

# LIFE & HEALTH<sup>®</sup>

WINTER 2011

CELEBRATING 101 YEARS OF CARING FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR COMMUNITY

## CEO CORNER

# From our family to yours

**AT** Sharon Hospital, we are dedicated to continued success by serving the future healthcare needs of our community. In 2011, we have many new and exciting growth initiatives, programs and technological advancements planned. These programs and services will further enhance our vision and ability to care for our community with compassionate, patient-focused care.

As the new President and CEO, I am honored to work with our management team at Essent Healthcare and our sister hospitals, members of our Governing and Advisory boards, and members of our community. I am proud of the outstanding professionalism and dedication of our nurses, physicians, ancillary staff and volunteers. Together, they work tirelessly caring for our patients and living our standards and mission.

Our patient satisfaction scores and quality measures continue to surpass hospitals both regionally and nationally. At Sharon Hospital, we are very proud of these scores and remain committed to enhancing care. Our multidisciplinary team maintains a daily focus on our

quality initiatives. After all, when it comes right down to it, our hospital family cares for our community family every day.

Sharon Hospital. Every day, we live at the center of caring.

*Kimberly A. Lumia*

Kimberly A. Lumia, RN, MSN, MBA  
President and CEO  
Sharon Hospital

Kimberly A.  
Lumia, RN, MSN,  
MBA, President  
and CEO of  
Sharon Hospital



## TeleStroke: It's like being there

Starting in 2011, Sharon Hospital will enhance its stroke services by providing an around-the-clock telemedicine program, called TeleStroke, with Yale-New Haven Hospital.

Using a web-connected computer with a camera, a neurologist from Yale-New Haven Hospital, with help from our Emergency Department team, will determine the type and severity of a stroke and create a treatment plan that uses t-PA, commonly called the clotbuster drug.

TeleStroke will provide residents of Northwest Connecticut the right care from the right specialists at the right time. Because when it comes right down to it, **minutes matter.**

**Know the signs of a stroke.** Call 911 right away if you notice one or more of these sudden symptoms—even if they go away: ▶ Numbness or weakness in the face, leg or arm, especially if it happens on one side of the body. ▶ Confusion or trouble speaking or understanding. ▶ Difficulty seeing with one or both eyes. ▶ Trouble with walking, feeling dizzy, or losing balance or coordination. ▶ Severe headache for no known reason.



## Get FREE health resources!



Sheila Sutton,  
RN, LNC

Would you like to receive a copy of Sharon Hospital's 2011 Physician Directory or a medical health card?

E-mail or call Sheila Sutton, RN, LNC, Health & Wellness Concierge, at sheila.sutton@sharonhospital.com or 877.364.4202.

Be sure to include your name, address, phone number and e-mail address with your request.

Sutton can also get in touch with you about any healthcare needs you have.



education and much more. In addition, all registered nurses completed three patient safety courses: "Strategies to Prevent Surgical Site Infections," "Strategies to Prevent Central Line Infections" and "Reducing Pressure Ulcers in Healthcare."

The learning platform gives instant reader feedback to test questions and provides links to more information on the web. The platform helps with record keeping and test-question analysis, which guides future learning initiatives.

### Training the next generation

Starting in February, Sharon Hospital will be a primary clinical site for the newly established nursing program at Northwestern Connecticut Community College. Over the past several years, we have supported the college's local feasibility study,

# It's all for you

A look at how we've enhanced care and services over the past year

By Dee Anderson, MSN, RN, BC  
Education Director, Sharon Hospital



Dee Anderson,  
MSN, RN, BC,  
Education  
Director, Sharon  
Hospital

**IT** has been an exciting year for professional development at Sharon Hospital! In addition to the monthly orientations, yearly competency assessments and new product education, many initiatives have been implemented to enhance

knowledge dissemination and professional growth and development.

### Patient education

Krames on Demand patient education software was adopted in the summer of 2010. The program enables staff to print patient education handouts about more than 3,000 topics in both English and Spanish. The staff

can adjust the font size to accommodate patients with low vision. The education sheets are written at a fifth-grade reading level and present easy-to-understand textual and graphic information. The high-quality product is updated quarterly based on scientific evidence related to the various topics.

Proper patient education and communication of health information has been proven to reduce hospital readmissions. Newly printed patient education folders will soon be given to patients when they leave the hospital. The colorful folders will serve as an organizational tool for their health handouts and discharge instructions.

### Staff education

Our new web-based learning platform, Healthstream, went live on Jan. 1, 2010. All employees used the program for annual safety education, ensuring that the hospital met the OSHA and CDC requirements for safety-related learning in the healthcare setting.

The education programs covered infection prevention, ethics, safety,

# Why travel?

The care you need  
is right here

*By Denise Fink, Chief Quality  
Officer, Sharon Hospital*

**COMMUNITY** hospitals have many advantages: care close to home, accessibility of your personal physicians, being cared for by people who know and who care about you.

One of the behind-the-scenes benefits of being a patient at Sharon Hospital is our daily Care Management meeting. Every weekday, a multidisciplinary team including staff members from Medicine, Nursing, Quality, Case Management, Physical Therapy, Nutrition and Staffing meet to discuss how to provide the best quality, most efficient and safest care for each and every patient.

For example, in planning for discharge, Case Management staff may need to know how well the patient is getting around. Will rehab or a visiting nurse be needed, or does the patient have the necessary resources to go home?

If a person is having difficulty swallowing, Dietary staff may need to know in order to adapt nutrition, and Nursing staff would need to know if a patient will need extra help being fed.

Our ability to get to know you and what your needs may be during hospitalization and beyond is key to both getting you well and helping to make sure you stay well.

The integration of resources ensures that you are receiving well-coordinated care from the minute you arrive through discharge, the transition home and for follow-up care.

donated \$100,000, participated in public forums and donated gently used medical equipment to furnish the nursing lab at the college.

Students will begin arriving in early February. Groups of eight students will be on-site during the evening and weekend hours on many units. We enthusiastically await their arrival. Our expert staff has a tremendous amount of knowledge and expertise to share.

## Emergency preparedness

In 2010, all hospital employees completed Healthstream's "Emergency Preparedness" course, and managers and directors also completed "Emergency Operations Centers for Hospitals."

In 2011, we will be taking our emergency preparedness efforts in the direction of pandemic flu preparedness. All staff members will be taking two new classes: "Health-care Worker Response to Pandemic Influenza" and "Personal Protective Equipment for Healthcare." All employees will be instructed in the proper use of gowns, masks and gloves. Lessons include tips on limiting worker exposure to infection, especially during outbreaks.

These courses were purchased with grant funds available from the federal government for pandemic influenza preparedness efforts. Hospital leadership will continue to test the working knowledge of emergency preparedness through the use of realistic, surprise drills.

## Leadership development

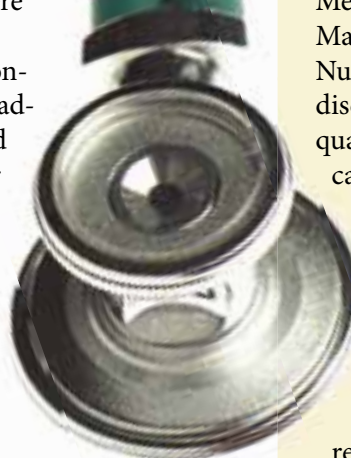
Hospital leaders attended quarterly leadership development conferences during 2010. The conferences

are intended to develop communication skills and identify different communication styles. Topics covered included how to have difficult conversations, preventing the "we vs. them" attitude, "managing up" departments, and generational differences. *Hardwiring Excellence*, by Quint Studer, and *Eat That Cookie*, by Liz Jazweic, were read by all and discussed in conference. The readings, topics and activities foster individual and collective leadership development.

## Stroke center education

All registered nurses are in the process of becoming certified to administer the National Institutes of Health stroke scale, which is a complex neurological assessment that helps to determine the location and severity of a stroke. It's an aggressive educational goal, since the course is rigorous and lengthy. As of October 2010, 81 percent of staff nurses had completed the course. Our goal is for everyone to have completed it by December 2010.

The most important asset of this organization is our people, and the professional development of our employees is my No. 1 priority.





**19.6**  
**Minutes to**  
**Emergency**  
**Care**



Home of the ER Waiting (Less) Room

## THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

# WE'RE HERE WHEN

**THERE** is no good time for a medical emergency, but if you suddenly become ill or are injured, our emergency department is always here to take care of you.

### Full-time service

Emergency departments provide care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Doctors, nurses and other professionals with emergency training and skills are always on hand to treat patients.

“While your healthcare provider’s office is sometimes closed, the Emergency Department is always open,” says Gene Chin, MD, Emergency Medical Director, Sharon Hospital.

If you have a life-threatening event—such as a heart attack or stroke—calling 911 to be taken to the Emergency Department is

obviously the thing to do. But for less serious injuries or illnesses, you may wonder if a trip to the emergency department is in order.

“You should learn the major warning signs of an emergency, like chest pain or having trouble breathing,” Dr. Chin says. “But even if you’re not sure, it’s better to be safe than sorry. Get help right away if you suspect it’s a medical emergency.”

### What to expect

When you first arrive at the hospital, a nurse will most likely see you to help determine how quickly you need care using a process called triage. The nurse may check your vital signs, such as temperature, heart rate and blood pressure.



Gene Chin, MD,  
Emergency  
Medical Director,  
Sharon Hospital

Depending on your condition, you may have to wait to receive care. If the emergency room is busy, the staff has to prioritize cases and see the most serious ones first, Dr. Chin says. If you need immediate attention, a member of our Emergency team will see you right away.

If your condition is considered less serious than another person’s, you may have to wait. While waiting, if you start to feel worse, you should let the nurse know.

Depending on your condition, you may be admitted to the hospital. Otherwise, the Emergency team will discuss your treatment plan with you before you go home. You will receive instructions about

# Act fast! Know the signs of an emergency

Being able to recognize the signs of a medical emergency could prove to be a lifesaving skill.

“Knowing the signs of an emergency could save your life or the life of someone you love,” says Gene Chin, MD, Emergency Medical Director, Sharon Hospital. “If you know what to look for, you can get help quickly.”

According to Dr. Chin and the American College of Emergency Physicians, signs of a medical emergency include:

- ▶ Difficulty breathing.
- ▶ Chest or upper abdominal pain or pressure.
- ▶ Fainting, weakness or sudden dizziness.
- ▶ Changes in vision.

- ▶ Confusion or other changes in mental state.
- ▶ Sudden or severe pain.
- ▶ Uncontrolled bleeding.
- ▶ Severe or persistent vomiting or diarrhea.
- ▶ Coughing up or vomiting blood.
- ▶ Difficulty speaking.
- ▶ Suicidal thoughts.

If you detect any of these signs, you need to come to the hospital right away. If you think the condition could be life-threatening or could get worse on the way to the hospital, call 911 immediately.



## YOU NEED US

medicines, restrictions and symptoms that may require a follow-up visit with your regular healthcare provider.

Keep in mind that emergency care is not a substitute for having a primary healthcare provider.

“Everyone should have their own healthcare provider,” Dr. Chin says.

### Quality care

The Emergency team at Sharon Hospital is trained to help if you are injured or become sick suddenly.

These specialists may go from stitching up a head wound to setting a broken leg to treating a heart attack—all in a short period of time.

The Emergency team must be quick-thinking and able to keep up with new medical technology and treatments. Doctors, physician

assistants, nurse practitioners and nurses regularly take part in continuing education to update their skills.

“Sharon Hospital’s Emergency team always provides the highest-quality care when you need it most,” Dr. Chin says.

\*Average wait times for patients from door to doctor were 19.6 minutes based on actual 2010 wait times in the Emergency Department at Sharon Hospital. Patients who arrive with life-threatening and more serious injuries and ailments are seen before those with non-life-threatening problems.

## Note it now: Be ready in an emergency

Before you ever need to visit the Emergency Department, take a few minutes to note on paper the answers to the following questions, or fill out the information in our Healthcare Card. Keep this information in your wallet where you or others can access it quickly. The information could help save your life, reports the American College of Emergency Physicians. Please call 877.364.4202 or e-mail [sheila.sutton@sharonhospital.com](mailto:sheila.sutton@sharonhospital.com) for a copy of our Healthcare Card.

- ▶ What prescription, over-the-counter or herbal medicines do you take?
- ▶ What allergies do you have to medications, foods, insects or any other products?
- ▶ What is the contact information of your primary care provider and specialists?
- ▶ What are the name and phone number of your healthcare proxy?

# Seek help for a sleep disorder

A good night's sleep is essential for good health

By Irving S. Smith, DO  
Medical Director  
The Sleep Center at Sharon Hospital



Irving S. Smith, DO  
Sleep Medicine:  
**860.364.4525**  
Internal Medicine:  
**860.364.7029**

**I**T is my pleasure to address the important medical topic of sleep and sleep disorders, in light of the recently opened Sleep Center at Sharon Hospital.

## What is sleep?

There are varying states of wakefulness, rapid eye movement (REM) sleep and non-REM sleep. Physiologic signs of sleep include distinctive brain wave patterns, muscle movement measurements and eye movement patterns best measured in the laboratory during an overnight sleep study, which we regularly conduct at our sleep center.

## Why do we study sleep?

Sleep is essential for a variety of healthy bodily functions. It is a period of needed rest and repose to conserve energy and restore the mind and body. Inadequate sleep is a serious risk factor for a range of health problems.

Approximately 40 million Americans have disorders of sleep-wakefulness, 15 million have insomnia and 10 million have shift-work-related disorders, while over a quarter of a million have narcolepsy.

These disorders increase the likelihood of accidents, reduced intellectual performance and mortality.

## Some common sleep disorders

The most common sleep problems that we see are obstructive sleep apnea, insomnia, narcolepsy, restless legs syndrome, and REM sleep behavior disorder.

**Sleep apnea** is the most common reason for a sleep study, and it has serious health implications. Patients with sleep apnea spend an inordinate amount of their sleep snoring, choking, gasping for air or simply not breathing. Effective therapy is available in the form of continuous positive airway pressure, or CPAP. About 4 percent of men and 2 percent of women have this condition, which puts them at risk for high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke.

**Insomnia** is generally caused by multiple factors, and a variety of treatment approaches are available. These

include instructions in proper sleep habits, stimulus-control therapy, and a form of behavior modification called cognitive behavioral therapy. Occasionally medication is necessary, but only for a brief period of time and as a last resort.

**Narcolepsy** affects up to 6 people in every 10,000 in the United States.

Major symptoms include falling asleep suddenly, sudden muscle weakness or collapse, and disturbed night sleep. Therapeutic naps along with good sleep habits and assorted medications are effective treatments. Like sleep apnea, a diagnosis of narcolepsy requires an overnight sleep study as well as a next-day study known as a multiple sleep latency test.

**Restless legs syndrome** is an urge to move the legs, usually accompanied by unpleasant limb sensations. Symptoms are typically worse as the day progresses and while at rest. The symptoms are usually relieved to some extent by movement, which keeps people from achieving adequate and restorative sleep.

**REM sleep behavior disorder** is typically found among middle-aged and older men. The disease is characterized by violent dream-enacting behavior during REM sleep and may be misdiagnosed as a nocturnal seizure. A sleep study is needed for proper diagnosis, and medication is the most common treatment.

## Do you need a sleep study?

We all know from experience how important sleep is for general physical and mental well-being. If you have a problem such as one of those outlined above, ask your health-care provider about seeing a sleep specialist.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call The Sleep Center at Sharon Hospital at **860.364.4525**.



# On your side

Learn more about physician assistants and nurse practitioners

**WHEN** you're looking for a healthcare provider, you might naturally think about selecting a doctor. However, for a variety of reasons, that's not always possible.

Fortunately, there are many highly trained professionals you can turn to for medical care. For example, physician assistants and nurse practitioners can be crucial members of your healthcare team.

## What is a physician assistant?

A physician assistant (PA) cares for patients under the supervision of a doctor. A PA is trained to provide many of the same healthcare services a doctor performs.

For example, a PA can diagnose medical problems and guide treatments as well as help patients stay healthy. Among other things, a PA may:

- ▶ Take your medical history.
- ▶ Do your physical exam.
- ▶ Order and interpret lab tests and x-rays.
- ▶ Treat minor injuries.
- ▶ Prescribe certain medications.

PAs work in all medical settings. They might be part of a family medicine or general practice or work exclusively with older people

In our fall issue of *Life and Health*, we included a listing of allied health professionals. If you would like another copy, please call our Health & Wellness Concierge at **877.364.4202**.

or infants. A PA may treat you in the emergency room or assist with your surgery.

## What is a nurse practitioner?

For a blend of nursing and healthcare services, you may want to consider a nurse practitioner (NP).

An NP is a registered nurse with advanced education and hands-on experience with patients. He or she may be part of the healthcare team in a clinic, nursing home, hospital or private medical office.

NPs are often found in family medicine, women's health and pediatrics settings. Some work on their

own, while others are supervised by a doctor.

Like PAs, nurse practitioners provide a number of healthcare services, such as prescribing medications and diagnosing and treating minor illnesses and injuries.

No matter what type of healthcare provider you select, be sure to see him or her regularly. Doing so can help you stay on top of your health.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



Rebecca Malone, APRN, FNP-BC, (left) and Caitlin Nass, NP

Physician assistants and nurse practitioners can be crucial members of your health care team.

## Hundreds of health specialists

You may be surprised at the size of your healthcare team.

Of course, your primary healthcare provider takes the lead, but services also are available from other professionals to address health matters that stretch from your head to your toes.

As a group, they're called allied health professionals. Individually, they include people such as dental hygienists, athletic trainers and podiatrists. Other allied health professionals include:

- ▶ The emergency medical technician who treats a heart attack patient in an ambulance heading for the hospital.
- ▶ The occupational therapist who assists

with a stroke patient's recovery.

- ▶ The diagnostic medical sonographer who tracks an expectant mother's pregnancy.
- ▶ The clinical lab technologist who runs tests to help a healthcare provider diagnose a disease.
- ▶ The dietitian who shows a person newly diagnosed with diabetes how to eat healthier.
- ▶ The respiratory therapist who helps someone with asthma breathe more easily.

Like your primary healthcare provider, these professionals—and many others—are here for you.

Source: Health Professions Network



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We invite your feedback on LIFE AND HEALTH, a quarterly journal devoted to healthful living. Please let us know if you have any comments or suggestions for future issues. E-mail Jill Musselman, Director of Marketing and Public Relations, at [lifelandhealth@sharonhospital.com](mailto:lifelandhealth@sharonhospital.com) or call 860.364.4444.

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"I received the  
very best care at  
Sharon Hospital."

Jim Batterton  
Orthopedic Patient,  
Sharon Hospital

## A 30 year knee | Dr. Rashkoff's total knee replacement gave me my life back.

"I had a knee injury and it was becoming a big problem in my everyday life. Eventually, I had to do something about it. I had a total knee replacement which Dr. Rashkoff performed at Sharon Hospital just over a year ago now. The surgery went very well. The treatment was excellent at Sharon and my nurses were very caring," said Jim Batterton of Cornwall Bridge, Connecticut.

After it became apparent that Mr. Batterton would need a knee replacement he did some research. He asked around for the name of a good knee surgeon and was referred to Dr. Evan Rashkoff. Mr. Batterton also found out that Sharon Hospital has a high success rate and low complications after knee replacement. So he was happy when he learned that Sharon Hospital is Dr. Rashkoff's hospital for knee replacement and that he has done well over one thousand joint replacements there. "I wanted the best hospital and the best surgeon," said Mr. Batterton.

"Initially we tried to manage Jim's knee conservatively with physical therapy, medication and injections," said Dr. Rashkoff, "but when Jim told me he had pain all the time and could barely get around I knew it was time for a knee replacement. He was the ideal candidate for our

new, high tech thirty year knee because he's relatively young and active. Knee replacement is now a routine procedure at Sharon Hospital. I'm very proud of our program. The patients receive the very best care in a team effort involving our experienced anesthesiologists, skillful OR team, wonderful physical therapists and caring nurses. The patients certainly do benefit because experience really does make experts," added Dr. Rashkoff.

"My stay at Sharon Hospital couldn't have been better. While I was in the hospital, the Advanced Therapy team began my physical therapy. We worked on various exercises including walking, upper body and stairs. It was tough in the beginning, but I worked hard on my therapy. I progressed very well especially with the help of Sharon Hospital's outpatient physical therapists. Following instructions and exercises, and working alongside other knee replacement patients kept me motivated. Sharon Hospital is not just our community hospital it is a wonderful hospital for orthopedics and physical therapy. I recommend Sharon Hospital to anyone needing a new knee. They offer excellent care and are close to home. There is an old adage that a bigger hospital gives the best care. That is just not true. At a big hospital, you are just a number.

At Sharon Hospital, you're an individual," said Mr. Batterton. The Orthopedic and Advanced Therapy teams worked together on an individualized plan of care for Jim. Their goal was to get him back to his daily routine as quickly as possible. Jim wanted to be able to get back to his daily activities and to his hobby, converting motorcycles to trikes. When he came back for outpatient therapy, Jim was walking and progressing well. The team worked to strengthen and restore Jim to full range of motion. "Jim has had a complete recovery and has exceeded the goals that we had set for him," stated Alanda Babbitt, Director of Advanced Therapy at Sharon Hospital.

"I am able to do many things again. I can really get around and work on any project now. I am very grateful for Sharon Hospital's Orthopedic team. Thank you to Dr. Rashkoff and to the team in Advanced Therapy. It is great to have Sharon Hospital here in our community," said Mr. Batterton.