



*a message from the Chief Medical Officer, Joyce Peabody, MD, to the Medical Staff*

### **Securing Physician Prescription Pads**

After discussion with the Medical Executive Committee, we have taken steps to secure blank prescription pads and patient-specific prescriptions and samples. Prescription pads are now stored in the PYXIS cabinets. Prescriptions and/or samples for patients are held in the pharmacy – not at the front desk and floor reception areas. Please advise your patients accordingly.

### **Hepatitis B for Newborns**

Earlier this month, we began offering the hepatitis B vaccine for all newborns prior to discharge. This practice reflects a recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendation that all delivery hospitals establish standing orders for routine administration of the vaccine.

### **Latex Gloves**

In keeping with our policy to reduce latex exposure, as of October 10, we no longer use latex exam gloves. Instead, we have converted to a powder-free third-generation synthetic PVC exam glove that provides enhanced durability and protection. We do, however, still carry Nitrile gloves for those departments that may prefer or need to use them. Since latex remains the preferred surgical glove and allergy is predominantly related to the powder, powder-free latex gloves will still be used in the OR unless a patient or practitioner allergy is specifically identified.

### **Safety Improvements**

We have installed a camera and “Physicians Entrance” sign at the door to the corridor connecting the Hospital and Radiation Oncology Center. These changes enhance security and limit the use of this door by non-medical staff. Accessible by card swipe, the Physicians Entrance is provided in response to feedback from the Physician Satisfaction Survey.

### **Tobacco-Free Initiative**

You should receive a mailing soon from the Greater Capital Region Healthcare Tobacco-Free Initiative, which is supplying physician offices with table tent cards and posters announcing that all area hospitals will be tobacco free as of January 1, 2007. To avoid any surprises, please let your patients know that the tobacco-free policy covers all of our buildings and surrounding areas. We will offer assistance to patients and employees who smoke to help them through this transition.

### **NPI: Get It, Share It, Use It**

A reminder: physicians are required to obtain a national provider identifier (NPI) by May 23, 2007. Getting an NPI is FREE – not having one can be costly! To ensure continued Medicare reimbursements, please email your NPI as soon as possible to lretzlaff@saratogacare.org.

### **Testing For Lactic Acid**

In response to a request from our Emergency Department physicians, our chemistry lab now provides in-house testing for lactic acid. The test, which aids in the diagnosis of severe sepsis and septic shock, is available on all shifts.

### **Simplifying Blood Transfusion Consents**

Consent forms are required for non-emergent blood transfusions and must be signed after the patient is informed about the procedure, including its risks and benefits. This consent is valid for the duration of the hospital stay, regardless of how many units are transfused. Consents signed prior to a transfusion may be obtained up to 60 days before the procedure. For your convenience and that of your patients, if you think a patient may need a transfusion during his or her hospital stay, please obtain the consent while seeing the patient in your office.

### **HIPAA Privacy Clarification**

The HIPAA Privacy Rule does not require that all risk of incidental use or disclosure be eliminated. Rather, it mandates that covered entities implement reasonable safeguards to limit incidental uses or disclosures. [See 45 CFR 164.530(c)(2).]

We offer the following tips to prevent others from overhearing patient information. Please, when you are in public areas:

- Keep your voice low.
- Discuss personal health information in private whenever possible.
- Use your Nextel phone only in private areas or turn the volume down.
- Try to dictate in the private areas provided on nursing units.
- Never use speakerphone or discuss patients in public areas, such as the cafeteria or elevators.

### **“Just Touching Base”**

At the request of President and CEO Angelo Calbone, we will host quarterly “Just Touching Base” receptions, informal sessions at which medical staff members and senior management can share perspectives and discuss opportunities for improvement. These are currently scheduled for the Golf and Polo Club at 6 p.m. on February 20, May 15, August 21, and November 20, following the Medical Executive Committee meetings. If the medical staff would prefer two of these to be breakfast sessions instead, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Joyce Peabody, MD  
Vice President, Chief Medical Officer