. Dr. Guyer took over the practice of Dr. Prit Gill. Initially, besides seeing current patients in Dr. Gill’s practice, Dr. Guyer is accepting new pediatric patients.

Dr. Guyer is board-certified in internal medicine and pediatrics. She completed medical school and her residency at Vanderbilt University. While at Vanderbilt, she also completed a fellowship in palliative care. Dr. Guyer chose her medical specialties, she says, “Because I just knew that I wanted to see patients from birth all the way through their lives.”

Coming to Martha’s Vineyard is quite a change after nine years at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, a sprawling urban hospital with 900 beds, Dr. Guyer admits, but she has been prepared by almost a decade of summers on the Island. Her husband, Carlos Tilghman-Osborne, has family roots that go back generations on Chappaquiddick, where they are now making their home together with their two young children, Ramona and Milo.

Dr. Guyer says of her first few weeks at the Hospital: “Everyone I’ve met has been just lovely. It looks like I’m stepping into a pretty content and functional work environment.”

She’s looking forward to adjusting to the commute from Chappaquiddick. “I’m a knitter,” she says, “and I have a sweater project that I’ll be knitting while I wait in the Chappy ferry line. We’ll see how long it takes me to finish it.”

EMS and MVH Collaborate on Care

THANKS TO a grant of more than $476,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), every Island ambulance will soon be able to transmit electrocardiograms and other data instantly to our Hospital and all four Island ambulance services. This was the first grant application, to his knowledge, ever submitted jointly by the Hospital and all four Island ambulance services.

The new equipment, which arrived in mid-October, will dramatically improve the ability of paramedics to communicate with waiting doctors in the ER. “As we moved forward with the grant,” says Mr. Schaeffer, “we knew that communication with the hospital was going Continued on page 4
Updates from the Emergency Department

A NEW PRACTICE was instituted called “Immediate Bedding.” This practice bypasses pre-care formalities and gets emergency patients directly into a treatment room. Prior to this, patients would see the triage nurse, go register, then take a seat in the waiting area. Now patients go straight into triage and then to a room, or even skip triage and move to a room immediately. Registration and triage come to them. This summer, the program helped reduce the average wait time between a patient’s arrival in the ER and the time before a patient began to receive care.

THE RECRUITMENT of five year-round board-certified emergency physicians will be the foundation of a solid, long-term staff. The goal is to build a group of physicians who know the system well rather than provide coverage with temporary staff. However, in the summer the Hospital will still have to bring in additional physician assistants and nurses.

IMPROVEMENTS AND INITIATIVES THIS YEAR INCLUDE:

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- HELPING TO MEET the challenge of the Island’s seasonal ebb and flow – when ER traffic can be less than 20 people on a winter day and more than 100 in peak season – are the five or six junior and senior nursing students the Hospital hires each summer. The friendly face-time they give to patients and the assistance they give to our nurses and doctors helps to improve the patient experience.

Electronic Patient Care Records continued from Cover

ensure the access was appropriate. It really locks down the patient’s health records.

Finally, electronic records make great advances possible in the field of community medicine – looking at healthcare across larger groups of people. “Right now,” says Mr. Cosgrave, “to figure out how many patients have a history of heart problems or tobacco use, you’d have to go through tons of paper charts. Four months from now, we’ll be able to go into the system and immediately pull information on all our patients.”

Beyond all the technical challenges, going electronic is a cultural shift for workers in the healthcare field, and Mr. Cosgrave says this change is being met with an understandable mix of anxiety and eagerness at Martha’s Vineyard Hospital. “Most people are really picking this up and running with it,” he says. “Many of them have already been through this transition at other hospitals. They knew that October 1 might be tough, but October 15 was going to be pretty good after everyone had a couple of weeks under their belts.”

Looking ahead, the IT department already has another deadline circled on its calendar. “On April 1,” Mr. Cosgrave says, “we’re planning to go live with new software in the Emergency Room that makes all their documentation electronic as well.”

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to be huge. As it stands right now, we have no way to transmit our EKGs or other patient information to the Hospital when we’re out in the field, except by description over the radio.

But with real-time EKG images immediately viewable in the ER, doctors will be able to see exactly what the paramedics in the field are seeing miles away. “The hope is that this will reduce the amount of time it takes before a patient receives vital care,” says Mr. Schaeffer. “In some cases,” he says, “we’ll actually be able to deliver medications earlier, while a patient is still en route to the Hospital.”

In addition to transmitting EKGs, the new monitors measure core body temperature and carbon monoxide levels in the blood, neither of which was possible before. They also function as defibrillators.

The minutes immediately after a heart attack are critical, says Dr. Jeff Zack, ER Director. “This new equipment is able to transmit electrocardiograms and other vital signs to us instantaneously,” he says, “which allows us to get a jump on treatment a lot sooner.”

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Martha’s Vineyard Hospital listed as one of the “50 Greenest Hospitals in America” by Becker’s Hospital Review

The Review’s editorial team used several resources to develop this list, including:
- Health Care Without Harm
- Practice Greenhealth
- Healthier Hospitals Initiative
- U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)
- The EPA

Becker’s Healthcare is a leading source of cutting-edge business and legal information for healthcare industry leaders.

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