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a blog on LVHN.org containing timely health information and health network news.

**Lehigh Valley Health Network**

# Parking Plan Update

BY [ADMIN](#) · MAY 18, 2016

**This message is from Bill Kent, President, LVH, and Jim Geiger, President, LVH-M**

Over the past year, we have seen an increasing level of concern and frustration from our patients related to insufficient and inconvenient parking availability. In recent weeks, our Security team has monitored this parking situation closely and they have observed several hundred instances in which our employees are parking in patient and visitor locations.

We are distributing an updated Parking Management Plan to facilitate adequate parking at various LVHN locations for our patients, families, visitors and staff. The updated policy is attached for your review and we ask you to share it with other staff throughout LVHN.

A comprehensive Parking Management Plan with effective enforcement will allow our patients and visitors to more easily find parking on our campuses. Additionally, to ensure we have enough employee parking, we have added parking spaces at the LVH Cedar Crest and LVH Muhlenberg employee lots to

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allow adequate and convenient access. [This policy](#) describes employee parking locations for all LVHN locations. Other updates to the policy include:

- **2 Hour Parking for Visiting Employees** – 2 hour parking in our Cedar Crest garages will be limited to leaders that are required to travel site to site multiple times per day. A hang tag will be distributed to these employees and this 2 hour provision will be strictly enforced. 2 hour parking at Cedar Crest will be provided on the West (H) deck and will be limited to 30 spaces. If all 2 hour spots are in use, the expectation is that you will park in a regular employee lot. Hang tags will be distributed on a case by case basis and can be requested by calling 610-402-7700.
- **Parking violations will result in progressive actions to be taken in accordance with our [Human Resources Policy – Employee Counseling and Discipline](#).** Up to 2 initial violations will result in distribution of parking tickets, and subsequent violations may result in application of a car boot and towing of the automobile off LVHN premises. Chronic violators of this policy may ultimately be terminated from LVHN employment.
- **Special Events and Meetings** – For pre-planned special events and meetings, please call the security parking hotline at 610-402-7700 so that parking needs can be planned for effectively.

We thank you in advance for your support to ensure we have adequate parking for our patients, families and visitors. We will continue to monitor our parking capacity and use survey feedback to make further refinements as necessary. Our ultimate goal is to achieve the right balance between patient/visitor parking and employee parking needs.

To report any parking violations or concerns, please call the security parking hotline at 610-402-7700 and leave a message. If this is of an urgent nature, please call 610-402-5555.

Additional documents:

# RN Uniform Standardization Q&A Updated Ahead of May 31 Start Date

BY [TED WILLIAMS](#) · MAY 17, 2016

On May 31, inpatient registered nurses (RNs) throughout LVHN are expected to begin wearing the new standardized navy blue uniforms with white LVHN- and Children's Hospital at LVH-branded logo embroidery. Patient care services leadership has updated a [question and answer guide](#) that addresses concerns raised during the uniform standardization process. Anyone with questions not addressed in the Q&A should contact [Susan.Steward@lvhn.org](mailto:Susan.Steward@lvhn.org).

The uniforms, manufactured by Cherokee and WonderWink, are available through Lizard Apparel and Promotions (Lizard AP) of Dayton, Ohio at a special



website – [lvhnuniform.com](http://lvhnuniform.com). All embroidered logo items must be purchased through Lizard AP. All non-embroidered items (e.g. navy blue uniform pants/skirt) can be purchased through the vendor of your choice. A limited supply of uniforms, complete with embroidery and in the most popular sizes and styles, will be available in LVHN gift shops.

See our [ordering navigation instructions](#) for details on ordering uniforms online.

# Volunteers Needed at Pocono Raceway

BY [RICK MARTUSCELLI](#) · MAY 18, 2016

LVHN is proud to continue our partnership with Pocono Raceway as a sponsor and as the official health care provider for two NASCAR Sprint Cup races this summer. Our presence at these fun events is a wonderful collaboration that also benefits our health network.



As part of our partnership, LVHN will help sell 50/50 raffle tickets during these races. Volunteers are needed to sell tickets throughout the main grandstand areas, using a hand-held computer device. Volunteers will be trained to use the device before the start of their shift. Proceeds from the raffle, conducted by the Mattioli Foundation, will benefit Children's Hospital at Lehigh Valley Hospital.

The race weekend dates are:

June 3-5

July 29-31

Signing up is easy. [Review this schedule](#) to select your shift, including your second and third choices, and then call 610-402-CARE or [go online](#) to register. Feel free to sign up for more than one shift. Be prepared to provide your employee ID, inter-office address, job title and cost center. This information can be obtained through API. Volunteers receive free admission to the race the day of their shift, free parking and a free T-shirt to be worn the day of their shift. The deadline to register is June 1. After you register, you'll receive a confirmation letter with more details that will be helpful to you.

Following last year's raffles, the Mattioli Foundation made a generous donation of more than \$35,000 in support of Children's Hospital at Lehigh Valley Hospital. With your help and enthusiasm, we have an opportunity to raise another large donation this year. Volunteering is a great opportunity for you, your family and friends to support LVHN while enjoying a day of NASCAR activities. For a complete schedule of the daily activities taking place at the track, visit [poconoraceway.com](http://poconoraceway.com).

## How One Practice Took a Quantum Leap in Access

BY [RICK MARTUSCELLI](#) · MAY 18, 2016

LVPG Hematology Oncology is a large, busy practice. With locations at LVH–Cedar Crest, LVH–Muhlenberg and the Health Center at Bangor, the practice averages 3,500 monthly outpatient visits.

Colleagues at the practice anticipated they'd become even busier when people learned that [LVHN's Cancer Institute is a member of the Memorial Sloan Kettering \(MSK\) Cancer Alliance](#). As the announcement of the new partnership neared, colleagues began taking steps to improve access to meet the



*Access coordinator Jenn Corbett (left) and patient services representative Donna Raatz are among many LVPG Hematology Oncology colleagues who get new patients seen*

community's growing demand for care.

*quickly.*

Working together, colleagues from the practice and organizational effectiveness took a deep dive into how the practice operates. They identified three goals:

1. Discover ways to meet the needs of new and existing patients.
2. Ensure new patients with a solid tumor are seen within five days of calling for an appointment, with all other new patients seen within 14 days.
3. Improve patient satisfaction scores related to access.

Here's what they did beginning in December to achieve their goals.

### **Created a better phone experience**

Before the deep dive, practice phone calls were handled by colleagues who were responsible for multiple duties. "They were overwhelmed," says practice director Mary Greenberg. In some instances, patients were waiting up to a week to make an appointment.

To solve the problem, the practice identified seven colleagues whose sole responsibility is to answer patient phone calls and address their needs. Also identified were three access coordinators who work to ensure patients receive an appointment with the right doctor within the appropriate amount of time. All these colleagues – including those who originally were located at another site – were moved into one centralized location within the LVH–Cedar Crest practice to foster collaboration and efficiency. The phone system also was upgraded to allow calls to be quickly routed to an available attendant, minimizing wait times.

### **Streamlined precertification**

Six colleagues were identified to handle precertification. After a new patient sees a physician and a treatment plan is made, these colleagues contact the patient's insurance company to receive precertification for all the tests, medications and treatments in the plan. They work to receive the necessary certifications prior to the patient's next appointment. This eliminates the need to reschedule appointments when patients arrive for treatment without certification, and helps ensure patients get the care they need when they need it. This new process also gives nurses more time to spend on patient care, because they handled precertification previously.

### **Maximized physicians' potential**

When evaluating practice data, the team realized physicians at one practice site were seeing more patients per day than physicians at the other sites. By taking steps to ensure all physicians see the same number of patients daily, 500 extra appointment slots were created. Additionally, physicians now use their allotted administrative time to see patients if the practice is unable to give new patients an appointment within the proper timeframe.

## The results

### **More new patients**

The practice has seen 372 more new patients this fiscal year than it did during the same period last fiscal year, an increase of 25 percent.

### **Quicker appointments**

Before the deep dive, less than 50 percent of new patients received an appointment within the appropriate timeframe. In the last four weeks, 100 percent of new patients got the appointment they needed.

### **Enhanced patient satisfaction**

The team is monitoring Press Ganey patient satisfaction scores for three questions related to access. Their goal is to rank in the top half of practices nationwide (higher than the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile). Here's the latest data:

Question Topic	Percentile in December	Percentile in March
Ease of scheduling an appointment	49	60
Ease of getting the practice on the phone	32	39
Appointment scheduled as soon as needed	30	54

### **Added benefit**

While the team's work is greatly benefiting patients, it's also affecting another group. "Access is not only a patient issue," Greenberg says. "When colleagues can't give patients the appointment they need, they become stressed." Now that LVPG Hematology Oncology took a quantum leap, that's not the case anymore.



## **Cathy Cerami, RN**

Nurses meet hundreds of patients during their careers. Each patient is special, yet every nurse has that one patient who leaves a lasting impression. For Cathy Cerami, RN, of LVPG Hematology Oncology–1240 Cedar Crest, that one patient became a special friend.

As an oncology nurse, Cerami provides support and education during difficult treatments. She manages side effects under the guidance of an oncologist and serves as an important lifeline during the cancer journey – becoming a beacon of light for patients through dark and tumultuous times.

Cerami met patient B and his wife six years ago after he was diagnosed with metastatic melanoma. The couple valued Cerami’s expertise and support, and over time they developed a wonderful friendship. Because they were most comfortable getting information from Cerami, she shared her cellphone number in case they needed help after hours.

This past Christmas, Cerami invited the couple to join her family for a traditional Italian Christmas Eve dinner. The evening turned out to be one of B’s last social outings because days later, his condition took a turn for the worse. When Cerami visited him in the hospital, they talked about the delicious dinner they shared. Cerami made a promise to cook for him again after he was out of the hospital. A few weeks later, she kept her promise and hosted B and his wife for yet another special meal.

A short time later, B’s cancer began resisting treatment, and his condition declined rapidly. Knowing that Cerami’s comfort and support were just a phone call away, his wife made the decision to bring him home so his cancer journey wouldn’t end in the hospital.

Early one morning, Cerami awoke suddenly from a deep sleep. Within minutes, she received a text telling her that B had died peacefully in his wife's arms. Within a few days, she received yet another reminder of their friendship.

"B chose to be cremated and wanted Cathy to have some of his ashes," says nominator Krista Malinoski, RN. "The gift was presented in a small book-shaped urn. It's symbolic of their friendship and the role she played during the last chapter of his life."

This isn't the first time Cerami brought her work home during her 25-year nursing career. "Cathy is fond of saying 'Nursing isn't a 9-to-5 job.' Her leadership and expertise set a wonderful example for other nursing colleagues."

## Next Steps

### [Nominate a Service Star](#)

Congratulate these nominees:

- **Laurie Fournier, RN, 5B, LVH–Cedar Crest**

Fournier was caring for a 100-year-old dying man on comfort measures and his family. She took the time to obtain a private room, stayed beyond her shift to get the family a convenience cart, made food service arrangements and rearranged furniture to accommodate the man's large extended family.

- **Katherine Malitsch, Heart Station, LVH–Muhlenberg**

After a patient became emotional during a test, Malitsch took the time to comfort her and learn what was weighing on her heart. The woman had a puppy that she was having trouble caring for. Malitsch assisted the woman by making arrangements with a rescue shelter and even picked the puppy up from the woman's home.

- **A team of colleagues from perianesthesia, infection control, emergency management, Crothall, safety and engineering, LVH–Cedar Crest**

Colleagues jumped into action when a small drip from a ceiling tile turned into a water line break emergency in the surgical staging unit at LVH–Cedar Crest. A "village" of colleagues from numerous departments came together to solve the problem while providing uninterrupted high-quality care to our patients.

- **Martin Gibson, float pool, LVH–Muhlenberg**

After drawing blood from a patient on 6T, Gibson set up the woman's meal tray. Within minutes she turned dusky gray and was unable to cough or speak. The woman was choking, and Gibson saved her by performing the Heimlich maneuver.

- **Debra Rudert, TOHU, LVH–Cedar Crest**

Rudert is an administrative partner who uses her past technical partner experience to help with patients. She de-escalates situations when confused patients become agitated. She answers call bells, helps with equipment and shows great empathy and compassion with patients.

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- **Christine Renninger, RN, Jo Anne Sabia, Tracy Nichols, RN, Robert Santucci, home care/hospice**

A team of professionals cared for a patient with cancer who had a serious wound and was showing signs of decline. Renninger went to the patient's home at 9:30 p.m. to develop a plan of care. Nichols provided excellent wound care and coordinated other physician visits. Sabia made the patient comfortable by giving her a full bath and performed successful CPR when the patient suddenly stopped breathing. When the patient passed away, Santucci provided spiritual guidance and bereavement support.

# More Professional Legacies: 2016 Friends of Nursing Award Recipients Accomplish the Exceptional

BY [RICK MARTUSCELLI](#) · MAY 20, 2016

This week's featured Friends of Nursing award recipients all received Fleming awards, named in honor of the late Dick and Peggy Fleming, the couple who co-founded LVHN's Friends of Nursing program more than 25 years ago. Their dedication to nursing resulted in a legacy that has honored countless nurses, physicians, advanced practice clinicians and support staff over the years – and will continue to honor nurses and patient care colleagues in the future through the involvement of their children, extended family and many donors who support the program. Meet this week's Friends of Nursing award recipients:

## **New Knowledge and Innovations Lead to Improved Patient Outcomes**

**Medical-surgical intensive care unit colleagues** were

recipients of The Fleming Award to Recognize New Knowledge, Innovations and Improvements. This award is named for one of the Magnet Model<sup>®</sup> components and has the most criteria of all model components – so, these colleagues most assuredly helped us achieve our fourth Magnet<sup>®</sup> designation.



**What was the new knowledge?** Evidence to decrease pressure ulcers and catheter-associated urinary tract infections.

### **The innovations?**

For pressure ulcers:

- Two nurses together completing skin assessments upon patient transfer from the unit
- Mobilization of patients on ventilators
- ‘Wednesdays with the WOC’ (wound ostomy care nurse), during which unit leaders and the WOC nurse address each RN and discuss skin issues of each patient

For urinary infections:

- ‘Tinkle Tuesday’ and ‘Foley Friday,’ when unit leaders and infection control practitioners address a patient’s catheter presence and necessity

**What were the outcomes?** A successive decrease in pressure ulcers from 80 in 2013, to 40 in 2014 and 20 in 2015. These results are remarkable for this patient population. For urinary tract infections, infections decreased from 34 in 2013, to 29 in 2014 to one in the first quarter of 2016.

### **Essential Nurse Residency Support**

**Kristine Petre**, library services, received a new Friends of Nursing Award: The Fleming Award for Exemplary Performance Associated with the Nurse Residency. Petre is a medical librarian, a credentialed member of the Academy of Health Information Professions, is certified in copyright management and teaches the nurse residents the intricacies of searching the literature. This is the first and a most important step in completing their evidence-based practice projects, a requirement of the nurse residency program. Petre also schedules appointments with the residents individually to provide personal coaching.



### **Nurses who Provide Exceptional Care and Leadership, Here and Abroad**

According to Robert Fleming, who presented the Fleming awards on behalf of his family, the Fleming Caring Awards were among his mother's favorites. Two Fleming Nursing Caring awards were presented at the Friends of Nursing event.

**Krista Malinoski** was nominated for this award by the wife of a 47-year-old man with renal carcinoma, for whom Malinoski cared for five years as a nurse in the LVPG Hematology Oncology office. The patient's wife wrote, "Every visit resulted in appointments and medication refills or changes. I would do my best to keep up, but I would always say to my late husband and friends, 'I have to call Krista for her to explain the new approaches.' She always called back in a few hours and had the answers in language we could understand.



"When Dr. Shah told my husband there were no more treatment options and he needed to prepare to die with dignity, he and Krista assured us they would be with us *until*... and they were.

"When we began using hospice, Krista was my liaison and point person. My husband's plan was not the typical one, and the in-depth approach was coordinated by Krista. My experience with one of the most difficult scenarios possible – my husband coping with treatments and care in his last days and his death – was made a little brighter, a little calmer and more bearable by the nursing care, support, guidance and sincerity of Krista."

**Jeanna Werner**, our second Fleming Nursing Caring Award recipient, is no stranger to adversity. Despite overcoming several personal tragic life events, her emergency department (ED) colleagues describe her as a selfless, amazing and upbeat nurse whose enthusiasm is contagious.



In addition to caring for patients in our busy ED at LVH–Cedar Crest, Werner uses her skills and compassion to provide care to patients in Third World countries. She recently traveled to a small hospital in northern Haiti which was beginning to offer emergency services. Werner taught the Haitian nurses how to handle a wide range of potential injuries they might encounter.

# Our Fourth Magnet Designation: Behind-the-Scenes Site Visits, Exemplars, and Celebration

BY [JENN FISHER](#) · MAY 17, 2016

*A behind-the-scenes look at the site visits, exemplars, and announcement of our fourth Magnet Designation. From the [spring 2016 issue of Magnet® Attractions](#).*

For patient care services (PCS), 2016 started quickly. In early January, four Magnet Recognition Program® appraisers visited LVH–Cedar Crest, LVH–17th Street, LVH–Muhlenberg and LVHN–Tilghman, as well as home health and hospice services. The representatives learned firsthand how PCS colleagues demonstrated the Magnet sources of evidence.

- 40+ nurses were site visit escorts for the appraisers.
- Each unit had Magnet Champion RNs (members of our Professional Excellence and Night Shift Councils and RN Advisors) to help present Magnet evidence.
- More than 200 patient care services staff and 30 physicians joined appraisers at meal breaks.

## Designation announcement

In February, Anne Panik, RN, LVHN's chief nursing officer and senior vice president for PCS, received notification from the American Nurses Credentialing Center, the organization that administers the Magnet program, to prepare for the designation decision. "I was told to gather some of my colleagues on February 17 at 2 p.m. to hear our designation news," Panik says.



- Several hundred nurses and interprofessional colleagues gathered at LVH–Cedar Crest, LVH–17th Street, LVH–Muhlenberg and LVHN–Tilghman to hear the news.
- Executive leaders Brian Nester, DO, Terry Capuano, RN, MSN, and Tom Whalen, MD, joined the gathering.
- Cheers resounded across the Lehigh Valley when we heard we were designated as Magnet for the fourth consecutive time.

### Exemplars Accompany Designation

The Executive Summary Report spotlighted two exemplars:

#### Structural Empowerment: Nurse Residency Program

The program was honored for its focus on retaining new graduate nurses – exhibited by a 91 percent retention rate, as well as for the nurse residents' work on evidence-based practice (EBP) projects – 108 completed since 2013; 64 in progress. The Center for Professional Excellence also was recognized for its assistance with EBP poster and presentation development.

#### Exemplary Professional Practice: Nurse-sensitive clinical indicators

- Acute Myocardial Infarction (AMI) Core Measure. The percent of AMI patients who receive aspirin within 24 hours before or after hospital admission outperformed the vendor's national mean, median or other benchmark statistics for all eight quarters.
- Ambulatory or Outpatient Measure: The Home Health data for, "How often nurses checked patients for pain," outperformed the mean, median or other benchmark statistics for all eight quarters.

## DISCOUNTS AND PERKS

# PPL Center Presale: Philadelphia Flyers

BY [ADMIN](#) · MAY 17, 2016

Because LVHN is a valued founding partner of the PPL Center, you are eligible to purchase tickets to see the Philadelphia Flyers vs. the New Jersey Devils on September 28th at 7:05pm before they go on-sale to the public.

[Enter promo code PTLVHN to purchase.](#)

**Presale begins WEDNESDAY, May 18th at 10:00 a.m. and ends WEDNESDAY, May 18th at 11:59 p.m.**

**\*Tickets go on-sale to the public on Thursday, May 19th at 10:00 a.m.**



The preseason showdown follows the wildly-successful “Flyers in the Valley,” in which superstars Claude Giroux and Jake Voracek guided Philadelphia to a 5-3 win over the New York Islanders in a preseason tilt in downtown Allentown on September 21, 2015.

In the team’s 20-year history, the Phantoms have helped produce a host of NHL stars including 2016 Calder Trophy finalist Shayne Gostisbehere and Flyers captain Claude Giroux along with three-time Stanley Cup champion Patrick Sharp and two-time Stanley Cup champions Jeff Carter and Mike Richards.

# Congratulations to the Winners of the Valley Preferred Cycling Center Tickets

BY [ADMIN](#) · MAY 20, 2016

Each winner [listed below](#) will receive a confirmation notice from Valley Preferred regarding their two general admission tickets. Winners will be able to use their tickets at any of the twelve Valley Preferred Cycling Center “2016 World Series of Bicycling” events. Winners were selected through a random drawing. Thank you to all who participated.

Valley Preferred Cycling Center

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1151 Mosser Rd., Breinigsville, PA

World Series of Bicycling events



Gates open at 6:00 pm, Racing starts at 7:30 pm

## JUNE

Friday, June 3	US Sprint Gran Prix (Opening Night/Fireworks)
Friday, June 10	Fastest Man on Wheels
Friday, June 17	Festival of Speed
Saturday, June 18	Red Robin All-Stars
Friday, June 24	Mike Walter Madison Cup/US Women's Open

## JULY

Friday, July 8	T-town Showdown
Friday, July 15	Golden Wheel Race
Friday, July 25-31	USA Cycling National Championships

## AUGUST

Friday, August 5	Keirin Cup
Friday, August 12	Rodale Corporate Challenge
Friday, August 19	Tandemonium
Friday, August 26	Madison Cup Air Products Finals

### **Congratulations to the winners:**

Alberoni, Margherita

Aleszczyk, John

Atno, Patricia

Barrett,Kathleen

Bear,Audrey

Berg,Daniel

Bergstresser,Charlene

Borthwick,Karen

Bryski,Alan

Caraballo,Wanda

Chromiak,Sharon

Craig,Jenelle

Davidson,Jonathan

DeAngelo,Angela

Dillard, Janet

Dixon, Amy

Entrot-Tomino Valerie

Erb,Jennifer

Evans,Tracey

Fichter,Thomas

Freudig,Chris

Glemser,Lisaeve

Grather, Donna

Grather, William

Gunther,Ann

Guzman,Ammy

Haines,Mary

Hamm,Marjorie

Harbon,Dennis

Heist,Cynthia

Henning,Michele

Henning,Scott

Hertzog,Caitlin

Higgins, AnnMarie

Hoffert,Robert

Holzer-Mesko Chris

Hower, Janet

Hujsa,Tracy

Hunkele,Debra

Huyett,Rosemarie

Keller,Lori

Keppel,Janice

Klase,Sharyn

Kozlowski,Liza

Kresge,Tammy

Kristine Scott

Lawson,Hollie

Leidheiser,Ann

Litkovich,Mary

Lorah,Suzanne

Ludwig,Erin

Macdougall,Tara

Marcus,Kathleen

McKinnon, Janet

Meckes, Charles

Messinger, Shirley

Miller, Barbara

Miller, Jeffrey

Motsko, Michelle

Muth, Judy

Myers, Michelle

O'Brien, Kevin

Otto, Suzanne

Pavelco, Pat

Payson, Mark

Peters, Bob

Petrucelli, Janice

Pimentel, Josue

Raatzs, Donna

Raisner, Dawn

Rex, Suzanne

Roberts, Christina

Rosario, Patricia

Ruhf, Jackelyn

Salamon, Debroah

Sander, Theresa

Schiavone, Lynne

Schlegel, Jolene

Schlier, Tara

Schutt, Michele

Sell, Susan

Shoenberger, Cheryl

Sisolak, Jr. William

Smith, Jodi

Smith, Roxanne

Sneckenburg, Heather

Stout, Donna

Strohecker, Joel

Tobias, Pamela

Tomsic, Christina

Transue, Laura

Traub, Teri

Treese, Wattana

Varga, Jenna

Vavrock, Ashley

Wanamaker, Audrey

Weidaw, Kelly

Weikel, Tina

Wells, Donna

Zeliff, Cathy

# Visit Point Pleasant This Summer

BY [NICHOLAS FRITZ](#) · MAY 16, 2016

In August, LVHN's Recreation Committee is running a trip to Point Pleasant, NJ. Here are the details.

## Point Pleasant, NJ, Aug. 6

- Round-trip motor coach transportation leaves at 8 a.m. and departs for home at 6:30 p.m.
- Relax on the beach and stroll the mile-long Jenkinson's Boardwalk.
- Other attractions include an aquarium, amusement park, arcades and games of chance. There are 3 mini-golf courses, batting cages and sweet shops.



**Price:** \$30 per person (beach prices not included)

[Get more details and a registration form.](#) The reservation and payment deadline is July 30. Email [Brandi Haja](#) or call 610-751-8580 for more information.

# Press Ganey CMO Emphasizes the Importance of Patient-Centered Care as Standard Practice – VIDEO

BY [TED WILLIAMS](#) · MAY 20, 2016

Most people choose a career in health care because of a deep-rooted desire to care for the sick and injured. How that care is delivered often means as much to patients as the quality of the care itself.

“Providing safe, effective care is at the core of what we do every day,” says Thomas Lee, MD, chief medical officer at Press Ganey, an organization whose mission is to help health care providers transform the patient experience through a data-driven, patient-focused approach. “And those same principals should not only apply to *what* we do in today’s health care, but *how* we



do it.”

Lee, one of the nation’s foremost authorities in health care performance improvement, discussed the importance of patient-centered care as the featured speaker in the eighth annual Jeffrey Paul and Grace Kathryn Feather Endowed Lectureship at the Lehigh Valley Hospital–Cedar Crest auditorium.

His presentation, entitled “Suffering, Loyalty and Transparency – Key Strategic Themes in the Era of Health Care Reform,” touched on the need for providers to concentrate on key issues that surveys indicate matter most to patients when it comes to their care:

- Confidence in their physicians
- Good communication with patients and other caregivers
- Empathy

“It’s not something that’s automatic because we’re all humans who are subject to the pressures and challenges of our own lives,” Lee says. “Plus health care is constantly changing with medical progress, a population living into older ages and the struggles of a global economy.”

Lee says with today’s increasing caseloads and a growing need to coordinate care among several providers, an average day for a physician can feel like there are just too many people involved and too many things to do. The potential is greater for gaps in quality, safety and efficiency.

With such pressures, the potential also is greater for patients to fear more than their diseases. Concern for addressing their fears – what Lee calls the “reduction of suffering” – is paramount.

“We can’t deliver immortality in the health care business,” Lee says. “The core point in what we can deliver is peace of mind given the cards we’ve been dealt.”

He pointed to a Press Ganey survey of 1.3 million patients who visited the busiest emergency rooms across the country. The survey indicated the variable mattering most to these patients was that the ER staff seemed to care about them. It ranked well ahead of pain control and issues with wait time. Lee

says only 65 percent of ERs across the country received a top rating in the survey.

“We’ve seen it reflected when asking patients about the likelihood to recommend a provider,” Lee says. “Loyalty to providers is a matter of how well they’re working together, listening to each other, and showing empathy to the patient. Those are the things that promote peace of mind.”

Some health care organizations have instituted daily practices – such as a mandatory dress code or an immediate beeper response policy at Mayo Clinic – designed to reinforce the importance of collaboration and cooperation among providers. Others like the University of Utah Medical Center have chosen to be completely transparent with Press Ganey ratings and comments by posting them online for all to see.

“The idea is to emphasize that every patient visit involves high stakes,” Lee says. “At first there was a real concern about posting negative comments. But they found the vast majority of comments were positive. People can see this information online and have a good idea of what to expect from a particular physician.”

At the end of the day, Lee says it’s up to each provider to make a commitment to patient-centered care. “This is really a ‘looking in the mirror’ issue,” Lee says. “All you have to do is be the kind of physician your patient is hoping for.”

### **What do patients really want in their health care providers?**

Good people:

- Working well together
- Listening to them
- Showing them they care

### **Possible ways to make patient-centered care the norm:**

- Peer pressure (staff mandates that promote collaboration and cooperation)
- Transparency among peers (making Press Ganey survey rankings and comments available to staff view)
- Transparency with the public (making Press Ganey survey rankings and comments available online)