

Creating the Mercy Difference

I've been involved in healthcare long enough to know that most people drawn to this ministry as their life's work want to make a difference in the lives of others. Despite the challenges that face our industry, that desire to make a difference keeps people committed to being a part of healthcare.

There's no better time – and no better opportunity – for the Sisters of Mercy Health System (Mercy) to make a difference. Our heritage as a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Mercy gives us a shared foundation and a mission that has meaning and direction. We have made tremendous strides in collaborating to bring improvements to our clinical practices and operational areas, from the implementation of the Mercy Meds medication administration program to the establishment of a unified supply chain organization. While we serve in multiple locations, we are one as Mercy.

Recently I had an opportunity to address executive leaders, board members and physician representatives across Mercy. My message to them was that what we share – our continuity of tradition – is a gift that has been given to us, one that we must nurture and pass on to those who follow us. It is *why* we do what we do. But *what* we do must and will change over time, in order for us to successfully meet the needs of our communities. We must be open to making difficult decisions, trying new things and taking the kind of risks that are necessary to meet the demands of a competitive and complex healthcare environment. We must be able to prove that the "Mercy difference" is tangible and meaningful to all of our constituents, from patients to payer groups to physician partners and more.

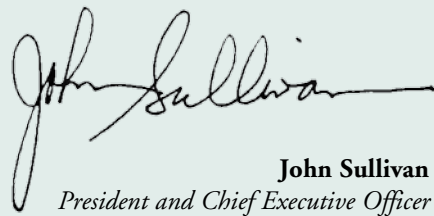
What will it take? We must be able to demonstrate our difference at each level of service. Our quality, safety, personal service and ability to manage costs must be at industry-leading levels. We cannot rely on general claims about our commitment to excellence and caring. We must identify best practices within Mercy and migrate those practices organization-wide.

To truly prove the Mercy difference, I believe we must achieve two significant but achievable goals:

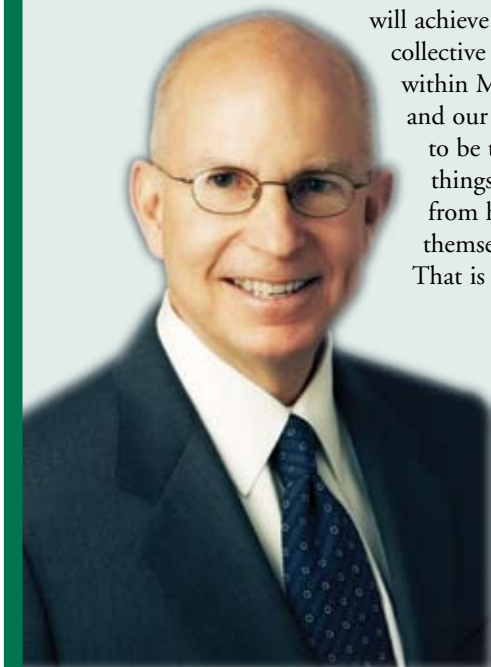
1. **Starting now, no event that causes serious harm will ever be repeated within Mercy.**
2. **Within three years, we must be able to give the following report for our entire health ministry:**
 - Zero Never Events
 - Zero Ventilator Associated Pneumonia
 - Zero Blood Stream Infections
 - Zero Infections from Clean Surgeries
 - Zero Falls with Harm
 - Zero Significant Medication Errors
 - Zero Unexpected Deaths

Leaders across our ministry are working to identify how we will achieve these goals, an effort that will require the collective talents and commitment of every co-worker within Mercy. Mercy people know that our heritage and our mission call us to high standards. Striving to be the best is part of the "Mercy way" of doing things. Catherine McAuley demanded as much from herself: "Only the best for those who entrust themselves in our care." We should act in kind. That is the Mercy difference!

Sincerely,



John Sullivan
President and Chief Executive Officer
Sisters of Mercy Health System



Mercy Caritas Recipients Named for 2007

A total of 19 programs, serving families and communities throughout the Sisters of Mercy Health System (Mercy), will receive grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 as 2007 recipients of the Mercy Caritas program. Mercy Caritas was established by the health system in 1987 to provide funds to health and human services programs that meet community needs and further Mercy's mission. Now in its 20th year of operation, Mercy Caritas is providing a total of \$500,000 in grants to the recipients listed below.

Casa de Misericordia Counseling Program

Laredo, Texas
Assists women and children victims of violence in reclaiming their lives by providing emergency shelter and other services.

Whole Kids Outreach, Inc.

Ellington, Missouri
Faith-based, not-for-profit service organization committed to the unmet wellness and developmental needs of infants, children and expectant mothers within their family structures.

Mercy Health Plans: Childhood Wellness Education

St. Louis, Missouri
Provides translation services to introduce the Childhood Wellness Education project to newly arrived immigrants in languages other than English.

Our Lady's Inn

St. Louis, Missouri
Establishes a nursing program in a second site to improve maternal and child health outcomes for high-risk homeless families.

Mercy Outreach in Action

St. Louis, Missouri
Connects economically underserved individuals and families with appropriate health and social service resources.

Mercy Breast Health Project

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Provides mammograms and/or diagnostic procedures for women who are uninsured and underinsured in the greater Oklahoma City metropolitan area.

St. John's Medication Access Program

Springfield, Missouri
Helps economically disadvantaged patients receive prescription medications by enrolling them in free or low-cost medication programs.

Living Well with Diabetes

St. James, Missouri
Provides diabetes self-management education for patients at St. John's Clinic-Rolla.

Kornerstone, Inc.

Shell Knob, Missouri
Provides comprehensive programs to improve the health, quality of life and access to services for economically poor teens and their babies.

C/SARA Foundation, Inc.

Ardmore, Oklahoma
Provides education regarding children in crisis and facilitates cooperation among community agencies concerned with children's safety and security.

Mercy Indigent Drug Program

Fort Scott, Kansas
Provides prescription medication for low income people, especially women, children and the elderly.

Mercy Ministries of Laredo Dental Program

Laredo, Texas
Provides basic and preventive dental services at low or no cost to eligible community residents, focusing on adult patients and those with chronic illness.

McAuley Counseling Services, Inc.

Springfield, Missouri
Provides mental health services to the economically poor.

Support Path to Cancer Recovery

Fort Smith, Arkansas
Provides free, non-medical support programs and services to cancer patients and their families, as well as early-detection cancer education programs for the community.

River Valley Primary Care Services – Northside Clinic Lab Tests

Fort Smith, Arkansas
Enables the addition of vital laboratory testing equipment to the facility in order to provide a more comprehensive in-house service.

St. John's Mercy Medical Center Integrative Therapies

St. Louis, Missouri
Offers integrative therapies such as acupuncture, auriculotherapy, massage therapy, nutrition counseling and spiritual guidance to oncology patients at St. John's Mercy Medical Center.

Procovery Group

Springfield, Missouri
Assists people with mental illness in achieving a higher quality of life by encouraging them to focus on their future and take responsibility for their personal wellness.

Gloria S. Ainsworth Daycare Center

Ardmore, Oklahoma
Provides daycare for working families in the Carter County area who fall below the poverty line.

Pediatric Healing Coaches – St. John's Mercy Medical Center

St. Louis, Missouri
Provides art therapy, music therapy, pediatric massage, biofeedback, hypnosis, guided imagery, healing touch and pet therapy to enhance physical, mental and spiritual healing of patients.

A Time of Epic Change continued

systems on Mercy's Epic system team. "Because we're documenting virtually everything on the computer, the chart is always up-to-date. This means no more tracking down or waiting for a patient's chart if someone else is using it, since multiple caregivers can review the record at the same time. Also, handoffs and transitions from one clinician to another – a significant source of preventable errors – will be greatly improved."

Focus On Team Care

Epic technology will help coordinate care provided by virtually everyone who comes in contact with a patient. According to Lisa Martin, director of interdisciplinary clinical practice on Mercy's Epic team, this model means that rather than working in individual silos, doctors, nurses, therapists, pharmacists, social workers, dieticians and other clinicians will all work from the same electronic record that includes a detailed patient-centric care plan.

Clinical practice guidelines that cover a full range of potential patient goals, interventions and education approaches will be embedded in the Epic system to help Mercy caregivers develop these team-oriented plans. "This

approach promotes the involvement of all team members in developing an integrated patient plan and continually adjusting it based on a patient's changing needs and condition," Martin explained.

Orders at a Touch of a Button

In a hospital setting, the Epic system will give Mercy physicians new tools to order treatment plans and prescribe medications through a computerized physician order entry (CPOE) system. For most diagnoses and procedures, physicians will work from standardized order sets or templates that include a list of possible options for medications, labs, nursing procedures, dietary guidelines and patient education – all tied specifically to the patient's diagnosis or need. Physicians simply point and click using a computer mouse to specify their choices.

Making things easy is hard work, explained Sheryl Bushman, D.O., medical director, clinical transformation. The Mercy inpatient team is building more than 350 order sets for a full range of admission and pre- and post-op scenarios, covering virtually all medical specialties.

"One of the strongest arguments for using CPOE and standardized order sets is improving patient safety and care,"

Dr. Bushman said. "Order sets can help identify medication interactions, speed up order and test turnaround times, and support the most effective and efficient treatment options."

Providing Information Just Once

Epic's integrated system, with its single consolidated patient record, also will create a new level of efficiency and completeness for patient registration, scheduling, health information management and billing processes. Most patient information will be available in one place, using a variety of on-screen views and reports. Workflows will be smoother, as the Epic system eliminates the time-consuming task of switching between systems, waiting for printed reports and sorting through stacks of paper.

"One of the biggest benefits for patients – as well as Mercy co-workers – is that patients will be able to provide demographic and historical data just once, regardless of where care is provided. This will save everyone the time of dealing with repetitive forms and handling the same questions over and over," said Charlene Virgen, vice president of revenue on the Epic project. "It will be tremendous patient satisfier."

Managing Healthcare Online

Countless studies have told us that our patients live in an Internet-connected world and increasingly are expecting personal input and online access to all aspects of their lives. They bank, shop and arrange travel plans online, so why should managing their healthcare be any different?

The new Epic system will soon fill that void, increasing the role Mercy's patients can play in their healthcare management. In later phases of Epic implementation, patients will have access via their personal computers to certain medical information and self-service features. Through a secure online connection, patients may be able to schedule appointments, view lab results and discharge instructions, e-mail doctors with questions, and request prescription refills at any time of the day or night.

"The Epic system will improve the care our patients receive," said John Sullivan, Mercy's president and CEO. "What we are doing with Epic is essential in enhancing the Mercy difference, which is built on a foundation of serving our patients with safety, quality and personal service. In just a short time, I am confident that we will look back and wonder how we managed any other way."