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Editor’s note: May is Better Hearing and Speech month. The following story – written by Mercy patient, Grace, and her husband, Gary – highlights the impact speech language pathology services has had on them.

My life changed Dec. 16, 2014, when I had a severe ischemic stroke that physically affected my right side and left me unable to speak. Before my stroke, I was a university-educated, professional middle-aged woman who worked eight to 10 hours a day interacting by phone with team members spread across the United States. Outside of work, I constantly talked with my children, husband, parents and friends.

After my stroke, I could not speak. I could understand what people said, but I could not verbally interact with people as I had lost my ability to talk. I had something called “aphasia,” meaning I could not get my brain to move my mouth and tongue to talk. I was very frustrated and angry that my excellent speaking skills – of which I was once so proud – were taken from me.

After hospital release, I knew I needed outpatient speech therapy and I chose Mercy Riverside Rehabilitation. I was introduced to Lori Huffman, my speech language pathologist, and she has been my speech therapist ever since. What a journey it has been!

From the first speech therapy session, Lori started me on my road to recovery – relearning, rebuilding and working to overcome my speech impediments. It has not been easy to come back from my stroke and I am still not where I want to be. But, with speech therapy, I have gone from simple sounds, to one-syllable word responses, to two- or three-syllable words in complete sentences in a conversation. I can again interact with the world! No longer am I locked away in my own world, only communicating with a few people who know my non-verbal “code” or what I want with a finger point.

I know I am not done relearning what I lost. My speech therapy journey will be a road I will be on for a long time. I will need excellent speech therapy coaches like Lori to help me move forward and work with me to overcome all aspects of my aphasia. I am certain, though, I will get to where I want to be.

For more information regarding outpatient speech language pathology services, please call Riverside Rehabilitation at (515) 643-9800.

Grace has been making great progress to regain her speech, with the help of a speech language pathologist, ever since she experienced a stroke late in 2014.
Mercy – Centerville achieves perfection in re-accreditation survey

Mercy Medical Center – Centerville recently went through an unannounced critical access hospital recertification survey conducted by the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals. The final report found that Mercy-Centerville had no deficiencies and is operating in full compliance.

In an interview with the “Daily Iowegian,” Clint Christianson, Mercy Centerville president said, “To have zero deficiencies on the recertification process for Medicare and Medicaid is nearly unheard of in the health care industry and is an outstanding achievement for our hospital. The survey results simply validate the dedication of this hospital and staff to providing a safe environment and high quality care to the patients we serve and I couldn’t be prouder of our entire team who together strive for excellence every day.”

Public Relations Department earns national recognition


Mercy earned a Gold Award (the competition’s highest honor) for its April/May 2015 issue of “Health Matters,” a Silver Award for its orthopedic trauma infographics on social media and a Merit Award for the 2015 Annual Report to the Community.

In its 33rd year, the Healthcare Advertising Awards is the oldest, largest and most prestigious health care advertising awards competition, with more than 3,700 entries submitted from around the world this year.

American Stroke Month underway

May is American Stroke Month— you may have seen our ads around town as we strive to educate the community to recognize the signs of a stroke and seek treatment as soon as possible.

It takes a village to care for stroke patients, and our staff go above and beyond to ensure patients get the best care possible. Here are just a few of our wonderful staff members who work together to treat our stroke patients: Dr. Michael Jacoby, Terri Hamm, Teresa Long, staff in the Emergency Department and 6 North, rehabilitation, radiology, neurosurgery, neurology, hospitalists, CIC unit, internal medicine, family medicine, chaplains and palliative care. Thanks for the work you do to make Mercy the best place to be treated for a stroke in Des Moines!

A Live Up letter from a grateful daughter

“My mother was recently a patient at Mercy West Lakes for a knee replacement. I want to express my appreciation for the impeccable care she received and the extremely positive experience! All the staff were so patient-focused and worked together to ensure my mom’s recovery and healing was uneventful. My mom has had multiple surgeries, in other states and other hospitals in Des Moines, and we agreed that this was the best experience ever. Thank you to all the nurses and therapists and all supporting staff who cared for my mom!!”

Celebrate grand opening of the Community Healing Garden this Saturday

Join Mercy Cancer Center this Saturday, May 21, from 9:30-11:30 a.m., for the grand opening of the Community Healing Garden at Mercy Cancer Center, 12495 University Ave., in Clive. The open house event is open to the public and will showcase the new healing space on the Cancer Center property.

Bring your trowels and come prepared to help plant this year’s array of vegetables and herbs! All vegetables are grown organically and distributed to cancer patients free of charge to help promote a plant-based, health-promoting diet.

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If you are interested in submitting information to be printed in the Bulletin, send it to PR and Marketing or call 515-247-3050.