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MERCY

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Around the System

The Sisters of Mercy Health System (Mercy) has reached the halfway mark in Epic hospital go-lives, with the July 19 launch of the electronic health record (EHR) system at St. John's Mercy Hospital in Washington, Mo. Five Mercy hospitals now are live on Epic, with five to go. Nearly 10,000 Mercy co-workers and physicians are using Epic each day, and that number will quickly grow by another 6,500 when St. John's Mercy Medical Center in St. Louis goes live on Epic in August.

Focusing on "one patient, one record," the Epic system creates a single, complete and continuously updated electronic record for each patient. It also provides clinicians and other co-workers with a wide range of interconnected computerized tools to document patient care, place orders for medications and tests, record and review results, and handle scheduling and billing activities.

Even though it was the fifth hospital implementation, the Epic go-live at St. John's Mercy Hospital was a first for Mercy. For the very first time, Mercy managed the installation of the

system on its own, start-to-finish, with virtually no assistance from Epic, the software vendor.

"It was a total team effort," said Terri McLain, president of St. John's Mercy Hospital. "Our co-workers and physicians were well-prepared and ready to go, and Mercy's Genesis-Epic team was great. But I want to especially thank the more than 200 Mercy co-workers and physicians who traveled to Washington from other locations to help make our go-live such a success."

Physician Offices On-board

Concurrent with hospitals going live on Epic, more than 1,200 Mercy physicians and mid-level providers are using the Epic system in offices, clinics and urgent care centers across the System. This phase of the Epic project, which began in January 2008 and includes the vast majority of Mercy's integrated physicians, is scheduled to be completed this September. Some additional Mercy providers, such as those in Fort Smith, Ark., will go live concurrently with their associated hospital next year.

"As we implement Epic in physician offices, we're continually working hand-in-hand with the



On the first day of go-live, Diana Luechtefeld, RN, works with the Epic system in the nursery of St. John's Mercy Hospital in Washington, Mo.

hospital teams to make sure the system functions smoothly as providers go back and forth between the hospital and their offices," said Alice Lord, vice president for Epic ambulatory clinical/practice management. "That is the real benefit of the Epic system. A patient's single electronic record is readily available no matter where the patient is seen – at the office, hospital or an emergency room."

Lord reports that for the most part physicians have responded well to Epic. Some, particularly those who were not strong computer users, were skeptical or resistant at first. But once they began using the system and got over the initial learning curve, most have become advocates for the system. Mercy physicians in more rural locations report high levels of satisfaction with Epic, she added. They now have data at their fingertips that before took a lot of time and many phone calls, letters and faxes to obtain.

"I never thought I'd say this, but I really like Epic now," said Mickey Crittenden, MD, a pediatrician with Mercy Health Edmond Memorial, part of Mercy Health Network in Oklahoma. "When Epic first was introduced, I was concerned that the number of patients I could see would drop dramatically and I would be spending too much time after hours on the computer. However, I was up to normal patient volumes fairly quickly and I soon was able to finish with my charts within 20 or 30 minutes after my last patient. Now that I am used to the system, I make finishing my documentation and closing the chart a priority while I'm still in the examining room."

Online Access for Patients

This past March, Mercy took the next step in using Epic by giving patients access to a portion of their electronic health record online, similar to how consumers use personal computers to manage banking and other services. In addition to seeing their medical history, the application allows patients to receive test results, make appointments and communicate with their physicians online. Mercy is working on developing its own name for

Hot Springs Child Advocacy Center Continues Legacy of Healing

Child abuse is a topic few people want to think about, much less talk about. But it is a stark reality in far too many families, and when this tragic situation occurs, they often do not know where to turn or what resources are available to them. Thanks to the heritage of healing begun by Sisters of Mercy foundress Catherine McAuley, residents of Hot Springs, Garland and several surrounding counties in Arkansas have a refuge in which victimized children may find help.

The Cooper-Anthony Mercy Child Advocacy Center, named after a donor and her mother, was founded in 2003 after Garland County was ranked among the state of Arkansas' top three counties for filings of child maltreatment reports. For Patrick McCrudden, executive vice president of mission and ethics at St. Joseph's Mercy Health Center, and other hospital and community members, this grim revelation was an opportunity to right an incomprehensible wrong.

"As we became aware of the significant increase in sex abuse cases and child predation in our communities, we realized that a resource center like this would be vital to our community," said McCrudden, who helped lead the effort to open the child advocacy center.

As Arkansas' first and only hospital-based child advocacy center, the Cooper-Anthony Mercy Child Advocacy Center provides a safe haven for children who are victims of abuse and neglect. Victims have access to a wide range of services, including forensic interviews, medical evaluations, victim support, advocacy and case review and tracking, all under one roof and at no cost to the families.

Dedicated to the safety and protection of children, the center's staff members – which include a director, child advocate, forensic interviewer and forensic examiner – all agree that what they do is not a job, but rather a ministry. "So many abused children pray to God that they'll be saved," said McCrudden. "It is a blessing that through Mercy's ministry, the Mercy Child Advocacy Center is here to offer them physical, emotional and spiritual healing."

Best Standards of Care

Mercy's child advocacy center is based on a national model that represents the best standards of care for child victims. The model entails employing a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to healing in a dedicated, child-friendly environment. Janice McCutcheon, director of the advocacy center, explains that this approach is critical in improving continuity of care and promoting

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Members of the Mercy Child Advocacy Center staff (left to right): Marcie Hermann, RN, certified sexual assault nurse examiner; Tracey Sanchez, forensic interviewer; and Janice McCutcheon, director.

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