

Nancy Meehan Recognized for Excellence in Customer Service



Nancy Meehan's official title is office assistant in diagnostic imaging. But the title doesn't begin to sum up the range of assistance she actually provides.

Meehan is the December recipient of the Excellence in Customer Service Award. Her supervisor, Chief Radiologic

Technologist Patricia Gerdin, puts it simply: "She does everything! Nancy never says no." Whether it's handling x-ray files, manning the front reception areas, calling in technicians for weekend shifts or just doling out good cheer, Meehan is the very definition of a team player.

"She's the type of person who always comes in with a smile," Gerdin adds. "She's kind, caring, compassionate—always willing to help others. We love our Nancy!"

Casting a Shadow in Registration

Senior management continues to walk a mile in employees' shoes, under the Newport Hospital job shadowing initiative. The latest VP to spend a day on the front lines was Todd Cipriani, vice president of professional and support services, who put in a day recently as a member of the registration department.

Cipriani started the morning with the cashiers, observing record keeping, collections and cash management. "There's a huge amount of paperwork required to pass muster," he

says. "Lots of detail, checking and double-checking. It's remarkable that it runs as smoothly as it does."

Next he moved to registration, following both the standard and emergency room patient intake process. "The registration folks are really the guardians of our system," he says. "On the one hand, they protect the organization to make sure we get paid fairly for the care we provide. On the other hand, they protect the patient—they are the patient's safety net, making sure we have the right contact names, provider information, insurance, or making the connections for charity care."

Cipriani ended the day with the hospital's financial counselors. "That takes a great deal of diplomacy," he says. "They have to approach patients about private information, and they have to talk about money, which no one likes to discuss. The amount of tact and discretion and professionalism the job requires is quite amazing."

All in all, Cipriani found the registration department plays a crucial role, both in welcoming patients into the hospital environment, and assembling vital details. "These folks are the gatekeepers," Cipriani says, "and they do a great job."



Todd Cipriani with members of the registration department



The Meaning of Meaningful Use

Meaningful use: all Lifespan employees will be hearing these words a lot over the coming year. But the phrase is meaningless without some basic background information.

When Congress passed the 2009 Stimulus Bill, it provided financial incentives for hospitals and eligible providers who can demonstrate “meaningful use” of health information technology. In many ways, this was a first, crucial step in the process of health care reform. While the means are technical, the goal is about delivering better care--making medical information more portable, measurable, accessible and secure, and thereby having a powerful and positive impact on community health.

To speed this transformational process, the bill made the financial incentives contingent upon meeting a series of staggered deadlines. The entire initiative is divided into three stages, and the first compliance period begins in October 2010.

“The good news is that our partner hospitals are on track to meet the first deadline,” says Mary Cooper, MD, JD, Lifespan chief quality officer. “Due to the hard work our employees have already put in on Physician Order Management, MAK and the like, our hospitals are among the top 6 percent in the nation in terms of readiness to meet the federal standards.”

The challenge, she adds, is that a great deal of work remains to be done. A working group made up of representatives from all the hospitals, and including all CMOs and CNOs, is overseeing a number of projects that should assure hospital compliance within the deadline period, including:

- replacing most paper documentation with an electronic clinical documentation system (Newport Hospital is by far the most advanced of the partners in this process);
- developing a method to share clinical information with the patient’s outside caregivers at discharge (so records “follow” a patient wherever he goes);
- creating a patient portal and a provider portal for easy, instant access to clinical information (so that patients can view their own records from home and referring physicians and providers can follow a patient’s progress in the hospital and access records anywhere); and
- enhancing the security and privacy of patient information.

If Lifespan hospitals fail to meet the standards within the designated time frame, the incentives are eventually replaced by financial penalties that could mount to \$87 million by the year 2020. Clearly, non-compliance is not an option.

“Although all Newport Hospital staff members have readily embraced electronic clinical information technology to advance clinical practice, we will be modifying and enhancing our current processes over the next several months to meet ‘meaningful use’ criteria,” says Terrence McWilliams, MD, chief medical officer. Chief Nursing Officer Cathy Duquette adds, “We know that our hospital community will meet the challenges and exceed all expectations.”

Emergency Department Highlights Helping Hands



With the help of some discarded surgical masks, plastic tubing, EMS badges and a great idea, the Newport Hospital emergency department took top honors in the hospital’s annual wreath decorating contest last month.

The ER theme was a creative take on “helping hands”, with different wreaths highlighting the department’s partners in providing care: the lab, respiratory therapy, infection control, registration, orthopedics and community EMS partners. The wreaths made use of everything from syringes to fire department badges, in one case serving as the head of a full-scale, hospital-gowned Santa. In addition, staff members created hand cutouts featuring ER staff photos and hung them around the department.

“One person came up with the idea to do ‘helping hands’ and talk about teamwork, because we work so closely with other departments and all our community partners,” says Karen Smith, director of emergency services. “Then everyone grabbed a wreath and created mini-themes. The whole exercise really built morale throughout the department, and it was nice to highlight the teamwork needed to deliver great patient care. The creativity was extraordinary!”