

# CHECKUP

Volume 4, No. 4 May 24, 1991

## Hospital Gets Major Prenatal Care Grant

An innovative program to provide disadvantaged pregnant women with comprehensive prenatal care will soon get hundreds of local newborns and their mothers off to a healthier and happier beginning.

The Pew Charitable Trusts of Philadelphia and the Howard Heinz Endowment of Pittsburgh have announced an award of \$600,000 to TAH—LVHC. The grant, the largest TAH—LVHC has ever received from an outside foundation, will be used to increase access to maternity care for Latino and homeless women in five local neighborhoods with a high incidence of low-birthweight babies and infant deaths. Funds for this initiative, entitled "A Better Start," will be distributed over a four-year period and will be augmented by the hospital's donation of \$227,521 for in-kind services.

The new program will further expand maternal/child healthcare services provided by a state-financed program recently initiated by TAH—LVHC. Healthy Beginnings Plus (HBP), which accepted its first patients on April 1, has significantly expanded the scope of

maternity care services already offered through the Pennsylvania Medical Assistance Program. HBP is integrating care provision and oversight through perinatal case management, expanded clinical staff, psycho-social assessment, nutritional counseling and smoking cessation training for its patients. Implementation of HBP was a prerequisite for the hospital's receipt of the Pew-Heinz Grant.

A Better Start will build on the success of HBP and extend the program by coupling hospital services with those available through community agencies already serving the priority communities, Latino and homeless women. These partners will be active participants and will serve as satellite sites for the project. They include Casa Guadalupe Center, the Sixth Street Shelter/Turner Street Apartments, the Rescue Mission, Turning Point, the Salvation Army and the Lehigh County Conference of Churches.

The core of the program will be an outreach team consisting of the project coordinator and two outreach workers. Bilingual and

*Continued on Page 6*

### What's News

#### Fire Extinguisher Classes Start In July

An ongoing program to provide hands-on fire extinguisher training for all non-clinical employees begins at TAH site in July.

Emma Hooks, safety officer at TAH—LVHC, says employees — beginning with Security, Engineering, General Services and Food and Nutrition Services — will be required to learn how to handle extinguishers.

The first round of training will shift to LVHC site in August and be held at both sites in September. That, she says, will involve the first 500 employees. Next year, another thousand employees will get the instruction, and it will continue on about a three-year cycle.

Specifically exempted are employees in medical and surgical areas, whose primary role in a fire situation is patient evacuation.

Hooks explains that the measures are to comply with both Joint Commission Accrediting Healthcare Organization (JCAHO) plant technology standards and fire protection standards of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

"OSHA standards say that if fire extinguishers are available and employees are expected to use them, they shall be trained

*Continued on Page 3*



The Allentown  
Hospital—  
Lehigh Valley  
Hospital Center

A HealthEast Hospital



## Making The Rounds

On May 2, Daniel Kaczor, MT(ASCP), supervisor, Coagulation, gave a presentation titled "Hypercoagulability: an Overview of Current Concepts in Hemostasis and Thrombosis" during a symposium at Washington Hospital Center, Washington, D.C.

Patricia Vaccaro, RN, CCRN, published "Care of the Patient with Minor to Moderate Burns, Chapter 8" in *Nursing Care of the Burn Injured Patient* by Rita Botek Trofini, RN, MNEd.

Diane M. Carpenter, director, and Jack Dunleavy, assistant director, Human Resource Development, presented "Developing Future Leaders: Designing a Comprehensive Management Development Program" at the Middle Atlantic Health Congress in Atlantic City, N.J.

N. Susan Reinke, director, Human Resources, and Barbara A. Salvatore, assistant to the COO, are among the faculty at the Hospital Association of Pennsylvania Certificate of Management Program, to be held June 4-6 in Harrisburg.

## Congratulations

General Services at TAH site named Robert Rausch as the first Employee of the Quarter recipient this year. Rausch works in Pediatrics and will receive a \$50 gift certificate to Widow Brown's restaurant, \$50 in cash and \$100 worth of ServiceMaster products.

Michael Weaver, General Services, and Margaret Weaver, Radiology (TAH site), welcomed a son, Ryan Michael Weaver, on April 25.

*CheckUp* is a biweekly publication of the Public Relations Department of Health-East, Inc. / The Allentown Hospital—Lehigh Valley Hospital Center. To submit an article or for additional information, call ext. 3007.

### Our Quality Policy

Our commitment is to quality in everything we do. This can only be achieved if we provide services that conform to clearly understood requirements. We are dedicated to continuous improvement in our work processes. Our approach is based on "Prevention" and the concept of "Do it right the first time."

*Equal Opportunity Employer  
M/F/H/V*

## The Hotline

### Open Doors And Room Numbers

*The door of the West Street entrance to TAH site is left open. This wastes heat during the winter and air conditioning in the summer. What is being done to correct this problem?*

This problem is difficult to resolve. However, employees can help by closing the door if it is seen open.

*When will a pedestrian walk light be installed at the entrance to LVHC site for people to cross Cedar Crest Boulevard from the 1251 building?*

There is no current plan to install a walk light because the intersection is not heavily used by pedestrians. As a state highway, special studies would be required to justify one. Security advises that those crossing the road do so at their own risk — it's a four lane state highway with left turn lanes and about 30 seconds to cross safely.

*Why aren't the offices located on the ground, first, second and third floors of TAH numbered rather than identified by names and departments?*

This system of identifying offices and patient rooms has been in place at the site for many years, with no known reason. With the new signage plan for TAH site, both department names and numbers will be used.

*I work at TAH site. The nursing staff is concerned that medications are being missed on the unit. What is Pharmacy doing about this problem?*

Missing medications are a problem for both Nursing and Pharmacy staffs with no single cause or solution. The Nursing/Pharmacy Committee formed a corrective action team to address this complex problem and it has met weekly. To date, several causes for missed medications have been identified and addressed and others are being identified and discussed. If you are interested in becoming involved in the corrective action, contact Nancy Root, RN, head nurse, 5C, ext. 8780, or Greg Snyder, assistant director, Pharmacy, ext. 2590.

*I have not received my cancelled check for my contribution to the Miller Memorial Blood Center drive. When I called Miller, I was told HealthEast was holding the check. Who has the cancelled check and why is it being held?*

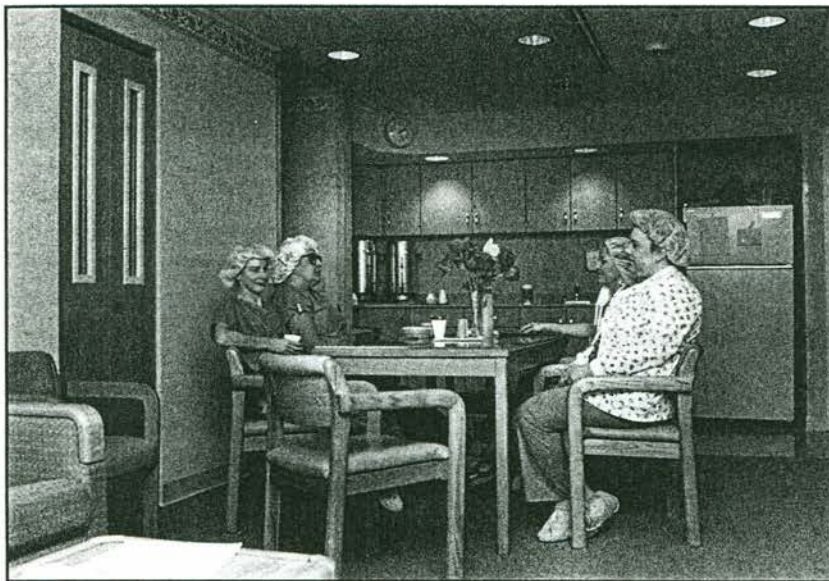
As you may recall, checks and pledges for the 1991 Miller Memorial Blood Center drive were due to HEI/TAH—LVHC by the end of November. After recording individual gifts, all checks were sent to Miller in the first week of January, 1991. Checks were not retained by HEI/TAH—LVHC for any reason.

Miller officials say all checks have been cashed. If an employee has not received his or her cancelled check, contact Keith Strawn, ext. 8864, for assistance.

*Why was the soda machine removed from TAH site cafeteria?*

The soda machine was not part of the renovation plan in the cafeteria and a new soda and ice-dispensing unit, offering both 10 and 16 oz. beverages, was recently introduced. Soda vending machines are still available 24 hours a day in TAH site snack bar on the ground floor.





OR Staff at LVHC site take a break between procedures in a renovated lounge, redecorated for the first time in 17 years.

### **Same Space, Better Arrangement**

## **OR Lounge Work Finished**

An extensive renovation and rearrangement of existing space for OR personnel at LVHC site has many employees and medical staff smiling.

Recently completed, the block of office space, locker rooms and lounges used by a total of 250 people has considerably boosted morale and departmental efficiency, says Mary Ann Frankl, RN, one of the OR head nurses.

Employees and physicians alike agree that their respective lounges and locker areas were major improvements that put an end to overcrowded facilities.

A key factor in the plan, says Frankl, was to create restful and comfortable environments outside of the ORs and to accommodate the large numbers of physicians and hospital staff. The old facilities were in use since 1974.

While the total square footage and specific alignment of rooms was dictated by department needs and engineering limitations, employees and physicians had a hand in many decor considerations. Surgeons and OR staff were of-

fered several environmental alternatives from which to choose.

Locker choices were made rather than locker assignments. What might not seem very important to a manager might be terribly important to those using the facilities. So the staff have a free hand in organizing locker allocation. Participation in portions of the project enhanced satisfaction as well as kitchen facilities, soft lighting and carpeting. Frankl points out that the physician lounge is now located, with a window, directly opposite the department nursing station — which means rapid communication for more effective patient care.

Head nurse offices are next on the line, and they, too, have windows in which OR staff can see the supervisors and feel free to pop in with concerns requiring attention.

Another factor in a decentralized format was putting the surgical department in charge of their own locker and lounge facilities. Any problems encountered are resolved within their department.

*Continued on Page 7*

### **What's News**

## **Fire Extinguisher Classes Start In July**

*Continued from Page One*  
in how to handle them," Hooks says.

Schedules for the programs, which will include a brief lecture, film and actual use of three types of extinguishers, will be posted in affected departments.

Assisting with the training will be members of the Emergency Response Team (ERT).

Participants will be required to sign in at both the classroom and field demonstrations, and should wear casual attire on the day of training. In one of the parking lots at TAH site and to the rear of the employee lot at LVHC site, ERT members and members of the Allentown Fire Department will control small "pan fires" to be extinguished by all participants.

Hooks says water, carbon dioxide and chemical extinguishers will be used, but that halon extinguishers will only be demonstrated because, while effective in firefighting, the material causes ozone depletion.

### **They're Worth It**

HealthCounts recently announced the names of prize winners in the April "I'm Worth It" incentive program drawing.

Recipients of accommodations for two for one night at Hotel Hershey were Cheri Lee Konunsky, TAH site, and Rebecca Caffrey, LVHC site. A refreshment set will be awarded to Lillian Higgins at TAH site and Irene Ehergott at LVHC site. Pam Snyder, TAH site, and Terry Burger, LVHC site, won gift certificates to Franks Nursery and Crafts, while Anna Keene, TAH site, and Jeanette Imbody, LVHC site, won certificates to Pasta Bellas.

HealthCounts gift certificates for a health promotion program of choice went to Ruth Bonn, TAH site, and Lois Douglass, LVHC site. Barbara Koval, TAH site, and John Dittbrenner, LVHC site, won three-month HealthCounts exercise memberships.

**More News On Next Page**



## What's News

### Benefit Bike Festival

The Cystic Fibrosis Family Bike Festival will be held Sunday, June 2 in three divisions at several sites in the area. Participants seek flat donations for participation and money is collected at the time the pledge is raised.

There is an assortment of incentive awards for various pledge levels.

The Junior Division, for pre-school to sixth grade students, involves laps around the Mack Test Track. Juniors may ride in the senior division if accompanied by a parent or guardian. The Senior Division, for ages 13 and up, will take a 10-mile recreational ride through Allentown and Salisbury Townships. Senior riders may also elect to ride the test track.

Corporate Challenge, the third division, involves company teams to ride the 10-mile route. The team with the highest amount of money raised will receive a catered lunch from Dyanne's Catering & Deli.

Sponsor sheets are available from McDonald's Restaurants or from the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation office at 820-0206.

### So Far, So Good

The Waste Management Committee wishes to thank all employees for cooperation through successful early stages of the hospital's expanded recycling efforts. Owen Grady, director, General Services, points out that while the process has gone smoothly, some confusion remains over carbon paper and self-carbon forms.

"Forms such as the doctor's order sheets, outpatient registration forms and intravenous solution records are not acceptable for recycling," he says.

### Diabetes Drug Trial Offered

TAH—LVHC is one of 60 sites in the nation conducting an oral drug trial to help slow the development of kidney disease in Type I diabetes patients. Enrollment of 15 patients within the next nine months is the goal of the study team at the hospital.

Candidates must meet specific criteria, including:

- Insulin dependent diabetes mellitus for

*Continued on Page 7*

# Empowerment

## 'Wiser' Management Style Popular In Respiratory Care

Like all healthcare professionals, respiratory technicians and therapists have their own network throughout the Lehigh Valley. It's also one of the allied healthcare fields in which shortages of personnel are a fact of life.

But not at TAH—LVHC. In fact, the word around the Lehigh Valley is that this is the place to be. There are any number of casual inquiries about staff openings — but there aren't any.

A lot of people believe it's because the way the department is being run. From top to bottom, it's a model of Total Quality Focus. When George Ellis, director, Respiratory Care, arrived a year ago, he was already familiar with the style of management that TQF relies upon and wasted no time in tuning into what he calls "my associates."

Ellis brought with him 17 years of management experience, including a background in sales — where positive attitudes and motivation are extremely important. And he brought a simple theme, which hangs on his office wall: "work wiser."

The first letter in "wiser" stands for "work works." It has value and meaning to all employees. Next comes "involvement" — there must be involvement in the process at all levels. The third letter stands for "structure," which provides the tools, skills and job descriptions.

The fourth letter has multiple meanings. "Expectations" reminds him that 97 percent of all employees will meet expectations if they know what the expectations are. "Education" underscores the need of employees to develop abilities and skills. "Engagement" urges Ellis to proactively engage

issues rather than react to them.

Finally, the last letter stands for "recognition." Good work needs to be rewarded.

He calls the employees "associates, because we are all in this together," and believes respect in both directions is critical. That can mean little things, like availability and returning phone calls promptly.

And Ellis immediately set about determining the requirements of a specific set of customers: his own staff. High on the list was education and a team was organized to develop a plan the staff desired. A second priority was billing problems, and another team was formed to resolve difficulties there.

He correctly believed from the start that by providing the means for employees to develop their own sense of accomplishment, their needs and the needs of the department could be met simultaneously. He also understands clinical work can become routine and that 95 percent of the time is spent on clinical work. Thus, the remaining 5 percent was devoted to activities of substance.

Ellis admits that initial successes led to problems in a third corrective area — policy and procedure development — because he was too laissez faire initially in his approach in structuring the policy and procedure team and didn't periodically check to keep things on track. The team initially faltered. That's been corrected in a positive way and the team is now operating like a fine-tuned machine.

He gives the credit for major improvements in performance to his "associates," and appraises the increase in quality at about three-

*Continued on Page 6*





*Paul Garbarini and Yvonne Bennett of Respiratory Care plan inservice education classes based on requests from employees in the department.*

## Team Designs Educational Program For Department

An educational program developed by employees in Respiratory Care continues to enhance staff skills and plays an important role in boosting morale and smoothing the merger process.

Department staff ranges from technicians to registered therapists and development to higher levels is based heavily on expanded knowledge. With a change in department leadership came an appraisal of how those needs were being met — and it touched off major changes.

Eight employees from both sites formed an education committee. The group includes Yvonne Bennett, Steve Pyne, Marlene Ritter, Ann Snyder, Paul Garbarini, Ken Miller, Judie Swartley and Joanne Givler.

Garbarini and Bennett explain that the first task was to survey the entire staff to measure needs. Until then, there was no organized program and course material was a "top-down" decision that tended to be of value to only specific levels of skill.

Six months of planning devel-

opment of an in-service program followed with a conscious effort to include as much staff involvement as possible. The emphasis was placed on encouraging staff at all levels to prepare presentations on highly technical subject matter to benefit the entire group as well as personnel from other disciplines.

They note that to reinforce the permanent commitment of the department to the program, a full year's calendar was prepared and the practical means to pull it off required brainstorming and innovation.

Both praised department leadership for allowing the time to do it. The group currently presents an average of seven programs monthly. The nature of the programs requires the many presenters to gain high levels of expertise to become effective instructors. An unanticipated consequence of the quality of the programs was attracting audiences from other departments.

Bennett and Garbarini attribute much of the success of the effort to

*Continued on Page 8*

## Respiratory Care Employees Improve Billing

It didn't take a corrective action team very long to measure the magnitude of lost charges in Respiratory Care and pluck out faults that had evolved patchwork-style in the system.

But then Beth Karoly, RRT; Vicky Klobosits; Sue DePrill, CRTT, and Rick Wieand, RRT, had their work cut out for them. They had to find a way to plug leaks running at \$1.5 million a year.

A look into billing concerns showed the nonconformances came from an assortment of assumptions about how things were supposed to be done, built up over time, mutating as they passed from one generation of employees to another.

Karoly's committee was amazed after meeting with Patient Accounting and Legal Affairs. There were some cases of confusion over what was to be billed, duplication of billing (and subsequent rejections by insurance carriers) in others, and billing errors attributed to variations in terminologies.

Closer monitoring by team members was installed as a quick fix, but the committee's primary task was to devise a system to put a stop to the problem once and for all — zero defects. Reviewing the different procedures involved, they also knew that a new system would have to be accepted by all the therapists if it was to work.

Because they knew firsthand what was involved, committee members focused on time requirements of individual therapists. One key issue was working with the limitation that the patient comes first and billing second — which sometimes led to forgotten billing.

Karoly's team worked with the staff to organize an improved charting system to provide for accurate billing. However, it meant more work for individual therapists. She attributes the success of the program to the simple fact that because the staff developed the system, it was committed to make it work.

She says there was strong staff support for developing a workable solution and high motivation to see it succeed.



# Major Grants To Help Prenatal Care

*Continued from Page One*

knowledgeable about Latino culture and homelessness, the outreach team will provide free transportation to care sites and a variety of incentives to encourage participants to continue regular prenatal visits. Free pregnancy testing will help introduce women to prenatal care and offer an opportunity for family planning counseling for those who are not pregnant.

To develop skills and sensitivities in dealing with the growing Latino population, TAH—LVHC staff will participate in a language and culture program consisting of a series of short courses, seminars and one-day workshops. A 40-hour Spanish course will be presented through the Multilingual and Cultural Institute, a partnership between Pennsylvania State University and the University of Puerto Rico.

In addition to the efforts of the community partners, support is expected from two other sources. Kiwanis Division 18, which includes 12 local service clubs, has agreed to purchase a passenger van to be used in the program. Since transportation is often a barrier to receiving care, participating women can receive free rides from the communities to the hospital for maternity services. Kiwanians have also expressed a desire to become involved with the project as volunteers.

The hospital has also applied to the Dorothy Rider Pool

Health Care Trust to provide additional resources to develop the maternal/child healthcare model linking the hospital and its services with external resources of the community. The proposal's primary aims are reduction of the incidence of low birthweight babies and adolescent pregnancy, coordination of perinatal care in the region and support for the continuum of care through parenting programs and other educational endeavors.

If the application is approved, the Pool Trust would match A Better Start's funds dollar for dollar. This support would amount to annual funding of \$150,000 over each of the next four years.

"The Allentown Hospital—Lehigh Valley Hospital Center has been working for over a year to develop a comprehensive system of perinatal care and outreach services," says Sam Huston, CEO. "This care will help those who currently are not receiving adequate preventive treatment and who are at risk of developing conditions which almost certainly will require a more highly concentrated level of medical intervention in the future."

"We are pleased to join our partners in the community in building bridges to better healthcare for women and their children. A Better Start is just that — the beginning of a major maternal child healthcare program which will mean healthier infants and mothers who are better prepared to give their babies the care they need and deserve."

## Employee Activities

Two days of membership privileges at The Fitness Plaza at Iron Run Inc. are offered to employees of HEI/TAH—LVHC through the Employee Activities Committee. On June 10 and 12 from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., employees may sample the weights, cardiovascular and selectrized equipment at the fitness center. Also available are any of the scheduled aerobic classes. Door prizes are offered for those who attend and register for them. For additional information, call 481-0100.

Directions to The Fitness Plaza are: take I-78 west to Route 100 north (exit 14B, Fogelsville). Go 1/10th of a mile and turn right on Imperial Way. At the stop sign, turn right and proceed to the rear of 2 Windsor Plaza.

## Empowerment Philosophy

*Continued from Page 4*

fold. Opportunities for improvement remain, though, and his expectations remain high. Nonetheless, Respiratory Care personnel have won a unique form of recognition from their peers in other institutions: TAH—LVHC is the place to be.

## Credit Union

### Interest Rates

New Cars .... 8.9% .....	Was 10.4% .....	3 years, 5 percent down
New Cars .... 9.9% .....	Was 10.9% .....	4 years, 10 percent down
New Cars .... 10.9% ....	Was 11.4% .....	5 years, 20 percent down
Used Cars .... 12.3% .....		3 years maximum
Personal ..... 12.9% .....		25 percent of shares
Personal ..... 13.9% .....		10 percent of shares

### Dividends

\$1.00 to \$1,000.00: 5.75 percent. \$1,000.01 to \$10,000.00: 5.80 percent. Over \$10,000.01: 5.85 percent.

### Business Hours

LVHC Site — Mondays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Tuesdays, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Wednesdays and Fridays, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Thursdays, 3 to 7 p.m. Phone: 776-8405. TAH Site — Mondays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Wednesdays and Fridays, 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Thursdays, 1 to 5 p.m. Phone: 778-9499.



## What's News

*Continued from Page 6*  
five to 20 years.

- Normal blood pressure
- Between 18 and 50 years of age.
- Non-childbearing (females must be post-menopausal or surgically sterile)
- Microalbuminuria
- Free from serious heart, liver and renal disease

Additional information about the trial is available from Nelson Kopyt, DO, 432-8488, and Robert Doll, Jr., MD, 820-9557, the co-primary investigators, and Mary Ann Gergits, RN, study nurse, at ext. 8200.

### HRD Programs

"Contemporary Diagnosis and Management of Hypertension" is the topic of a one-day program in the regional symposium series on Saturday, June 8, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

There is no charge for staff affiliated with HEI/TAH—LVHC, and registration is with Human Resource Development.

The next hospital orientation will be held June 3 in the auditorium at TAH site, and an optional hospital tour will be given on June 5, beginning at 1 p.m. at TAH site and 2:30 p.m. at LVHC site.

"Stress and Burnout — Care for the Caregiver," will be offered June 19 from 9 to 11:30 a.m. in Room 900, School of Nursing, TAH site. Call ext. 2430 to register.

### Volunteer Training

Training sessions begin June 1 at both sites for teenagers who want to be junior volunteers at TAH—LVHC.

Junior volunteers must be at least 13 years of age. Teens are needed to deliver mail and flowers to patients, assist with transporting patients between departments and to perform miscellaneous tasks.

Training sessions will be held Saturday mornings and volunteers will receive classroom instruction as well as on-the-job training.

Applications are now being accepted for junior volunteers; adults are also welcome. For more information, contact Hazel Kramer, director, at TAH site, ext. 2391, or Maria Dresen, assistant director, at LVHC site, ext. 8897.

### Language Service

Human Resources maintains a list of employees and physicians who speak a wide range of languages to serve as interpreters when dealing with patients who do not speak English. They range from Spanish to Panjabi.

Now language service has been extended through a 24-hour-a-day service of AT&T called Language Line, an "800" number for healthcare institutions that accesses interpreters fluent in 140 languages. Also available are "Point Talk" brochures, which work by pointing to a question or word in a foreign language where the question or word is written in English in an adjoining column.

To receive assistance in using either Language Line or Point Talk during daytime hours, patient representatives at both sites can be called. From 4:30 p.m. to 8 a.m., nursing coordinators will provide assistance.

## Benefits Spotlight

Please remember to pre-certify for inpatient stays. By presenting your HealthEast Health Plan (HHP) identification card to all hospitals, physicians and other providers, you alert admissions staff or the physician's office manager that HHP requires pre-certification for elective admissions.

In an emergency, it is your responsibility to call Spectrum Administrators within 48 hours of the admission to advise them of the stay. Also, you should contact Spectrum Administrators for notification and verification of eligibility.

### Israeli Physician To Visit

Eban Dolev, MD, head of the Department of Internal Medicine "E", the Wolfson Hospital, Holon, Israel, will present "Medicine in Israel Today" on Friday, June 7 at 9 a.m. in the auditorium at LVHC site.

Dolev is the former chief medical officer of the Israeli Defense Forces and former Chief of Medicine at the Sheba Medical Center and head of the Department of Behavioral Sciences, the Sacklar School of Medicine, Tel-Aviv University.

Among his affiliations, he is a member of the American Association of Medical History, the executive committee of the Israel Society of Bio-Ethics, a fellow of the American College of Nutrition and a member of the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research.

The program is open to all employees and staff of HEI/TAH—LVHC.

### OR Lounge Renovations...

*Continued from Page 2*

"Decentralization" of authority lines, especially in areas where staff can easily be empowered is essential. A recent graduate of the Quality Education System, Frankl believes the quality process works extremely well.

In all, she believes the new organization of space will provide the staff with considerable flexibility for many years to come and gave high praise to Engineering for quality workmanship.



# Have A Nice Day...

## *It Was A Very Small Incident*

*"You really ought to fill out an incident report."*

But in fact, there was no real harm done, and it's just another form and probably just collects in a dusty file cabinet somewhere.

Wrong, on all three counts. The Safety Office takes all incidents, especially "near misses," very seriously, and your few minutes of participation joins a bunch of others every day. Employee safety is a major concern of the hospital, and incident reports play an important role in establishing patterns that lead to action.

But without an incident report describing an event of potential bodily injury or illness, property damage, fire or chemical exposure, what's happening to you and perhaps a number of others will never get corrected.

Incident reports were valuable in the infamous "microwave popcorn" fire alarms last year (in which heat detectors were touched off when popcorn sacks were opened underneath); an employee awareness program considerably reduced the problem and all the ancillary aggravations of responses to false alarms.

On a more serious note, incident reports revealed that back injuries cost the hospital over \$250,000 and led to training programs and the hiring of a rehabilitation employee. The rate of injury remains a major concern and a variety of alternatives are being studied to prevent employee injury. Each report is entered into a computer data base from which a wide array of statistical information can be culled. It touches off reports and suggestions to supervisors and it keeps the importance of workplace safety in the forefront.

It may sound like too much hassle for too small an incident, but it's the best single way to underscore your individual concern in working in a safe environment.

## *The Patient's Valuables*

Every day patients come to the hospital with valuables. These aren't just jewelry, wallets and money — they can include important sentimental objects, eyeglasses, dentures and hearing aids.

"We can hold the patient responsible for safeguarding their dentures, glasses and hearing aids," say Nancy Stevens and Maryanne Falcone, patient representatives, "but at times we assume responsibility when the patient goes into the operating room or a critical care unit, is receiving sedation, is confused or is having tests. They entrust their belongings to us."

The best way to avoid a search and upsetting the patient is by taking good precautions. Put all valuables in the appropriate container with the patient's name as identification on the container. Then chart where the valuable have been placed.

Or look at it this way: if it was your valuable item...

## *Take A Hike...*

Aerobics? None of that jumping around to rock music for me! Then how about a basic walk? Sharon Holmes, exercise program coordinator at HealthCounts, says a nice, brisk 45-minute walk, four times a week, would shave 10 to 15 pounds a year off your body — assuming, of course, that you ate the same amount of food.

Walking has been shown to raise metabolic rates for one to four hours after an exercise program is done, translating into an expenditure of more energy and more burned calories. It has also been proven that walking will maintain more lean muscle mass and reduce more body fat than diet alone.

A brisk walk, she continues, will not only burn calories, but because it is a low impact exercise there is a minimal chance of injury. "So get your walking shoes on and put one foot in front of the other," she advises.

# Staff Empowerment Enhances Education Needs

*Continued from Page 5*

a strong sense of participation from staff members. A side benefit has been enhancement of self-esteem that's come from respect gained on nursing units.

One of the issues the plan successfully addressed is the support it gives staff members who are working for higher levels of certification through non-traditional AMA-approved courses. "There are some things that just can't be covered in those kinds of courses," Bennett explains. Having the resources within the department and readily available meets those needs.

Because it is a three-shift department, the Respiratory

Care team staggers presentation times and videotapes all presentations. In addition to the written materials, the videotapes have created a useful library for future use.

And, conscious of pitfalls that come with mergers, presentations are deliberately not site specific. Activities were closely coordinated between both sites, and presentations move back and forth. The result of the effort was improved development of rapport as the department merged. Barriers dissolved when all were a single group of professionals interested in the same information and it created a social ease in which to gracefully merge. An important result was that Respiratory Care personnel are becoming more comfortable with each other in the merged department.