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Letter to the Editor
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
December 11, 2006

To the Editor:

Providing health care for a growing number of poor and uninsured people represents a crisis for our community. Rather than shed light on possible solutions, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel chooses to cast aspersions on those who are doing the most.

The premise of your Dec. 10 article ("Hospital discourages poor"), that Aurora Health Care is reducing the amount of care it provides to the poor in our community, is simply false. The truth is that the amount of care we provide for the poor is continuing to grow, particularly in the wake of the Wheaton Franciscan system's decision to close St. Michael Hospital.

Aurora HealthCare is an integrated health system, not a loose collection of hospitals. We continually look for ways to stretch resources for the communities we serve. That means delivering care where it is best for the patient, and it means avoiding duplication of care at multiple sites, thereby lowering the overall cost of care. For example, Aurora St. Luke's does not provide obstetrics or mental health services. We do provide these services at other locations. Over time, we have gradually increased the amount of work we do outside of hospitals, so that inpatient hospital care accounts for only 34% of Aurora's activities.

St. Luke's is our tertiary medical center, providing the most specialized care for patients with complex conditions. We are pleased to be able to provide this level of care for all Aurora patients who need it, including Medicaid patients. For many other patients, our community hospitals are a better choice.

Aurora has long accepted more than its fair share of the responsibility for providing care for the poor, and we will continue to do so. The most recent data show that our hospitals care for 38.7% of all Medicaid HMO patients in the county. That is far more than competing hospital systems. What's needed is not finger-pointing, but rather a community-wide response to this crisis. Aurora stands ready to join with other providers, government officials, insurers and others in the quest for real solutions.

Sincerely,

Nick Turkal, MD
President and Chief Executive Officer
Aurora HealthCare

In response to this article, Nick Turkal, MD, our new president and CEO, wrote the letter to the editor that appears on the left. It outlines the reasons why the article was unfair and inaccurate.

Several employees have asked if they could write a letter to the editor supporting Aurora and Aurora St. Luke’s. This is the choice of any employee who wants to express their opinion. Letters can be submitted online at www.jsonline.com. Click on Editorials to find out how. They can also be mailed to The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel at P.O. Box 371, Milwaukee, WI 53201.

As health care leaders, we will continue to find ways to better deliver health care to our communities. This may sometimes draw criticism. This is not a reason to back away from Finding Better Ways.
I do appreciate that on Christmas and New Year's we are given tickets for our free meal. Do you think it's possible to have something else other than the Beef Wellington and the Chicken Kiev that we have each year? Frankly the Beef Wellington leaves something to be desired. There's a whole group of us that would appreciate it if you could please suggest that to Food Services. Thank you.

We talked to John Riegler, director of Food Services, who welcomed the feedback. He said they would serve Stuffed Pork Loin rather than the Beef Wellington this year. He said they monitor volumes from year to year and he did notice a drop off in popularity of the Wellington.

I work in Medical Records, second floor, near the center elevators. It is so hot in our department. For the past few weeks, maybe a month, each day when I come in it's like 90 degrees or more in there. We've been told that the thermostats are uncontrollable, that we can't adjust them. But it's so hot when you walk through the door, it's like walking into a sauna.

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We talked to Nolan Harp, manager of Maintenance. They were able to make an adjustment that brought the temperature in your area down from 77 degrees to 74 degrees, which is still too hot. They discovered the major cause is that there isn't enough air in the duct to cool down your area. They are now trying to discover why this is so they can provide a lasting solution.

I have a concern about the size of the ladles used for the self-serve soup and oatmeal in the cafeteria. The ladles are too big. Whenever I fill my bowl up with soup or oatmeal, it ends up spilling over the edges. Then the food ends up burning my hands. I think the ladles should be a little smaller.

We talked to John Riegler and he found out that 6 oz. and 8 oz. ladles were being used in the soup area. He said a 4 oz. ladle is the correct size for the bowls. The cafeteria has already put the smaller ladles out and will monitor the situation. Thanks for the call.

I am calling regarding the breast-feeding room near the cafeteria. I'm grateful to have the room but you can tell that the room has not been looked at or updated in many years. I was wondering if there was a way to update the room. Also, it seems like it isn't as private as it should be. The curtains only partially block you. It would be great if you could also add a sink. I'm glad that we have this room, but you can tell that it has not been touched in years.

We've been working on the project with Neva Reimer, facility planner, to determine what can be done to address your concerns. To improve the room, she plans to reupholster the furniture, add a sink and put in new curtains that will provide more privacy. This may take a little while since the project has just been approved, but it will happen as soon as possible.

I park in the Dakota structure. I'm wondering who has the right-of-way, the person coming straight down or the person crossing over at the bottom or top? There are no yield signs so I'd like to know.

We contacted John Dobrynksi, supervisor of Loss Prevention. He said yielding the right of way in this situation is a matter of driver courtesy issue. He advises employees entering or existing the Dakota or the West structure to proceed slowly and get home safely.

I read in a previous We're Listening column that in the ladies' bathrooms, you were going to put hooks on the stall doors so that we can hang up a coat or something like that. I haven't seen hooks in any of the ladies' bathrooms in the hospital. Why don't you get the hooks on?

Mike Connor, director of Facilities, informed us that all ladies' public bathrooms in the hospital have had hooks installed on the back of the stall doors. The only exception is in the ladies' public bathrooms in the POB East, POB West and Health Science buildings, which are managed by an outside company. Mike talked to the company and they plan to install the hooks in those bathrooms as well.

In a recent We're Listening column there was a question regarding allowing food and beverages at an employee's desk, whether it be at a patient check-in or patient testing. I can't believe we leave guidelines for this up to individual managers. Would it ever be appropriate for an employee to be eating or drinking at a patient check-in area or a patient testing area? I may be wrong, but I hope that you will address this because employees in my department are saying why can't we have it at the bedside when we're taking care of patients. Thank you for your consideration of this. And I enjoy the “We're Listening” section.

You are right to question the response that was published in the past. It pertained only to non-patient care areas. Vera Lynn Pischke from Infection Control said for patient care areas the following precautions, located in the Infection Control Manual and the Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan, must be as follows:

Employees are not to eat, drink, apply cosmetics or lip balm, or handle contact lenses in work areas where there is reasonable likelihood of exposure to blood or potentially infectious materials. Food and drink shall not be kept in freezers, refrigerators, shelves, cabinets, or on countertops or bench tops where blood or potentially infectious material is present.

Keeping InTouch

Using InTouch is simple. Call toll-free 1-877-MY-INPUT (1-877-694-6788). When your call is answered you will be asked to enter our Password Number: 649. Then, just follow the instructions to record your message. InTouch is completely confidential.
A Message From Your Employee Assistance Program

Stressed? ‘Tis the Season to be Jolly!

Are long lines, traffic, too much food, too little money, strained relationships or having too much to do leaving you stressed this holiday season? Your best defense may be your sense of humor! Laughter enhances breathing, suppresses stress-related hormones in the brain, curbs appetite and activates the immune system. Humor can help us move from a “grin and bear it” mentality to a “grin and share it” orientation. So go ahead, smile at some of the senseless activities that go on around you, don’t take yourself too seriously and find the humor in even challenging situations. Take a 5-minute “fun break” each day to share laughter with a friend, read a funny book or play joyfully with a child. Get together with friends to go to a movie or play a silly game with your family. And most importantly, take care of yourself by maintaining realistic expectations and laughing often!

For more information on keeping your humor this holiday season, log on to Aurora EAP’s website at www.aurora.org/eap. Click on “For Employees of Client Companies” and go to the “Focus of the Month” section any time during the month of December. And don’t forget your EAP is just a phone call away at 1-800-236-3231. Happy Holidays!

Menu Highlights

Sunday, December 17
Breakfast: Belgian Waffle
Breakfast Sandwich
Soup: Wisconsin Cheese
Lunch/Dinner: Turkey Schnitzel
Spaghetti & Meatballs
Baked Breaded Fish*  
Monday, December 18
Breakfast: Omelettes Made to Order
Belgian Waffle
Soup: Chicken Noodle
Lunch/Dinner: Salisbury Steak
Turkey Ala King
with Biscuit
Scrod with Broccoli*  
Tuesday, December 19
Breakfast: Omelettes Made to Order
Cheesy Hashbrown Bake
Soup: Broccoli Cheese
Lunch/Dinner: Oriental Chicken
Cheeseburger Casserole
Grouper with Tomato & Basil*  
Wednesday, December 20
Breakfast: Omelettes Made to Order
Biscuit and Gravy
Soup: Vegetarian Vegetable
Lunch/Dinner: Breaded Chicken Parmesan
Vidalia Burger
Grilled Mahi Mahi*  
Thursday, December 21
Breakfast: Omelettes Made to Order
Cinnamon Roll
Soup: Beef Barley
Lunch/Dinner: Lasagna
Thai Coconut Curry
Chicken over Rice
Potato Crusted Cod*  
Friday, December 22
Breakfast: Omelettes Made to Order
Belgian Waffle
Soup: Clam Chowder
Lunch/Dinner: Salisbury Steak
Turkey Ala King
with Biscuit
Scrod with Broccoli*  
Saturday, December 23
Breakfast: Belgian Waffle
Breakfast Egg Roll
Soup: Chicken Dumpling
Lunch/Dinner: Tater Tot Casserole
Fillet of Fish Sandwich
Chicken Teriyaki*  

The Cafeteria is open everyday from 6:30 am to 7:30 pm and 12:30 am to 3:30 am.

Meals Are Served:
Breakfast: 6:30 am – 9:30 am
Lunch: 10:30 am – 2:00 pm
Dinner: 4:15 pm – 7:30 pm

The Deli is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. It is not open Saturday and Sunday.

Cell Phone Reminders

As more and more households move to using cell phones in place of traditional telephone lines, a whole new cell phone culture has developed. As a result, we want to share a few quick reminders about the use of cell phones while working in the hospital.

• During work hours personal cell phones should be turned off.
• You can use cell phones for personal reasons during meal and rest periods in areas where cell phone usage is allowed.
• Watch for signs that indicate a patient area of the hospital is equipment dependent. Cell phones must be turned off in these designated areas to avoid any electromagnetic interference.

Thank you for following these reminders to keep our hospital safe.
9,8,7,6... Shopping Days Left

We can help complete your gift list.
The gift shop is open every weeknight until 7:30 pm for your convenience.

The gift shop is located on the 1st floor of the Outpatient Building, next to Cancer Counseling.

Regular hours are:
Monday – Friday, 9 am – 7:30 pm
Saturday – Sunday, Noon – 4 pm

MasterCard, Visa and Discover are welcome. Proceeds from the Gift Shop benefit the Aurora St. Luke’s Volunteer Program.

Mark your calendars for our final Holiday Event – Friday, December 15th • 7:00 am – 7:30 pm

Crisis Demonstrates Our Readiness
A Thank you from Mary O’Brien

On December 6, when the devastating explosion took place at the Falk Plant, I was able to see first hand how well we are prepared to respond to a community crisis. Quickly and calmly our condition alert plan was put into effect. The command center established lines of communication with key areas, the maintenance team set up a decontamination tent for possible chemical exposure patients, housekeeping staff and transporters made sure the Emergency Department had beds ready for incoming casualties and the ED physicians and staff jumped into action. Even surgeons and physicians from other areas of the hospital showed up to support the ED’s efforts.

The ultimate result was that we were able to respond when our community needed us and to accept and treat the injured Falk employees who were sent our way. That says a lot about our level of preparedness and our ability to successfully implement our condition alert plan. Thank you for a job well done.

Mary O’Brien

Pin Recognizes Caregiver Role in Planetree Philosophy

Our Planetree journey at Aurora St. Luke’s is nearing a milestone. By the end of next week, 25% of our employees will have attended a Planetree retreat. Because these retreats are critical to our cultural shift, we want to recognize employees who have invested their time in the all-day retreat. All employees will now receive a special Planetree pin to acknowledge their role as caregivers in the Planetree philosophy.

Starting with the December 14 retreat, pins will be handed out at the end of each retreat. For employees who already attended retreats, we will be getting pins to you over the next few weeks. We hope you will wear the pin proudly recognizing your commitment to taking the first step toward giving our patients the best healing environment possible.

Ideas or articles can be submitted to:
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