

■ What's Up?

Merger Update -- Although the merger has now been finalized, the *Merger Update* will continue to be published as long as there is a need for frequent and timely communication on merger-related issues. It will not necessarily be produced every Wednesday, however, but only as there is new information to be communicated. Because of the Thanksgiving holiday, there will be no *Merger Update* on Dec. 3.

Human resources -- With the merger finalized and Lehigh Valley Hospital and Muhlenberg Hospital Center operating as a single organization, the human resources subgroup can now review salary and benefit information. The process of collecting and comparing data on personnel policies, benefits and compensation practices will be completed no later than the first of the year. Analysis, prioritization and a plan for implementation will take at least through the end of January. It's important that the process be thoughtful and well-planned to ensure that responsible recommendations and decisions are made. So until changes are made, everyone will remain at their current salary, enrolled in their current benefit programs and with their current PTO and sick accrual rates.

Operations -- The operations subgroup has made good progress in creating guidelines and tools to aid the development of integration work plans. Next steps are: 1) Identifying and communicating with senior clinical leaders who will provide guidance and participate in integration efforts; 2) Finalizing the packet of information for managers who will have accountability for integration; 3) Understanding how various integration efforts are linked; 4) Understanding the type and cost of resources needed to gather, analyze and compare data in functions to be integrated.

Cultural integration -- Lehigh Valley Health Network employees at all sites are invited to the annual meeting of the LVVHN board of trustees on Wednesday, Dec. 3, 4 p.m. in the auditorium at Lehigh Valley Hospital, Cedar Crest & I-78. The merger will be a featured presentation.

Additional events or highlights:

- ▶ Change management workshops for department directors in mid-November were well-received, with ratings averaging 5.6, a 7 being "best use of time." Participants indicated they enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about each other's organizations and continued to applaud the open communication regarding the merger.
- ▶ Ron Macaulay, senior vice president, LVHN, and formerly vice president at MHC, gave an informative presentation on MHC at the LVH department head meeting Nov. 20. A similar presentation on LVH will be given for MHC department directors next week.

Information systems -- A systems fair will be held Jan. 9 from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the first floor conference room at MHC, to showcase Phamis, email, wireless and imaging technology.

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■ Rumor Control -- Call 402-CARE

Rumor: Stu Paxton has replaced Bill Mason as president and CEO of MHC.

Fact: Stu Paxton has been appointed vice president, operations, for the MHC division of Lehigh Valley Health Network. He will also retain his other network responsibilities in the consumables area. Bill Mason retains the title of president for MHC. Elliot J. Sussman, M.D., is president and CEO of Lehigh Valley Health Network, and Lou Liebhaber is COO of the hospital division of LVHN, comprising the newly merged LVH and MHC.

Rumor: Melissa Wright will be leaving MHC's campus.

Fact: Melissa Wright, director of community relations, will remain at MHC. She is now reporting to John Stavros, senior vice president for marketing and public affairs, LVHN.

■ Former IBM building

Renovation of this vacant office building on the campus of Muhlenberg Hospital Center will begin immediately, offering an option for several administrative operations of the network. Approximately 50,000 square feet of space is available, and could be occupied in as little as six months. The goal is to reduce the network's substantial expense in off-site leases at various buildings. With the merger, LVHN now owns the former IBM building.

■ Psychiatry

Consultants have presented departmental leadership from both sites with a profile of services at both locations, including treatment processes, lengths of stay, occupancy and programs. Financial analyses are currently being completed. It is expected that a recommendation on psychiatric inpatient services for the network will be made by mid- to late December.

■ A Line or 2 from Lou

Out of the blue, I got a call last week from someone at The Advisory Board Company, a highly respected group out of Washington, D.C., that does research and policy analysis on a wide range of health care issues for health care organizations across the country. The group had been called in as advisors to two hospitals in upstate New York that were merging, although I suspect referees might have proven to be more valuable. The community was in chaos, the medical staff in an uproar, employees in a panic. Why? No communication, no involvement, no feedback. Instead, rumors, secrecy, fear. Everything we have been doing right, they have been doing wrong, or so it appears. That said, we all know there are some anxieties about the days ahead. But open communication and sharing of information in honest, complete and timely ways should help to ease concerns and move us quickly to acceptance and support for our new Lehigh Valley Health Network.



Lou Liebhaber
COO, Lehigh Valley Health Network