Early efforts to use evidence-based medicine as a way of creating better health care were often referred to as Pay for Performance programs or “P4P”. These types of programs are now referred to as Value-Based Purchasing programs (VBP)—most notably by CMS.

Value-based purchasing is a new way of paying hospitals and other providers. They will be given incentive payments based upon their performance against quality measures. Value-based purchasing brings together information on the quality of health care, including patient outcomes and health status, and uses the health system’s performance to determine if they will earn the payment.

In calculating a VBP score for each hospital, CMS wants hospitals to exhibit a high and consistent performance. Originally, HCAHPS was optional, then it became mandatory, next we began receiving payment for reporting, and now starting in Federal Fiscal Year 2013 (October 1, 2012), we will be paid for how well we perform (www.hcahps.org). CMS will use data from two 9-month periods in FY2009 and FY2010 to calculate a hospital’s reimbursement for FY2013.

For FY2013, CMS has proposed to hold back 1% of hospital payments (for UTMB Health, this equals more than $700,000 at risk in this first year alone, climbing up to $2 million in four years). Hospitals can then “earn back” their payment at an incentive rate determined by the percentile ranking of their total VBP score. The total VBP score will be based on a hospital’s scores from the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey (which will account for 30% of the VBP score) as well as its scores from the 17 clinical process of care measures that have been identified for inclusion in the Value Based Purchasing program (which will account for 70% of the VBP score). In FY 2014: outcome measures will be added.

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CMS has indicated that hospitals scoring at or above the 50th percentile in terms of their overall VBP score are likely to earn back their percentage from the value-based purchasing program. These hospitals will be positively rewarded based on their strong performance relative to other hospitals.

On the other hand, hospitals that have a total VBP score that is below the 50th percentile will experience a drop in their CMS reimbursement rate. It is the intent of CMS to make Value Based Purchasing a budget neutral government program, so CMS will not pay out more money to hospitals than it would normally pay. Rather, the money will be redistributed from lower performers to those who achieve higher scores. That is why it is so important for UTMB Health to perform well.

Given this, one of the first objectives for every hospital should be to make sure they are at or above the 50th percentile on 8 HCAHPS themes:

- Communication with nurses
- Communication with physicians
- Responsiveness of hospital staff
- Pain management
- Communication about medicines
- Discharge information
- Cleanliness/quietness of hospital
- Overall hospital rating

This will assure that they receive all 20 “consistency” points from CMS. To earn the remaining 80 points, CMS will look at each theme individually and assign it either “attainment” or “improvement” points—whichever is greater.

CMS will also compare a hospital’s current performance (based on patients discharged from July 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012) to their baseline performance two years ago (based on patients discharged from July 1, 2009 – March 31, 2010).

**What can you do?**

In order to meet the requirements of HCAHPS as a minimum standard, we must achieve consistency at several levels:

- Treat every patient you encounter the way you want your family treated. Do this every day!
- Be consistent in how you deliver care and service to patients.
- To keep patients safe, follow policies to ensure safe care.
- Be consistent in how you hand work off to another person or department in the Health System. All work affects patient care!

**What are HCAHPS?**

The HCAHPS (Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems) survey is the first national, standardized, publicly reported survey of patients’ perspectives of hospital care. HCAHPS (pronounced “H-caps”), also known as the CAHPS® Hospital Survey, is a survey for measuring patients’ satisfaction with their hospital experience. While many hospitals have collected information on patient satisfaction for their own internal use, until HCAHPS there was no national standard for collecting and publicly reporting information about patient satisfaction with care that allowed valid comparisons to be made across hospitals locally, regionally and nationally.

A few of our employees worked collaboratively to collect a $42,000 payment last Monday for an upcoming surgery. This scenario started out as a request for casebook consideration and due to the case complexity, it involved three of our areas (Financial Counseling, Estimates and DSU Planning). Kudos to the following individuals:

- **Karina Garcia** in the Financial Counseling Office did a wonderful job financially screening the patient and assessing their ability to pay.
- **Anita Galicia** in Day Surgery Planning played a crucial role in performing the registration, coordination between the patient, the estimate team, the medical team, the Financial Counseling Office and for collecting the payment.
- **Linda Gamble**, also in Day Surgery Planning, helped keep everything moving in Anita’s absence.
- **Kerrie Pierce** and **Monika Bury** from the Estimate Team did an excellent job generating the estimate. Although they have both been under a great deal of pressure lately to provide complex estimates not yet found in TechPro, our cost estimating software, they continue to do great work!

These efforts are just one example of the positive contributions to the revenue cycle that the entire Registration, Eligibility & Precertification teams are making each day. You all have a great deal on your plates with many competing priorities and under very tight timelines. This scenario would not have been possible without the collaboration and support of the collective teams. Thank you all for the roles you play each day, please keep up the great work!
New! Online Guest and Visitors Guide

By Ben Dzialo, Health System Operations Manager

Patients are not our only guests at UTMB Health. When a loved one becomes sick or injured, the entire family is affected. As UTMB strives to provide the most excellent patient experience, we must not forget the needs of the patient’s family—or any other visitor to our campus. These needs are varied and can distract families from fully focusing their love and support on the patient.

The new online Guest and Visitors Guide helps UTMB Health staff member to act as a concierge to patients’ families. It provides quick links to directions in and around campus, dining, lodging (there are even special deals for UTMB guests), and ways to pass the time. By freeing our guests’ minds of these trivial but necessary issues, we allow them focus on our patients, fostering a speedier recovery and higher satisfaction with the stay.

Please visit the Guest and Visitors Guide at www.utmbhealth.com/visitor and explore general information and entertainment for our non-patient guests. Who knows? Perhaps you’ll even find a new a new restaurant or activity for yourself!

Sports Physicals at UTMB Health’s Specialty Care Center at Victory Lakes

On Saturday, July 23, 2011, 106 UTMB medical experts volunteered their time during a special community outreach event to offer local families, school districts, and athletic programs students pre-participation sports physicals. UTMB Health’s Specialty Care Center at Victory Lakes hosted the event to provide nearly 120 student physicals! A very special thank you to all of the volunteers who helped make the event a success!

Check out more photos on UTMB’s Flickr page!

Donna Sollenberger Visits Environmental Services

Donna Sollenberger, executive vice president and chief executive officer of the UTMB Health System, recently joined Jason Botkin, director of environmental services, and Dave Ketchens, associate vice president of property services, to visit employees of Environmental Services. The department was recently recognized for receiving Patient Satisfaction Scores above the 95th percentile for May 2011 and June 2011. These employees received many wonderful compliments from patients and their families, and it was a pleasure to visit them on the job!

Among the many initiatives the Environmental Services team has implemented include:

• Towel Animals for patient and visitors
• SWARM cleaning (employees, supervisors and managers meet for 30 minutes on 4 units and clean patient rooms by removing trash, refreshing the rest rooms and interacting with patients)
• Free Amenity kits for patients that include shampoo, conditioner and lotion
• Picture Perfect Room reference manual
• Video Role Playing Training for front line employees
• Toilet Seat Strip Sanitizer

Housekeepers’ name is written on a dry erase board and pose questions like, “your room has been professionally sanitized today, is there anything else I can clean for you?”

Donna Sollenberger and Bessie Martinez

Donna Sollenberger and Denetra Lynn Smith

Donna Sollenberger and Nick Lazaro

Maria Soto, Donna Sollenberger and Maria Fernandez
“My recent visit to the Specialty Care Center at Victory Lakes was just as expected. I have always had a positive visit with the greeters, and the registration desk. Parking is so easy. I visited the Lab where I had a Carotid Doppler test that was requested by ENT. The technician was friendly and knowledgeable. I was very impressed by the procedure that was explained to me by the tech who did the procedure. I always look forward to my visits to Victory Lakes because I know that I will always receive the best service and will be completely taken care of by the staff.”

“For the past 10 months, I have been coming to John Sealy Hospital for pulmonary rehab twice a week. I have COPD and have deteriorated to the point of being attached to oxygen full time. I cannot get up to rehab without being wheeled up by your transportation people. You have an outstanding person out front—Petra Benavides. She knows the whole hospital and knows how to get everywhere. She’s always cheerful and always careful with her patients. She is friendly, quick, smart and always has a big smile. She makes everyone around her feel welcome and well cared for. Coming to UTMB is not a fun thing, but I always look forward to seeing Petra.”

A patient felt as though the nursing staff of 7B really went above and beyond to ensure he was comforted and well cared for. He asked to be sure that all of the employees, especially the nursing staff of 7B, knew how sincerely they were appreciated. “They were very kind, knowledgeable and explained all my procedures.”

“The Specialty Care Center at Victory Lakes indeed exceeded my expectations. I love going to this modern and clean facility and I have a couple more follow-up appointments with Dr. Killewich and her staff. When I entered in the front door, I knew the police officer and was greeted by him, and with the professional and friendly staff of Ken O. at the front desk; Ashley, clinic receptionist; clinician Erika V.; and Jeanne in the vascular lab. They made me feel relaxed, the only discomfort was the ultrasound on my legs, but this is due to my poor veins and not the machine! Thank you and I look forward to getting the vein procedure completed with Dr. Killewich and her staff.”

“On July 20, I was scheduled for an urgent colonoscopy and bronchoscopy...My husband was out of town attending to his failing father. I was one scared puppy, but it was Kinsey Medina, RN, with her kindness and attention to me as a human being, and not just a series of intestines, who addressed my fear and calmed me. Once the procedure was underway, both Kinsey and Mellissa Diaz were the ‘angels of mercy’ about which one hears...Without their gentleness and skill, it would have been a much more harrowing experience.”

“Following a fall Wednesday, I brought my son to the ER and he was then admitted to 6C. Both departments gave us exceptional care—exactly what you hope to receive as a patient and exactly what administration hopes is being achieved. In the ER, we had Emily Escamilla and Ryan on day shift and then Chad Connally and Katie Preston on nights. All four were fabulous with my son- very patient, compassionate, funny, and kind! When we were being discharged the following day, my son asked if we could “go find Chad” to tell him ‘Thank you!’ That is very impressive from a nine year old who had to get an IV. When we were transferred to the floor, the GREAT care continued with Josephine Edwards! She also was very compassionate and played with him to make him more comfortable.”

Nick Lazaro and Maria Roque from Environmental Services have received numerous compliments. Thank you for being wonderful assets to UTMB Health!

Also mentioned: Erika Zamora, Mark Rosenfelder, Brenna Brown, Emma Davis, Sandra O’Neal, Deanna Walmsley, Eric Bieber, Ruth Soulsby-Monroy, Rachel Murphy, Gloria Decker, Dr. Eric Hustak and Dr. Daniel Beckers