

Morristown Memorial program gets parents, doctors to talk *Hospital hosts launch of training initiative*

Daily Record

August 1, 2008

By Minhaj Hassan

MORRISTOWN -- Parents and physicians packed the atrium at the Goryeb Children's Center at Morristown Memorial Hospital to launch a program designed to improve communication between patients and doctors. The program will have teams of doctors and parents attend workshops provided by the Maryland-Based Institute for Family Centered Care, which provides training on how to improve hospital communication and to help parents become more involved in hospital medical care.

"The No. 1 problem is communication," said Dr. Walter Rosenfeld, chairman of pediatrics at Goryeb Children's Hospital. "Inadequate communication is a key problem."

The program is made possible through a \$100,000 grant from the R Baby Foundation. The foundation was created by Phyllis and Andrew Rabinowitz following the death of their infant daughter in 2006, with the goal of improving communication and medical outcomes for infants.

"Ineffective communication can be fatal," Phyllis Rabinowitz said, before a crowd of approximately 70 people. She became emotional as she held up a photo of her daughter Rebecca, who died on July 21, 2006, only eight days after her birth. Rebecca died as a result of complications stemming from a viral infection and was not treated at Goryeb Children's Hospital. "She would have been 2 years old this month," she said.

When she brought her daughter home from the hospital, she noticed that Rebecca was very congested and lethargic.

Believing her daughter's conditions were more severe than the common cold, which is what the emergency doctors thought, Rabinowitz tried to get them to treat her daughter's symptoms. However, she said her concerns were dismissed, with the doctors believing she was "neurotic and overreacting," she said.

She later learned the physician had not even been trained in pediatric care.

Another mother, Siobhan Reid of Montville, said her son Conor, now 13, was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis when she brought him to Goryeb some five years ago. In the eight years prior to coming to Goryeb, Reid said she took Conor to several doctors after he became congested and coughed heavily.

"It was a heavy, gasping-for-air kind of cough," she said.

She received little help from the doctors they visited in the interim. "We watched him suffer and cough and not be able to help him."

She said the Goryeb Children's Center doctors "have given him (Conor) a new lease on life."

While cystic fibrosis is a genetic disease, Reid said it can be "managed" well under the proper care.

She said Conor frequently come to Goryeb, commonly staying for two-week stretches. When he does, Reid said, "this hospital becomes our home, where we eat, sleep and work."

"Nobody opens the door without first knocking."

Even though she did check out bigger New York hospitals after recommendations from friends, Reid concluded that "this is where we get the best care."

The Goryeb Children's Center has nearly 100 pediatricians and treats patients, most of whom are between birth and age 21.

In 2000, some 98,000 out of 36 million people who visited hospitals died due to medical errors, according to the Institute of Medicine.