Practice makes perfect: Gearing up for Accreditation

You know what they say: “Practice makes perfect.”

Over the last few weeks, Accreditation teams across Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS) have been doing just that: preparing for the upcoming Accreditation Canada (AC) on-site survey between June 8-12, when AC surveyors will visit various units and departments across our family of hospitals to evaluate our organization’s progress in quality improvement.

A key element of the Accreditation on-site surveys are “tracer” activities, where surveyors follow the patient journey and observe priority processes and procedures to assess compliance with AC standards. Throughout this process, surveyors observe and ask questions of staff, physicians, volunteers and patients regarding their knowledge and experiences related to important quality factors. To prepare for the real thing, Accreditation teams across HHS engage in “mock tracers”, as one of the final stages of preparation before the surveys in June.

At West Lincoln Memorial Hospital (WLMH), mock tracer training is in full swing. On Apr. 16, members of the HHS quality & performance team were joined by representatives from St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton to conduct mock tracers across our sites. At WLMH, staff are familiar with the Accreditation process, but 2015 marks the first year that WLMH will participate as part of the HHS family. This means additional learning and training to integrate HHS’ processes and practices into the quality culture at WLMH.

“Quality Improvement means we are always reviewing, evaluating and revising processes,” says Vikki Metler, Chief of Inter-Professional Practice, West Lincoln Memorial Hospital.

“The mock tracers help us prepare by providing an opportunity to educate and highlight the success of actions taken toward improving quality of care and service within our hospital.”

VIKKI METLER, CHIEF OF INTER-PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE, WEST LINCOLN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

CONT’D ON P. 3...
When Tyler Leblanc was struck and killed by a transport truck in June of 2012, his mother, Kim was faced with the difficult decision of whether or not to donate his organs. Although the topic had never come up in their discussions, Kim knew exactly what to do.

"It wasn't something we talked about as a family," she says. "These things happen to other people."

Yet, Kim had a feeling that her son would have wanted his death to bring life to others.

"Tyler was a very giving person and so I knew without a doubt that this is something he would want."

Since she made the decision on behalf of her son, Kim has seen the power of organ donation, and how making the decision to donate can bring a glimmer of peace to grieving families. Tyler’s donation gave the gift of life to seven other hopeful recipients who were waiting for a donor. This inspired Kim and every one of her family members to register as organ donors themselves.

"It’s important, it’s really, really important to have that conversation with your family, to ask them what they want," says Kim. "It takes two minutes to register, and we now take comfort in just knowing that if that we’re ever faced with a tragedy like this again, we’ve all made our wishes known to one another."

Today, there are over 1500 people still waiting for donors in Ontario, alone. Every three days, one of them will die if they don’t receive an organ.

"Tyler was my youngest child, my only son. He has now become my hero. I want him to know that somewhere out there, he has brought life to and given seven people a second chance. And I know he’s smiling, and I know he’s proud."
Most people know that strokes and heart attacks can result from poor eating habits, but did you know that lack of proper oral care is a leading cause of cardiac disease?

“Bacteria from the mouth can enter the bloodstream and settle in different parts of the body, causing disease elsewhere,” says Dr. Lazlo Szoke (pictured, above), director at the Dr. James Morreale Dental Clinic at St. Peter’s Hospital.

“Gum disease is an infection and inflammation of the gums, and is thought to be related to other inflammation related diseases in the rest of the body.”

Throughout his more than 25 years in private dental practice, Dr. Szoke has seen firsthand the results of poor oral health. He says long-term oral health issues are often ‘rooted’ in habits from earlier in life. Unfortunately, bad habits adopted in youth often compound, leading to greater difficulties and health complications in the future.

“We’ve seen that patients have more plaque and calculus as they age, and all problems add up,” says Dr. Szoke. “A cavity gets larger with time; gum disease gets more severe with time. The damage done keeps getting worse.”

For elderly patients - especially those who are in hospital and/or need extra help with self-care - oral hygiene is especially important, since oral issues and diseases can exacerbate existing conditions. For this reason, the Best Practice Oral Hygiene committee has done extensive work in promoting the importance of patients’ oral hygiene among healthcare providers.

The extensive harm that can be caused by poor oral care might be a surprise to some, but the most effective method of prevention is simple:

“Only by cleaning more carefully can most of these effects be reduced”, says Dr. Szoke. “My advice has always been to brush, brush, brush - that is, four times a day, after every meal and snack and before bedtime. And, floss every day.”

Having peers and co-workers asking the ‘difficult’ questions helps us become comfortable with the process and the types of questions we may be asked, in a non-threatening way.”

For staff across HHS, but especially for those at WLMH as they adopt new standards and processes, the mock tracers provide the opportunity to review and apply knowledge of quality procedures embedded in their day-to-day work.

“The surveyors will ask us to explain a process and our specific role within it, but some people have trouble articulating what they do,” says Sharon Wintemute, charge nurse, acute medicine at WLMH. “The opportunity for these mock tracers puts people at ease. Practice makes perfect!”

CONT’D FROM COVER...

**Accreditation**

chief of interprofessional practice, WLMH. “The amalgamation between HHS and WLMH itself is a quality improvement initiative that staff and physicians have embraced.”

“The mock tracers help us prepare for the onsite assessment by providing an opportunity to educate and highlight the success of actions taken toward improving quality of care and service within our hospital.

For more information and updates about Accreditation at Hamilton Health Sciences, click here.
Excellence in waste management

The operations of a hospital are dynamic and complex. There are countless gears turning at once, many behind-the-scenes.

On Apr. 8, recognition was awarded to one member of the Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS) family who quietly excels at her role - one that’s not widely known but is beneficial to the health of our hospital environment, and our environment as a whole.

Rosemary Van Oostrom is the waste management coordinator for all of HHS’ facilities and has led the development of the hospital’s successful waste management program since 2007. Looking for strategic ways to manage the waste that an organization of HHS’ size inevitably produces, Rosemary partnered with Daniels Sharpsmart, a waste management company. Throughout the years, her dedication to sustainable waste management has spoken for itself. Daniels decided it was time to give Rosemary the recognition she deserved with their Lifetime Achievement Award for Waste Reduction, Recycling and Sustainability.

“As a company that is dedicated to waste management within healthcare, we strive to acknowledge industry leaders,” said Daniel Kennedy, CEO of Daniels Sharpsmart Canada. “Rosemary has set herself apart from the majority of individuals in our field.”

Soon after joining HHS, Rosemary became a strong proponent of reusable medical waste and sharps containers, ensuring that all HHS sites were using the lowest possible number of single-use waste containers. Over the past four years, in partnership with Niagara College, Rosemary has developed a formal student internship program at HHS, drawing in students from the college’s Environmental Management Program. The third year of the program focused on hospital organic waste, resulting in the introduction of a food waste dehydrator project which turns food waste into usable compost. This project was successful and remains in place today, saving money and diverting a significant amount of the hospital’s food waste from landfill.

“The working relationship I have with Daniels is what I would aspire to with any vendor,” said Rosemary as she received her award. “I’m thankful that our partnership has helped to make HHS a safe and sustainable place to work.”

Excellence in waste management
Rosemary Van Oostrom (pictured, centre), waste management coordinator at HHS, is the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award for Waste Reduction, Recycling and Sustainability presented by waste management company Daniels Sharpsmart.

Staff lottery
It was just the phone call Debbie Strabac needed. The single mom of two kids hadn’t been on a vacation in years. A group of friends were going to Cuba and were trying to persuade her to join them. Worried about her finances, Debbie worked hard to convince herself she deserved a vacation. After much hesitation, she finally called the travel agent. As soon as she hung up the phone, she received a call to notify her she had won $10,711 in the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation Winning Wednesdays 50/50 Staff Lottery.

All HHS employees and volunteers are eligible to purchase 50/50 tickets. Since it began in July 2012, the lottery has generated $850,000, with half of the proceeds going to support patient care across HHS, including equipment purchases.

Ten thousand tickets are available this year. Actual prize amounts vary with participation to a maximum of $15,000 per draw. Tickets are $3 each and draws are held bi-weekly, one week after each pay deposit.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions!
Public Relations & Communications
905-521-2100 ext. 75387
publicrelations@hhsc.ca

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