Like most of you, I look forward to the holiday season and the opportunity to share good cheer with family and friends. But I am aware that theft and other crime usually spikes this time of year, making the holidays for some less than happy.

In the coming days and weeks, you can protect yourself, your family and your personal property from criminal activity by being observant, careful and vigilant. At UTMB, we have implemented a couple of programs to keep our students, staff and visitors on campus safe.

We have increased patrols in the parking lots and garages at UTMB. This is especially important now that it gets dark much earlier in the evening when our students and employees are heading home.

For those students and employees who are on campus late into the evening, UTMB police officers are available to escort them to their car. To request a safety escort on campus please call (409) 772-2691.

Further, we encourage employees to lock their valuables (purses, cell phones, laptops) in a drawer or storage facility when they are not in use during the work day. The best way to protect your belongings is to lock them up when you are not using them. Students and employees are urged to report any persons or activities that seem suspicious on campus to the Police Department. Some of our buildings, particularly in research and education areas, have less activity than normal during the holidays, so extra vigilance is in order. Be alert to persons or activities that seem out of place and report the same to the Police. One of the very best crime prevention tools we have is the observations of those who frequent an area. Simply the unusual or out of place are quickly noted by these “regulars” and that information is an invaluable crime prevention tool.

The holidays means many of us are shopping, dining out, attending parties and taking part in other activities typical of the holiday season. In addition to keeping safe in the workplace, it is equally important to practice personal safety measures when you are out and about. Here are some useful tips for your consideration:

• Avoid shopping alone; if you have to shop alone, ask security personnel to escort you to your car.
• Carry cash only when you have to, and keep it in your front pocket. Criminals usually observe their victims before taking action. Cash is very attractive to potential thieves.
• Do not park in dark or dimly-lit areas;
• Lock your vehicle—always, lock your vehicle -- and hide valuable items out of view. Place your packages in the trunk or under the seats in your car.
• Hold purses close to your person; do not let them hang, and do not cross them over your neck.
• Be fully aware when you are walking in the open. Walk with confidence. Do not be distracted by headphones or cell phone until you are safely at your destination.
• Tell family or friends exactly where you are going, and check in with them before you leave a shopping mall, restaurant or party.
• Stay alert and keep on your guard. Do not expose your credit card or ATM PIN numbers to those around you. If a credit card is lost or stolen or if unusual charges appear on your statement, contact that credit card company or financial institution immediately. The longer you wait the more damage a criminal can do to your credit.

By staying alert, being aware of your surroundings and practicing these personal safety tips, you greatly reduce the crime opportunity. Best wishes to all!
HCAHPS Category: Quietness of the Hospital Environment

“True silence is the rest of the mind; it is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment.” ~William Penn

“Quietness of the Hospital Environment” is one of eight HCAHPS measures hospitals across the country are striving to improve. At UTMB Health, we face unique challenges in this category. Not only have we experienced construction noise throughout the John Sealy Modernization process, but we can expect to continue to experience noise as construction begins on the new Clinical Services Wing and New Jennie Sealy Hospital.

Construction noise peaks during daytime hours. It is very important that we inform our patients upon arrival that they will hear this noise. We should also let them know the construction is a necessary step toward our dedicated efforts to modernize and grow our facilities so that we can offer the best possible patient care in the most comfortable, patient- and family-friendly, state-of-the-art facilities. Please encourage patients to alert staff when the noise becomes bothersome—ear plugs are available through Environmental Services, which can help muffle out sounds. Hospital leadership are also currently exploring additional methods to help patients combat excess noise.

During the evening, as the construction noise subsides, we must continue to be acutely aware of noise levels as patients sleep. While it may seem quiet compared to the sounds of construction, please remember that noises can seem amplified when one is trying to sleep.

Some ideas the Patient Care Facilitators (PCFs) have devised, with the support of the Nurse Managers, to reduce the ambient noise levels in patient care units have included:

- Reducing the audible volume of conversational noise in the inpatient areas by using noise meters
- Placing “Dynamat” sound deadening material on the metal linen carts to reduce resonance
- Keeping shelves on the empty linen carts in the down position when not in use
- Replacing casters on metal linen carts to a pneumatic type that will further reduce noise

Let’s all remember to keep our voices down and to minimize conversation other than what we need to deliver patient care.

Resolute Hospital Billing Team visits Wisconsin for Epic training

On November 15, UTMB Executive Leadership kicked-off UTMB Connect, a high-priority, mission-critical initiative. The project will demand considerable work and attention over the next two years.

Everyone who touches a patient’s record will see their work affected. Those with a vested interest in the project filled the auditorium of Levin Hall South to hear how UTMB Connect will prepare UTMB Health for new, federally mandated documentation and coding requirements needed to bill patients for our services (ICD-10 CM/PCS).

Participants also learned how the new software system will replace all revenue cycle information systems, such as Siemens Invision, Signature and charge automation software.

The meeting consisted of a project description and a demonstration of the system’s capabilities by the Epic team. Meeting materials are available here.

Thank you to everyone who joined us at this important overview and demonstration! And thanks in advance for all of your efforts in the future which will assure this project’s success.

Coming Soon: ICD-10 Coding Tips
Look for news on coding tips in future issues of Fully Connected and on the UTMB Connect website (www.utmb.edu/connect).
Christian Motorcycle Association volunteers
at UTMB during Lone Star Rally

Members of the Christian Motorcycle Association (CMA) volunteered their time at UTMB Health during the weekend of the Lone Star Rally, held November 1-4, 2011. The CMA is a non-profit, interdenominational Christian organization, whose members perform outreach to people primarily, but not exclusively, from the motorcycling community. The volunteers were here from 9 a.m. to 10-11 p.m. each day, Thursday through Saturday and until noon on Sunday, providing spiritual support in the Emergency Room and critical care areas. They were also available to assist in social service needs that applied directly to motorcycle-related occurrences. Volunteers travelled from all over Texas (and one all the way from Montana!) to Galveston for the weekend.

A Visit to the Newborn Nursery and Labor & Delivery Departments

Dr. Mark Kirschbaum, chief quality, safety & clinical information officer, visited the Newborn Nursery and the Labor & Delivery Unit on November 17. We are proud to both these fantastic groups of people on the UTMB team!
Congratulations to Nurse Manager, Neal Clayton

Congratulations to Neal Clayton, who has accepted the nurse manager position for the new Ortho/Trauma unit (7C) and Neuro/Neurosurgery (9C). Neal has been functioning as Patient Care Facilitator for Surgery (8C, previously 9A) for the past eight months.

Maureen Brami, nurse manager, has worked very hard over the past one and a half years over the Surgical Units and done an outstanding job with her assignment. She will remain nurse manager for Surgery (8C) and CT/Vascular Surgery (9A).

Complimentary meals will be provided to employees working on Thanksgiving and Christmas (must present badge).

UTMBHealth.com receives recognition from Strategic Health Care Communications

Congratulations to Business Development & Marketing and Pep Valdes, programming and network services manager, for silver medal recognitions for the UTMB Health web site (utmbhealth.com) by Strategic Health Care Communications for Best Interactive Site, Best Doctor Directory and Best Overall Internet Site.

Not only is the utmbhealth.com web site well organized, looks fantastic and highlights many of the important health care-related events and observations occurring across the institution, but it is the first encounter many of our future patients have with UTMB and is also the means by which our current and future patients, their families and our visitors can gain access to the numerous important services and contacts they may need to have an even more excellent experience at UTMB.

It is an honor for UTMB Health to be recognized among many other outstanding health care organizations for this outstanding achievement. Thank you, Pep, doing such a wonderful job and for making a difference at UTMB Health!

For more details, please visit http://www.strategichealthcare.com/awards/winners.php
“Bonnie Laramore (Institute for Translational Science) showed exceptional skill in handling a challenging day full of long blood drawings. She did an outstanding job helping me with a complicated discharge process.”

“Dr. Kristene Gugliuzza and Dr. Thomas (General Surgery) were extremely attentive to my care. They both demonstrated a great deal of concern for my well being. I appreciate their thoroughness. They explained everything in terms that I could understand.”

“Jackie Stout (Gyn Oncology) was great, very helpful, uplifting and made me feel positive.”

“Jason Ziegler on the 9th floor (Transplant) was very professional and extremely attentive to my husband, also. Ryan Benedicto was great.”

“Linda Giamalva (Gyn Oncology) was great. She was very helpful on my last day in helping me throughout the discharge process.”

“Mona Ott (Ob/Gyn - Midwifery – SOM) helped me feel very comfortable. She was an excellent midwife.”

Congratulations to everyone who helped make the move of the CT/Vascular Unit from 9B to 9A a successful one!

We hope all of our patients have an experience like this one!

“The service that I received in your Family Medicine Clinic was far more that I could ever have expected. I have been in health care for more than 20 years and have not experienced the level of care that I received at UTMB! I get so filled with happiness that I tear up when I think about my experience.

My experience began in the parking lot with a woman named Cindy Jones (Transportation). It was a rainy day and Cindy was helping with directions because of the construction. She was so cheery, friendly and helpful. I told her it was my first time there and she made me feel very safe and comfortable. She assured me that I would receive great treatment and would love the doctors.

Even though I was in pain, I relaxed. Once inside the clinic, Renee and Donna Singleton (Patient Services Specialists), at the front desk, blew my mind. They were very personable and friendly and even provided their names, which is a rarity.

From that point on, each person that I encountered, nurses and doctors alike, wore friendly smiles and took the time to speak to me. I was in a great deal of pain, yet I noticed and still remember each and every one of them. First impressions really are lasting ones!

Dr. Hanan Hussein (Family Medicine) was amazing. She was patient and took great care of me! I am thrilled that she took the time to look at the “whole person” and not just my injury.

Your “MyChart” system is wonderful. Being able to see my results online and communicate with the staff including the physician on line and actually get a quick response from them was amazing!

Today with all of the talk about how poor health care is, your organization has proven that the community does not have to worry about access to great health care! Although where I live it is very easy for me to access health care, from now on I will gladly drive 50 miles to UTMB for the very best care and treatment.

I have become a UTMB Ambassador and will spread the word! Kudos to all of you!

“I wanted to let you know that the Emergency Room staff at every level provided seamless compassionate care to my father-in-law last weekend. Despite the multitude of motorcycle accidents and traumas coming into the ER, every person who met with us or treated my father-in-law was absolutely incredible!

Wanda Taylor, Nancy Theriault, Catrena Hughes, Dr. Brent Vasut and Dr. Robyn Crowell were especially pleasant, knowledgeable, efficient and compassionate. The transition of my father-in-law to the ACE Unit was also easy.

My in-laws reside in Fort Worth and were in town visiting. They were very impressed with the care and facilities at every level. They were given very clear instructions as well as excellent documentation for my father-in-law’s primary care physician. All bases were covered, and I was comfortable sending them back to Fort Worth knowing that they received such high quality comprehensive care here.

We truly couldn’t have asked for a better experience for them!”

“I recently had a baby and Dr. Christine Abair performed the delivery. I just wanted to write to you to let you know that she did a phenomenal job and I think she should be recognized for it. She went above and beyond for me as her patient. This was my first pregnancy and I was terrified, but having her as a doctor eased my fears. I went through three other doctors during my pregnancy because I just couldn’t seem to find a doctor that I liked. When I met Dr. Abair, I knew she was the best doctor for me. Doctors like her make a challenging experience like pregnancy more enjoyable. I would recommend her to anyone who is looking for an OB. I can’t imagine having another doctor. The entire UTMB team did an excellent job and treated me so well!”