

# FOCUS

Route to:

*The Quarterly Newsletter for Physician Office Staff*

Volume 5, Number 2

May, 1996

## **PennCARE Partnership Marks Key Developments**

Two important developments for PennCARE signal increased momentum for the health partnership of physicians and eight hospitals that first organized in May, 1995.

First, the network has officially been incorporated in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, a move that now allows PennCARE to enter into contractual arrangements with insurance companies on behalf of participating hospitals and physicians. Second, PennCARE signed the first of those contractual arrangements, a long-term agreement with U.S. Healthcare, the region's largest health maintenance organization (HMO). U.S. Healthcare has approximately 100,000 enrollees in the Lehigh Valley service area and 250,000 in the PennCARE service area. This agreement is subject to approval by the Pennsylvania State Department of Health.

PennCARE's incorporation, coupled with the U.S. Healthcare contract, creates in effect the region's first health network to blend the financing and delivery of health care, by bringing physicians, hospitals and insurance companies together in a single entity.

Other PennCARE hospital members include: Doylestown Hospital, Gnaden Huetten Memorial Hospital in Lehigh, Grand View Hospital in Sellersville, Hazleton General Hospital, Hazleton-St. Joseph Medical Center, Muhlenberg Hospital Center in Bethlehem, and North Penn Hospital in Lansdale. Penn State University's Hershey Medical Center will participate through a contract for highly specialized medical services.

## **Pre-Admission Testing to Temporarily Relocate**

Over the next several weeks, the Admitting and Pre-Admission Testing (PAT) Departments at Cedar Crest & I-78 will be undergoing facility renovations. During this time, it is necessary to temporarily relocate the PAT Department. On May 6, PAT will move to the "Brown Bag Suite" on the first floor of the John & Dorothy Morgan Cancer Center and remain there through August. In order to minimize

patient movement between the Cancer Center and the hospital, services previously provided in PAT and on 4A-DOPA will be performed in the "Brown Bag Suite" in the Cancer Center.

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Coleman, Manager, Admitting/PAT, at 402-4299.

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## **For Your Information . . .**

### **Emergency Department Phase 3**

On Friday, April 19, the corridor located between the Emergency and Radiology departments (Cedar Crest & I-78) was closed permanently. Access to the Emergency Department from within the hospital is now through the southeast corridor located near the Shock/Trauma Unit.

### **Valet Parking**

- Valet parking is available free of charge for patients of the Ambulatory Surgery Unit (17th & Chew) on the day of their procedure AND on the day of their pre-admission processing. Please remember to remind your patients of this service.

- Valet parking hours at Lehigh Valley Hospital, Cedar Crest & I-78 are:

#### **Main Entrance**

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Monday through Friday  
10 a.m. to 6 p.m. - Saturday and Sunday

#### **Cancer Center/1210 Building**

8 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Monday through Friday

### **1230/1240 Buildings**

7 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Monday through Friday

Car retrieval is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For car retrieval, call 402-8220.

If you have any questions or would like more information about Valet Parking, please contact Louis Geczi, Security Manager, at 402-2986.

### **Ambulatory Surgery Unit**

The Ambulatory Surgery Unit at 17th & Chew is in the process of revising its discharge instruction protocol book. In order to coordinate the information you give to your patients with the information the hospital provides, please send copies of all discharge instructions and pre-operative instructions which you give to your patients in the office to: Cindy Hertzog, Ambulatory Surgery Unit, Lehigh Valley Hospital, 17th & Chew, P.O. Box 7017, Allentown, PA 18105-7017.

If you have any questions, please contact Cindy Hertzog at 402-3435.

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## **Help Your Patients Stop Smoking**

The Coalition for a Smoke-Free Valley invites your office to take part in its initiative to reduce the prevalence rate of smoking by offering your staff training in the National Cancer Institute program, "How to Help Your Patients Stop Smoking."

As a health care provider, you know the health hazards of smoking. It is the chief avoidable cause of death, disability, illness and addiction in our society. Your office can play a vital role in reducing this public

health hazard by helping your patients stop smoking.

Your office's involvement in smoking cessation counseling is particularly effective for many reasons, among them:

- The provider/patient relationship is a unique and powerful one, giving staff a natural forum to speak to the patient about quitting.

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- More than 70% of smokers visit this physician's office at least once a year, giving your staff access to more smokers than any other qualified group or individual.

- 75% of smokers state that they would try to quit smoking if advised and help to do so by their health care provider.

**"How to Help Your Patients Stop Smoking"** is a step-by-step guide for incorporating brief smoking cessation and

education into your daily office routine. The program employs a team approach, maximizes office time, and does not disrupt a busy practice.

The training is free of charge, conducted in your office, takes about one hour, and includes support materials. For more information or to schedule a time for staff training, please contact Diane Tihansky, Training Coordinator, Coalition for a Smoke-Free Valley at 402-7460.

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## VRE Precautions

Are we indeed on the horizon of what certain alarmists are predicting as the "post-antimicrobial era?" In recent years, a growing number of organisms have exhibited resistance to not only the old guard antibiotics, but also to the latest pharmacological concoctions being released on the market. Vancomycin resistant enterococcus (VRE) has been declared one of the hottest emerging pathogens having significant implications as a nosocomial organism in the hospital setting. Most alarming is the fact that VRE exhibits multiple resistance to a host of available antimicrobial agents with only a few dim prospects remaining for treatment.

The emergence of VRE along with a number of other resistant organisms has been attributed to the intensive use of antimicrobials and the failure to **consistently** apply basic infection control practices and procedures. A recent consensus statement made in *JAMA*, (January 17, 1996 - Vol. 275, No. 3, pgs. 234-240) calls for a multidisciplinary, systems-oriented approach to address the current crisis we are experiencing due to the rising incidence and spread of resistant organisms. The statement was made by a

group of experts from hospital epidemiology and infection control, infectious diseases, clinical practice, pharmacy, administration, quality improvement, medical informatics, and outcomes. The group was challenged with the task to provide hospital leaders with "strategies to prevent and control the emergence and spread of antimicrobial-resistant microorganisms in hospitals."

The contributors to the consensus statement developed strategic goals to guide hospitals in the fight against the rising resistance of microorganisms. The goals were directed toward creating delivery systems to optimize antimicrobial use and establishing methods to detect, report and prevent the transmission of antimicrobial resistant organisms. One of the goals recommended that hospitals develop a plan for discharging, and readmitting patients colonized with specific antimicrobial resistant pathogens.

The Centers for Disease Control also recognizes that aggressive infection control measures must be undertaken to reduce the nosocomial spread of VRE.

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Since patients with VRE may remain colonized with the organism for long periods following discharge, the CDC recommends a system be in place to highlight the records of these patients so they will promptly be placed in isolation if readmitted. In an attempt to comply with the recommendations from the CDC published in the *MMWR*, the Infection Control Department has found it necessary to develop a process which would flag patients in our computer system who have been identified with VRE. Upon readmission, the VRE patient will then be

directly placed on the appropriate isolation precautions. Effective March 1, the Infection Control Department began the process of highlighting patient records with VRE infections. Should the patient be readmitted in the future, their pre-admit screen will indicate that they must be admitted into a private room under isolation precautions.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this new process, please contact Terry Burger in the Infection Control Department at 402-0680.

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### **Diane Palmer Workshop Review**

by Joan Rissmiller, Practice Administrator,  
General Surgical Associates

In spite of the inclement weather, the turnout was marvelous for the Diane Palmer Workshop held on Tuesday, April 9, at the Holiday Inn, Bethlehem. Over 100 attendees filled the morning session, with over 50 office managers in attendance at the afternoon session. There were several new faces among the crowd. Almost every surrounding community was represented including Jim Thorpe, Lehigh, Lehigh Valley, and Easton.

The morning session got off to a fast-paced start. Through the use of videos and Ms. Palmer's role playing, the audience had an opportunity to step back and take a look at themselves. Humor and diplomatic wit was used to discuss common problem areas.

The presentation on first impressions, non-verbal interactions, and the proper way to greet patients sent out a signal that offices need to evaluate the way we are perceived on the other side of the welcome desk.

An emphasis was placed on team approach and the importance of working together. The morning hours sped by too quickly. Unfortunately, time limited the telephone techniques presentation. Repetitive comments such as "I could have listened to her for hours" were heard.

The afternoon session was much slower paced. Unfortunately, topics such as "Dealing With Work Change," "Dealing Effectively With Complaints and Complainers," and "Performance Appraisals" are now humorous and entertaining issues. Videos and references were presented and networking was encouraged.

When asked to describe the seminar in three words, the following comments were written: "Informative, Fun, Uplifting," "Front Desk Must," "It Was Great," "Too Short," "Wished we could have had more time."

PAHCOM is interested in presenting another conference in the Fall. Please contact Rosanne Kocher, President, Lehigh Valley Chapter, at 966-4646, with your comments and suggestions.



## Upcoming Seminars and Educational Programs

### Upcoming PAHCOM Meetings

Upcoming meetings of the Professional Association of Healthcare Office Managers (PAHCOM), Lehigh Valley Chapter, include:

Tuesday, May 21  
Breakfast Meeting  
Spice of Life  
Restaurant  
8 a.m. - Business  
Meeting  
8:30 a.m. - Speaker:  
Dan Oswald -  
Budgeting

Tuesday, June 18  
Evening Meeting  
Spice of Life  
Restaurant  
5:30 p.m.  
Report on National  
Conference

Tuesday, July 16  
Lehigh Valley Chapter  
Picnic  
Details to be  
announced

If you are not a member of PAHCOM and would like information about how to join, please contact Bonnie Miller, Lehigh Valley Chapter Membership Director, at 770-1350.

**Stress Solutions - Workshop for Women** will be held on Tuesday, May 14, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Comfort Suites University, 120 W. Third Street, Bethlehem, Pa. \$79.00 per person. By attending this seminar, you will be provided with simple stress management skills that will help you: stay calm and collected in anxious moments; deal with stressful people, assertively and positively; learn to manage your personal stressors with grace and confidence; and live more energetically and work more productively – in spite of the pressures at home and on the job. For more information, call CareerTrack Seminars at 1-800-334-6780.

**How to Succeed in EXTREMELY Managed Care** will be held on Friday, May 17, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., at the Philadelphia Airport Hilton, 4509 Island Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa. \$385.00 per person. Through this seminar, you'll learn: how to evaluate your practice so you can "sell" your services to insurers; contract provisions to beware of; cash flow changes when you shift to capitated practice; safeguards for identifying non-covered services before they're performed; changes in buy-in/pay-out arrangements; and more. For more information, call The Physician's Advisory at (610) 941-4499.

**How to Supervise People** will be held on Tuesday, May 21, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Allentown Hilton & Conference Center, 904 Hamilton Mall, Allentown, Pa. \$99.00 per person. This is a powerful, one-day seminar that will launch you to peak performance in motivating, managing, and taking charge of projects and people. For more information, contact Fred Pryor Seminars at 1-800-255-6139.

**Coaching Skills for Managers & Supervisors** will be held on Tuesday, June 4, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Allentown Hilton & Conference Center, 904 Hamilton Mall, Allentown, Pa. \$195.00 per person. Transform your work group into a cohesive, coordinated team! Imagine how much your work group could accomplish if it functioned as one well-coordinated unit. You'll learn how to pull everyone together with a shared drive and purpose. For more information, contact Fred Pryor Seminars at 1-800-255-6139.

**Is Your Office OSHA Proof?** will be held on Wednesday, June 5, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Conference Center, Routes 22 & 512, Bethlehem, Pa. \$179.00 per person. OSHA regulations affect all medical and dental offices. But, what impact do these regulations have on YOUR office? Attend this seminar to learn more about: protecting your employees, your responsibility for having written plans for your office, controlling TB/Hepatitis B/HIV exposure and infection situations, employer training requirements mandated by OSHA, your reporting, documentation and recordkeeping requirements. For more information, contact Healthcare Consulting Associates, Inc. at (616) 345-3329.

**Getting It All Done**, a one-day seminar on managing priorities, deadlines and pressure, will be held on Thursday, June 20, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Comfort Suites University, 120 W. Third Street, Bethlehem, Pa. \$79.00 per person. This program will help you: identify *true* priorities when everything is urgent, eliminate time-wasters by dramatically increasing your focused, productive time, anticipate problems and prevent bottlenecks, spot the hidden shortcuts in every project, and more. For more information, contact CareerTrack Seminars at 1-800-334-6780.

Peggy S. Blue, Medicare Professional Services Representative, is available to meet with physicians or their office staff on a one-to-one basis regarding any Medicare issues. This free service is made possible by the Lehigh County Medical Society in conjunction with the hospitals. Peggy's schedule for the remainder of the year is as follows:

**Lehigh Valley Hospital  
August 20, December 17**

**Sacred Heart Hospital  
June 18, October 15**

All appointments should be scheduled through Lehigh County Medical Society by calling (610) 437-2288.

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**LEHIGH VALLEY**  
**HOSPITAL**

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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 July 12, 1996, 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.