

HConnections

NEWS FOR HOLY CROSS HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES

Appointment Scheduling Gets a Makeover

New Centralized Appointment Scheduling and Financial Clearance Department Designed to Improve Patient/Physician Satisfaction

To improve the patient and physician experience, Holy Cross Hospital has centralized scheduling for several departments into a new Appointment Scheduling and Financial Clearance department, which offers expanded hours and the availability of bilingual staff. By calling one number, 301-754-8200, patients and physician offices are now able to schedule one or more appointments at the same time for one or more tests and procedures.



“This new system provides Holy Cross Hospital with a competitive advantage and an important new patient service that will bring us in line with current expectations.”

– Julie Keese, Vice President, Revenue Cycle Management

- Ambulatory Care Center
- Echo, EKG
- EEG, Neuro Diagnostics, Pulmonary Function Tests, Sleep Studies
- Labor and Delivery
- OB/GYN Clinic
- Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy
- Radiology (except Angiography)

Other departments will become part of this department in later phases. PLEASE NOTE: Surgical scheduling is not currently anticipated to fall under this department.

Having these departments under one scheduling process offers the ability to schedule more than one procedure at a time and to schedule more than

Continued on page 2

“We’ve created a new area of centralization that includes insurance verification to provide a one stop shop for the patient,” says **Julie Keese**, vice president, Revenue Cycle Management. “This new system provides both patients and providers one point of contact so patients can easily pre-register saving valuable time for the patient and physician.”

The departments listed here were in Phase One of the new outpatient appointment scheduling service, which went live June 27.

Key Facts About Appointment Scheduling

Phone Number: 301-754-8200

Fax Number: 301-754-8201

Hours of Operation: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.

In this issue:

Message from the President.....	2
Giving Back	3
Patient Safety.....	4
New HCH Website	5
Improving the Care Experience.....	6
Excellence at Holy Cross Hospital ...	7
Bulletin Board	8



HOLY CROSS HOSPITAL
Experts in Medicine, Specialists in Caring.™

Holy Cross Hospital Role: Holy Cross Hospital exists to support the health ministry of Trinity Health and to be the most trusted provider of health care services in our area. Our health care team will achieve this trust through: high-quality, efficient and safe health care services for all in partnership with our physicians and others; accessibility of services to our most vulnerable and underserved populations; outreach that responds to community health need and improves health status; ongoing learning and sharing of new knowledge; and our friendly, caring spirit.

Improving patient safety and the patient experience is at the heart of our mission to be the most trusted provider of health care in our region. It is why we place so much emphasis on quality measures, patient safety goals and patient satisfaction.



As you know, we've recently implemented several patient safety initiatives. The Stamp Out Sepsis campaign and mandatory flu vaccination program are two of those initiatives. More recently, we implemented Comprehensive Unit-Based Safety Program (CUSP) teams. These 11 teams are focusing on improving patient safety at the individual unit level. The CUSP teams are collaborative in nature and include not only staff members from the individual units but a physician champion and representatives of other relevant departments.

By identifying defects of care at the local level and then setting priorities for dealing with those most important, each team can take the corrective action most appropriate for that unit. As a start, we've had all teams focus on hand hygiene and one or two other unit-identified defects. I'm impressed by the creativity we're seeing as the teams decide how to address the hand hygiene issue within their own units, and I look forward to their ongoing progress in addressing other patient safety issues. You can learn more about the CUSP program on page 4 of this issue.

The experience that our patients have while they are in our care or even when they are making arrangements for that care also is extremely important. For example, difficulty in scheduling an appointment or having to wait a long time after they arrive for a procedure can negatively affect patients' entire perception of the care they receive from us. Until very recently, patients (and physician offices) had to call multiple phone numbers to schedule outpatient appointments and procedures because each department had its own scheduling process.

On June 27, we went live with our new outpatient appointment scheduling service, which provides patients and physician offices with a single point of contact for scheduling needs. We've also expanded hours of operation and have Spanish-speaking staff available. We believe that this streamlined approach will offer quicker response times as well as ensure that we've collected all of the appropriate information prior to a patient's arrival, thus reducing delays in service. To learn more about our new outpatient appointment scheduling program, see the article on page 1.

Improving patient safety and patient satisfaction is the right thing to do and must be an ongoing effort. Thank you, as always, for your commitment to our patients and to the communities we serve.

Kevin J. Sexton
President and Chief Executive Officer

Appointment Scheduling Gets a Makeover

Continued from page 1

one patient at a time. By streamlining the process using a single point of contact, scheduling becomes simpler and more predictable.

In addition to the single phone number point of contact, the hospital has developed a standard order form. The form enables physician office staff to fax orders to the Appointment Scheduling department if they choose to do so, rather than having to place a call at all. Schedulers will make an outbound call to the patient to set up the appointment once the order is received. The form is available on the Physician Portal, HCnet and the public website.

In addition to scheduling, the department is also able to take care of a lot of pre-service work prior to the patient's arrival for his or her appointment as well as pre-registering patients, verifying insurance at the time of registration and, if needed, referring uninsured patients to financial counseling. "All of this helps patients be better informed ahead of time, while clarifying how the financial obligations associated with the appointment will be met," says **Lena Ehlers**, director, Patient Access Services.

Because such information will have been collected or verified ahead of time, other anticipated benefits to centralized outpatient appointment scheduling include:

- Reduced wait times for patients
- Increased on time procedure starts
- Better hospital reimbursement
- Less bad debt for the hospital
- Fewer insurance denials

"This new system provides Holy Cross Hospital with a competitive advantage and an important new patient service that will bring us in line with current expectations," Keese adds.

Benefits of Outpatient Appointment Scheduling Service

- Provides physicians, physician offices and patients a single point of contact for all scheduling needs.
- Allows for scheduling multiple tests/procedures in a single call.
- Allows physicians/physician offices to schedule multiple patients in a single call.
- Allows physicians/physician offices to select "1" after calling to be prioritized in the scheduling queue.
- Faxable order form allows physician office staff to fax the order to the Appointment Scheduling department without having to make a call.
- Offers a higher level of customer service through bilingual staff, increased hours of operation, shorter wait times for service and quicker callbacks to physician offices.

Over the next six months, the goals are to create service level agreements for each department in Phase One to reduce call waiting times, improve call response times by answering calls in less than 30 seconds and decrease on hold time to no more than three minutes.

To accomplish this, Appointment Scheduling now offers expanded hours from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Another plus is the availability of a Spanish-speaking scheduler during all hours the scheduling office is open. The department is located at Tech Road.

The reengineering of scheduling is designed to improve patient and physician satisfaction, foster better stewardship of hospital resources, standardize processes and leverage the use of technology, according to Keese.

Key Contacts in Appointment Scheduling and Financial Clearance

Barry Wendell, manager: 240-638-0100 or ext. 2-0100

Tanya Claggett, supervisor: 240-638-0102 or ext. 2-0102

Rattana (Lyn) Sengsy, supervisor: 240-638-0103 or ext. 2-0103



Taking Care of Our Own

In these tough economic times, many people in our community live paycheck to paycheck. Still others depend upon credit cards or loans to make ends meet. But with no financial wiggle-room, there is also no room for the unexpected expense: a serious accident, a long illness, enforced bed-rest before the birth of a baby.

“We want to make it easier for employees who are struggling with unforeseen circumstances to know that they have a safe and confidential place to turn.”

– Sister Rachel Callahan,
Vice President, Mission Services

As health care workers, we know such occasions happen all the time. But it’s not just our patients who are affected. Often, it’s a co-worker who finds that fate has dealt his or her finances a losing hand.

So what do you do when one of our own is feeling the economic pinch? If you’re **Mariusz Dymerski**, Nuclear Medicine coordinator, you follow the proverb that says, “charity begins at home,” and contribute to the Sister Dorothy Fund.

For the last two years, Mariusz has regularly supported the Fund, which helps employees in good standing who are in temporary financial distress. He uses payroll deduction to contribute some of his PTO—paid time off—every pay period, saying that the act of giving is personally satisfying to him. And the fact that his generosity benefits co-workers in need makes him feel even better.

“I definitely believe in giving back in life, whether through time or money,” the 12-year veteran of Holy Cross Hospital says. “But you get so many requests from so many organizations that you really need to decide what matters to you. For me, that was easy. First of all, the Sister Dorothy Fund is aligned with the nature and mission of our organization, and I know my gifts will be put to good use. And most importantly, it lets me provide hope to deserving people who might be at the lowest point in their lives.”



He’s not alone in his commitment. According to CFO **Gary Vogan**, more than 550 employees contributed PTO or cash to the Sister Dorothy Fund in 2010 alone, for a total value approaching \$265,000— more than a quarter of a million dollars.

“Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to come to the aid of nearly 150 employees last year.”

– Gary Vogan, CFO

“Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to come to the aid of nearly 150 employees last year,” Vogan says. “Needs ranged from paid time off to cover an extended leave for a parent’s illness or death in a foreign land to bridging the gap between major medical coverage and disability payments.”

Applicants complete a form — available via HCnet — which describes their specific request and verifies financial need. The anonymous form is then reviewed by a three-member committee of senior employees who make awards up to \$1,500 each. Requests are reviewed and processed as they are received throughout the year.

Sister Rachel Callahan, vice president, Mission Services, ensures that both applicants and committee members remain unaware of each other’s identify.

“It’s so hard for people to ask for help,” she says. “We want to make it easier for employees who are struggling with unforeseen circumstances to know that they have a safe and confidential place to turn.”

SISTER DOROTHY ANNE CAHILL EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE FUND

The Fund was created in 2005 to honor the memory of Sister Dorothy Cahill — a former English teacher who, after her retirement from education, pursued a nursing degree at age 65. She then worked at Holy Cross Hospital for 20 years as an LPN before her death a few days before her 92nd birthday.

Donors can contribute either cash or PTO. PTO is calculated at the hourly rate of the donor and awarded at the recipient’s hourly rate, often doubling or tripling the gift’s value. Gifts may also be designated toward a specific employee in need or deposited in the Sister Dorothy general fund for use as needed. Funds remaining from the previous year are reinvested to assure an adequate supply for the future.

To make a gift to the Sister Dorothy Fund, please contact Patricia Okolie, manager of annual giving, at the Holy Cross Hospital Foundation, ext. 7708; to contribute PTO, visit the “Be Smart – Donate PTO” link on the HCnet home page, or contact Sister Rachel Callahan, vice president, Mission Services at ext. 7024.

Patient Safety: From Second Thought to Second Nature

See Something, Say Something is Homeland Security’s reminder to report potential threats, no matter how small they may seem. Well, Holy Cross Hospital has a similar message for everyone in our domain: take patient safety to heart and speak up if something does not seem quite right.

Of course, voicing your concerns is easier in a “no blame” environment where innocent slips and mistakes are accepted. That’s part of the foundation for establishing communication and trust that, experts say, is key to building a culture of safety.

And it’s also the centerpiece of the hospital’s latest patient safety initiative, the Comprehensive Unit-Based Safety Program (CUSP). CUSP is designed to support other on-going programs, like the Stamp Out Sepsis campaign, and puts hospital-wide messages into the hands of the people most likely to make a difference: staff who actually work on the units.

“Holy Cross Hospital’s patient safety efforts are already doing quite well,” says **Dr. Yancy Phillips**, vice president, Quality and Care Management. In fact, the hospital recently received its first Excellence Award for Quality Improvement by the Delmarva Foundation for Medical Care (see page 7). “CUSP shows us how to get even better at recognizing problems and fixing them.”

CUSP uses a team approach, composed of staff members from the unit, along with a physician champion and representatives from other essential departments. The process first involves identifying what are called ‘defects of care’ on the unit, which can range from simple logistical problems—such



as whether staff have the supplies they need, in the right place—to serious issues like finding the causes of hospital-acquired infections. Defects are then prioritized in order of severity, with the top one or two singled out for corrective action by the team.

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“We want staff nurses to know it’s OK to stop a doctor who is about to enter a patient room without washing his or her hands, and give a gentle reminder.”

— Rachel Wilson, RN, BSN
CUSP Patient Safety Leader

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The SICU is one of 11 units putting the new program to the test. Under the direction of CUSP patient safety leader **Rachel Wilson, RN, BSN**, the team made rounds of the SICU together, selecting hand hygiene and “scrub the hub” (central line port cleansing) as the most important targets.

“We started by using ‘secret shoppers’ to observe behaviors,” says Wilson. “As a positive reinforcement, they immediately congratulate those who follow protocols. Staff who miss the mark are also stopped for an on-the-spot but non-punitive refresher.”

That last point is especially important. In a culture of safety, all employees must feel free to stand up for patients, without fear of recrimination or reprisals. On the SICU, for example, employees are encouraged to remind each other of any breach of safety protocol throughout the hospital hierarchy, including physicians.

“We want staff nurses to know it’s OK to stop a doctor who is about to enter a patient room without washing his or her hands, and give a gentle reminder,” Wilson says.

In addition to identifying problems, CUSP also empowers the team to fix the defects they find, in their own way. SICU staff formerly sang “Happy Birthday” while they “scrubbed the hub” to make sure it was sanitized, a process that takes 15



seconds. But Wilson’s shoppers discovered that different people were singing at different tempos, meaning that some hubs were not being cleaned long enough.

The team’s common sense solution? Watch the clock.

While it’s too early to tell if CUSP is making a difference, Wilson and other team members are seeing much more compliance throughout the unit, for both hand hygiene and central line port cleansing.

“Our goal is to turn the new safety steps into a habit, so that staff doesn’t even stop to think about them anymore,” Wilson says. “We want ‘doing the right thing’ to become ingrained and automatic.”

PATIENT SAFETY AS A SYSTEM

- Accept that we will make mistakes
- Focus on systems rather than blame
- Create clear goals, ask questions early
- Standardize and create independent checks
- Learn from mistakes

And remember: Changing situations is more effective than changing human nature!

New Holy Cross Website Launched in June

Features an improved user experience and dozens of interactive resources

On June 27, Holy Cross Hospital launched its new website. Visitors to www.holycrosshealth.org now find a cleaner, more functional design to guide them in learning more about the hospital and how it can help with their health care and lifestyle needs. The new site offers visitors:

- Dozens of interactive tools and online resources
- Improvements in usability, so people can find what they need more quickly
- Customization options that adjust font sizes to user preferences
- Ability to send specific pages to friends and family



Just how great is the new site?

- The **Programs & Services** section (tab on homepage) offers information and resources on more than 30 specialty areas of the hospital, including:
 - o A revamped **Neuroscience** section, which includes nine professionally produced videos featuring patients and clinicians. (Programs & Services > Neuroscience)
 - o A **Senior Services** section that features the hospital's full range of services, from prevention and wellness programs, to innovative hospital-based services and caregiver support. (Programs & Services > Senior Services)
 - o A **Maternity Center** section with up-to-date program information for expectant families. (Programs & Services > Maternity Center)
- The **Healthy Living** section (tab on homepage) offers a health library and quizzes and several interactive features, for example:
 - o Determine possible causes by using **Symptom Checker** to click the region of the body where symptoms are present (models for male / female adult / child, front / back are provided). (Healthy Living > Health Information > Symptom Checker)
 - o Use the **Body Mass Index Calculator** to approximate the amount of body fat by simply entering height and weight. (Healthy Living > Health Information > Wellness Tools > Body Mass Index Calculator)
 - o Find out if two or more medicines can cause potential interactions with the **Drug Interaction Tool** (Healthy Living > Health Information > Drug Interaction Tool)
- Site visitors can try out some of the hundreds of **Healthy Recipes** that can help them eat right and live better (Healthy Living > Healthy Recipes).
- And a **photo gallery** displays new renderings of the new hospital in Germantown, which is scheduled to open in 2014. (Home > About Us > Expansion and Enhancement > Germantown Hospital Multimedia > Images Of The Planned Hospital)

Employees also will notice that the **"For Staff" link on the homepage has moved from the left navigation to a newly titled "For Physicians and Staff" link at the top right of the page.**

Employees also will notice that the "For Staff" link on the homepage has moved from the left navigation to a newly titled "For Physicians and Staff" link at the top right of the page. This change makes it easier to access employee-specific content without having to scroll down the page.

Be sure to check back often as additional photos, recipes, calculators, links to social media content including Facebook, and more as the site continues to evolve.

Improving the Care Experience

New Care Management System Helps Patients Navigate The Hospital and Prevent Readmissions

In the ongoing effort to improve patient care, safety and satisfaction, the Department of Care Management is making some changes including changing its name, which was Case Management, to better reflect its mission.

“Together we address a number of issues including care coordination in the hospital and any psycho-social issues facing patients when they leave the hospital,” says **Cathy Livingston, LCSW-C**, director, Care Management.

“The department is comprised of social workers and nurses. We often act as tour guides helping patients navigate the decisions they have to make and ensuring they are receiving the tests and treatments ordered in an efficient manner. Coming to the hospital is often like a different culture and language for patients so we help them understand their care and get what they need.”

“Coming to the hospital is often like a different culture and language for patients so we help them understand their care and get what they need.”

*– Cathy Livingston, LCSW-C,
Director, Care Management*

There are many tough decisions that patients have to deal with, and often aren't prepared to deal with, so Care Management can step in and explain what is covered and what is not covered by health insurance. “We don't want them to wind up with a bill they were not expecting” says Livingston.

Patients are educated about their needs and options before discharge including whether they can qualify for outpatient care, home care or skilled nursing care after they leave the hospital.



Rose Durkin, RN, care manager, helps ensure patients get the best care, understand it and have the care they need after discharge.

Care managers help prevent readmissions by going the extra mile to phone doctors and make appointments for patients including followup nursing calls to ensure patients get their prescriptions, understand their discharge instructions and make it to the next physician appointment.

“The staff works very hard to keep patients safe in the hospital and when they leave the hospital,” says Livingston. Another benefit of Care Management is letting patients know about our community benefit program, something unique to Holy Cross Hospital. Those who qualify could get home oxygen, two weeks of antibiotics, cab vouchers or a week or two in a skilled nursing facility, for example, to bridge the gap until benefits are approved.

For example, the community benefit program helps many low income immigrants who don't qualify for Medicaid because they have not worked the required minimum five years. “Holy Cross has a strong sense of mission and the Community Benefit Fund is evidence of that,” says Livingston. “It's not a Cadillac plan, but it's a good basic Chevy.”

Care Management staff are available 365 days a year. During weekdays, they can be reached at 301-754-7470. On weekends and holidays, care managers can be reached by paging them through the hospital operator.

Holy Cross Hospital Wins Quality Award



Kuleni Gebreyes, MD, medical director, Delmarva Foundation for Medical Care (center) presented the 2011 Excellence Award to **Kevin J. Sexton**, president and CEO, Holy Cross Hospital (left) and **Cris Carr**, director, Performance Improvement, Holy Cross Hospital.

Holy Cross Hospital won the 2011 Excellence Award for Quality Improvement from the DelMarva Foundation for Medical Care (DFMC). Holy Cross is currently one of six Maryland hospitals to win the award this year.

The Delmarva Foundation Excellence Award for Quality Improvement recognizes individual hospital performance improvement in four national inpatient clinical areas: acute myocardial infarction, heart failure, surgical care, and pneumonia.

To receive the award, hospitals must meet or exceed the following:

- Score 90 percent or above on 17 required measures
- Sustain improvement for at least three consecutive quarters

“Holy Cross strives to ensure that each patient has the maximum opportunity for the best possible outcome, in an environment that is both safe and caring,” said **Kevin J. Sexton**, president and CEO. “We are honored to be recognized for our quality improvement.”

Lab Professionals Get Winning Results

Outstanding Achievement Awards for 2011 Laboratorians



From left to right: **Joyce Thomas**, medical transcriptionist, wins Laboratorian of the Year for Support Services; **Sheryl Stuckey**, microbiology manager, wins Laboratorian of the Year for Leadership; **Marie Jeune**, medical technologist, wins Laboratorian of the Year for Technical Services

As part of National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week, three employees earned awards for outstanding achievement throughout the year. More than 60 nominations were submitted from throughout the hospital.

National Lab Week, held April 24-30, 2011, is an annual celebration of the medical laboratory professionals and pathologists who play a vital role in delivering exceptional patient care and service at Holy Cross Hospital.

Often working behind the scenes, few people know the critical testing they perform every day and night saves lives, reduces morbidity, and helps control the cost of care.

Employees Win Service Excellence Awards

Service Excellence awards were presented in June by President Sexton. The employee awards recognize employees whose commitment to stellar customer service has been noted formally by a grateful patient, visitor, supervisor or colleague.

From left to right: **Bolajoko Dawodu**, RN, Women's Surgery; President and CEO **Kevin Sexton**; **Mary Madukwe**, RN, Float Pool A1.



License Renewals

All Holy Cross Hospital employees whose jobs require a license to perform their associated duties must ensure it is kept up to date. Managers and Human Resources staff must verify that all licensed employees have current and appropriate credentials for compliance.

Effective June 1, 2011, for licenses expiring on or after July 1, 2011, all employees in positions requiring licensure must renew their licenses one month *prior* to expiration.

A license expiring on: Must be renewed by:

August 31, 2011	July 31, 2011
September 28, 2011	August 28, 2011
December 31, 2011	November 30, 2011

Employees with questions about licensure and certification requirements should contact their managers for further information.

Echo Lab Receives Accreditation

The Department of Non-Invasive Cardiology recently received full accreditation by the Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Echocardiographic Laboratories (ICAEL). The Echo Lab provides service to adult, pediatric and neonatal patients. Cardiac structure and flow information provided by echocardiographic testing helps detect and manage of many types of heart disease.



Echo Lab Staff (L to R): Millan Aguero, Echo technologist; Mohammed Shahnoor, Echo technologist; Leann Adamson, Echo technologist; Lynne Sheller, lead Echo technologist; Shadi Novravarسانی, 2nd year Montgomery College student and Win Oo, PRN Echo technologist.

Echo Lab Certificate

EMPLOYEE FIT CARDIO/STRENGTH

A free cardio/strength class for Holy Cross Hospital employees is offered on Wednesdays and at the Resource Center from 4:30 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. All fitness levels welcome! For more information, contact Sarah McKechnie at ext. 7895.

WALK FIT

An informal walking group for employees meets at noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the reception desk of the hospital for a 30 – 45 minute walk in Sligo Creek Park. For more information, contact Sarah McKechnie at ext. 7895.



2011 GOLF AND TENNIS CLASSIC SETS FUNDRAISING RECORD

The 2011 Holy Cross Hospital Golf & Tennis Classic raised a record \$215,460, a fifteen percent increase over last year. This year's goal was to raise at least \$200,000. Proceeds will support the hospital's Nursing Excellence Fund, which underwrites education and training, certification, retention, and technology initiatives for Holy Cross Hospital nurses and medical technicians. Special thanks to Golf Chair **Brian Avin**, MD, Tennis Chair **Kirsten Moshyedi**, and Event Chair **Vandana Narang**.

