

# FOCUS

*The Quarterly Newsletter for Physician Office Staff*

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Volume 4, Number 3  
July, 1995

## ***Site & Facilities Update***

### **Cedar Crest & I-78**

#### **Lobby Renovations Progress**

Lehigh Valley Hospital has begun extensive renovations to the main lobby at Cedar Crest & I-78.

The renovation project, which will continue through August, has transformed the reception and entrance areas into a series of construction tunnels. The tunnels have been erected to facilitate the project while allowing access to the main elevators, Admissions, the GI/Endoscopy unit, and the cafeteria.

The new lobby will extend from its existing location to space now occupied by the cafeteria conference room.

The project is being completed in phases and includes:

- \* extensive renovations to the Tree Top Shop which will be closed through July

- \* the installation of a stone floor and the elevation of the ceiling in the hallway that links the lobby to the chapel and ancillary services

- \* the installation of a stone floor in the vestibule, the area between the automatic doors at the entrance. During this part of the project, patients, staff, and visitors will be directed to exit the hospital via Stairwell 4 (parallel to the main entrance).

In late July or early August, a bridge of sorts will be installed in the gallery hall to facilitate the floorwork. The bridge will not restrict but slightly reroute inpatient access to the GI/Endoscopy unit and outpatient access to ambulatory services. Once the floorwork is completed, the ceiling in the hall will be elevated. (Much of this work will be completed after visiting hours.) Donor recognition plaques and displays now located in the lobby will be relocated to the gallery hall.

(Continued on Page 2)

#### **In This Issue...**

Tips from  
Infection  
Control  
Page 3

Benefits of  
Medical Society  
Membership  
Pages 4 & 5

Ask FOCUS  
Pages 5 & 6

PAHCOM News  
Page 7

Upcoming  
Seminars and  
Educational  
Programs  
Pages 7 & 8

### **Gift Shop to Reopen in August**

Renovations to the Tree Top Shop, which were funded by the Lehigh Valley Hospital Auxiliary, are close to completion. Through the remainder of July, members of the Auxiliary will be stocking the shop for a grand reopening on or around August 10.

### **Renovations Proceeding, Planned for 7th, 6th and 5th Floors**

\* Minor structural changes to 7C, which facilitated the implementation of the patient centered care delivery model, have been completed. 7C has been occupied by the GI inpatient unit formerly located on 4B. The section of 4B will be renovated for occupancy by the Pediatrics Department this October.

\* Renovations to the 7th floor reception area, across from the public elevators, as well as the physical therapy unit, will begin in late July and continue through early September.

\* Renovations to 6B have begun in rooms 6 through 15, the first of two phases in the project. Phase 1 is scheduled for completion in early September. Contractors expect to complete the second phase, which will encompass the remainder of the unit, in early November. The section of 6B, now occupied by ancillary and administrative

services, will eventually house a physical therapy satellite facility. A similar series of renovations are planned for 5C following the completion of 6B and continuing through February 1996.

### **Off-site Laboratory Planned**

The hospital's Board of Trustees has approved the construction of an off-site laboratory at 2024 Lehigh Street. The design and construction of the project is expected to span 9 to 10 months. Plans for utilizing the space vacated by the laboratory have not been finalized but may include the addition or expansion of ambulatory services.

### **17th & Chew**

#### **Transitional Skilled Unit to Expand**

Last March, Lehigh Valley Hospital opened a transitional skilled unit with accommodations for 28 patients and plans for an additional 24. Plans are now being finalized for the remaining patient rooms which will eventually occupy space being vacated by the Pediatrics Department which will relocate to 4B at Cedar Crest & I-78 in October. The new patient rooms in the transitional skilled unit should be ready for occupancy early in 1996.





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## *Helping Hands Stop the Spread of Infection*

The main focus of good handwashing between patient contact has always been to prevent the spread of infection from patient to patient. More recently, with the advent of bloodborne pathogens and introduction of universal precautions, the need to practice good handwashing has significantly increased. Handwashing not only protects the spread of infection from patient to patient, but also protects the health care worker. In effect, you gain a twofold advantage by engaging in good handwashing practices -- protecting yourself and the patient.

With universal precautions firmly in place to manage the spread of bloodborne pathogens, the use of gloves as a physical barrier from offending microorganisms has dramatically risen. But the use of gloves should not overshadow the necessity to continue good handwashing habits. Even if your hands are clean when you put on the gloves, residual bacteria that are hiding under rings and fingernails flourish in the warm moist environment which the gloves create. Furthermore, gloves have many tiny holes in them and the chances of them keeping your hands free from contamination are dim. Often a false sense of security is created by wearing gloves reducing the frequency of handwashing after glove removal.

The appropriate method and frequency of handwashing is unfortunately poorly adhered to

in all health care settings. Since proper handwashing is considered one of the most important procedures in preventing the spread of infection, it is worth revisiting to serve as a gentle reminder and repeated plea to make this a part of your practicing routine.

Five things should be taken into consideration to insure your hands are properly cleansed. Such a simple task can make a significant impact on the reduction in the spread of potentially pathogenic microorganisms.

- Frequency. Wash your hands before and after every meal, after using the bathroom, between each patient contact, after handling contaminated equipment, immediately after BBF exposure, and after gloves are removed.
- Antimicrobial Soap.
- Quantity. 3-5ml of antimicrobial soap with running water.
- Duration. Wash for 10 to 15 seconds.
- Technique. Create friction in the handwashing process and don't overlook the areas under your fingernails and rings. Rinse your hands, dry with paper towel, and turn off the faucet with the paper towel and discard.

The Lehigh Valley Hospital Infection Control Department will be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding proper handwashing techniques or any other infection control issue. If you have any questions, please call Infection Control at 402-0680.

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# ***Benefits of Medical Society Membership for Office Staff***

by Barry Seltzer, Administrator, Lehigh Valley Ophthalmic Associates

Your physicians are certainly familiar with the benefits of medical society membership, but did you know that office managers can benefit from membership as well? Each of the three professional organizations -- Lehigh County Medical Society, Pennsylvania Medical Society, and the American Medical Association -- offer membership benefits that can be helpful to practice managers.

## **Lehigh County Medical Society**

### **Monthly Medicare Representative Meeting**

The Lehigh County Medical Society arranges for members to meet with a Medicare representative the third Tuesday of each month. Meetings are held at various area locations and any Medicare question can be discussed.

### **Mailing Service**

The Society will stuff and mail announcements and letters for members. The cost is based on services requested.

### **Seminars**

The Society offers a wide variety of seminars. They are listed periodically in the Society's publication, *The Dr.*

## **Pennsylvania Medical Society**

### **Seminars**

The state medical society sponsors many seminars each year. Recent topics have included ICD-9 Coding, Managing a Practice in a Managed Care Environment, Complying with OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Regulations, and Running a More Profitable Practice.

### **Publications**

The society publishes handbooks that are helpful to the daily operation of a medical practice. Some of the topics available include managed care, general and employment law, OSHA compliance, patient satisfaction measurement, and purchasing personal and professional insurance.

### **Services**

The state medical society makes services available to members, some at reduced prices. Some of these services include Claim Net, for electronic claims submission, legal services, and health, term life, and workers compensation insurance.

(Continued on Page 5)



The society also publishes ***Executive Report***, a monthly newsletter that addresses legislative and medical economics issues. The medical economics section is a timely resource for information regarding billing and reimbursement issues.

## **American Medical Association**

### **Publications**

The AMA publishes books, videos, and software that fall into four general categories: statistics and science, quality assurance and legal, professional development, and managed care. In addition, members can purchase CPT books at a significant discount.

### **Services**

The AMA also sponsors service programs for members. Some of these include an equipment leasing program, clinical supply purchasing program, and practice management seminars and workshops.

In addition to the benefits listed, membership in all three organizations supports advocacy for legislative and regulatory issues affecting medical practices at the local, state, and national levels.

If your physicians aren't already members of these medical societies, encourage them to join, and plan to take advantage of the membership yourself!

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## ***Ask FOCUS***

Beginning with this issue, in an effort to provide you with answers to some of those questions you've been asking, ***FOCUS*** presents this new section to the newsletter. If you have any burning questions that you would like to get an answer for, please contact Physician Relations at 402-9853. An extensive effort will be made to publish the answers in upcoming issues of ***FOCUS***.

**Q. What is the current minimum wage?**

**A. \$4.25/hour**

**Q. What is the law regarding overtime payment?**

**A.** The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires that an employer compensate an employee at one and one-half times his or her "regular rate" for all hours worked in excess of 40 in a work week. Overtime must not be paid weekly but by the next regular pay day. Generally, the FLSA does not permit the employer to grant an employee

(Continued on Page 6)

compensatory time-off in lieu of overtime pay. An exception exists, under strictly defined circumstances, for "time off plans." These "time off plans" for private employers do not permit employees to accumulate "comp time" beyond the pay period in which it is earned. Before considering any sort of "time off plan," counsel should be consulted.

Some employees may be exempt from the overtime compensation provisions. The "salaried" employee may not necessarily be exempt from overtime compensation. To qualify for this exemption, these employees must be salaried (and receive certain minimum salary amounts per week), and satisfy a variety of other strictly defined criteria relating to such matters as educational background, job duties, and managerial/supervisory responsibilities. Before claiming any "White Collar Exemption," however, counsel should be consulted.

**Q. If any employee voluntarily quits, are they eligible to collect unemployment?**

A. An employee who voluntarily quits his or her employment without cause of a necessitous and compelling nature is ineligible for unemployment compensation. In order to collect, the claimant is required to prove that the departure from employment resulted from "circumstances which produce pressure to terminate employment that is both real and substantial, and which would compel a reasonable person under the circumstances to act in

the same manner." [Taylor v. UCBR, 474Pa. 351, 378A.2d829(1977)] Requesting a letter of resignation from an employee does not necessarily mean the employee will be ineligible to collect benefits due them. Counsel should be consulted should any questions arise.

**Q. Is it illegal to "write off" Medicare deductible and copayments?**

A. Yes. The Office of the Inspector General at the Department of Health and Human Services states that routine waiver of deductibles and copayments is unlawful because it results in (1) false claims, (2) violations of anti-kickback statute, and (3) excessive utilization of items and services paid for by Medicare. The Office of the Inspector General is actively investigating health care providers to identify and eliminate fraud and abuse. Any insurance provider that you are contracted with has requirements with regard to the collection of copayments and deductibles. Your contract may be terminated if you do not collect as specified in your agreement.

**Q. If a part-time employee does not receive health care benefits, is the practice required to reimburse the employee for the amount of the monthly premium?**

A. The health care benefits and eligibility must be clearly defined in the practice's personnel manual. A written policy should explicitly state employee benefits which are at the discretion of the practice. You are not required by law to compensate the part-time employee.



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## ***PAHCOM News***

by Colleen Burgess, CMM, Area Representative

Congratulations to the four Lehigh Valley office managers who successfully passed the certification examination in Orlando, Fla., and are now Certified Medical Managers. They include: Cindy Borowski, CMM, Lehigh Neurology; Skie Kramp, CMM, Children's HealthCare; Anita Bennett, CMM, East Penn Family Practice; and Sarah Wilkes, CMM, Drs. Cassel, Paranicas & Snyder.

The total number of CMMs nationwide is currently 619 with 15 of those being Lehigh Valley medical managers. The Lehigh Valley Chapter had the largest chapter attendance at the Orlando conference in May with nine managers representing the Lehigh Valley.

For more information about PAHCOM (Professional Association of Health Care Office Managers), please contact Bonnie Miller, CMM, membership director, at 770-1350.

*A breakfast meeting of the Lehigh Valley Chapter of PAHCOM will be held on Tuesday, August 15, from 7:30 to 9 a.m., at the Spice of Life Restaurant, 1259 S. Cedar Crest Blvd., Allentown.*

*For more information or to confirm your attendance, please contact Cindy Borowski at 402-8429.*

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## ***Upcoming Seminars and Educational Programs***

**Wages, Hours & Pay for Pennsylvania Employers** will be held on Wednesday, August 9, in Philadelphia, and on Thursday, October 12, in Harrisburg. This seminar will be beneficial to individuals from both public and private organizations. Federal requirements which set minimum standards for Pennsylvania public and private employers will be discussed. In addition, Pennsylvania's minimum wage and overtime law as well as other Pennsylvania and federal laws relating to wage payments, wage deductions, vacation pay,

and other similar matters will be reviewed. Cost is \$275. For more information or to register, call Deerfield Seminars at 1-800-862-3337.

**Handling Employee Discipline and Performance Mistakes**, a one-day seminar for supervisors, managers, and team leaders, will be held on Monday, August 14, at the Allentown Hilton. Cost is \$79. For more information, contact Seminars International at (913) 681-1060.

(Continued on Page 8)

**How to Supervise People for the Newly Appointed Supervisor and Manager**, a dynamic one-day workshop that meets the challenges of today's supervisors, will be held on Monday, September 11, in Allentown. This special workshop is designed to meet the needs of those ultimately responsible for getting the job done -- managers, supervisors, and team leaders who need to increase the practical leadership skills they must use every day to get results. Cost is \$99. For more information or to register, call National Career Workshops toll-free at 1-800-258-7246.

**Interpersonal Communication Skills**, a dynamic one-day seminar which will dramatically improve your ability to build winning, working relationships with everyone, every day, will be held on Wednesday, September 20, at the Clarion in Allentown. Cost is \$99. For more information, contact Fred Pryor Seminars at 1-800-255-6139.

*The Transitional Skilled Unit is pleased to report that it has received its Medicare Provider Number: 39-5951. Those physicians who have attended patients in the TSU will need to report this number in their billing. The TSU staff has appreciated your patience in waiting for this number.*

*If you have any questions, please call Terry Tressler, TSU Administrator, at 402-9725.*

### ***Who's New***

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***FOCUS*** is published quarterly for the office staffs of physicians on the Medical Staff of Lehigh Valley Hospital. Articles for the next issue should be submitted by October 6, 1995 to Janet M. Seifert, Physician Relations, Lehigh Valley Hospital, 1243 S. Cedar Crest Blvd., Allentown, PA 18103. For more information, please call Janet at 402-9853.