



# HEART OF HOLY CROSS

H O S P I T A L

## Top Guns Swoop Down On Hospital Teaching Ways to Increase Patient Safety

We all love the old western movies when John Wayne comes riding in and saves the day. John Wayne's persona in his movie roles was, "I am the leader, get the heck out of the way and do not question me - big, bold and larger than life!"...not unlike many surgeons, physicians or even Top Gun combat pilots. All of these professionals have assumed the role of being the leader, getting the job done under the tightest deadlines and most trying of circumstances and making sure no one gets in their way. Their authority was NEVER to be challenged in any way.

Those old days of a pyramid organizational structure with one leader at the top are now undergoing a transformation in the next few months at Holy Cross Hospital into a more parallel team where everyone has a say and a right to speak up in an assertive manner if they notice a red flag that something may be going wrong in the care of a patient. Now is the time to "leave the rank at the door..."

And who better to lead the training of a new model of health care for the industry than LifeWings, a company composed of pilots, astronauts and physicians? With over 45 national health care organizations learning this new model of team building, communication and safety tools from LifeWings, amazing changes in medical health cultures are proving (with measurable hard data) that more patient lives are saved and fewer human medical errors are being made. "Holy Cross Hospital is a great hospital now, and we are constantly striving to improve to become the best small, rural hospital in New Mexico" commented hospital CEO Kean Spellman. "By contracting with LifeWings and training physicians and hospital staff, our hospital wants to achieve the highest standard of medical care consistently providing safe, quality, efficient, compassionate and patient-centered care."

The Quality Council at Holy Cross Hospital and annual strategic planning with physicians led the hospital to



**LifeWings Leadership Team - From l. to r.:** Grant Besley, Co-Chair and United Airlines Pilot for 38 years; Stephen Cetrulo, MD Surgeon; Geilan Ismail, MD Cardiologist; Mike Huelsman, RN, Clinical Director of Surgical Services; Theresa Valerio, RN, Clinical Director of Med-Surg, ICU/PCU; Carol Blakely, RN, Director of Education, ER and Quality Improvement; Patty Hannigan, Safety and Risk Management Director; Anna Abeyta, RN, BSN, MBA, Chief Clinical Officer and Co-Chair; Ron Burnham, President of hospital board of directors; and Sandy O'Kelly, Infection Control/Clinical Safety Director

from the Operating Room, Emergency Department, Intensive Care and Progressive Care Units are participating in this training.

Chief Nursing Officer Anna Abeyta explained that the purpose of the intensive training is to help build strong critical care teams by catching errors and human mistakes BEFORE there is an impact on a patient's medical care and thereby saving more patient lives. "We want to serve patients at a higher level of performance by becoming more of a cohesive team," she added.

Of course medical professionals are human and are impacted by the same sorts of things as all of us are, stress, tight deadlines, lack of sleep, less than perfect nutritional habits. When combinations of these stressors occur there is a greater chance for a mistake or medical error. Although mistakes do occur occasionally in the medical world, oftentimes what makes a medical error is a combination of things that go wrong at the same time and very quickly.

The LifeWings training at Holy Cross Hospital will be five months in length covering four major phases including Leadership development which started on August 21st and 22nd. Co-leaders of the Leadership Team are Anna Abeyta, Chief Nursing Officer and Grant Besley, a United Airlines pilot for 38 years, a check pilot for the Boeing 747-400 and taught and monitored crews in the proper use of Cockpit Resource Management. Besley was also

instrumental in starting a United Air Lines Employee Assistance Program which was initially an alcohol and drug program but eventually became a broad spectrum program that included any problems that effected job performance.

Other phases of the LifeWings training include organizational structure, skills training, hard wiring the system and project measurement. Then data will be collected during the first quarter of 2007 to actually demonstrate statistically how many medical errors have been reduced, and to prove that the level of care for patients has improved along with a number of other performance bench marks which are carefully measured.

One example could be when the hospital Environmental Services professionals come into patient areas for cleaning and happens to notice that an oxygen line is tangled, or a patient is having trouble breathing and is in distress, Chief Nursing Officer Anna Abeyta explained. That hospital staff person cleaning needs to be clear that it is their responsibility to assertively bring the problems noticed with a patient to the attention of a nurse or other medical professional. If they are afraid of being treated rudely or ignored, then that patient's safety may well be in jeopardy due

to egos of who is telling whom there is a problem, Abeyta added.

Hospital staff are taught when they see any warning signs of a possible adverse event that may impact a patient's medical condition to See It, then Say It as a personal observation and then Fix It - So in the example the environmental services worker would say to a nurse or other medical professional... "I noticed that the patient in Room 11B is having difficulty breathing. I observed that the oxygen line was tangled. In order to fix this problem for the patient, a nurse or other medical professional needs to immediately check on the patient and untangle the oxygen line."

**A recent positive example occurred in the Operating Room when a Stephanie Conahan, RN, RNFA was reviewing the pre-surgical packet on a patient scheduled the following day for surgery. As she was reviewing the patient's medical history she noticed that the patient had a possible heart condition (See It). The nurse consulted with the surgical team who then contacted the patient (Say It). This patient's surgery was postponed until the patient received clearance from their cardiologist to go ahead with the surgery (Fix It).**

So then it becomes imperative for everyone on the "team" to know what they need to do and why it is important, and then to be assertive in asking why or pointing out a potential problem and that it is the RIGHT thing to do. **Another positive example occurred recently when a Holy Cross Hospital lab technician, Linda Romens who completed a patient's lab screening and then called Dr. Cetrulo who was planning a surgical procedure on this same patient to let him know that this patient had a blood clotting issue that could affect the surgery. Dr. Cetrulo was aware of this patient's condition, but commended the lab technician for catching a potential life saving issue on behalf of the patient and bringing to his attention.**

Individual skills taught will encompass fatigue countermeasures, identifying the warning signs of adverse events, assertion and conflict management. Team skills will cover decision-making, team formation and management, team briefing and debriefing, and the team using protocols, guidelines and checklists along with team communication.

As a part of the training an analysis of check lists is provided by LifeWings. In some cases there are too many check lists in different locations that may be combined into one simplified check list in a central location creating a more efficient method of cross checking a list and saving time and money - such as with a list of required surgical tools for a specialized orthopaedic surgery (bones and joints) versus the

surgical instruments required for a general surgical procedure such as abdominal surgery.

Holy Cross Hospital is investing in a major transformation in the way that physicians and hospital staff inter-relate, to improve patient safety and reduce the chance for medical errors. In addition many hospital departments also have individual patient safety programs that are correlating directly with the LifeWings training including planning (with staffing council's input) for higher staffing levels of RNs and Nurse Aides during peak patient volumes during the winter, a medication reconciliation program being rolled out by the Pharmacy Department, and publicizing an upcoming PBS series entitled Remaking American Medicine...Health Care for the 21st Century on patient quality and safety.

In addition Patty Hannigan, Safety Risk Management Director of Holy Cross Hospital also announced the hospital's participation in the national Save a 100,000 Lives Campaign which encompasses implementing six major interventions for patient safety. Notably the hospital has already has been routinely performing five of the six interventions in this campaign and will be starting rapid response teams (which is the sixth intervention), in the near future.



**Operating Room Team - from l. to r.:** First Row - Iris Figueroa, Scrub Tech, Carlos Gallegos, RN, (sitting), Barbara Garcia, Surgery Dept. Admin. Assist. Second Row: from l. to r. Victoria Diamond, RN, Katie Kilosovsky, Scrub Tech, Kim Bourne, RN, Deborah Cripps, RN, Tomasita Martinez, RN, Veronica Harrold, RN. Third Row: Bob Olen, RN, Marc Moody, Scrub Tech, Larry Jaramillo, Scrub Tech, Mike Huelsman, Clinical Director of Surgical Services, and Lorenzo Rodriguez, Scrub Tech.

LifeWings also follows up with refreshers; practice and feedback to assure the system changes take effect over the long haul, in addition to measuring outcomes with performance benchmarks.

LifeWings Partners, LLC was founded in 1999 by a former U.S. Navy Top Gun pilot and commercial airline pilot for Federal Express. One of the partners is also a physician from NASA, Rhea Seddon, MD who flew aboard three space shuttle missions. The firm specializes in applying aviation-based training to help health care facilities improve patient safety and reduce costs. Measurable results are documented for LifeWings patient safety training initiatives including one hospital that reduced its surgery error rate from one in every 60 days, to one every 619 days, 10 times better than the national average.

### New Patient Satisfaction Survey for In-Patients



Your opinions are important to Holy Cross Hospital. We are starting a new way to receive patient comments about their stay in the hospital with a patient satisfaction survey that will be mailed to you. A completely objective survey company will be following up with each patient to ask them to mail in their survey so that it may be tabulated. These patient satisfaction surveys are vital to Holy Cross Hospital so that we may learn what we are doing well and what areas we need to improve upon. For additional information contact Patty Hannigan, Safety and Risk Manager at Holy Cross Hospital at 751-5762.



**ICU Team - From l. to r.:** First Row - Elinor Bell, RN, Theresa Valerio, RN, BSN, MBA, Director of Med-Surg, ICU/PCU, Renee Sudborough, RN. Second row - Martha McDonald, Monitor Tech, Emily Torres, RN, Dina Damen, RN, Joyce Ulibarri, Graduate Nurse, Jill Ismail, MD, Cardiologist, and Karyn Zorn, Monitor Tech.

narrow their focus and make providing a higher level of patient safety a top priority for this year. In 1999 The Institute of Medicine estimated that up to 98,000 people die each year to hospital errors. LifeWings has proven its value to health care clients with a new health care industry model over the past six years that has demonstrated reduced medical errors, increased efficiencies, reduced costs and less hospital staff turnover.

Physicians, nurses, technicians and other hospital staff

**Next Blood Drive Scheduled For**  
**Saturday, November 4th**  
**8:00 a.m. - 3 p.m.**  
**Sunday, November 5th**  
**8 a.m. - 2 p.m.**  
**at Holy Cross Hospital**



To pre-register go to United Blood Services website, at [www.ubs.org](http://www.ubs.org), or call Phyllis Nichols at 737-9511

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