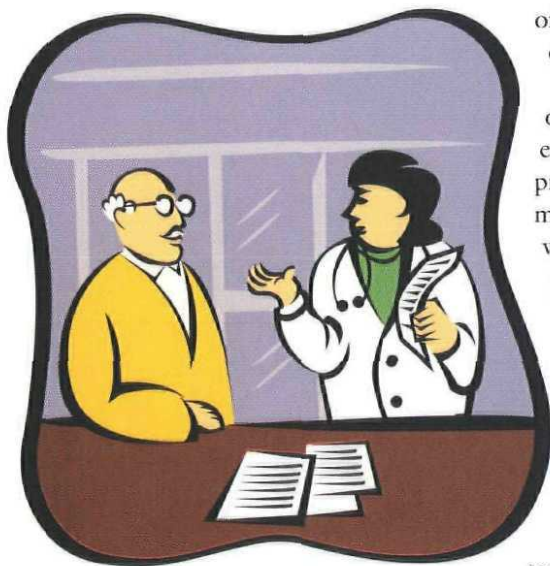


Putting PATIENTS FIRST

KEEPING THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN



In the January-February issue of *Health Progress*, we asked you how your organization facilitates the information flow among caregivers and patients. Here's what you told us. Answer this issue's question on p. 23, and we'll publish your answers.

COORDINATING CARE IN OREGON

I'm writing as both a patient and a leader of a religious community (prioress, in my case). The sister who supervises our infirmary and I help the sisters in our community, especially the 20 or so who are over 75, deal with various healthcare issues and providers. We are fortunate to have insurance with Kaiser Permanente North West (KPNW), which consistently hires compassionate providers who care for people, not just diseases or health problems. KPNW provides access to healthcare in ways other than just the traditional office visit. We can call advice nurses 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They have access to specialists who are on call after hours and on weekends. We can fax and e-mail many

of our physicians, and access advice on-line.

Communication is also a priority during an office visit. At the end of an office visit, we receive a printout listing recommendations, medication changes, laboratory work ordered, and a return appointment. For the elderly and/or hard of hearing, this is wonderful. The KPNW doctors will let the infirmary supervisor or me accompany any sister who needs assistance in understanding, hearing, or remembering what the doctor recommends. We receive written copies of test results, and our pharmacists offer consultations on any new prescriptions. We can also send information to providers before an appointment. Since many of our providers are in the same building, the doctors frequently consult with one another about patients.

KPNW in the Salem area contracts with Salem Hospital. There is a KPNW physician there during the week and one on call in the evening and on weekends. Computer access to the medical records allows physicians to see what drugs someone is taking and what any recent health problems might be.

All in all, KPNW:

- Provides information on healthcare to the patient and his/her family (or, in our case, community)
- Coordinates the care among specialists
- Provides care for persons, not just diseases, and so communicates compassion—often more important than medical information

Sr. Jeanette Von Herrmann, OSB
Prioress, Benedictine Sisters
Mt. Angel, OR

INVOLVING THE NURSING STAFF

- The patient's assigned nurse attends the doctor's daily visit with the patient to observe, listen, and ask questions concerning specific requests or updates.

- The nurse uses clear language the patient will understand, for example, "Your plan of care for today is . . .," or "Today I'm going to teach you about your medications (or the procedure you will have, the protocol you are on)."

- Team rounds are held biweekly with social services staff, the integrated care management team, physical therapists, nutritional therapists, mission/ministry personnel, and the nurse and nurse manager.

St. Francis Medical Center
Trenton, NJ

DECISION MAKING IS KEY

At Mercy Hospital, ScrippsHealth, one of our guiding tenets is "The Patient First." We keep the patient first by encouraging and supporting point-of-service decision making, or shared governance.

Interdisciplinary committees and councils made up of, and directed by, interdisciplinary staff and physicians drive the healthcare delivery system. They determine what care is best for the patient and how that care is to be delivered. Management's role is to ensure that the committees and councils have the resources they need to facilitate this process. The level of empowerment and commitment that results from point-of-service decision making is inspiring.

Jere Murray
Assistant Administrator,
Patient Care Services
Mercy Hospital, ScrippsHealth
San Diego, CA

Health Progress's new department, "Putting Patients First," highlights practical ideas and programs that put the patient at the center of healthcare. In every issue, *Health Progress* will publish this fax-back survey with a question on a specific topic. Then we'll publish your answers. Share your ideas now!

Putting PATIENTS

FIRST Fax Survey

To: Judy Cassidy
Editor, *Health Progress*

Fax: 314-427-0029



How Do You Protect Patient Privacy?

In this issue of *Health Progress*, the article on p. 26 discusses preserving patient privacy in an electronic environment of shared information. How does your organization meet this challenge and protect patient privacy?

Here's what we do to protect patient privacy:

Name _____

Title/Organization _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ Phone _____

Photocopy and complete this form and fax or mail it back to Judy Cassidy. Feel free to attach extra pages or to use e-mail to send your response.

To return form by mail, send it to:

Judy Cassidy, Editor, *Health Progress*, Catholic Health Association, 4455 Woodson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63134-3797

E-mail your ideas to: jcassid@chausa.org.