



SPREADING OUR STORIES

As promised in the Editor's Note, Nov.-Dec. 2010, *Health Progress* will continue to publish vignettes about creative ways of communicating mission.

Community Mercy Health Partners Honors Heritages

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As our chaplain visited with Nawal, there was a noticeable frown on her face. Nawal repeatedly glanced at the stylized Christian cross on the wall, facing her as she lay in her hospital bed. As a community hospital with a Catholic presence, Community Mercy Health Partners displays this cross in all patient rooms. Upon learning Nawal was Muslim, the chaplain informed her we could change the cross for a framed symbol, the written calligraphy **Allah** (Arabic word for God). Her

face lit up! When the chaplain returned and switched out the symbols, she noticed tears trickling down Nawal's cheeks and asked, "Why are you crying?" Nawal replied, "you have given me a gift. I am safe now because Allah will be with me while I am in your hospital." She also related that her name, Nawal, means gift.

To honor the religious diversity of our patients, the mission services and spiritual care service departments developed a process to "hardwire" placement of appropriate religious symbols in patient rooms in keeping with our mission which states, "our healing ministry will be evidenced by exceptional care, compassion and respect for the diverse religious beliefs and faith traditions of those we serve." Here is how we do it:

Admission: Upon admission, patients are routinely asked about their faith tradition or religious preference. The information is included in a daily report sent to the chaplains for rounding, referrals and patient visitations.

Initial bedside nursing assessment: At the time a patient is admitted to an inpatient unit, the nurse completes a comprehensive assess-

ment that also asks a patient if he/she would like a chaplain to visit during the hospital stay.

Spiritual care chaplain visit: While visiting with a patient, our chaplain will expedite requests for an approved alternative religious symbol to be mounted in the room. These meaningful religious symbols have been endorsed by the religious leadership from faith communities

in our service area, reviewed by the director of spiritual care and approved by the vice president, mission services.

The local Catholic community endorsed the use of a crucifix.

Our Jewish community endorsed the use of *chai*, a Hebrew word and symbol meaning "life," spelled with the Hebrew letters Het and Yod. A local artist and member of the synagogue designed and framed this watercolor rendition, now available on request for Jewish patients.

Our regional Hindu community endorsed the Hindu symbol for God who pervades the universe. This framed symbol is available for our Hindu patients during their hospital stay.

CMHP's healing ministry is a rich tradition and heritage reflected in all these major faith traditions. We honor our patients, families and each other when we respect their requests in this meaningful manner.

TERRY WEINBURGER is vice president, mission services at CMHP.

To share your story of communicating mission, e-mail it to pschaeffer@chausa.org. Length: about 600 words, and please put "mission vignette" in the subject line.



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