The Hospitalists Initiative: First Year Successful!

The Hospitalist Initiative passed its first anniversary on July 1. One year ago, four faculty from the Department of Internal Medicine, Drs. Clay Beveridge, Steven Freer, Rajat Garg and Andy Pinson, agreed to fully staff two of the seven general medicine services, each spending four to eight months on the inpatient medicine wards. The premise of the program was that inpatient medicine has become sufficiently complex and demanding to warrant the undivided attention of dedicated inpatient physicians or hospitalists. In the past, physicians attempted to provide this service two to four weeks per year while juggling an ambulatory practice or research commitment. They learned it is not conducive to skilled, efficient inpatient care in an academic setting.

The expectations for the program were high: to improve the morale of subspecialty faculty with their unusually heavy inpatient attending obligations; to improve the efficiency of inpatient care by increasing the involvement of inpatients in the attending process; to improve the availability of inpatient attendings to patients, their families, and, where applicable, to housestaff and students; to permit a greater commitment by the inpatient attendings to teaching; to identify and address barriers to high quality inpatient care; and to reduce overall costs while maintaining or improving quality.

The organization of the Hospitalist Attending Service (formerly the FAS), which most closely resembles the private sector model for hospitalist services, is actually a hybrid service, since it is not covered entirely by the hospitalists. In fact, all nights and half the weekends are covered by housestaff. The Team III hospitalist service functions like the other general medicine teams, with the notable difference that the hospitalist’s ward duties do not compete with other clinical or research obligations.

Some goals have been unequivocally successfully met: retaining subspecialty faculty of attending duties, reviving the inpatient teaching mission, improving efficiency and availability of inpatient attendings, assuming administrative responsibility for the stepdown unit, and identifying barriers to quality inpatient care. By all accounts, housestaff and students appreciate the increased presence of their faculty attendings, and community physicians have been surprised and pleased by the increased communication from MCV attendings about their hospitalized patients.

(continued on page three)
Two Faculty Members Appointed to the VCUHS Board of Trustees

Dr. Lenore Buckley, Professor, Division of Rheumatology, Allergy, and Immunology, and Dr. Mary Nettleman, Professor and Chair, Division of General Medicine and Primary Care, have been appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System (VCUHS). The VCUHS Board has 21 members. In addition to Drs. Buckley and Nettleman, VCU is represented by five other faculty and administration members: Dr. John A. Canale, Dr. Hermes A. Kontos, Dr. Ronald Merritt, Dr. Eugene Tsai, and Dr. John D. Ward. Other community members include Dr. Wyatt S. Beasley, III, Dr. Randall E. Dalton, Mr. Edward L. Flippin, Mr. William A. Forest, the Honorable Franklin F. Hall, Dr. Clarence A. Holland, the Honorable Dwight C. Jones, the Honorable Benjamin J. Lambert, III, Mr. Thomas L. Nixson, Dr. W. Baxter Perkinson, Jr., Dr. Lindley F. Smith, Mr. Jay Weinberg, Dr. H. George White, Jr., and Dr. Percy Wooten.

Dr. Nettleman said, “This is an important opportunity and responsibility. I am very pleased to be on the Board and look forward to the September meeting.” Dr. Buckley said, “I see my role as helping to optimize delivery of clinical care. I will represent the faculty in the development of the academic mission. My role also includes representing women on the faculty.”

Dr. Richard P. Wenzel, Chairman of Internal Medicine, had high praise for the new faculty appointees: “It is a testament of the excellent work of both physicians that we have two members in our Department appointed to the Board. Furthermore, it is a bright day for women in medicine with two exceptional role models.”

The Hospitalists Initiative: First Year Successful (continued from page one)

A recent summary of the last three quarters of activity was compiled by Dr. Wally Smith, Chairman of the Division of Quality Health Care (see table). It suggests remarkable changes with great dollar savings to the institution. Further efforts to improve direct access to the medicine service; make the inpatient experience more “customer friendly” for patients and referring physicians, continue to raise the quality and quantity of inpatient teaching, expedite discharge and improve billing, and improve throughput from the emergency room and from the ICUs, are all part of the forthcoming year’s agenda for the Hospitalists Initiative.

Comparisons of the old FAS to the new Hospitalist Service:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>FY 99</th>
<th>FY 00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost Savings During the Last Three Quarters of FY 00:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average cost per discharge FY 99</td>
<td>$ 7,242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average cost per discharge FY 00</td>
<td>$ 6,983</td>
<td>$ 6,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference (savings)</td>
<td>$ 259</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cost savings</td>
<td>$ 271,432</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Difference times number of admissions for three quarters (1,048)]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other positive indicators between FAS and the Hospitalist Service:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>FY 99</th>
<th>FY 00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average length of stay</td>
<td>6.0 days</td>
<td>5.1 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of returns to ED w/ 30 days</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of discharge summaries by 11 AM</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% one-day admissions from ED</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>1,048</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Endocrinology and Metabolism Presents Diabetes Symposium

The Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism, in conjunction with the Office of Continuing Medical Education, is presenting a symposium entitled “Diabetes in the Primary Care Setting.” The symposium is a half-day program being held at the Williamsburg Marriott at Kingsmill on October 1, 2000. There is no fee to attend. VCU designates this educational activity for up to four hours in Category 1 credits toward the AMA Physician’s Recognition Award.

The goal of the symposium is to provide practical information on the management and treatment of diabetic patients in the primary care setting. Faculty include John E. Nosler, M.D., John N. Cleare, M.D., Frank Zieve, M.D., Ph.D., and James Levy, M.D. For additional information and registration, contact the Division of Endocrinology at 828-8389.

News Briefs

Dr. Laurie Lyckholm, Assistant Professor, Division of Hematology/Oncology, was invited to be the speaker at the White Coat Ceremony during the M-1 orientation program on August 10.

Internal Medicine Specialty Clinic Rated Excellent

According to a recent patient survey, the nursing and clerical staff in the Internal Medicine Specialty Clinic received an excellent rating. The patients surveyed gave a rating that exceeded the VCU Health System’s overall results, and met or exceeded the Professional Research Consultants standard. The Department congratulates the nursing and clerical staff and appreciates their hard work and commitment to our medical practice.

Clinical Trials Unit

Virginia Commonwealth University is exploring the feasibility of developing a Clinical Trials Unit for investigators. The Clinical Trials Institute, directed by Anton Schoenherth, M.D., MS, Professor and Chairman, Division of Nephrology, is conducting a needs survey to help determine the logistics of developing such space with attention to the services that would be required by investigators and their staff. Please feel free to make sure your needs are considered by taking a few minutes to complete the “Clinical Trials Unit Needs Analysis Survey.” The survey is located at http://Taurus.vcu.edu/~somadmin/cti-login.htm.

Next Issue of Between Rounds Announced

Submissions are being sought for the fifth edition of Between Rounds, the arts and literature publication of the Department of Internal Medicine. The deadline this year is October 15, so send your contributions to: Michael F. Barnes, Box 80452, 828-5548, or email address: mbarnes@hsc.vcu.edu.
Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology
Honored at National Meeting

Stephen O’Keefe, Professor, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology has won an American College of Gastroenterology Award for Excellence in Clinical Research. The award was for a paper entitled, “Enteral infusions of elemental diets stimulate pancreatic enzyme secretion in normal subjects but not in patients with acute pancreatitis.”

The VCU Department of Internal Medicine will be well represented at the ACG meeting. In addition to Dr. O’Keefe’s award, Dr. Souheil Abou Assi, Fellow in the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, won the award for Best Abstract Submitted by a Fellow. Dr. Abhijit Bharia won the Lawlor Award for Best Abstract by a Trainee.

Faculty members presenting papers in various symposia include:
- Dr. Amy Foxx-Orenstein, “Pelvic Floor Disorders” and “Pelvic Floor Dysfunction: Evaluation and Treatment.”
- Dr. Arun Sanyal, “Liver Transplantation.”
- Dr. Mitchell Shiftman, “Management of Hepatitis C in the New Millennium” and “Liver Cancers: Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment.”
- Dr. Alvin M. Zfass, “EUS: Nuts & Bolts (Battery Included!).”

...inpatient medicine has become sufficiently complex and demanding to warrant the undivided attention of dedicated inpatient physicians or Hospitalists.

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