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Aurora Health Care’s confidentiality policy says that “all information regarding a patient’s medical condition and treatment is confidential . . . and shall not be discussed with any unauthorized person.”

When patients come to us, they are trusting us to provide the very best health care and services. Patients must also be able to trust that the confidentiality and privacy of their care will be maintained.

Confidentiality is an important aspect of delivering high quality patient care. Any misuse or breach of confidentiality is unacceptable and could result in immediate termination. Health care workers have been fired for breaching confidentiality.

Our Aurora Health Plan is designed to encourage Aurora employees to use Aurora facilities for health care. As employees, we need to be able to trust that our medical information and patient records will be kept confidential.

In the discussion that follows, two fictional violations of patient confidentiality are described. These are not true stories, but they could be. The examples were taken from the Confidentiality Awareness leaders guide/self-learning packet.

First example
“I was so embarrassed,” said Mary, a clinic employee. “I assumed when I had my tests that I’d get the same confidentiality that I give to patients.”

Mary was waiting to have a mammogram when she was noticed by a co-worker. The co-worker not only had “20 questions” for Mary, but also shared the information about seeing her waiting for a mammogram with several other employees.

Second example
Larry, a hospital employee, was finishing his shift when a co-worker mentioned that Larry’s wife’s name had been noticed on the surgery schedule for the next day. Not only had his wife’s name been noticed, but there’d been a discussion about why she’d need such a surgery and what it might mean to Larry.

What should you do if you see patient information, such as the surgery schedule, that has nothing to do with your job? What should you do if co-workers are commenting about another employee’s or family member’s health care when it clearly doesn’t relate to their jobs?

If you encounter patient information that you don’t need to do your job, return it to the originating department and be quiet about it. If your co-workers are speculating about another’s health care, remind them gently, but firmly that they have a duty to keep patient information confidential.

For more information on confidentiality and additional examples for discussion, call organizational development, (414) 647-3282, for the Confidentiality Awareness leaders guide/self-learning packet.
In the last issue of Teamworks, Metro Edition, we talked about The Great American Smokeout, set for November 20 this year. The Smokeout is a nationwide effort to provide a “quit smoking” opportunity for people, and to let them know they don’t have to quit alone.

Here are a few suggestions that may help you survive quitting smoking:

- Don’t think in terms of “forever” right away. Take it one day, one hour, one urge at a time. Today (or right now, or for the next 15 minutes) you choose not to smoke. Remind yourself that every urge will go away, whether you light up or not.
- Beware of the signs of withdrawal. During the first several days of quitting, you may experience irritability, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, changes in bowel habits, difficulty concentrating, or coughing. These symptoms will subside. Think of them as positive signs that your body is “housecleaning.”
- Whenever possible, stay away from smoking areas and any tempting situations you can avoid, until you begin to feel comfortable as a nonsmoker.
- Ask for support from family, friends and co-workers to get you through this period.
- Get moving! Increasing your physical activity is an excellent way of dealing with the stress of this change. It may also prevent weight gain.
- Drink lots of fluids, but stay away from caffeine.
- Plan rewards for yourself. You deserve them. For example, after each week as a nonsmoker, treat yourself to something special.

For more information on quitting smoking, contact Aurora Health Care Call-A-Nurse at 888-863-5502.

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A urora employees are really generous people,” says Rick Cesar, RN, a parish nurse who works in the Sinai Samaritan Medical Center emergency department. “Last year we delivered boxes and boxes of food, clothing and gifts to needy families identified by the parish nurses.”

Employees throughout the Metro Region are planning to participate in a number of holiday food and gift collections that will benefit those who are less fortunate.

Here’s a listing of the collections already organized and the people to contact to participate (additional collections will be listed in future issues of Teamworks):

- St. Luke’s Medical Center, Doreen Wheaton, facility services, (414) 649-7388 — Holiday Food Drive — Includes St. Luke’s South Shore, St. Luke’s New Berlin, St. Luke’s Franklin, Bay View Clinic, Medical Surgical Clinic, Corporate Center, Forest Home Center, Aurora Credit Union, Heil Center, Diversified Care, Inc. and a number of private physician offices. Benefits the Madison Street Outreach Clinic and families identified by parish nurses. Beginning Dec. 1, food, clothing and gifts may be left in collection barrels in the medical center and the employee parking structure. Money donations will be forwarded to the Second Harvest Food Pantry or the Salvation Army Emergency Christmas Fund.

- St. Luke’s South Shore, Diane Janicek, social services, (414) 489-4281 — Holiday Food Basket — Sponsorships of individual needy families from the SLSS service area closed on Nov. 8, however individual employees and departments may participate in the Holiday Food Drive being organized by SLMC.

- West Allis Memorial Hospital, Kate Deakin, patient relations representative, (414) 328-6722—The Gift Giving Tree — Individual gifts for needy children in West Allis schools and food collection for the Holiday Food Drive.

The holiday giving plans of other Aurora care sites in the Metro Region will be listed in future issues of Teamworks.
Golden Sneaker & Big Storm Awards presented

St. Luke's South Shore Big Storm Awards for Service Excellence were presented in October to seven employees who exceeded the expectations of their patients, patients' families, coworkers and other customers. Recognized were Sheila Drewel, CICU; Don Fett, loss prevention services; Ruth Glasner-Davis, MRICU; Cheryl Haase, radiology; Karen Heltmach, outpatient pharmacy; Monica Jones, 5LM; Cindy Kollau, 9LM; Tammy Larsen, 3EF; Jean Meyer, 9LM; Lori Neumann, UW nursing student; Karen Orlinski, housekeeping; Marilyn Rahney, cardiac rehabilitation; Siang Raisch, UW nursing student; Mary SanFellippo, radiology; Glenda Sundberg, Family Practice Center; and Joyce Tomasetti, less prevention services.

Sheila Drewel, nominated by Dianne Harrison, is the randomly selected Golden Sneaker Service Provider of the Month. Dianne was on her way to St. Luke's in a pouring rain to visit a friend and was involved in a car accident. Sheila stopped to help those involved and in spite of the rain stayed with them until help arrived. Dianne said, "She must have been late for work by the time she left, but even then she kept her cool."

Research wins award

The effect of early discharge after birth on new mothers and newborns, a research project undertaken at Sinai Samaritan Medical Center, has won the first annual research award from the Wisconsin Network for Health Policy Research.

Margaret Malnory, MSN, RN, home care coordinator and nurse researcher, and Russell Kirby, PhD, research coordinator, UW Medical School, both based at Sinai Samaritan, reviewed the charts of more than 3,300 women who had babies at Sinai Samaritan from August 1995 to August 1996.

They showed that a home visit from a registered nurse within the first 10 days after a short stay for delivery meant fewer hospital and doctor visits for the new moms and babies.

Heritage Award recipients named

The fourth annual Heritage Awards were presented at Sinai Samaritan Medical Center's annual meeting on Oct. 22. Recognized were those people who have "contributed their precious time and personal talents and resources over the years," according to Len Wilk, administrator-SSMC.

Here are the recipients and categories: Ralph E. Houseman and Kenneth S. Jamron for Demonstrating Outstanding Leadership; Dr. Edgar Habeck (deceased) and Dr. John Silbar for Outstanding Service by a Physician; Marcella Steinkrauss for Sharing Lifelong Dedication; and Dr. Burton M. & Mavis S. Zimmerman for Commitment on Behalf of an Entire Family.
Poinsettia Sale
West Allis Memorial Hospital
Men's Service Club
Order plants by Nov. 28 at $8.45
Pick up 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Friday, Dec. 5
in the outer lobby. Cash sales on pickup
day are $9.45 per plant.

Mark Ambrosius, president, Metro Region, and Karen Schulte, his assistant, moved into new office space Nov. 7. They are located at 2424 S. 90 St., Suite 414, West Allis, WI 53227. Mark's phone number is (414) 328-6988; Karen's is (414) 328-6966; the fax is (414) 328-6822.

Workshop for Parents
Good Children, Challenging Behaviors: Problem Solving in the Home
sponsored by Sinai Samaritan Medical Center and the Jewish Community Center
7:15-9:15 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 4
Jewish Community Center,
6255 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Whitefish Bay
Presented by Stanley Turecki, MD, the author of The Difficult Child and The Emotional Problems of Normal Children.
For further information and to register, call (414) 967-8216, cost is $12.

St. Luke's South Shore Specialty Diagnostic Treatment Center
Free blood pressure screenings 1-3 p.m.
Nov. 24, Dec. 1, 8, 15, & 29

"Sir, what is the secret of your success?" a reporter asked a bank president.
"Two words."
"And, sir, what are they?"
"Right decisions."
"And how do you make the right decisions?"
"One word."
"And, sir, what is it?"
"Experience."
"And how do you get experience?"
"Two words"
"And, sir, what are they?"
"Wrong decisions."

1998 Benefit Annual Enrollment
November 21, the last day for you to make benefit changes for the new year, is fast-approaching. Your present benefit elections, except AuroraFlex, will continue throughout 1998 unless you make a change. Remember to complete and return your enrollment forms, including AuroraFlex forms, to your site's Human Resources Department by November 21, 1997. Enrollment forms will not be accepted after this date.

Words of Wisdom
Perfection is not attainable. But if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence.
— Vince Lombardi

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Teamworks, Metro Edition, is a bi-weekly newsletter for employees and volunteers in Aurora Health Care's Metro Region. Comments, questions and suggestions are always welcome and may be directed to Susan Lebergen, internal communications coordinator, Public Affairs Department, 3031 W Montana, Milwaukee, WI 53215. Phone (414) 647-3126, Fax (414) 671-8560.
Mark Ambrosius
President, Metro Region