The nation's opioid crisis has played a key role in the rise in fatal drug overdoses which now far surpass motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of injury death in the United States. University Hospital is now taking part in a federal strategy to gain control over the crisis and reduce opioid addiction and deaths.

The Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey that patients are asked to complete following their hospital stay was changed starting in January with regards to pain management. Hospitals, providers and anesthesiologists had expressed concern that the previous wording of the survey questions could have encouraged inappropriate prescribing of opioids.

"With the opiate crisis, we've all had to look in healthcare at how we manage pain, how we speak to patients about pain," said Chief Experience Officer Joan Dauhajre. "We were asking questions of the patients about their pain that would encourage prescribing more pain medication. Now we're not looking so much at how much pain medication you get, but about the communication you get regarding your pain management."

For example, patients previously were asked on the HCAHPS survey: "During this hospital stay, how often did pain management and current processes for addressing pain are under review. In addition, a page will be added to the Patient Welcome page addressing acute and chronic pain and the different methods used at UH to address pain management.

“With the opiate crisis, we've all had to look in healthcare at how we manage pain, how we speak to patients about pain.”

—Chief Experience Officer Joan Dauhajre

Putting Patients First

Each month we feature news from the chief experience officers. This month we look at our efforts in helping to fight the nation’s opioid crisis.

Staff training at UH is being developed to address patient communication and current processes for addressing pain are under review. In addition, a page will be added to the Patient Welcome page addressing acute and chronic pain and the different methods used at UH to address pain management.

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Honoring Our Employees

The most valuable resource for any successful organization is its people. This is particularly true in healthcare where every day we touch the lives of people who entrust us with their care. While a simple “thank you” goes far, it is important that we do more as an organization to show our appreciation.

On this month’s cover: UH employees joined CEO and President John N. Kastanis, MBA, FACHE, on February 2 to celebrate National Wear Red Day to help raise awareness around the prevalence of cardiac disease among women.

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John N. Kastanis, MBA, FACHE
President and CEO
University Hospital

With Kind Regards,

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President and CEO
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"Will be empowering patients with how to view their pain and how to take care of their pain without pain medication,” Dauhajre said. The use of pain medication will continue, she noted, but patients will be more aware of alternative options.

In a 2016 report, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) noted that opioids, including prescription opioids and illicit opioids such as heroin, killed more than 33,000 people in 2015 – the highest number in recorded history.

“The number of opioid prescriptions written each year has quadrupled in less than two decades, yet pain reported by Americans has not changed during that time period,” CMS reported. "Now, after two decades of increasing prescriptions, nearly two million people suffer from prescription opioid use disorder.”

CMS went on to report that the Medicare population has among the highest and fastest-growing rates of diagnosed opioid use disorders, currently at more than 6 of every 1,000 beneficiaries. "For Medicaid beneficiaries, the prevalence of diagnosed opioid use disorder is even higher, at 8.7 per 1,000, a figure estimated to be over 10 times higher than in populations who receive coverage under private insurance companies,” the report noted.

CMS warned that the actual prevalence is probably higher because there is no systematic policy in place to screen for opioid use disorder and patients are unlikely to volunteer they are misusing prescribed opioids.

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UH Shows You The Money

Employees will soon be eligible for cash awards ranging from $100 to $2,000 each if they propose changes in operating procedures that save the hospital money or bring in additional revenue.

Called the Value Innovation Partnership Program (VIPP), the new initiative is designed to dovetail with efforts underway by the Project Management Office to work with each unit in the hospital to operate more efficiently.

“This is really at its core a partnership, or gain-share, for employees who suggest ideas to the hospital that yield for the hospital,” said Ralph Iadarola, MBA, Executive Director for Healthcare Finance. “In return, they get a piece of the action.”

Employees, either individually or acting in a team, can submit their ideas using forms found on UH Net or in communications boxes placed around the hospital. An evaluation committee consisting of representatives from Finance, Administration and Operations will evaluate the ideas and decide which ones to implement.

If the idea is saving money or increasing revenues the employees or team who suggested it will be eligible for a cash reward. The rewards will be based on a scale (see chart below). Iadarola said the VIPP initiative was utilized at Temple University Hospital which generated millions of dollars annually in financial improvement.

Critical to the program’s success will be close communication with employees who make suggestions throughout the approval and implementation process, Iadarola said.

“We don’t want people walking around saying, you know I gave Ralph one of those pieces of paper and I never heard from him again,” he said. “We’ve structured it in such a way that employees will be kept informed throughout.”

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Two new initiatives focused on recognizing UH employees have been launched by Human Resources and the Foundation for University Hospital.

The Foundation has begun a “My Hospital Hero” program that enables patients and colleagues to honor staff with a donation. The minimum donation is $25; for gifts over $1,000 or multiple recognitions, the employee will receive special acknowledgment.

Thus far, 17 employees have been honored as “Heroes.”

Greg Sugalski, MD, Medical Director of Emergency Services, honored Jacqueline Sewell, a housekeeper in the ED, for doing such a great job cleaning the Emergency Department and always smiling about it.

The next day, Mary Beth Lav, Director of Hospital Clinical Systems, honored Dr. Sugalski for the emergency care he provided a family member.

Chief Experience Officer Jean Daushaje has honored three Heroes in the Emergency Department—Hasaan Ayyala, a Supervising Advanced Practical Nurse; Gina DeFrancesco; and Adam Kenney, MD.

Sugalski’s idea was to suggest new initiatives to work with frontline employees for improving processes. Whereas managers tend to be aware of some operating problems, frontline employees are often on the front lines and can identify all problems based on their day-to-day work experience.

Training will soon be offered throughout the hospital on “Lean” management techniques.

 Hearts and Heroes

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The heart of the program created by the Human Resources Department offers an online peer-to-peer platform to publicly acknowledge special achievements or milestones by employees. In addition, the Quarterly Employee Recognition program enables employees to nominate their colleagues for outstanding patient care or service excellence. TEAM awards are also included for departments or teams of employees.

Individual award winners will receive a trophy, $100 gift cards, lunch with President and CEO John N. Kastanis, MBA, FACHE, and eligibility to win the annual President’s Award. Winning TEAM members will each receive $50 gift cards, personalized zip up fleece jackets and participation in the CEO lunch. A TEAM trophy will be presented.

To be nominated for the TEAM Award, employees have to have achieved a significant increase in patient experience scores or clinical outcomes; earned a team award or grant; or, implemented a cost or time-saving change in their operations.

For Outstanding Patient Care, nominees need to meet nine criteria, including a record of exceeding performance standards by achieving scores of 4 or 5 in the last two performance years. The Outstanding Service Excellence Award is for non-clinical employees who also satisfy nine criteria, including achieving 4 or 5 overall scores during their two most recent performance years.

Details about the Human Resources programs and nomination forms are available on UH Net.
Spreading Cheer
TO END THE YEAR

Last year came to an eventful conclusion at UH with a festive holiday party for employees in the Garden Café, a visit with Santa for our youngest patients aboard United’s Fantasy Flight to the North Pole, and meals served to the homeless at Harmony House by the hospital’s executive staff.

Hundreds of hospital employees took part in the holiday party which included refreshments, holiday-themed activities and gift baskets.

EMS volunteers once again took the lead representing University Hospital at the annual Fantasy Flight hosted by United Airlines at Newark Liberty International Airport. Young patients hospitalized at UH and other Newark hospitals boarded a one-hour “Flight to the North Pole” and were greeted by Santa upon landing.

Just before Christmas, President and CEO John N. Kastanis, MBA, FACHE, led the executive leadership team to Harmony House to serve holiday meals to the homeless.
Bridging the Gap Between IT and Nursing

The switch from handwritten to electronic medical records (EHR) has been a key advancement in healthcare. But, to be a success, the evolution to EHR requires IT and medical staff to understand and clearly communicate with each other.

That’s where the Nursing Informatics Steering Council comes into play at UH. “We support the system for new upgrades, new implementation, any changes in the Epic EHR system, and specifically those changes that affect nurses,” said Marthe Leveille, RN, who cochairs the council with Ann Forbes, RN, the chair. “We serve as the liaison between the clinical areas and the Information Technology team, and integrate ancillary departments such as Pharmacy, Laboratory, Blood Bank, Respiratory, Therapies and Nutrition.”

Leveille said every level of care (ICUs, Med/Surg, ED, and Family Health) is represented on the committee with representatives who serve as the voice for frontline nurses.

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Once implemented, EHR changes are monitored by communicating with frontline nurses. For 2018, the committee wants to expand its membership to include representatives from every nursing unit, participate in the implementation of device integration to help intensive care nurses document vital signs, and update templates for patient care and education to insure they meet current evidence-based guidelines.

Nurse Practitioners Present at Houston Conference

Two UH nurse practitioners presented at a clinical excellence conference in Houston hosted by the National Association of Indian Nurses of America (NAINA). Molly Jacob, MSN, APRN, ANP-C, CCRN, an Advance Practice Nurse/Stroke Coordinator, presented on “Stroke Facts and Updates.” Lydia Albuquerque, DNP, RN-BC, ACNP-BC, CCRN, a Nurse Practitioner with the heart failure program, presented on “What’s New, What’s Next: Reducing Hospital Readmissions.”

Albuquerque served as the conference planning committee chair and Rachel Kosty, DNP, RN-BC, APN-C, served as the editor of the NAINA Journal that was released at the conference, titled “Advancing Health Through Excellence in Clinical Practice.” Over 200 nurses attended the conference.

Also during the conference, Bindu Jacob, BSN, RN, a staff nurse on H-Yellow, was awarded first prize for her poster titled “Utilizing bed alarms to reduce falls among patient on a medical surgical unit.” Jacob is a fellow in the Minority Nurse Leader Institute, sponsored by the Rutgers School of Nursing.

Maternal Health Awareness Day Comes to UH

New Jersey observed the first statewide Maternal Health Awareness Day on January 23 with presentations for patients and physicians by our Obstetrics, Gynecology and Women’s Health Team.

“The objective is to increase maternal health awareness for all residents of the state including providers of women’s healthcare services, the general public, legislators, insurance company executives and other interested parties,” said Joseph Apuzzo, MD, who chairs the New Jersey Maternal Mortality Review Committee.

“It was apparent from our discussions at the committee meetings that our detailed reports which included recommendations and suggested improvements for the more common pregnancy-related maternal death issues often went unacted upon,” he said.

The event was initiated by the Tara Hansen Foundation which was founded in honor of a 29-year-old woman who died shortly after giving birth to her first child when her postpartum complications were not identified. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, maternal mortality rates nationally jumped 56 percent between 1993 and 2013.

The awareness campaign is called “Stop, Look and Listen!” to proactively help women and their families by empowering the mother’s voice throughout the birth process.

Apuzzo and Lisa Gittens-Williams, MD, provided educational presentations for patients and for physicians.

Police Honor Trauma With Donation

On January 12, 2000, Police Officer Kenneth McGuire was critically injured in a gun battle and transported to the New Jersey Trauma Center at University Hospital. He was treated by Anne Mosenthal, MD, who saved his life and now, every year on January 12, he returns to UH to deliver flowers to Dr. Mosenthal.

This year, McGuire brought more than flowers. As president of the non-profit National Law Enforcement Associates, McGuire got to select a charity meaningful to him and chose The Trauma Survivorship Program/Foundation for University Hospital to make a $1,500 contribution.

Now working in homeland security, McGuire spoke of the care he received at the trauma center during the organization’s annual meeting in New York before 400 members. Former NY Giants football great George Martin was the guest speaker.

“While I was a patient at University Hospital, I received the best care for my injuries,” said McGuire. “It was after I was discharged that it became very clear that without a support system, I was going to have a really hard time because I was still very sick and weak.”

Caring for trauma survivors following their release requires frequent doctor visits and physical therapy, which can be a burden on loved ones. “The Trauma Survivorship Program will be real help for real people going through the after-effects of a traumatic injury,” he said.
Newark Mayor Visits UH

Newark Mayor Ras Baraka met with President and CEO John N. Kastanis, MBA, FACHE to discuss his “Newark 2020” initiative. After his visit, the mayor met with three Newark residents who were hired by UH through his Hire Newark program.

A goal of Newark 2020 is to connect 2,020 unemployed residents to well-paying jobs by the year 2020, halving the unemployment gap between Newark and New Jersey. The program is designed to ensure that Newark residents are competitive candidates for employment and that they receive fair consideration for positions that become available.

UH took part in the inaugural graduation ceremony last summer for the Hire Newark Employment Ready Boot Camp, a five-week job readiness program. Three of the graduates hired by UH (left to right) Craig Volius, Environmental Services; Shaniquah Borders, Data Control Clerk II, and Kellie Muhammad, Ambulatory Care Technician, met with Mayor Baraka and Mr. Kastanis.

Empowering Our Community

Ana Padilla, a Patient Navigator, was presented with the 2017 Volunteer of the Year Award by President and CEO, John N. Kastanis, MBA, FACHE, for her work with the UH patient community. Padilla provides diabetes and fall prevention education to the community.

“Everyone who knows Ana is immediately touched by her genuine concern for everyone around her,” Kastanis said. “She exemplifies all that is great about our hospital — caring, compassionate and always willing to help.”

Padilla started working at UH in March 2005, and was named to her present position in November 2015. Ana has held several positions here at the Hospital. She began in her present role as a Patient Navigator in November 2015. Between 2016 and 2017, Padilla volunteered for more than 22 community outreach events at churches, nursing homes, concerts, schools, and health centers. She has been involved with feeding families at local holiday dinners and instrumental in the planning for UH’s participation in Newark’s annual Puerto Rican Day Parade.

Christmas Present

At 1:39 am on Christmas morning, Whitnys Richardson received a special present in the form of a new son, Luis Suero, born at 7 pounds, 13 ounces and 20.5 inches long. Welcoming Luis to the world with a basket of baby goodies were RNs (left to right): Craig Volius, Environmental Services; Shaniquah Borders, Data Control Clerk II, and Kellie Muhammad, Ambulatory Care Technician, met with Mayor Baraka and Mr. Kastanis.

UH Signs Up For ‘Eighty By 2018’ Colorectal Cancer Screening

University Hospital has joined a campaign to increase screening for colorectal cancer in 2018, setting a target of screening 80 percent of male and female patients aged 50 years or older. UH joins the Rutgers Cancer of New Jersey and Rutgers Health in the campaign, which is sponsored by the American Cancer Society (ACS).

“We are proud to partner with the American Cancer Society and Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey to increase the awareness and access to colorectal cancer screening,” said President and CEO John N. Kastanis, MBA, FACHE. “Through our partnership with Rutgers’ Cancer Institute of New Jersey, our community has access to state of the art cancer care.”

With proper screening, doctors can find and remove growths, or polyps, hidden in the colon before they become cancerous. The ACS recommends first-time screening for men and women beginning at age 50. Appropriate screening intervals should then be discussed by the patient with their health professional based on age, health history and family history of the disease. Those with a family history of the disease may be encouraged to start a screening regimen at a younger age.

According to the ACS, the percentage of adults 50 and older who are up to date with recommended colorectal cancer screening has increased nationally from 56 percent in 2002 to 65 percent in 2010. By focusing on target audiences, including the newly insured, financially challenged, African Americans, and Hispanics, UH will work towards an 80 percent goal of patients screened during 2018.

“We need to increase the rates of screening to have a true impact on colorectal cancer outcomes,” Kastanis said. “We are committed to this pledge, and we look forward to continuing our efforts to raise awareness about the importance colorectal cancer screening.”

Kastanis Honors 2017 Volunteer of the Year

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“Whether she is providing diabetes education to our community using her signature Sweet Talk Program, or educating a group of seniors on Falls Prevention, Ana makes sure that our community is empowered with information that will equip them to live healthier lives,” said Sara Peña, MPA, Senior Community Outreach Coordinator.

Gladys Martinez, Monica Hanna, and Alejandrina Canelo-Villafana challenged the seniors at the New Community Corporation senior building to a game of Jeopardy. This was part of their presentation on the Smoking Cessation Program at UH and resulted in several enrollments.

Padilla pictured with a child.

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Each issue we will save the last page for something that is of special interest to everyone. With the launch of the My Hospital Hero employee recognition program, we honor four of the winners here…

Gina DeFrancesco
Emergency Department
Chief Experience Officer Joan Dauhajre honored Gina for providing excellent care.

Kienast White
Secretary II, IT
Kienast was honored by Joan Neugebauer, Director of Hospital Administrative Services, for “being a superstar in IT.”

Hassan Ayyash
Supervising Advanced Practice Nurse, Emergency Department
Hassan was honored by Chief Experience Officer Joan Dauhajre for providing excellent care.

Jacqueline Sewell
Environmental Services
Dr. Greg Sugalski honored Jacqueline for cleaning the Emergency Department and “always smiling.”