

Hospital hopes to end miscommunication

Hanover Eagle

Friday, August 8, 2008

MORRISTOWN — In an effort to combat a national issue of miscommunication leading to medical errors Goryeb Children's Hospital initiated on July 26 a program creating an environment that supports young patients and their families.

R Baby Foundation of Short Hills provided a \$100,000 grant for the Patient- and Family-Centered Care program, which will pilot in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) and the Gagnon Children's Emergency Department, both located on Goryeb's Morristown Memorial Hospital campus. Teams at Goryeb will partner with the Maryland-based Institute for Family-Centered Care, an industry leader in improving hospital communications and promoting meaningful involvement of patients and families in the care process.

"The Institute of Medicine reports that communication errors are the most common cause of medical errors, leading to the injury of one in 25 hospital patients nationwide," said Dr. Walter D. Rosenfeld, chairman of pediatrics, Goryeb Children's Hospital, Atlantic Health. "Open and effective communication between health care providers and families is crucial for delivering the highest level of treatment for our patients and in achieving the best possible outcomes. At Goryeb, we have made significant strides to welcome our families but adopting this model of "'Families First' care will further empower patients and parents to work together with their health care providers on quality initiatives and improving the delivery of pediatric care."

To achieve a model of family-centered care for children's hospitals throughout the country to follow, Goryeb plans to:

- Assess the current approach to care, and focus on improving doctor-patient communication;
- Include patients and families in planning and developing protocols and standards for hospital procedures;
- Improve patient and family access to useful information, engage them in clinical decision making, and empower parents to become more directly involved in their child's care.

"Parents know their children best," Rosenfeld said. "This program is about empowering parents and making them realize that the Goryeb physicians, nurses and staff truly value their opinions, thoughts, and feelings. A hospital setting and the medical system can be intimidating, but we want them to feel welcome and included in the medical decision-making for their child."

The Patient- and Family-Centered Care project already has allowed Goryeb to expand its parent advisory board and create the Goryeb Family Advisory Council, a group of parents who advise hospital administrators and medical leaders about patient needs and hospital priorities from a family's perspective. Through the program, Goryeb also sent parents and staff to a series of workshops at the Institute for Family-Centered Care. As initial assessments with the Institute for Family-Centered Care are completed within the PICU and Pediatric Emergency Department, additional programs to improve communication will be implemented.

"The night before our daughter, Rebecca, passed away, my husband, Andrew, and I took her to a local Emergency Department (not Goryeb)," said Phyllis Rabinowitz, co-founder, R Baby Foundation. "We felt the physician did not listen to our high level of concern for our daughter's health and we left very frustrated, as she refused to re-admit or do further testing. We are confident that this new program at the Goryeb Children's Hospital will help other families have increased confidence and communication, ultimately leading to the best possible health care outcome and experience."

For more information about R Baby Foundation or to donate, visit www.rbabyfoundation.org.