This December marked the first time families with newborns in the UTMB Infant Special Care Unit (ISCU) were able to spend time with their children in private rooms without restrictions on visitation hours. The ISCU expansion opened December 16, just in time for the holiday season. The expansion features single patient rooms, giving each patient and their family members privacy and the opportunity for the patient to have one visitor stay overnight in the room.

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Prior to the expansion, the ISCU could comfortably hold 25-35 babies per day, but the unit was often crowded. The expansion increased the unit’s capacity to easily care for up to 55 babies. The extra space permits enough space for the family to request roll-away beds to spend the night with their baby. Permanent sleeper sofas and rocking chairs, similar to those on the children’s unit, have been ordered for the rooms and are expected to be delivered by April.

Debbie Barrera, nurse manager for the ISCU says how meaningful it has been for families to have this private space, “During Christmas, one family brought a Christmas tree to set up in their baby’s room. The parents and grandparents all were able to come and celebrate with their baby. Before we had the single patient rooms, families would not have been able to do that together.”

Deborah Mordecai, director of patient care services and assistant chief nursing officer, says one of the most significant benefits of the expansion is that mothers now have privacy when breastfeeding their babies. “In the old unit, everyone was out in the open. If a baby was having trouble breastfeeding, it was hard to determine the cause—whether it was the bright lights, noise, maybe the mother was stressed, or the baby just wasn’t ready. Now, in a controlled, quiet, private environment, we can take many of those other factors away.”

Lights stay dimmed in the hallways of the units to promote a tranquil setting, and each room has a window that lets in natural light. Exposure to natural light helps regulate the babies’ natural circadian rhythm and is an important factor when trying to transition from the hospital to the home.

“In the new area, we’ve already seen babies being discharged sooner than their projected discharge date. It will be a while before we are able to report any solid data, but so far, babies have been sleeping and breastfeeding better,” Mordecai says.

The nurses on the unit also enjoy the benefits of the expansion. Barrera says, “Nurses feel really good about being able to provide families with the space and support they need to bond with their babies. It’s been rewarding.” She says physicians are happy with the new unit, too. Now that the mothers are able to stay with their babies full time, they are able to receive hands-on instruction on how to care for their babies, especially in complicated cases, and learn how to take over care themselves.”

As an intermediate care unit, the infants often are discharged with special home care instructions. Most babies stay on the unit for about a week, but some also stay on a longer basis.

Dustie Carter, a discharge nurse on the unit, also appreciates the new expansion. “This is so much better. Now the moms have space to be moms and care for their babies. If they’re starting to care for their babies and are able to take over, why not release them? It has made the process so much easier.”

Mordecai says the expansion is the first step in trying out the single room Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) concept. Subsequent to the move to the new Jennie Sealy Hospital in 2016, the John Sealy Towers, which will be home to UTMB Women’s & Infants, will be remodeled using the single room design.

In the meantime, the expanded unit still plans on adding a common area that will feature a refrigerator, microwave and coffee service for families of patients to use. Dr. Joan Richardson, professor and chair of the Department of Pediatrics, is providing artwork for the unit that will feature an ocean theme with bright colors.
Joint Commission Readiness

UTMB is still in the window for its upcoming Joint Commission Accreditation survey. The Joint Commission (TJC) most recently surveyed UTMB and the Angleton Danbury Campus in 2012. Janet DuBois, associate director of accreditation, says that we should expect The Joint Commission to arrive as early as February 2015, although the window extends through November 2015.

In an effort to maintain continued readiness and avoid preventable Requirements for Improvement (RFIs), the Quality & Healthcare Safety Department has provided a set of weekly checklists for inpatient and ambulatory departments to begin to use in anticipation of The Joint Commission’s arrival, as well as “last minute” checklists and checklists for department directors to use when The Joint Commission arrives. A complete list of medication/specimen refrigerator and/or freezer temperature logs, nutrition refrigerator logs, and fluid and blank warmer temperature logs are also available.

Examples of Preventable Findings include:

• Fire safety (hallway clutter, fire doors, location of fire extinguishers, panels, etc.)
• Proper cleaning of equipment (high-level, low-level, wet-time, etc.)
• Proper storage of supplies
• Expired supplies and medications
• Refrigerator temperature monitoring
• Proper labeling of food; ensuring food areas and refrigerators are clean
• National Patient Safety Goals
• Timing and dating entries in the medical record
• Multi-dose vials (28-day expiration)
• Residue in pill crusher
• Patients with multi-drug resistant organisms (MDRO); no patient/family education
• Linens not covered
• Dirty, cluttered work areas
• Verbal orders
• Plans of care
• Patient education

Visit the UTMB Heath Joint commission website for the downloadable version of the 2014 version of the Joint Commission Readiness Handbook, up to date information on The Joint Commission, checklists, and chapter Spotlights at http://intranet.utmb.edu/qhs/TheJointCommission/spotlights.asp.

A Challenge from the UTMB Diversity Council

On January 29, UTMB hosted the 2015 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Excellence in Servant Leadership Luncheon and Award Ceremony, an annual event that pays homage to Dr. King and recognizes faculty, students and staff of the UTMB community who reinforce his legacy by promoting diversity, inclusion, civic engagement and service.

Dr. King was a leader who valued diverse opinion, cultivated a culture of trust, put others first, and acted with humility. Today, we recognize individuals who exemplify these qualities as servant leaders. Such individuals are often found in health care, as they desire to help others, reduce pain and suffering, and to improve the lives of others. It is a higher calling, a motivation that comes from the act of doing for others, helping others to be the best they can be, and in return, being the best that we can be.

Servant leaders also respect the uniqueness of patients and co-workers. In a Culture of Trust, we coach, mentor, teach, nurture and counsel; we encourage others to go further and achieve more. We see the biggest picture. We are selfless, and we put our ego needs on a back burner.

If we can remember to walk the walk of a servant leader, we will find that we have more to give, and in turn, we are able to draw from each other for support and energy. If we can all strive to embody these virtues, our patients will receive the very best care and our students a better education.

As we embark on the New Year ahead, let Dr. King’s words resonate: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?”’
Earlier this month, fifth graders from Trinity Episcopal School delivered more than 80 hand-knit hats to the newborn nursery in John Sealy Hospital. Nurses and new parents alike were thrilled to receive the hats. Covering the head with a hat after birth effectively reduces the loss of body heat in newborns. Kelly Schaffer, the fifth grade teacher at Trinity, delivered a baby at UTMB last February. She thought knitting hats for the newborns in the hospital would be a great project for the students. “I originally thought they were just going to make a few each, but they just kept going!”

Beanies for Babies

December Daisy Award Winner

Lucie Gold’s rapid response and critical thinking helped a mother safely deliver her baby in an unusual place

Congratulations to the 2014 December Daisy Award winner, Lucie Gold!

Lucie showed excellence by responding rapidly when a patient was clearly in the process of delivering a baby. A bystander flagged Lucie down and stated that a woman was yelling in pain and appeared to be pregnant. Lucie showed teamwork by recruiting other nurses that were passing by and asked them to immediately call for more help from Labor & Delivery. She exhibited critical thinking and advocacy by placing the patient on a bench so that she could deliver the baby safely. Lucie illustrated patient and family focus by comforting the young mother throughout the entire process, even after the baby was delivered and more help arrived. Her caring and courageous actions that morning speak to her extraordinary devotion to nursing.
Video Remote Interpretation: New Technology Increases Patient Safety

In April 2014, Patient Services purchased 10 iPads for Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) in units throughout the hospital. Purchased with incentive funds that were acquired through a Medicaid Transformation Waiver project, the VRI tablets offer patients on-demand video language interpretation services with a live person. The VRI tablets help Patient Services staff ensure that patients who require an interpreter have access to services even when staff and/or department interpreters cannot be present in person. Since April, the department has increased the number of iPads to 15, and more are on the way, bringing the total to 26.

Martha Livanec, director of patient services, says offering language interpretation services is vital to patient safety: “If a patient doesn’t understand what is going on with their condition because of a language barrier, they and their family members can’t make informed decisions about their care; if they don’t understand their care instructions, they can’t follow those instructions.” Martha says that participating in the Medicaid Waiver project gave the department a great opportunity. “This is still on the cutting edge of interpretation services. A lot of health providers and hospitals, even private facilities, don’t have this available yet.”

The most common languages accessed at UTMB are Spanish and American Sign Language, but a total of 12 video languages are available, based on regional demand. If a patient requires a language that is not included in the program, a separate audio interpretation service is available in more than 200 languages.

Erica Ramos, patient services administrative manager, says the overall patient response to the VRI tablets has been positive. She says it gives a more personal touch than when patients simply speak to an interpreter on the phone. It also helps the interpreter more accurately translate what the doctor is saying, because facial expressions and hand gestures can be seen as they exchange dialogue.

As more iPads arrive, they will be distributed to the areas that have the greatest need; areas who do not have an interpreter on staff will receive an iPad before areas who do have an interpreter. The ultimate goal for Patient Services is to provide VRI services in every area of the hospital. For more information on UTMB Language and Interpreter Services, visit http://intranet.utmb.edu/patientservices/LangSvcs/default.asp.
Always Award

Congratulations to the latest winners of the Always Award, which recognizes units and clinics that can move their teams closer to always doing the right thing for our patients. The award is given quarterly to an inpatient unit and an ambulatory unit for achieving excellent performance in all domains of the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey and CAHPS Clinician & Group Survey (CG-CAHPS), respectively.

In the second quarter of FY2015, the ambulatory winner was League City Pediatric & Adult Primary Care. Of the clinic, patients commented:

“The entire crew, from the doctor to the nurse to the lab person who drew my blood—the entire staff is kind and considerate. Everyone did their very best job. They make the visit to the clinic so painless, so to speak! I really like this outfit called UTMB.”

“I love that I’m able to get my test results and make my appointments on the website. My previous provider did not offer this type of service. Others who have used UTMB have also told me how happy they are with this clinic.”

“This clinic is very helpful. As a new patient, they showed me around the office and introduced me to people, as it was my first time there.”

The CG-CAHPS, which asks patients about their recent experiences with clinicians and staff, reflected an overall doctor rating of 90 percent, the office staff was rated at 98.5 percent, and physician communication at 96 percent; in addition, the clinic currently ranks at 80 percent in turnaround time for test results, something that’s currently of particular focus for improvement in the ambulatory enterprise. Jenny Lanier, director for clinical operations, accepted the award on behalf of the team: Deirdre Smith, nurse manager; Dr. Jean McAtee, medical director; and Terri Gately, director of clinical operations.

On the inpatient side, the Always Award is given to the unit who has shown the most dramatic improvement and demonstrated consistent performance over time. In addition, other criteria, such as “communication with physicians” and “communications with nurses”, as measured by the HCAHPS survey, is also taken into consideration.

Medicine/Cardiology (unit J9B) was this quarter’s inpatient unit winner. Their achievements included a rating of 80.8 percent for physician communication, which placed them in the 88th percentile for ranking in the All Press Ganey University Hospital Consortium (UHC) database (623 hospitals are in the database), and they also ranked in the 90th percentile among our peers with similar bed counts for this measure. The unit ranked in the 97th percentile for “communication with nurses”, which placed the unit in the UHC database at the 98th percentile.

Chelita Thomas, nurse manager of the unit accepted the award. Dr. Shreyas Modi is the medical director.
NEAR Department Employees Volunteer at the Ronald McDonald House

On Sunday, December 14, Nursing Education, Advancement, and Resources (NEAR) gathered at the Galveston Ronald McDonald House to cook a holiday dinner for the guests in residence. While McDonald’s is the house organization’s largest corporate donor, each local house depends on the support of local organizations, volunteers and businesses to assist in fulfilling its mission to create, find and support programs that directly improve the health and well-being of children. In addition to providing the meal, the NEAR department donated many day-to-day operational items including kitchen and household paper products, trash and storage bags, and canned and boxed food items.

There was a large variety of entrees and sides to choose from as each staff member brought their own specialty dish and then some. In addition to the traditional favorites of ham, turkey, dressing, gravy and pumpkin pie, there were also scrumptious sides that included black beans and Spanish rice, fresh salads, sweet potato casserole, and much, much more.

Because families often spend up to 16 hours per day at the hospital with their sick children, having lots of leftovers was helpful as it allowed them to pack home-cooked food to eat while at their child’s bedside. More than 15 residents and house staff members also enjoyed the dinner that night, and more were expected to as they returned from late shifts at the hospital.

Special thanks to all of the NEAR staff who baked and cooked for the event or donated supplies, including: Dr. Pat Davis, Cynthia Grasso, Michelle Carter, Brenda Wendorf, Maribel Bhojani, Jane Gonzalez, Dolly Sanares, and Roselyn Ogunkunle. Keith and Kathy Ozenberger (UTMB NEAR and UTMB Pastoral Care Services, respectively), along with NEAR staff members Janet Sandridge, Debbie Murphy, Lila Muzik, and Sharon & Joe Hensley and their grandson Khamron, volunteered to serve the food. There were even two special guest “chefs”, Dr. Dwight Wolf (UTMB Psychiatry) and Dr. Tammy Cupit (UTMB Nursing Research) on hand to prepare the guest-requested Spanish rice! A fun time was had by all and the spirit of Christmas giving was alive in each heart!

Spotlight on Juanita Norton

The Health System recognizes Juanita Norton, Children’s Hospital assistant nurse manager, for her extraordinary contributions to teaching. Juanita teaches a Patient Safety and Quality elective to students from all four schools at UTMB. Her special session on the Patient Safety Network (PSN) acquaints students to the system, explains how concerns are received and difficulties are addressed. Students have specifically described Juanita’s elective and the Patient Safety Network as a valuable resource for them to address concerns they have or to report patient safety events. Thank you Juanita for promoting a culture of safety to our students and future health care providers!
Chad Davenport was selected again as a 2015 Five Star PT/OT in the Texas Monthly Magazine. Congratulations, Chad!

“This afternoon, as I was wandering around the parking deck trying to locate my vehicle, Martha Livanec stopped and asked if she could help me. I explained that I had been upset when I parked and could not find my Jeep. She invited me into her car and spent ten to fifteen minutes helping me. I know she was on her way home, but she delayed that to assist me. She was very friendly and helpful!”

“Debbie Garza was the best pre-op nurse ever during my two surgeries. I cannot say enough about how good she is!” (Ophthalmology)

“Dr. Wayne Rutledge was excellent!” (Emergency Department)

“All of the staff members were caring and concerned. My favorite people: all of my nurse staff each shift and the nursing assistants. I appreciate them dearly. To the staff on J7A—I love you! You were awesome! Happy Christmas and a Merry New Year to all with plenty of blessing and best wishes!”

“Dr. Aaron Mohanty, our neuro-surgeon and his team always were professional, courteous and conscientious. They took their time answering our questions and concerns.” (Surgical)

“While in NICU, my nurses were very caring and quick to respond to my needs and the needs of my family, especially nurse Annette De Los Santos. Kudos to her!” (Neurology)

“My surgeon, Dr. Emmanuel Amulraj and his assistant, Kathleen were just wonderful. I felt loved and encouraged.” (Cardiology/Coronary)

“Dr. Kimberly Brown was amazing. She made me feel like I was her only patient and that I was important to her.” (General Surgery)

“Dr. John Phelps has always taken a great deal of interest in helping me achieve goals with my health and family planning. He’s my first choice for all my women’s health needs. I can’t say enough positive things about him. If all doctors were like Dr. Phelps when it comes to patient care, I’d never worry about whether I’m receiving quality health care.” (Obstetrics/Gynecology)

“The Infectious Disease team is courteous, knowledgeable, and they show compassion and respect to the patients. This compliment is directed towards everyone from the ladies who check me in, to the nurses and Dr. Jeff East. He knows his stuff! I never leave an appointment not knowing exactly what is going on.”

“Lisa Abbott (nurse practitioner) is exceptional. She’s friendly, professional, knowledgeable, does not rush through appointments, and I trust her with my life.” (VLTC Stark Diabetes Center)

“Dr. Kathleen Griffis is the best doctor I’ve ever had. I’ve seen her for more than ten years and am extremely happy with service she provides. She not only advises pro-actively on conditions, but has a great outlook on life and a wonderful sense of humor. I have recommended Dr. Griffis to four different friends and colleagues and all of them are happy with care she provides. I wish all the best to Dr. Griffis personally and to her staff!” (Women’s Health Care Bay Colony)

“Dr. Lyuba Levine always spends time and makes sure I understand. I always feel like I’m the only one she has to see. She never rushes my visits!” (Gynecology Oncology)

“Dr. Truong Nguyen took extra time to explain why he was ordering the test that he did. He talked on my level and not above me. I love him as my physician!” (Obstetrics/Gynecology)

“Dr. Lindsay Sonstein is the absolute best. She’s very thorough and very good at processing referrals. I regularly use MyChart to communicate with her, and I have more contact via MyChart than telephone.” (Internal Medicine)

“I had an urgent medical issue. Dr. Julieanna Camarena, her staff and Physician’s Assistant John Centenio were exceptional in scheduling my procedures and following up with my by phone call.” (Internal Medicine)