

Health Beat

Spring 2011 | The Newsletter of Speare Memorial Hospital



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Meeting Needs. Exceeding Expectations.

Michelle McEwen, FACHE, President/CEO

A quick scan of the national news headlines and it is no secret New Hampshire is far from being the only state struggling to balance its budget. While education funding is always a hot topic, healthcare funding, or lack thereof, is one of particular note in New Hampshire. At the heart of the matter is that New Hampshire's Medicaid payments do not cover the cost of services. However, hospitals, including Speare Memorial Hospital, are committed to ensuring all patients have access to the services they need in their community.

During these difficult economic times, our community's need for help with their medical needs has increased. Speare has responded in numerous ways, many of which are highlighted below and in our 2010 Community Benefits Report.

- \$3 million of free care provided as part of our Community Care Program.

- \$4 million of unreimbursed costs of care provided to Medicare and Medicaid patients.
- Nearly \$463,000 spent to ensure access to primary care and specialists, dental care, breast cancer screenings and prescription medications.
- Over \$46,000 provided in community health education, support and free health screenings.

As the numbers above indicate, an increasing number of our patients are uninsured or underinsured and the shortfall of reimbursement from governmental programs continues to grow. Despite these challenges, we remain committed to providing our patients with access to the best care available.

Recently, Governor Lynch criticized New Hampshire's hospitals for engaging in construction projects. There have been a number of hospital projects in the past few years; and Speare was one of them. Speare's building projects were focused on upgrading our 50 plus year old buildings to provide an environment of care that was modern, efficient, reliable and supported delivery of care in the 21st century. When our hospital was originally built, the primary purpose of the hospital was to deliver inpatient care. Due to the advancement of medical technology, most of healthcare today can be delivered in an outpatient visit. Renovation and expansion at the hospital and the replacement of our old medical office

building with the Boulder Point office allowed us to expand access to meet the needs of our growing community, increase patient privacy and to provide advanced technology.

In addition to providing an improved environment of care, we continue our relentless pursuit of delivering the best quality care possible. As the story on page three explains, we are also providing a level of care in accordance with national quality, safety and patient satisfaction benchmarks better than national and state averages. The significance of our commitment and dedication to better patient outcomes is what led to our selection on the Harvard Pilgrim Honor Roll. The introduction of a new nursing protocol to reduce the occurrence of catheter associated urinary tract infections explained on page four is just another example of how Speare is leading the way.

Everything we do is based on how we can best meet our patients' healthcare needs. Our Board of Directors are leaders in the community representing towns across central New Hampshire. They help to shape our strategic initiatives to ensure they are in line with the needs of the patients they represent. From cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation to integrated physical therapies and wellness – and soon the promise of a better night's sleep leading to improved health overall – at Speare Memorial Hospital, your health is our mission.

The intent of the *Health Beat*

newsletter is to provide useful health-related news in a timely, accurate manner. It is not intended to provide medical advice on personal health matters. Such advice should be obtained directly from a qualified health care provider.

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On the cover: Sleep Technologist Darcy Farina explains the use of a CPAP mask to a prospective sleep study patient.



SMH Named to Harvard Pilgrim Honor Roll

Speare Memorial Hospital was recently recognized by being named to Harvard Pilgrim Health Care's 2010 Hospital Honor Roll, recognizing those hospitals whose performance was among the top 25 percent of those measured nationally on a set of composite quality and patient experience measures, as reported by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on Hospital Compare (www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov), and Leapfrog (www.theleapfroggroup.org).

"The providers on Harvard Pilgrim's Honor Roll have embraced a culture of quality and are among the top performers in the nation," says Eric H. Schultz, Harvard Pilgrim's President and Chief Executive Officer. "We share their commitment to bring safe, effective and patient-centered care to the people we all serve." Speare Memorial Hospital was one of 40 hospitals included in the fourth annual Honor Roll.

"It is wonderful to be recognized for all the work our medical community has put forth in implementing

and demonstrating evidence based, best practice standards of care," says Speare Memorial Hospital President and CEO Michelle McEwen, FACHE. "This recognition also reinforces 'the Speare experience:' a healthcare team devoted to providing our patients with the best clinical care known to provide better outcomes."

Hospitals named to the annual Honor Roll were evaluated on processes for caring for patients with heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia and those having surgery. The results of patient surveys measuring patient hospital experiences were included. Leapfrog patient safety measures included results hospitals achieved in preventing medical errors, maintaining appropriate intensive care unit staffing, taking steps to avoid harm and reducing in-hospital injuries.

With respect to the delivery of evidence-based medicine noted above,



Alan Freeman, MD, (l) and Beth Roberts (r) from Harvard Pilgrim Health Care present Speare Memorial Hospital's President & CEO Michelle McEwen and Director of Quality & Safety Kofi Cash the certificate of recognition for Speare being named to the 2010 Hospital Honor Roll.

Speare Memorial Hospital performed in the top 10 percent of all critical access hospitals in New Hampshire for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010. Speare is providing a level of care higher than both the state and national averages for all four measures. The same is true with respect to Speare's scores on a national survey that asks patients about their experience during a recent hospital stay.

"These results are attributed to the commitment and diligence of our physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists and other clinical staff in providing consistent, patient-centered care," explains Kofi Cash, MS, CHPQ, director of quality and safety. "Speare's performance serves as a benchmark for others to emulate."

Laboratory Waiting Room Expanded

By Emily Holland, Community Relations Intern



The Laboratory at Speare Memorial sees a constant flow of patients daily, but it had one problem – the waiting room was too small. So along with a new year has come a new addition to the waiting area.

The waiting room, which can now hold three times as many people as before, is not only conducive to the space but it is also pleasing to the eye. It has a beautiful robin's egg blue accent wall, and new chairs with blue and gold specks are on the way. Office Supervisor Peggy Trimby, who was in charge of all of the interior decorating, says, "I wanted to create an atmosphere for the patients, that along with the extra room, was aesthetically pleasing, calming and comfortable."



Seeing is Believing

By Emily Holland, Community Relations Intern • Full text article available online at www.spearehospital.com

"You not going to believe the quality," Bill Reale, optician at White Mountain Eye Care & Optical, explained as Pamela Gould tried on her new glasses for the first time. After 30 plus years of being an optician, Reale is an expert helping patients navigate the multitude of frames available, and find the perfect pair.

"I think I tried on almost every pair of ladies' frames they had in the store," Gould laughed, before finally settling on a stylish blue Coach frame. "They were so helpful, and provided me with superior service and care."

And superior quality is what she received. Diagnosed with a rare viral eye problem, Gould has been seeing Ophthalmologist Dr. Richards for years. When it came time for new glasses, it was Reale she enlisted to help. "His experience is very evident," Gould said of her time spent with

Reale." He knew exactly what he was talking about and was able to explain the medical jargon in layman's terms."

"Mrs. Gould was the perfect candidate for the newest Hoya customized progressive lens given her specific eye care needs," Reale explained. The lens that Reale is talking about is a free form progressive lens that enhances visual acuity (sharper vision), reduces distortion, allows for a wider field of vision, and helps to improve distance vision. It is also lightweight, scratch resistant, and provides a high definition quality of vision.

Gould sees her new glasses as a way to express her style, and with the brands that White Mountain carries, the frame choices are endless. From Prada, Vera Wang, and Ray Ban to Lilly Pulitzer and Nike, White Mountain offers frames for everyone – children and adults.



Pamela Gould says her new lenses and frames from White Mountain Eye Care & Optical help express her style.

Along with frames and lenses, White Mountain also carries an array of the most popular contact lens brands with a promise of prices comparable to 1-800-Contacts. White Mountain Eye Care & Optical is located at Speare Memorial at Boulder Point. The Optical Shop is open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Speare Nurses Leading the Way New infection prevention protocol introduced

Full text article available online at www.spearehospital.com

Over the last 10 plus years, health-care has been taking a long, hard look at its patient care procedures and processes, identifying evidence-based best practices, and establishing national standards to improve overall quality and safety. Reducing the incidence of catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI) is one of many initiatives being focused on nationally. In New Hampshire, Speare Memorial Hospital is a leader in working to address CAUTI prevention.

"There are specific medical indications (reasons) for a patient to have a urinary catheter," says Speare's Chief Nursing Officer Kris Hering, RN, BSN, CCRN. "Nurses, working in partnership with physicians, assure

that only those patients who need a catheter get one, and that the catheter is removed as soon as possible, to avoid infection."

To achieve the required reduction in CAUTI, Speare has introduced a new nursing protocol. Essentially, the new policy will give nurses the authority to assess a patient's need for continued use of a catheter and remove it as soon as deemed appropriate. They will no longer need a physician order to do so.

"This is a significant departure from past practice when a physician order was required not only for placement, but also removal of a catheter," explains Hering. "As a result, waiting for

the order could delay the removal of the catheter. Now nurses will assess a patient's ongoing prescribed use of a catheter twice a day, and remove it immediately when the medical need for the catheter is no longer present. The sooner the catheter is removed, the less chance a patient has of acquiring a urinary tract infection."

She continues, "Instituting this new protocol demonstrates our focus on individual patient-centered care and the positive, professional relationship between our nurses and physicians in delivering it. More importantly, the partnership will result in providing patients better healthcare outcomes."



Sleep Lab to Offer Up Sweet Dreams

Sweet dreams. As children it was often the last thing our parents said to us as they tucked us in at night. For many adults, a restful night's sleep seems as fleeting as childhood. According to Neurologist Dr. Michele Gaier Rush, or Dr. Gaier, about eight to 10 percent of the population – 20 million Americans – suffer from sleep apnea.

“Each year, sleep apnea alone accounts for more than \$42 million in hospital bills,” Spere Memorial Hospital's President and CEO Michelle McEwen, FACHE, explains. “We need to do a better job of early diagnosis and intervention, and the greater Plymouth area has lacked this important service.”

As the medical director at the LRG Healthcare Sleep Evaluation Center at Hillside Medical Park in Gilford since 2001, Dr. Gaier has seen the field of sleep study expand rapidly in the last 10 years as patient demand and physician referrals have increased. She will be bringing the same access to “better sleep” in the greater Plymouth area when she also becomes the medical director of the new Sleep Lab here at Spere Memorial Hospital, expected to open later this spring.

“Sleep apnea is significantly under-reported,” notes Dr. Gaier, “but awareness of how good sleep can impact a person's overall health has dramatically increased over the last 20 years. Sleep apnea has been linked to increased risks of high blood pressure, cardiac arrhythmias (irregular heartbeat), congestive heart failure and pulmonary hypertension.” She also says lack of sleep has been spotlighted as a major national safety issue, pointing to the need for work limits on truck drivers, pilots, utility workers and the like.

Dr. Gaier explains that obstructive sleep apnea, or blockage of the airway, is a common breathing disorder. While a person's individual anatomy,

such as a larger neck, large tonsils or a small airway, are the root cause of sleep apnea, age, weight, alcohol use and certain medications are also contributing factors. In sleep apnea, because of gravity when a person lies down, and the decrease in muscle tension when a person falls asleep, the airway becomes blocked in the back of the throat. Dr. Gaier notes, “The typical patient referred for a sleep study complains of daytime drowsiness, snoring, and often morning headache. More men than women are affected.”

So what exactly does a sleep study entail? Referred patients would first have a consultation with Dr. Gaier. Next the actual overnight, sleep study would be scheduled at the Sleep Lab located on the lower level of the hospital's northwest wing – below Plymouth OB/GYN adjacent to Avery Street – with Registered Polysomnographic Technologist Darcy Farina. Already a registered respiratory therapist, Farina brings solid knowledge and understanding of underlying respiratory issues that can be associated with sleep apnea.

Arriving at the Sleep Lab between 7:30 and 8:30 p.m., patients will be oriented to their room and the process for monitoring their sleep. Attaching the numerous electrodes and sensors used to monitor the patient's sleep takes approximately an hour and includes monitoring of: brain waves; stages of sleep; heart rate; the heart's electrical activity (EKG); blood oxygen levels; body movements including legs, abdomen, chest and chin; and air flow in and out of the nose and mouth. There is also a microphone sensor placed on the throat. “Nothing hurts,” insists Dr. Gaier. “Most people sleep just fine.”

According to Farina, she needs to capture data over six to seven hours of continuous monitoring. The results

are given to Dr. Gaier to read and interpret. A sleep study can help diagnosis or rule out other chronic sleep disorders including periodic limb movement of sleep, REM sleep behavior disorder and narcolepsy. If she diagnoses sleep apnea, patients come back for a second sleep study and are fitted with a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) mask. CPAP masks provide a constant flow of pressurized air keeping the airway open so patients can breathe normally.

“...when you treat people and they sleep well it is life changing...”

Admittedly, getting used to and regularly using a CPAP does take work. “But when you treat people and they sleep well it is life changing,” says Dr. Gaier. And once a patient sees the benefits, it is not a hard sell. Combined with close patient relationships and follow-up, it is what has led to about an 85 percent compliance rate at her sleep lab while the national average is about 50 percent for continued usage of a prescribed CPAP says Dr. Gaier.

The opening of the Sleep Lab at Spere later this spring will be the culmination of planning and development begun more than five years ago. Part of a multi-phase renovation to implement advanced technologies to facilitate the delivery of modern day medicine, “The Sleep Lab is a dream realized,” says McEwen.

A dream realized in more ways than one. “When you give someone back the gift of sleep it is a wonderful thing,” concludes Dr. Gaier.



Giving Matters

by Susan Durgy, MBA, CFRE

The Board of Directors and Staff of Speare Memorial Hospital gratefully acknowledge gifts made between October 1, 2010 and January 31, 2011 totaling \$74,563.14. The generous support of the following individuals, families and businesses helps assure that the best medical care will be here, in our community, when needed. From all of us at Speare, **Thank You!**

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Reiki Being Offered to Oncology Patients

By Jennifer Oldenburg, Student & Volunteer Services Coordinator
Full text article available online at www.spearehospital.com

For many people suffering from chronic pain, medication alone is not always enough to alleviate their symptoms. For this reason, they turn to alternative forms of healing, one such form is the energy therapy known as Reiki – pronounced RAY-KEY – a Japanese word meaning “universal life energy.” Reiki is based on the premise that we can draw limitless amounts of energy from the universe to support and enhance the body’s innate ability to heal itself.

As a means of helping its patients feel peaceful and relaxed, Speare Memorial Hospital began offering Reiki treatments to its Oncology patients in February. “Reiki can be a positive adjunct to patients undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatment,” says Oncology and ICU Nursing Director Donna Toohey. “For this reason along with the smaller patient base, we believe Oncology is a great place to begin offering Reiki at Speare. When a patient informs the staff they are interested in receiving a treatment, we will match the volunteer’s schedule

to a time that is convenient and fits in with the patient’s plan of care.”

People respond individually to Reiki, although most feel a sense of calmness, warmth, peace, comfort, and relaxation. Reiki can accelerate the healing process for those who are ill, under medical treatment, and/or in the recovery stages. Toohey explains, “It may not cure your ailment; however, it can be a powerful healing system in conjunction with medications patients are currently using.”

Reiki at Speare Memorial Hospital is being provided by volunteers who have been trained and evaluated by Speare’s Reiki Master Eleanor Wright, RN, in ICU/CCU. “We believe that Reiki offers many benefits including relaxation, a decrease in discomfort and enhanced feelings of peace and wellbeing,” Wright states. “This will often lead to a decrease in the need for pain medication, a shorter hospital stay and an increase in the patient’s satisfaction with the services provided here at Speare.”

Save the Dates:

Living Well with Diabetes

Tuesdays • April 5 – 26 • 9 – 11 a.m.
Tuesdays • May 3 – 24 • 3 – 5 p.m.

A four-week series of classes to help you understand what it means to have diabetes and to learn the skills you need to reach your personal health goals.

Call the Diabetes Education Office at (603) 238-6472 for more information or to register.

Living with Diabetes Support Group

First Thursday of every month
9 – 10 a.m. • SMH Cafeteria Annex

Education for living with diabetes.
FREE and everyone is welcome.

Wing, Women & Wisdom

Thursday, April 7
5:30 p.m. • Art Cellar, Main St., Plymouth

Straight talk on women’s health issues at every age, featuring a keynote address by Dr. Kathy Pearson: “Everything Your Mother Didn’t Tell You” followed by a panel discussion answering your questions.

Hearty hors d’oeuvres and red wine tasting. The seminar is free, but advance registration is requested. Please call or email Community Relations at (603) 238-6468 or info@spearehospital.com.

Sponsored by Millennium Integrated Marketing

2011 Tour de Coeur

May 9 – 13

Mark your calendars and lace up your shoes! The very popular Tour de Coeur, walking the heart of New Hampshire is back for 5 walks, in 5 towns over 5 days. Each walk will be approximate two miles. Everyone is welcome to join us in Plymouth, Waterville Valley, Bridgewater, Meredith and Ashland.



Speare Memorial Hospital Golf Classic

Thursday, June 9, 2011
Owl’s Nest Golf Club
Campton, NH

Morning & afternoon flights available.

**PROCEEDS BENEFIT
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Contact **Sue Durgy** at (603) 238-2211
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SMH and Choice Physical Therapy Partner

New Plymouth Regional Rehabilitation Services Introduced

Choice Physical Therapy and Speare Memorial Hospital have merged rehabilitation services to create Plymouth Regional Rehabilitation Services, providing central New Hampshire access to a fully integrated rehabilitation center located at Speare Memorial at Boulder Point. The partnership became effective Monday, January 17, joining together Choice Physical Therapy's Plymouth location and Speare Memorial Hospital's rehabilitation department, RehabFIT.

"We are very excited about our partnership with Choice Physical Therapy," says Speare Memorial Hospital's President and CEO Michelle McEwen, FACHE. "By merging our services we are creating a comprehensive sports medicine, rehabilitation and wellness organization. Together we will deliver superior quality care through better clinical integration with providers, be centered on promoting positive patient outcomes and improving the overall health of our community."

Kelly Legacy, DPT, ATC, Clinical Director at Choice Physical Therapy, agrees, "This is a wonderful opportunity to collaborate and offer the community a patient focused

facility that aims to restore function and mobility and improve overall wellness. By combining our shared vision of physician directed care and a sports medicine approach with strong manual therapies and the medical fitness model for better health, we can add value by becoming a comprehensive medical hub for the greater Plymouth area."

McEwen explains the new organization, Plymouth Regional Rehabilitation Services, will encompass the hospital's own rehabilitation services and Choice PT's Plymouth, Bristol and Plymouth State University locations. Bristol and PSU will continue to operate under the Choice Physical Therapy name, while the hospital department at Boulder Point will have a name change. "We anticipate incorporating Choice Physical Therapy into the name of our hospital rehabilitation department, but keeping the RehabFIT designation for our membership-based medical fitness program introduced last year."

Legacy adds that Choice Physical Therapy began seeing their Plymouth patients at Speare Memorial at Boulder Point on Monday, January 17, but emphasizes, "We want to make this a smooth transition for everyone and ensure our integrated services are coordinated and designed to maximize better patient outcomes."

Speare Memorial at Boulder Point is located at 103 Boulder Point Drive off Tenney Mountain Highway in Plymouth. The rehabilitation services department is located on the first floor. For more information please call (603) 238-2225.



The new Plymouth Regional Rehabilitation Services at Speare Memorial at Boulder Point integrates comprehensive physical and occupational therapies with the membership-based RehabFIT Medical Fitness program.