Grant Helps Mercy Connect Patients with Needed Services

In 2016, Mercy Medical Center – Des Moines was one of three Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI) health systems selected to implement a new, innovative model for addressing the social determinants of health. The program, which was made possible by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with an equal match from CHI, involves utilizing community health workers to help patients learn about and gain access to local health and social services.

Patients of four providers at Mercy Clinics South and all providers at Mercy Centerville Clinic are currently being screened for the program, which officially began in June 2017. Screening involves a paper survey where patients indicate if they have worried about having enough money for food, housing, utility needs, medications or transportation. The survey also asks if the patient is safe in their current environment or needs help reading medical materials. If a patient’s survey results indicate a need for assistance, the community health worker connects the patient with appropriate resources available in the community.

Mercy’s community health workers meet regularly with community groups and service providers to better understand what resources are available, as well as where gaps exist in availability of needed resources. “We are tracking how well resources meet patient needs in an effort to make effective referrals and identify community partners where coordination may be beneficial,” said Emily Fletcher, MPH, who oversees the project for Mercy.

More than 3,500 patients have been screened through the program. Eighteen percent of patients screened reported at least one need, and approximately half of those patients requested assistance. Food and transportation have consistently been the highest areas of need.

“The grant project is allowing us to attend regional and national conferences to learn about the exciting work health systems are doing to develop healthier communities and address social determinants of health,” said Fletcher. “We are bringing that information back to Mercy, and during year two of the project we will work to identify ways to tie together the work Mercy is doing in the community with the essential needs patients identify through screening.”

The original grant covered a 30-month period. Once those 30 months are complete, Mercy hopes to sustain the program long-term. “We have received positive feedback from patients, physicians, nurses and clinic managers who find the program valuable, which is an encouraging foundation for sustaining and expanding the program,” said Fletcher.

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EMILY FLETCHER, MPH
Recent surgery, unfamiliar surroundings and being connected to medical equipment all contribute to a patient’s risk of falling, even if he/she has not had this concern before. When a patient falls it could result in injury, a lengthened hospital stay and increased costs.

To help protect our patients, Mercy nursing staff assess whether a patient is at risk for injury if he/she were to fall, and/or is at high risk for falling. If risk is identified, a sign is posted outside the patient’s room.

Introduced earlier this year, this new fall safety precaution alerts family, visitors, care team members and other Mercy colleagues that the patient is at risk and not allowed to get out of bed and move about without assistance. Nursing staff caring for the patient can help explain the concern to the patient and family, as well as the many interventions Mercy has in place for the patient to remain safe from falling, or receiving an injury from a fall.

**What should you do?**

If you notice a patient is up and moving about without assistance, and the fall risk sign is posted outside his/her room, notify a member of the nursing staff immediately. It’s the responsibility of all Mercy colleagues to help keep patients safe.

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**MERCY CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL & CLINICS PHYSICIAN APPOINTED TO STATE BOARD**

Joyce Vista-Wayne, M.D., pediatric psychiatrist with Mercy Children’s Hospital & Clinics, has been appointed by Gov. Kim Reynolds to serve as a physician member of the Children’s System State Board. Created by executive order signed by Gov. Reynolds last April, the board is tasked to develop a strategic plan with specific recommendations to build an integrated, coordinated and sustainable children’s mental health system in Iowa.

“I appreciate the support of Mercy’s leadership in my appointment to the Children’s System State Board,” said Dr. Vista-Wayne. “This demonstrates Mercy’s dedication to caring for children, and their families, who are living with mental illness.”

Dr. Vista-Wayne brings 20 years of expertise to her new position and has been a pediatric psychiatrist at Mercy for eight years.

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**VISIT MERCY CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL & CLINICS AT THE IOWA STATE FAIR**

The Iowa State Fair is right around the corner, and that means lots of fun opportunities with Mercy Children’s Hospital & Clinics!

Once again, Mercy Children’s Hospital & Clinics is partnering with STAR 102.5 to bring fairgoers the KidFind booth, located on the west end of the Grand Concourse in front of the Grandstand. Be sure to get your child an ID bracelet in case they become separated or lost from your group. Volunteers from Mercy will be at the booth from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Aug. 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18 and 19. They will have temporary tattoos, giveaways, a bag game, sidewalk chalk, lawn darts, hula hoops and more.

Mercy Children’s Hospital & Clinics will also have volunteers at Little Hands on the Farm, located inside the east gate of the fairgrounds. They will be there August 13, 15, 16 and 18.

**CONTACT US**

The Bulletin is published weekly for staff and friends of Mercy Medical Center, 1111 6th Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50314-2611

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

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