Bright Ideas: Improving Patient Experience

On April 11, Hartford HealthCare showcased 45 staff-initiated projects designed to improve the patient experience. Awards were presented in three categories.

HHC Chief Medical Officer Rocco Orlando, MD, said that while the projects were diverse, they shared a common theme.

“We are building trust with our patients and our communities — no matter what their health care needs may be,” Orlando said. “Every time we create a moment with the people who depend on us, we build and strengthen those relationships.”

Here are the winning projects:

**Teamwork**

It may sound like magic, but a team on the busy A3 Med/Surg. unit at Backus Hospital has figured out how to add staff, increase patient satisfaction AND save money.

The hospital’s winning project has been so successful that it is being rolled out across the rest of the 200-bed hospital this summer, with an expected savings of $1 million through 2015.

It started with a bit of a gripe. Experienced nurses were spending untold hours delivering juice, making beds and tracing down the dietary aide because a patient wanted mustard instead of mayo on a sandwich.

The solution: Hire a few more patient care technicians (PCTs) and pair each with a nurse. Each
State approves advance directive pilot program

It might not be an easy conversation to have, but it’s one that more and more health care providers are having with their patients: “If you are unable to speak for yourself, what measures would you want to be taken to sustain your life and who can make those decisions for you?”

Under a pilot program recently approved by the state legislature, providers in the Willimantic and New Haven areas will be encouraged to open a dialog with patients about advance directives and offer the MOLST (Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment) form that clearly and legally outlines the person’s medical wishes if they are unable to speak for themselves.

While the form does not take the place of a living will, it does empower patients to make their medical wishes known and ensures they are followed.

Hartford HealthCare Medical Group’s Elizabeth Visone, APRN, who practices in the primary care office in the Windham Hospital Family Health Center, is a member of a state task force which is behind the measure. Visone encourages patients—regardless of age or medical condition—to begin to discuss their wishes with family members.

“Advance directives should not be made under duress. The last thing you want to do is make these decisions in the emergency room,” says Visone.

Protocols using MOLST—also sometimes known as POLST (Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment)—have been adopted or endorsed in 15 states including New York and Pennsylvania. The MOLST form typically covers medical orders such as Do Not Resuscitate (DNR), comfort and pain relief methods, procedures including advanced airway interventions, mechanical ventilation, defibrillation/cardioversion and hospital transfers. The directive becomes part of the patient’s medical record.

Visone says while she and many other providers already discuss advance directives with patients, she’s hopeful the pilot program will help to establish a state-wide protocol.

“I ask my patients if they have a living will. If not, we have paperwork right in the office they can fill out to make their wishes known,” Visone says. “In Connecticut, you don’t need a lawyer to do this. Isn’t it better to have a medical professional answer your questions about these important health care decisions?”

Visone says the only concern some providers have with the protocol is that sometimes a fifteen minute office visit doesn’t always allow enough time to fully discuss the issue. That’s why she encourages patients to begin the conversation with their loved ones.

“This pilot program is not going to change these conversations. It’s just going to make it a priority for providers to talk to their patients about these crucial decisions,” she says. “It’s giving choice back to the patient.”

Hospitals across Hartford HealthCare were proud to host information tables designed to educate employees and the public on the importance of advanced healthcare decision making on National Healthcare Decisions Day, celebrated April 16.
team shares a caseload, working side-by-side to care for patients on their roster.

The position of unit secretary was transformed into more of a patient liaison, who now greets patients and families and plays an integral role in coordinating the patient’s discharge.

“It’s an amazing increase in face time, which I think is why this unit’s patient satisfaction scores are so high,” said Ellen Crowe, regional director of clinical excellence and innovation at Backus. With the team approach, nurses can focus on care plans, medication management and leading the multi-disciplinary care team. PCTs take pride in making their patients comfortable and unit secretaries are proud to assist as members of the care team. Patient satisfaction scores have soared on the trial unit, while 30-day readmissions dropped as did the number of patient call bells (patients get what they need before they have to ask) and the need for sitters to monitor agitated patients.

**Senior Moments**

The 79-year-old man arrived at the **MidState Medical Center** emergency room after a fall in his apartment.

There, the staff looked beyond his bumps and bruises to determine if addressing some of his non-medical needs might help avoid another ED visit in the future.

The staff has been specially trained to recognize the unique needs of seniors and approaches older patients with special assessment tools and a commitment to care coordination to link them with needed services. Since the start of the program, the ED staff has assessed thousands of seniors. The biggest win has been troubleshooting potential medication interactions.

Patients who might benefit are referred to HHC’s Connecticut Center for Healthy Aging.

A few days after the 79-year-old man’s ED stay, Marc Levesque, Senior Resource Case Manager with the Center for Healthy Aging, made a home visit. The man was set up with a Lifeline emergency response system, to get help faster if he falls again. An automated medication dispenser was ordered to help keep track of his pills. Levesque also discussed assisted living options.

The idea is to improve quality of life and help older people maintain independence by anticipating needs that may result in a trip to the hospital. The program was funded by a grant from the Meriden Foundation.

**Stroke Care for Body and Mind**

You’ve had a stroke, but the doctors say you are lucky: no permanent paralysis or speech problems.

Back home after a stay in the hospital you start to wonder: If I’m so lucky, why do I feel so bad?

That was the scenario described by patients of the Stroke Center at **Hartford Hospital** who participated in a Stroke Patient Advisory Board, convened in 2011.

“They just felt lost between the end of hospitalization and when we picked them up [four to six weeks later in the outpatient] clinic,” said Dawn Beland, MSN, RN, Stroke Center Coordinator, who worked closely with the Stroke Patient Advisory Board.

Beland and their colleagues recognized that while the Stroke Center was providing excellent care of the physical effects of stroke, they were waiting too long to address emotional and cognitive difficulties that can arise.

In January, 2013, the Stroke Center added neuropsychological services to the treatment plan for hospitalized stroke patients. Patients now go home with more information about possible emotional and cognitive changes and knowledge of resources should problems arise.

See list of winners on page 4 >>
Experts from across Hartford HealthCare returned to the Farmington Marriott May 5-7 for the last of three CareConnect validation sessions. The short sessions each focused on specific activities, or workflows, ranging from wound care to lab patient registration and provider billing.

Working with partners from Epic, our subject matter experts, or SMEs, provided feedback on a series of statements aligned to the ways we deliver care. After each statement, or validation point, SMEs held up a green card to agree with, or validate, the statement or a red card, if they did not agree.

The CareConnect team uses the feedback to make adjustments that will insure the system is built appropriately and able to support our organizational goals. Tom Lahman, a program advisor with CareConnect, compared the process to the interaction between an architect and builder as they prepare to start building a house.

The homeowner tells the architect what feature they want and the builder pushes back and says “you can’t do that without doing this,” Lahman explained.

“The architect would be Epic and the builder is all the SMEs,” he said. “CareConnect [team analysts] then take those suggestions and start building out the system.”

HHC is transforming care by using the Epic electronic health record tool to improve how we collect, share and track health information. The common, best-practice workflows coming out of the validation sessions with Epic will promote consistently better care and a great patient experience. It will also allow HHC to lead in the new health care environment.

“I like the way they are getting input from every one so that the system works right,” said Amanda Bill, a critical care nurse at Windham Hospital.

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**And the winners are...**

**Innovation:**

**Winner:** Clinical Redesign: Achieving “Top-of-License” Practice: Lisa Hageman, Katie Pollard, Pam Babcock, Donna Callicutt, Elaine Flaherty, Kathy Breault, Carla Jordan, Heidi Morse, Laurie Matney, Ellen Crowe — Backus Hospital

**Runner Up:** Improving Blood Transfusion Management in Joint Replacement Surgery: Dianne Vye, Rekha Singh – Hospital of Central Connecticut

**Enhanced Patient and Family Centered Care:**

**Winner:** Going to the Experts: Partnering with Patients and Families to Establish New Best Practices for HHC Stroke Continuum of Care: Sarah Tartar, Dawn Beland, Mary Foster, David Lovejoy – Hartford Hospital

**Runner Up:** Care Partner Program: Mary Horan – Windham Hospital

**Improved Transitions of Care:**

**Winner:** Senior Emergency Care Services: Improving Transition of Care from ED to Home: Senior Emergency Care Services Team (150 members including: ED physicians, ED nurses, ED technicians, ED leadership, pharmacists, care coordinators, social workers. physical therapists, dieticians, volunteers and the Connecticut Center for Healthy Aging — MidState Medical Center

**Runner up:** Discharge Medication Management: Eric Arlia, Mary Jane Mattern, Victoria Lambert, Les Temkin – Backus Hospital

**H3W Award:**

Creation of the Caring Cuisine: Improving the Patient Experience through Food: Janice Cannon – Hartford Hospital
Spotlight

If you have an interesting story, or know an employee who does, please send a brief description to our e-mail box, networknews@hhchealth.org. The Network News team will do its best to include the story in an upcoming Spotlight.

Steve Johnson: From cardiac patient to competitive swimmer

Windham Hospital painter and cardiology patient Steve Johnson says he never dreamed he would become a champion athlete—especially in a sport he didn’t learn until he was 60.

Johnson, who has been hospitalized twice over the past two years after episodes caused by atrial fibrillation, began swimming as part of his rehabilitation and at the urging of his 12-year-old daughter who enrolled in swimming lessons herself. Since getting in the pool, Johnson has lost 20 pounds and has become a local and regional medal winner in the 60 to 64 year age group after enrolling in the Masters Swim program at the Mansfield Community Center.

“I started using the elliptical trainer at the community center, and I saw the swimmers going back and forth and it just seemed so intriguing,” says Johnson. “I didn’t think I could ever do that.”

Johnson has been competing throughout New England taking home first place in the Male 60-64 year old division in the 200, 100 and 50-yard freestyle, and the 100 and 50-yard backstroke at the John Merrill Memorial 2013 Masters Swim Meet in East Lyme last fall. He says his proudest accomplishment is finishing fifth in his age group in the New England one-mile swim competition.

Johnson, who has worked at Windham Hospital for nearly 25 years in various jobs including security, plant operations and maintenance, is hoping to qualify for the nationals and the world Masters competition in August. He says his daughter has been his inspiration.

“We were an example to me. She’s completed her level four lessons, and I keep going too,” he says. “Where else can you enter a sport at 60 and have the time of your life?”

HHC Web Development Project kicks off

Windham Hospital debuted its new public website on March 31, making it the first website to go live under the Hartford HealthCare Web Development Project.

“There are currently 30 different websites across our system with 15 different vendors. Those sites receive over 250,000 visits each month. The Web Development Project is all about creating a single web content management system for all system websites,” said Todd Bluestein, director of eMarketing and digital strategy for Hartford HealthCare.

Once the project is complete, all sites will be integrated with the same technology and platform, ultimately at a lower cost.

The first phase of the project focuses on revamping the websites in the most need of repair. Sites for Hartford HealthCare and The Hospital of Central Connecticut are next in the lineup. Many others are in the initial stages of development and transitions will occur over the next year.

The new sites adjust for mobile and tablet settings, have a similar look and feel, allow for immediate updates, and integrate social media, online marketing, blogs and other features that will roll out throughout the year.

You can check out Windham Hospital’s redesigned site by visiting windhamhospital.org.
New orthopedic surgery center set to open mid-summer

Orthopedic patients across central Connecticut will soon have access to a state-of-the-art surgery center right in their backyard. On April 22, the Connecticut Office of Health Care Access approved the opening of a new orthopedic surgery center — a joint venture between MidState Medical Center, The Hospital of Central Connecticut, and area physicians — that will be located on the Bradley Memorial campus of HOCC.

The completely renovated 10,200 square foot space will boast three sophisticated operating rooms, six pre-operative bays with a private changing area, eight post-operative bays and private exam rooms for consultation. From new operating room lights that use LED technology to flooring with anti-bacterial protection, the facility will advance orthopedic care in the region.

Providers at the center will offer a broad range of orthopedic and musculoskeletal procedures.

Experts from The Advisory Board Company project that outpatient orthopedic surgery procedures will grow 23 percent over the next 10 years because of the aging population and a rise in obesity.

“We are excited to provide these services at the Bradley Memorial campus. This project is a prime example of how we are addressing the healthcare needs in our community and partnering with our physicians,” said Lucille Janatka, Central Region president.

The facility is set to open mid-summer.

Special Events

Wound & Skin Care 101

Tuesday, May 20, 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.
Westfarms Mall, Hartford HealthCare Wellness Lounge, Lower Level, near Nordstrom

Meet and speak with Dr. Kelly Johnson-Arbor, a Hartford Hospital physician and director of the Wound Center, who will take a 30 minute group walk while speaking about skin and wound care basics and how to identify and prevent future problems. To register, call 860-561-3420, X2102.

“EGGHEAD” – An Interactive Program on the Importance of Wearing Helmets

Saturday, May 17, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Connecticut Science Center, Hartford HealthCare Health Lab, 5th Floor

Bring the family and join Hartford HealthCare neurologist Dr. Michelle Boudreau and staff for the “EGGHEAD” exhibit, an interactive program demonstrating trauma to the brain and encouraging the use of helmets. There will be free giveaways, coloring pages, and activities for children. Handouts for proper helmet fitting will be available to parents. Dr. Boudreau will be interviewed on Channel 3 morning news the day of the event, so be sure to tune in!

Network News is a monthly publication produced by a sub-committee of the Hartford HealthCare Communications Council. Please send story ideas to networknews@hhchealth.org. The committee will make every effort to consider your story idea, but due to space constraints, editing may be necessary.
Midstate Chamber of Commerce President Sean Moore (right) was among those pledging to “Stop the Stigma” of mental illness at the Daffodil Festival in Meriden on April 26. Pictured with him are Rushford’s Tim Washington (left) and Christopher Collins (center).

Mary Delagrave, cook, Mulberry Gardens and Heidi Gil, senior director, Quality and Innovation, recently participated in Central Connecticut Senior Health Services H3W/Planetree fair. The fairs were themed as a Hollywood event, complete with a red carpet and paparazzi. The common goal of the fair was to successfully embed the H3W culture into the already present relationship-centered environment that Planetree helped to establish within the communities across the continuum.

Leonard Litsky, one of Hebrew Health Care’s Adult Day Services’ clients, stands alongside his painting called “War Paint.” The painting was featured as part of Hebrew Health Care’s exhibit, A Fresh Canvas: An Alzheimer’s Arts Program, located in the Greater Hartford Art Council’s gallery. The exhibit runs from April 7 through June 6 and demonstrates the boundless potential for human development despite physical, emotional or cognitive challenges.

Ten-year-old Mary-Grace Glinski came to Hartford Hospital’s Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center in April to donate more than 100 hats she had collected from her fellow students and staff at Northeast School in Vernon. Mary-Grace organized the hat donations as a way to honor the memory of her third-grade teacher, Cynthia Shea, who passed away after a stubborn battle with the disease earlier this year. Shown from left are: Mary-Grace’s mother, Stacey Glinski; Mary-Grace; Dr. Andrew Salner, medical director of the Gray Cancer Center; and Jean Cretella, a patient who warmly accepted Mary-Grace’s gifts.

The Hospital of Central Connecticut’s Women’s Heart Wellness Center received a check for $15,250 as beneficiary of the March 29 first annual Running with Scissors 5K Run/Walk in memory of Karen Pfaffenbach at Sears Park in East Hampton. Pictured are (from left) Dr. Heather Swales, FACC, director, Women’s Heart Wellness Center; Lucille Janatka, Hartford HealthCare senior vice president and Central Region president; event organizers Dorothy Winch, Corliss Ucci, JoAnn Pagliugh and Monica Turning; Dr. Justin Lundbye, FACC, director of Cardiology; and Nancy Kroeber, HOCC vice president, Operations.
50 HHC Nightingale nurses recognized

VNA HealthCare hosted its twelfth Hartford Regional Nightingale Awards for Excellence in Nursing at the Hartford Marriott Downtown on May 8. There were 39 HHC nurses in attendance and 11 additional HHC nurses from Backus Hospital and Windham Hospital nurses who were recognized at the New London region ceremony on the same evening.

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Hebrew Health Care’s Lisa Holloway, administrator; Doreen Beattie, vice president of nursing; and honoree Brad Renner and his wife, Nancy

Janet Richardson, RN, honoree from The Hospital of Central Connecticut

Seated: Dr. Rocco Orlando, Jim Blazar, Elliot Joseph, and Jack Greene. Standing: Michael Socco, Tracy Church, Bimal Patel, Lucille Janatka, Stuart K. Markowitz, Ellen Rothberg, Dr. Steve Hanks, Jeffrey Flaks, Rich Nankee, Trish Walden, Eric Hoeppner, and Peter Fraser