Sharing Good News

Imagine waiting for a team of people to come and inspect your house, never knowing exactly when the inspection would take place but being sure that every aspect of your home – from your food preparation to how clean every room was – would be scrutinized.

Some version of this is experienced by many of us in our work world since many of our Divisions are subject to periodical inspections and audits from outside agencies and the public.

**Improvement at CCRMC**

Our Regional Medical Center has had more than its share of oversight in the past year. You may recall me telling you that last year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services looked at all departments at CCRMC, including Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Emergency, Internal Medicine, Intensive Care and Outpatient Services. They found concerns in three departments: Inpatient Psychiatry, Dietary (food services) and Pharmacy. We responded to the CMS survey, submitting a Plan of Correction.

Since then the staff has really stepped up, acknowledging the need to improve some operations, increase staffing, improve policies and procedures and, most important, improve inpatient care and services.

That hard work has paid off. I am delighted to say that recently The Joint Commission (TJC) paid an unscheduled visit – for a week – to CCRMC and our Health Centers and we passed with flying colors. Not only were there only minor issues of concern – none of them involving clinical care outcomes – but TJC recommended that we apply for several awards.

**Lessons for all of us**

Whether it’s TJC or the public, we all have someone looking over our shoulders, and I say that’s a good thing. Sometimes it takes an outside view to shine light on areas that need improvement which we might not see.

The bottom line is that we have to be ready all the time, and that’s a good thing since providing quality service is our mission.

There is certainly a reality here that can’t be ignored. As a public agency, there are some issues that are beyond our control. Many of the deficiencies identified by TJC have to do with the performance of other county agencies that maintain our facilities and have control over purchasing and human resources.

**Richmond Health Center shines**

Surveyors acknowledge some of those barriers. For example, TJC praised the Richmond Health Center for being able to deliver quality care despite the age and condition of the facility. Richmond Health Center does nearly as many patient visits annually as the Pittsburg Health Center with one third as much space and a myriad of physical obstacles. The Commission didn’t issue any recommendations for improvement at Richmond, and I consider that to be a tribute to the commitment of the staff to provide quality care.

**Higher standards**

Surveys like this underscore the concept of continuous improvement. The Commission at one time scheduled their inspections. Now they are all unannounced to avoid having facilities “buff” up for their periodic visits. Many of the agencies that oversee our efforts have also raised their standards, presenting more of a challenge. The bottom line is that we have to be ready all the time, and that’s a good thing since providing quality service is our mission.

In 2005-06, CCRMC improved patient medication reconciliation from 53% to 93% as part of the 100,000 Lives Campaign.
improve operations. CCRMC has learned from their involvement with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and the 100,000 Lives Campaign what it takes to achieve change. (See page 5 for information about change principles.) Dr. Steven Tremain, who is spearheading those change efforts, has been sharing some of the change techniques with other divisions. He is now a nationally recognized expert on change methodology and I encourage you to take advantage of what he’s learned.

Even those of us who don’t have regulatory agencies scrutinizing our efforts have an obligation to the public to provide the best service possible. An excellent way for us to ensure that everyone is working toward the same goal is for every unit to define what Service Excellence looks like to them. That will help each of us understand the goal we are aiming to achieve. I urge you to begin those efforts now. (That process can begin by reading CCHS’ Policy 117A, available on iSITE)

Sincerely

William Walker, MD

Board Honors Mental Health Young Adult Team

Effective teamwork by our Mental Health Division staff and the Concord Police Department helped bring a troubled Contra Costa resident safely home earlier this year after she talked of suicide and then fled to the East Coast. The 23-year-old woman had been a recent consumer of Mental Health services at a Central County clinic. The County Board of Supervisors gave recognition recently to the police and members of the Mental Health Young Adult Team, who tracked the young woman’s travel across country by Greyhound bus and arranged for a New York Police Department officer to meet her upon arrival in New York. Her return home was coordinated by Concord Police Officer Ron Turner. Kudos are in order for Officer Turner and members of the Young Adult Team: Program Manager John Allen and Clinical Specialists Candace Kunz-Tao, Bob McKinnon and Sheryl Wiseman.

Employee Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Amalia Del Valle Gonzalez, Walter R. Gorski, Kimberlee S. Cox, Lolita B. Lim, Margaret Pytlak, Laura E. Reynolds, Christopher E. Dodd, Anissa Y. Carter, Mary T. Vesey, Denise L. Whittle, Michael L. Shoback, Roya Iranpour, Ma Linda H. Siat (10 years); Gail J. Clark (15 years); Remedios L. Bernardo, Henry S. Ong, Marie C. Servantes-Huie, Irmina A. Gonzales, Mary Puruganan, Cynthia L. Cook-Yoell (20 years); Ernest R. Slye III, Judith K. Smith (25 years); Lily Lestage, Cristeta B. San Jose (30 years); and Jerry L. Kothe (35 years).

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the December edition is November 12. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Dan Smith at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, email: dsmith@hsd.cccounty.us The Director's Report is available online at cchealth.org and on iSITE, our intranet, at cchs.
**GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

**Honor Roll**

**Jeannie Cummings**  
*Detention Facilities Liaison*  
*FMCH*  
For exceeding the First 5 milestones for outreach and case management of pregnant incarcerated women and teens. Also, for being inspirational to clients, and for being instrumental in keeping the dialogue open among correctional facilities and Health Services staff regarding perinatal issues.  
— Nominated by Itika Greene and Suzette Johnson

**Kate Fowlie**  
*Public Health Educator/Risk Communicator*  
*CEI/Health Emergency Coordination*  
For her leadership in coordinating the completion of the County’s Pandemic Influenza Response Plan.  
— Nominated by Kim Cox

**Donald Gomez**  
**Jotisha Jones**  
*Inpatient Financial Services Specialists*  
*Health Services Finance*  
For always being willing to take time out of their busy schedule to help me accommodate patients at the hospital in completing applications for medical coverage. This means a lot to both patients and me. Thank you very much!  
— Nominated by Constance Nguy

**Dave Shoemaker**  
*Secretary-Advanced Level*  
*Public Health Administration*  
For his great attitude, dedication and for always being there when needed. He is very organized, positive and very proficient in all he does.  
— Nominated by Fowzia Younos

**Corby Selzer**  
*Community Health Worker I*  
*WIC Program*  
For providing outstanding caring support for breastfeeding mothers with special needs, such as the hearing-impaired mother whom she helped with WIC enrollment by a lengthy exchange of text messages to provide needed information.  
— Nominated by Nancy Busby Hill

**Claudia Salmeron**  
*Community Health Worker I*  
*WIC Program*  
For quickly and cheerfully responding to requests from Pittsburg Health Clinic doctors and nurse practitioners for breastfeeding assistance for their Spanish-speaking patients, despite a very large ongoing caseload of breastfeeding mothers whom she is supporting with caring counseling.  
— Nominated by Lisa Broughton and Nancy Hill

**Bill Sorrell**  
*Developmental Center Director*  
*Public Health*  
For his hard work, great knowledge about the County system and for always being available to help staff with their questions. He is very professional, courteous, positive and easy to talk with. His care exemplifies Service Excellence.  
— Nominated by Fowzia Younos

**Willie Swenson**  
*Communicable Disease Program*  
*Public Health Nursing*  
For volunteering to provide emergency cortical injection training for the Northern California Chapter of the National Adrenal Diseases Foundation on 24 hours notice, and for providing materials on important topics.  
— Nominated by Trice Roberts

**Do you know someone who’s going the extra mile?**

To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the “Going the Extra Mile” commendation form, available from every CCHS Division Director, or email your commendation to ServicEX@hsd.co.contra-cost.ca.us or fax it to 925-313-6219. The form can also be downloaded from the Internet (About Us page) or iSITE our Intranet.
As part of our Reducing Health Disparities efforts, our divisions are working to achieve outcomes in four categories: consumers/clients/patients/customers; the community; our staff; and our systems. Each month this page highlights what different divisions of CCHS are doing to reduce disparities in health and health care, and what still needs to be done.

Reducing Health Disparities

Connie James to Join RHD Team
CCHS Director Dr. William Walker announces that Concepcion James is joining the Reducing Health Disparities team and, over the next few months, will assume the role as RHD manager. Dr. Walker praised José Martin for his groundbreaking work on linguistic access. This change allows José, who has been leading RHD efforts, to focus on the linguistic services component of RHD. Commenting on Connie’s new role Dr. Walker said, “Connie’s community engagement and resource development skills are an excellent match for RHD’s new direction.”

Connie, who was most recently the Manager of the Bay Point Family Health Center said, “Building upon the work our divisions are now engaged in, we will work together to document and champion effective strategies to positively impact health outcomes for Contra Costa residents.” Dawna Vann rounds out the team, focusing on resource coordination, training and education and staffing the unique African American Health Initiative, which is now a part of RHD efforts.

Roll-Out Highlighted by Work of Four Groups
More than 70 CCHS staff participated in the recent formal roll-out of the Reducing Health Disparities One-Year Plan and Five-Year Overview. The event capped a year-long strategic planning effort to assess the department’s commitment to reducing health disparities. Health Services Director Dr. William Walker traced the history of the commitment – which began as a discussion about diversity and how we treat each other and our patients and clients. Since then, the effort has grown to embrace strategies to reduce both health care disparities inside our system as well as health disparities that affect the community. There is a new focus on what Divisions are doing to improve language access and cultural sensitivity and appropriateness. “The bottom line is that this work has to be incorporated in the day-to-day work of our divisions. It’s not a special project. It sits on the plate of everyone who works in CCHS,” said Dr. Walker.

Acknowledging that there are many efforts underway throughout CCHS to reduce health care disparities and health disparities, a few of them were highlighted at the recent event.

- In the area of language access, our participation in the now statewide Health Care Interpreter Network gives us video access to interpreters shared across California by participating health departments, including ours. That gives us access to 20 languages, including American Sign Language. Public Health’s Limited English Access
Dr. Steven Tremain, Senior Medical Director for CCHS, presented a series of change principles at the roll-out event that can be used as a framework for conducting RHD work. “Change doesn’t just happen, it requires knowledge of how to create successful change,” he said, stressing that change has to come from the bottom up. “Change by decree doesn’t work,” he said. He encouraged RHD champions not to be afraid of failing at first or of presenting imperfect ideas. “Take small bites, don’t try to solve it all at once,” he recommended. (Log on to iSITE for a complete description of the change principles.)
Big Changes in CCRMC Psychiatry Department

This year has seen several changes in the CCRMC Department of Psychiatry - with more to come. One of the first changes was actually one of the hardest: Budget cuts and other factors resulted in January in a reduction of beds in In-Patient Psychiatric Services from 43 to 23. That same month, however, Dr. Akin Kolade joined the staff and soon became the first on-staff Medical Director of the department in several years. “It’s made for a vast improvement in what we do,” said Miles Kramer, Director of Psychiatry and Detention Health, noting that Dr. Kolade is qualified as a psychiatrist for both adults and children. Also this year, Psychiatric Emergency Services was renamed the Crisis Stabilization Unit and moved its administration from the Mental Health Division to CCRMC leadership. Medical screening by Emergency Department physicians of all psychiatric patients was also instituted. “To comply with (state) regulations, we needed to run under a medical model rather than a social services model,” explained Dr. Kolade. Other new leadership in the department includes Dr. John Echols as the Consult Liaison Chief and Anne Pato as the new Quality and Compliance Administrator. Now, the department is awaiting yet another big change: A remodeling project to increase patient and staff safety started last month and is expected to be completed sometime in December.

NEW Kids Program Comes to Monument Corridor

Building on their success in Pittsburg, Community Wellness & Prevention (CW&PP) and Public Health Clinic Services recently expanded its NEW (Nutrition Education and Wellness) Kids program in the Monument Corridor in Concord. Kaiser Permanente is the program’s funder and major partner. The program has an after-school physical activity component for students at Cambridge Elementary School, a training component for after-school staff and a six-week nutrition, physical activity and behavior change workshop for families. The workshop curriculum is supplied by Kaiser and is called KP KIDS (Kaiser Permanente Kid in Dynamic Shape). The workshop opened on October 17 to 26 participants and will run for six weeks each at Cambridge Elementary School, then Meadow Homes Elementary, then a third location to be determined. Charlotte Dickson, Manager of CW&PP’s Obesity Prevention Project, said, “The community is responding well to the KP Kids curriculum and message about family lifestyle changes. Many organizations, including the Monument Community Partnership, have spread the word about the program. Families are already reporting changes in their diet and physical activity practices. We’ve seen this in Pittsburg as well – parents and children get really excited about what they learn and practice.”

For more information about NEW Kids or obesity prevention, contact Charlotte Dickson at cdickson@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6217.

Veteran Nonprofit Administrator to Lead Regional Health Foundation

Lynda Gayden of San Ramon has been hired as the new Executive Director of Contra Costa Regional Health Foundation. Lynda comes to the Foundation after holding the same job with Prevent Blindness Northern California for the past year and with the Child Abuse Prevention Center in San Jose for 10 years before that. “Lynda is a smart, capable, experienced leader of non-profit organizations and we are happy she joined our team,” said Dick Blair, Chair of the Foundation Board. Lynda replaces Frank Puglisi, who has been Executive Director since the inception of the Foundation four years ago. Frank will remain with the Foundation overseeing the statewide Health Care Interpreter Network.
Collaboration Allows Diabetes Patients to Attend Conference
For the past four years, Phyllis Howard, a nurse practitioner at North Richmond Center for Health, has checked-in conferees at the yearly “Take Control of Your Diabetes” (TCOYD) conference in Santa Clara — an event which draws 1,200 participants. Since few of Phyllis’ patients could afford the conference fee or arrange a ride to Santa Clara, Dr. Troy Kaji asked Patricia Tanquary, CEO of Contra Costa Health Plan, whether CCHP could use funds for a diabetes patient incentive to cover the registration fee. Once Patricia arranged approval for the pilot incentive project, patients were encouraged to make appointments for diabetes care through Chris Tanaka at CCHP’s diabetes program. Within two weeks, Phyllis and her medical colleagues Drs. Cynthia Carmichael, Kate Colwell, Patricia Glatt and Ann Harvey and Family Nurse Practitioner Cathy Steirn referred 51 patients. TCOYD offered to charter buses and the day of the conference, 23 early risers took off for the event. CCHP will build on the experience of this pilot project to improve participation in next year’s conference. (Thanks to Dr. Troy Kaji for this story.)

To get involved in next year’s TCOYD planning, contact Dr. Troy Kaji or Chris Tanaka at 925-313-6060.

Project Homeless Connect 2 A Big Success
Kate Schwertscharf, Nurse Program Manager for Health Care for the Homeless at left, and retired Public Health nurse Linda Ray provided adult immunization shots during the second Project Homeless Connect last month at the Willow Pass Center in Concord. About 400 people had access to 80 different types of services during the one-day event, which provides people who are experiencing homelessness with food and medical, dental, employment and other services along with information on housing opportunities. For this Homeless Connect, 168 people volunteered to make the event possible. To see more photos, of the event, visit iSITE, our intranet.

Lunchbox, Toy Recalls the Subject of Health Column
Our Lead Poisoning Prevention Project (LPPP) Manager Joanne Genêt and Health Educator Gail Doyle write about the alarming number of recalled lead-containing toys and lunchboxes in a recent installment of “Healthy Outlook” column, which runs in the Contra Costa Newspapers chain. The state Department of Public Health recalled lead-contaminated lunchboxes distributed as part of its Eat 5 (fruits and vegetables) a Day campaign, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission has recalled more than 2 million toys contaminated by lead. Individually, a toy or a lunchbox may not pose a serious threat, but lead from multiple sources can add up to a significant total body “burden” of lead. To help residents safely dispose of the items, LPPP arranged for the toys and lunchboxes to be dropped off at its office as well as County Supervisors’ offices throughout Contra Costa. The column provided information on drop-off sites, lead poisoning prevention and blood lead testing. To read more of this and other Healthy Outlook columns, visit cchealth.org and click on the Healthy Outlook link in Items of Interest or on the Publications page.
County’s Industrial Safety Ordinance Inspections Lauded in Congressional Hearings

Contra Costa County was praised recently in testimony to the House Committee on Education and Labor, chaired by Rep. George Miller and in a Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board report. Our Hazardous Materials Program won accolades for how it conducts process safety audits - in contrast to those done by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). “This one county, which is particularly enlightened, seems to be outpacing the rest of the nation,” testified Carolyn Merritt, then Chair of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. Miller had praised the county similarly in his opening comments at the hearing.

Hitting the Streets: Mobile Clinic Expands Health Care Access for Students

CCHS is expanding services to teens via mobile, school-based health clinics, having started this past September at Kennedy High School in Richmond. Further expansions will bring wellness and sick care to children at selected K-12 schools throughout Contra Costa County. For now, the Mobile Clinic is at Kennedy High on Tuesday and Friday mornings seeing enrolled high school students for preventive and primary care. Additionally, the freestanding School-Based Health Center located at Richmond High School has also expanded. It now operates a full morning clinic each weekday that school is in session. The project is a collaboration between Public Health Clinic Services, Family Maternal and Child Health’s TeenAge Program, Ambulatory Care, and Pediatrics.

For more information, please contact Susan Nairn, Public Health Nurse Program Manager, at 313-6278.