

MERCY SPIRIT

Surviving and Thriving in Tough Economic Times

\$50 Million+

System-wide value of improvement plans and co-worker generated ideas to reduce costs and produce additional revenues in FY '09



600+

Number of ideas submitted by Mercy co-workers to reduce costs or increase revenue

Being thoughtful, creative stewards of our talents and resources is a big part of what makes us "Mercy."

It is tightly woven into the fabric of our history and success as a health ministry. For Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, making the most of every dollar while ministering to Dublin's poor and sick was no doubt a daily challenge.

Today, the world and the work we do are different, but the "why," and in many ways the "how," remain the same. They are a core part of who we are as the Sisters of Mercy Health System (Mercy). Then and now, we must be mindful of how we use the financial, material and human resources available to us in each task we perform and every decision we make. Under the best of conditions, this is no easy task. Add a historic economic downturn and the challenge becomes

incredibly daunting. However, Mercy co-workers, physicians, volunteers, board members and others have risen to the occasion, displaying resilience and ingenuity.

"I have heard many stories and creative ideas from co-workers across our ministry who are working hard to identify and implement cost-saving opportunities," said Lynn Britton, Mercy president and CEO. "Everyday they are looking for new ways to help Mercy weather this economic storm."

As an example, Britton pointed to the many formalized suggestion programs being implemented across the System. These programs are tapping the creativity and know-how of Mercy co-workers to produce hundreds of ideas, saving or generating millions of dollars.

"Mercy is stronger financially than most healthcare organizations," Britton said. "With the support of these co-worker-led efforts, I have no doubt we will emerge from this economic downturn even stronger and better able to meet the needs of our communities."

This special section of the *Mercy* newsletter is dedicated to celebrating the can-do spirit and tenacity that is present throughout Mercy. It highlights just a very small sample of the tremendous work underway to provide exceptional care and service to our customers while reducing costs and strengthening revenues. Some ideas are large, some are small, but all are "making a difference."



Renee Williams, health information management director (left), and Doug Ross, MD, medical director of the Emergency Department, are working together to improve chart coding that will lead to additional revenues.

ST. JOSEPH'S MERCY HEALTH SYSTEM

Teamwork Breaks the Code on Maximizing ED Reimbursements

Thanks to a new process introduced by health information management coders at St. Joseph's Mercy Health Center in Hot Springs, Ark., physicians in the Emergency Department (ED) have gained more than \$10,000 in lost reimbursement in just three months.

"Due to a lack of documentation, our ED physicians were losing thousands of potential reimbursement dollars from Medicaid, Medicare and private insurance companies," said Doug Ross, MD, ED

medical director for St. Joseph's Mercy. "Sometimes a single word missing on a chart would prevent us from receiving the maximum amount."

To remedy the situation, Dr. Ross worked with Health Information Director Renee Williams to implement a plan where ED coders would help identify potential documentation errors and omissions. When deficiencies are discovered, the coders inform the ED doctors, who in turn make the necessary adjustments. This new coding process has made ED physicians more aware of documentation guidelines,

which promises to help capture other appropriate and often overlooked reimbursement dollars in the future.

"The ED doctors now meet with the coding team once a month to target areas of documentation that need improvement. I have been very pleased with their commitment to this initiative," Dr. Ross added. "They have seen the value and are making the necessary corrections and adjustments. There are now many more eyes and ears to catch potential mistakes and improve our documentation." •

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\$10,000

Revenue gained in three months after correcting simple coding omissions.