

Update: Tobacco Free Lee Signage

The date that our health system officially becomes tobacco free—Nov. 19—is getting closer. On that day, which is the day of the national Great American Smokeout, Lee Memorial Health System will become 100 percent tobacco free at all of our facilities.

This is a big undertaking, and it has taken us several months to prepare for this day, which is another milestone in our ongoing efforts to improve the health status of the citizens of Southwest Florida.

To prepare for this day, you will see new signage being installed beginning Nov. 6 regarding LMHS' new tobacco policy. The signs will inform employees, patients and visitors that no forms of tobacco—including but not limited to cigarettes and smokeless tobacco—can be consumed on LMHS property.

Even though the signs will be up, the tobacco free policy does not officially go into effect until Nov. 19.

In Their Own Words

Periodically in “Teaming Update” I have been sharing with you examples of the impressive work that our team members are doing to continue to improve patient safety as part of Performance Improvement, one of our key System priorities for 2009-2010.

In this “In Their Own Words,” Lisa Whitacre, RHIA, Data Project Specialist, and Deborah McClellan, RHIT, Master Patient Index Specialist, share with us exactly how Registration, Scheduling and Health Information Management help safeguard the safety of our patients.

Here is their story:

“Many people may not realize it, but staff members in Registration, Scheduling and Health Information Management, or HIM, all play a very important role in patient safety. In many cases, it is the Registration and Scheduling employees who have first contact with patients and their family members.

“The entire System depends on those staff members to identify and register the patient correctly. If the correct patient is not found in the computer system, it could result in a duplication of Medical Record numbers or a patient being registered under the wrong MR number. When that occurs, physicians and other caregivers may not have access to all of the patient’s correct medical history, such as allergies, medications, diseases, conditions and treatments. This could result in the patient not receiving the proper care or receiving treatment for a condition that the patient may not have. In addition, a duplicate MR number or incorrect registration could result in duplication of services, such as Lab and Radiology tests, resulting in higher health care costs.

“It’s the responsibility of the Master Patient Index Office in HIM to maintain an accurate MPI and help train and educate the Registration and Scheduling staffs to do thorough and proper searches of all

patients during registration. It is now mandatory for all new hires responsible for registering patients to go through extensive training on how to avoid creating duplicate MR numbers in the computer system. They are also trained to look out for patients with the same or similar names, such as twins, who often only have one letter different, or perhaps a father and son that have "II" and "III" after their names to designate the different generations.

"Those employees doing the initial data entry have a very difficult job, as much of our client base may not have any physical identification or may speak very little English, making the registration process a very challenging task. It is the job of those staff members to attempt to get as much information as possible within a short period of time, so the patient's treatment is not delayed.

"Despite the great attention to detail and accuracy that is required of employees in Registration, Scheduling and HIM, our System is doing much better than the national average. Other facilities report an error rate in duplication of MR information at 3 to 5 percent. At LMHS, we are currently at a 0.1 percent error rate! We attribute that low error rating to the quality software tools at our disposal and the Epic electronic medical record, as well as the ongoing training and education of staff. A clean and accurate MPI may be one of the most important resources in a health care facility, as we can see that we are making a difference!"

What a powerful message and an outstanding track record in the Registration, Scheduling and HIM departments. This really does demonstrate how all departments within the System have a direct role, in some form or another, in impacting patient care. Well done!

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jim Nathan
President, Lee Memorial Health System