

SHARING

THA - Endorsed Products and Services

Volume 2, No. 3

Fall 2010

A Cup of Coffee and a Cup of Kindness

Extending Patient Care Beyond Medicine

Only the Best

*Thorough Background Checks Help Hospitals
Make Sound Hiring Decisions*

Protecting against Identity Theft

Is Your Patient Information Safe?

Rehabilitation Staffing

Traveling Therapists Hit the Ground Running

Addressing the Nursing Shortage

Recruiting Highly Skilled Nurses from Abroad

Turning Bad into Good

*Debt Purchasing Agency Helps Hospitals Recover
Exhausted Receivables*



A M E S S A G E F R O M T H E C E O

When the 82nd Texas Legislature convenes in January 2011, health care will face an uncertain future. Legislators will be dealing with the repercussions of federal health care reform as well as a large budget shortfall. This will mean tough decisions about funding for programs like Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, the state's trauma system and more.



Your hospital undoubtedly has felt the impact of this uncertainty in its budget. Belts are tightening, and it's more important than ever to find a way to cut costs while maintaining a high level of care. I hope you will look to HealthSHARE for guidance. Texas Hospital Association-endorsed companies provide unique products and services that assist Texas hospitals during even the most challenging times. HealthSHARE's extensive due diligence ensures that the THA-endorsed company logo serves as a seal of approval you can trust. Earning the right to use that logo is no easy achievement. Every facet of the business – from the quality of the products/services to the track record for excellent customer service, customer feedback, marketing plan and financials – is scrutinized. If a company is endorsed by THA, you can trust that it will provide your hospital with leading-edge products and services at unmatched pricing.

As always, I welcome your feedback. Please send your suggestions and comments to me at jdixon@tha.org.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James M. Dixon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "D".

James M. Dixon
President/Chief Executive Officer



Volume 2, No. 3
Fall 2010

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Sharing is published four times a year by HealthSHARE, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Texas Hospital Association, 1108 Lavaca, Suite 600, Austin, Texas 78701, 512/465-1070, fax 512/692-2709.

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As a wholly owned subsidiary of the Texas Hospital Association, HealthSHARE markets best-of-breed, competitively priced products and services offered through THA-endorsed companies that benefit hospitals' quality, service and bottom line. Each issue of *Sharing* spotlights a different category of services. This issue, the spotlight is on cost containment.

Air Liquide Healthcare

Air Liquide Healthcare is a world leader in gases for industry, health care and the environment. It offers every gas used by every department or facility in the health care market, from surgery centers and long-term acute care hospitals throughout the state of Texas to world-class research facilities and the largest hospital group. Air Liquide Healthcare seeks a strategic partnership approach to ensure hospitals can provide top-notch patient care with the highest-quality bulk and cylinder medical gases, supplies and equipment.

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Amerinet

Amerinet offers Texas health care facilities access to one of the most innovative and effective health care group purchasing organizations in the United States. Members choose from market-leading suppliers, ensuring the best match in price and quality. Amerinet delivers personalized service at all levels of interaction. Hospitals may join under the no-fee system without shareback or under the fee system and receive shareback dividends based on their contracted purchases. In addition to traditional group purchasing contracts, hospitals can take advantage of Amerinet Choice products, custom contracting programs and access to education, data and consulting services on complex clinical and regulatory issues.

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CareFusion MedMined™ Services

Each year nearly one in 20 patients acquires a health care-associated infection, impacting 1.7 million lives and costing hospitals and patients more than \$35 billion. Carefusion MedMined services objectively monitor the entire hospital for emerging infection issues, enabling clinicians to identify HAIs quickly and drive process improvement. Patient safety is further enhanced through Patient Event Advisor from CareFusion, which identifies patients of highest interest for adverse clinical events, continually screening for clinical status changes that may affect therapy. MedMined services have earned peer reviewed status from the Healthcare Financial Management Association and are ranked number one in the infection prevention market by KLAS. MedMined services provide Texas hospitals with the technology to help reduce HAIs, save lives and reduce costs.

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Columbia Healthcare Analytics Inc.

Columbia Healthcare Analytics can reduce blood use by 30 percent or more through interactive external utilization review of all hospital transfusions. The company's approach is unique and effective because it uses a highly summarized critique of comprehensive patient chart data to demonstrate to the physician how and why blood use may have been avoided and deferred.

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connectiMED Networks by Power Station LLC

connectiMED by Power Station LLC provides highly reliable and user-friendly business services and media entertainment in airports and hospitals. Its popular PowerPort product is an interactive kiosk that features stationary public computers with Internet access, portable laptop computer rental, printing capabilities and secure battery charging for laptops, cell phones and other portable electronic devices. Business services are available at a nominal fee, and access to the hospital's website and electronic medical library is available at no charge. connectiMED by Power Station monitors the kiosks electronically and maintains the equipment. THA members receive 20 percent of kiosk revenues.

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DOTmed.com

DOTmed.com is the leading public medical equipment marketplace worldwide. The site gets more than 11,000 unique visitors every day and has almost 100,000 registered users. Through DOTmed's full-service managed auctions, hospitals can recover the maximum fair-market value for their used equipment and assets. The auctions are commission-based transactions run by auction professionals who have the time to do the job right. They handle virtually all aspects of the auction, collect the money from the buyer and pay the selling hospital in advance. Their normal commission is 20 percent of the sale price; however, THA members enjoy a reduced 18 percent rate. There is no fee if equipment does not sell. Even paying the commission, hospitals selling through the DOTmed's auction typically generate at least twice what they would by selling equipment direct. DOTmed also offers minimum sales price guarantees for auctioned equipment.

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Management Dynamics Inc.

Management Dynamics Inc.'s Product Acquisition Consumption and Evaluation Review program assesses product and service utilization patterns and applies value analysis to help hospitals identify ways to significantly reduce consumption and improve product utilization. On average, hospitals save at least 7 percent in supply costs – about \$12,000 to \$15,000 per occupied bed. Hospitals can try a free mini-PACER assessment comparing their non-salary costs against a national database. They will receive a confidential report detailing possible opportunities for cost reduction.

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MEMdata LLC

MEMdata assists hospitals with capital equipment cost-reduction services. MEMdata reduces the price of new equipment purchases with its electronic request for proposal process. The company identifies an average 18 percent savings on the acquisition of all types of equipment, medical and non-medical. Its programs are performance-based, with fees guaranteed to be funded by hard-dollar savings.

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Priority Power Management

Priority Power Management is a leading Texas-based independent energy management and consulting services firm. The company provides unbiased and objective energy management information, supply and risk management and demand-side management. Its client base includes companies in the health care, oil and gas, industrial manufacturing, commercial real estate, governmental, food service, retail and financial services businesses. Since its establishment in 2001, Priority Power Management has procured and managed in excess of \$450 million of power and natural gas on behalf of clients.

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A Cup of Coffee and a Cup of Kindness: Extending Patient Care Beyond Medicine

BY JILL M. JOHNSON

Few events cause as much anxiety as a trip to the hospital, especially if it's unexpected. Patients and family members have to halt every-day routines to attend to the health issue at hand, which means time is scarce and errands are left undone. Additionally, patients often enter a hospital unfamiliar with the layout and parking situation. But when patients visit hospitals that use the contracted services of Curbside Hospitality Inc., they encounter friendly faces to direct them, answer questions, park their car and even fetch coffee and lunch.

At Plaza Medical Center of Fort Worth, patients and visitors are greeted by Monda, a Curbside Hospitality employee who has been there for four years. Her familiar face and knowledge of the hospital creates a welcoming environment and eases the concerns of patients and visitors as they seek information and directions.

"One of the reasons we use Curbside Hospitality is its commitment to screening and bringing in good employees," said Plaza Medical Center Chief Operating Officer Greg Haralson, FACHE. "We use Curbside for valet and patient liaison services, and the way Curbside works with us to find personnel who will present a friendly image of our hospital has been wonderful."

Curbside Hospitality offers concierge, valet parking, parking/garage management and shuttle services to the health care industry. Its valet attendants greet guests, open doors, provide directions, help with wheelchairs and luggage, hail taxis and even help with jump-starts and flat tires. Curbside's concierge services are available to hospital guests and employees for lunch runs, dry cleaning pick-up, car washes, hotel arrangements, personal shopping and more.

"While we provide the valet function of parking and retrieving vehicles, our main focus is on creating a warm and helpful environment," said Mark Currier, director of marketing for Curbside Hospitality. "For both valet and concierge, Curbside operates all aspects of these services, including recruiting, hiring and managing of staff. Additionally, our employees complete a hospital-specific comprehensive training program focused on quality customer service."

Plaza Medical Center leveraged the success of the valet operations by adding a patient liaison component. A Curbside Hospitality employee maintains a presence in the surgical waiting room to help facilitate timely information between families and physicians.

"Curbside helped us fix a breakdown in the communication process, and we have seen our surgery and patient satisfaction scores go up," said Haralson. "We maintain high standards and want to help our patients in any way we can. Our visitors rave about these services."

Centennial Medical Center in Frisco started using Curbside's concierge services two years ago with great success.

"For families of patients, having someone available to take care of errands and tasks gives them one less thing to worry about and allows them to spend more time with loved ones," said Paul Abraham, chief operating officer at Centennial. "For employees, having someone bring them coffee or lunch gives them extra time to spend on patient care, and having someone take care of that oil change gives them more time with their own families when they get off work."

What's the value of these amenities for hospitals? According to Currier, it's decreased staff turnover, which reduces recruitment and retention costs, as well as increased patient satisfaction scores. Additionally, hospitality services can improve scores on the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems survey, which can affect a hospital's ability to attract patients in competitive health care markets. Currier noted that these HCAHPS scores soon will be tied to reimbursement rates, further increasing the value of added services such as valet and concierge.

"Often it's the small gesture of kindness that the patient will remember when completing the survey, such as assistance with wireless hookup or a clean windshield when a car is picked up. That's where Curbside can help," said Currier.

"Curbside staff have come to us with great ideas, and we feel they are part of our team. We've even had a Curbside employee as our hospital employee of the month," said Abraham. "It's been a great partnership."

For more information about Curbside Hospitality, contact David Ryan at dryan@curbside.com or 978/524-0900 or go to www.curbside.com. *



Only the Best: Thorough Background Checks Help Hospitals Make Sound Hiring Decisions

BY KAREN BRANZ

Back in the mid-1980s, the Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council uncovered an ongoing dilemma that affected most of the hospitals in the Metroplex.

“There were a number of less-than-stellar employees who were able to move from one hospital to another because we weren’t able to access detailed information from past employment,” said Lori Goosen, employment manager for Cook Children’s Health Care System in Fort Worth. “When we called past employers to verify employment, we could learn the dates employees had worked there and their title, but not much else.”

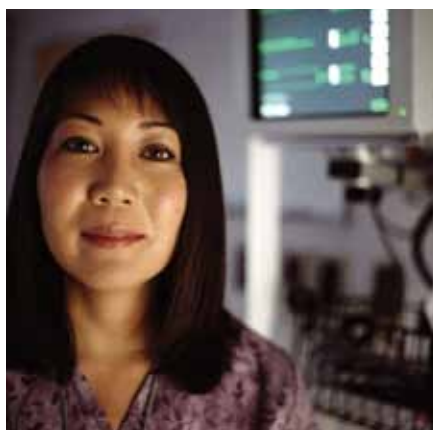
To help remedy the problem, in 1988 the DFWHC created its own background checking company, and its member hospitals agreed to share employment histories. The company, GroupOne Services, set about creating a comprehensive database of employees’ past performance at member hospitals. Cook Children’s was one of its first clients.

“GroupOne was able to provide a much-needed service,” Goosen said. “As the company has grown and added more organizations, the database of information has grown.” Since its inception, GroupOne has expanded its client base from the Dallas-Fort Worth area to nationwide.

In addition to verifying past work history, Goosen said, GroupOne provides Cook Children’s a long list of verifications on prospective employees, including criminal history checks, sex offender database checks, Social Security number verification, professional license verification and education verification.

“Even if we do not have a complete address history, GroupOne can find out where prospective employees have lived and can check with all the county criminal courts to verify that they have a clean history before we hire them,” said Goosen.

“Other companies offer a similar service and a 24-hour turnaround time, and they may be cheaper. But they aren’t as thorough,” said Jackie Middleton, vice president of human resources operations at Methodist Health System in Dallas, which also contracts with GroupOne. “It’s worth taking the extra time and a little more money to be sure we protect our patients, visitors and other employees.”



Middleton and Goosen both said that GroupOne makes it easy to initiate a search. Their hospitals’ human resources departments use Position Manager software to track applicants, and GroupOne has added a link from the hospitals’ software directly to its Web portal.

“All we have to do to initiate a background search on a candidate is click a button within Position Manager. The software uploads all the information on the candidate automatically to GroupOne,” said Goosen. “No additional data entry is required.”

“A big advantage of working with GroupOne is our proprietary database that includes work histories of local hospital employees,” said Eric Scott, vice president at GroupOne. “Other companies can do criminal histories and check references, but none of our competitors can provide a comprehensive review of a candidate’s work history in local hospitals. We are able to provide detailed information, both good and bad, on past employment, including the reason for termination.”

“Applicants might not disclose that they have worked for another hospital in town or the reason for termination. We get that information from the GroupOne database,” said Middleton. “It’s not infrequent that we rescind a job offer after learning additional information from GroupOne.”

“Working with GroupOne over the years has allowed us to make better hiring decisions,” said Goosen. “Sometimes the background checks come back with pages of bad information. When we rescind an offer, we send the candidate a letter to make them aware of the information we were provided, along with a copy of the background check. That gives the applicant the opportunity to dispute the information with GroupOne if he or she feels it is incorrect.”

Beyond the background checks, said Scott, GroupOne conducts salary and benefit surveys for health care human resource departments. The company also can do international searches to verify education and criminal histories.

For more information about GroupOne, contact Eric Scott at erics@gp1.com or 469/648-5052 or go to www.gp1.com. *

AMN Healthcare Acquires Medfinders

AMN Healthcare Services Inc., the nation's largest health care staffing and workforce solutions company, has acquired the parent company of Arlington, Texas-based Nursefinders Inc. (dba Medfinders), one of the nation's leading providers of clinical workforce managed services programs. Through its multi-brand strategy, Medfinders also provides travel nurse and allied staffing, locum tenens, physician search services, and home health care services, as well as local nurse and allied staffing in support of its managed services programs.

"Bringing together the experience and diverse capabilities of both companies in health care staffing and managed services will create significant short- and long-term benefits for our clients," said Susan Salka, president and chief executive officer of AMN Healthcare. "The expansion of our service lines resulting from this combination will substantially improve our ability to deliver an innovative, total workforce management and staffing solution to our broad and growing client base."

For more information, go to www.amnhealthcare.com.

Nominations Sought for Country Doctor of the Year

Staff Care Inc., a national temporary physician staffing firm, is seeking nominations for the 2010 Country Doctor of the Year Award. Now in its 18th year, the award honors the spirit, skill and dedication of America's rural medical practitioners. Staff Care is accepting nominations for the award through Oct. 15.

Nominations will be accepted for physicians who practice in communities of 20,000 or less and who are engaged in such primary care areas as general practice, family practice, internal medicine and pediatrics. For more information or to obtain a nomination form, go to www.countrydoctoraward.com or call 800/685-2272.

Amerinet Offers Revenue Cycle Enhancement Tips

Amerinet Inc., a leading national health care group purchasing organization, has released an executive briefing, *Keeping the Reimbursement Train on Track*, that offers tips and best practices aimed at ensuring hospitals and other health care providers are collecting all the revenue they are due. The briefing, written by Kelley Blair, vice president at Craneware Professional Services, and Linda Corley, corporate compliance officer for revenue cycle solutions at Dell Services, examines how the revenue cycle process touches all points of care – from the moment the patient walks in the door through final collection of payment – and how a breakdown at any stage can hurt profits.

"The majority of hospitals still are not collecting all of the revenue they are entitled to. Ninety-two percent of hospitals lost money on outpatient services – the fastest-growing segment of hospital billable services – and medical necessity denials cost some hospitals more dollars than they receive in collections," said Corley. "This adds up to lost revenue contributing to the negative margins experienced by nearly one-third of hospitals."

Amerinet, Craneware and Dell Services, along with Unibased Systems Architecture, have formed the Amerinet Alliance for Financial Efficiency, which offers health care organizations aligned solutions they need to reduce costs, generate revenue and achieve the financial health needed to best serve their communities.

For more information, go to www.amerinet-gpo.com.

RCA Names Tom Tucker New President and CEO

Tom Tucker has joined Resource Corporation of America as president and chief executive officer. He brings to RCA extensive knowledge and a wealth of experience in the hospital services industry.



Tucker

"RCA is positioned well to help the hospital identify and recover its at-risk dollars. This company is very patient-centric while also working the technical side of reimbursements for the benefit of the hospital," Tucker said. "This is a rare combination and one that is hard to master – as RCA has done. The company's performance proves it. The people at RCA are great, and I look forward to working with them and our clients as well."

RCA, a leading provider of third-party self-pay eligibility services, assists clients in recovering at-risk revenue from uninsured and self-pay patients. For more information, go to www.resource-corp.com.

THA Offers Social Media Resource Guide

The Texas Hospital Association has published a new comprehensive guidebook to help hospitals understand the social media landscape and how social media may benefit health care organizations. Developed through extensive research using social media tools themselves, *Where Social Media and Health Care Meet: Harnessing New Media Tools* combines how-to advice with best practices from social media experts and hospital early adopters.

The guide uniquely focuses on social media applications specifically in the hospital setting. In addition to advice and best practices, it includes case studies and sample policies and procedures.

For more information or to order, go to www.tha.org/smproducts. *

Protecting against Identity Theft: Is Your Patient Information Safe?

BY TERRI SCHEXNAYDER

Identity theft is one of the fastest-growing crimes in the United States, with more than 50 percent of these thefts occurring within the workplace. Health care facilities and their employees handle large amounts of personal and confidential information and could be at risk of violating state and federal regulations. This can lead to serious legal implications for the facilities as well as their employees.

ID Theft Solutions of America, however, has stepped up to provide a proactive identity theft protection program that not only helps its medical clients stay up-to-code through its on-site risk assessment and employee training, but also offers all staff members the opportunity to purchase identity theft protection for themselves and their families.

Peace of Mind is Best ROI

When IDTSOA approached Parmer Medical Center in Friona in 2005, Heidi Eichenauer, director of business development, was listening. She knew firsthand just how distressing identity theft can be.

“Both a friend and I had personally experienced identity theft, so I know how important this coverage is,” Eichenauer said. “After talking with IDTSOA staff and understanding what they were going to do for our employees, it was an ideal situation to check out.”

IDTSOA offers on-site training on data security for all employees at no cost to the health care facility. At the end of the training session, employees have an opportunity to participate in a voluntary benefit to help protect their own families from identity theft issues. Eichenauer has seen the “Aha!” moment during these educational forums with employees.

“You can see the light bulb go off in the employee’s head when he or she hears the different ID theft scenarios presented,” she said. “IDTSOA’s team shared, for example, that most people think it’s credit-related, so if they don’t have credit cards, no worry! But we learned only 16 percent of these thefts are actually credit-related.”

Trustworthiness Is Key

John Henderson, chief executive officer of Childress Regional Medical Center, the second-largest employer in Childress County, is thankful he overcame his early skepticism about IDTSOA almost four years ago.

“I was a little wary of vendor pitches that touted ‘no cost’ to the hospital. Being protective of my employees, I told IDTSOA staff to stick to the facts and no hard sell,” Henderson said. “They did just that, and now many of our employees, including myself, benefit greatly from IDTSOA’s services.”

“So many companies out there are trying to ride the wave of ID theft,” said Jason Lavender, managing partner of IDTSOA. “What many of them do is give you false guarantees or reimbursement plans, but, in reality, when you read the fine print many are just fancy credit monitoring services disguised as ‘protection.’”

“Before IDTSOA, our employees would talk about the fear and endless hours of dealing with their personal identity thefts,” said Henderson. “Now, those who participate in the benefit program definitely value the protection IDTSOA can offer.” He added that his own peace of mind comes at an estimated \$10 to \$12 per paycheck for his family’s coverage and the prepaid legal services package.

Fighting ID Theft Criminals

IDTSOA was founded in 2002 by Lavender and his business partner, Kevin Putnam. IDTSOA is a proactive identity theft protection agency specializing in solutions before, during and after an identity theft issue occurs. The company currently serves more than 50,000 corporate and individual clients in North America.

“There is never any guarantee that a business won’t fall victim to identity thieves,” said Putnam. “Our program doesn’t pretend to offer false guarantees but more so an affirmative defense against potential fines, fees and lawsuits as a result of noncompliance with the laws.”

In case that isn’t enough, Putnam says, the program helps ensure employee productivity.

“Our solutions help keep employees focused on the business at hand, not dealing with their legal or identity theft issues at work,” said Putnam. “Our clients appreciate that.”

For more information about ID Theft Solutions of America, contact Kevin Putnam at kputnam@idtsoa.com or 512/814-0201 or go to www.idtsoa.com. *

Rehabilitation Staffing: Traveling Therapists Hit the Ground Running

BY KAREN BRANZ

“There is a huge shortage of physical therapists and occupational therapists nationwide, and it is particularly difficult to recruit them to Central Texas,” said Gwen Housman, director of rehabilitation services for Providence Medical Center in Waco. “It typically takes as much as a year to recruit a permanent PT.”

With rehabilitation services increasingly in demand, that presents a challenge for Housman. “Our outpatient area is booming, and we really struggle with staffing. To fill the gap we use traveling therapists. It’s a tremendous expense, but the travelers pay for themselves. Otherwise, the patient doesn’t get seen,” she said.

Housman said that when she needs traveling therapists, she most often calls Med Travelers, a subsidiary of AMN Healthcare.

“The staff at Med Travelers provide great service. They do a great job of screening. The candidates’ skills are always exactly what they say they are,” Housman said. “I’ve hired three of their travelers for full-time work. I would have hired more if I could have.”

“One of the qualities that makes Med Travelers different from other placement services is that we specialize in allied medical staff,” said Noe Arceo, director of regional accounts for allied therapy at Med Travelers. “In some agencies, the salesperson that places therapists also places physicians. Because most salespeople work on commission, placing a physician is going to have a higher return, so the salesperson may not give as much time and attention to placing the therapist. At Med Travelers, we have staff who only place therapists. Their time is spent understanding the needs of the rehabilitation sector.”

“The recruiting teams also have a very targeted focus,” said Brent Harrolle, Med Travelers vice president of recruiting. “Our therapy recruiting team focuses solely on finding the best therapy talent.”

Margaret Gullede, director of rehabilitation and home care at Huntsville Memorial Hospital, prefers to work with Med Travelers for just that reason.



“Noe really knows about therapy. He knows we need people who can hit the ground running,” Gullede said. “We can ask him to find us a traveler to fill a specific therapy position, and if he doesn’t have a traveler who fits the bill, he’ll say so upfront. He won’t send us someone who doesn’t have the skills we need. He doesn’t waste our time.”

Housman echoes that statement. “Med Travelers sends us therapists who need only minimal orientation. That’s important because if a therapist needs 30 days of orientation to be productive in a 13-week assignment, that cuts into the value,” she said.

The service doesn’t stop with the placement. If a problem arises with a traveler, Gullede said, Med Travelers staff take immediate action.

“We had a therapist who developed a mental health issue after a couple of weeks of work. It wasn’t Med Travelers’ fault – she seemed fine when she started,” Gullede said. “Med Travelers immediately removed her and found us a replacement very quickly. That’s not always the case with other agencies. One agency sent us a therapist who had just been injured in a car wreck and clearly couldn’t do the work. I know Med Travelers wouldn’t do that.”

Med Travelers offers the personal attention of a small firm combined with the resources and infrastructure of AMN Healthcare, the largest health care staffing company in the United States. That’s a winning combination, according to Gullede and Housman. They both say they turn to Med Travelers when they’re in need of traveling therapists.

“I don’t use a lot of travelers, but when I need one, Med Travelers is my preferred agency,” Gullede said.

“We have used other agencies, but the majority of the time we use Med Travelers,” said Housman. “The staff’s follow-up has been good. When an assignment ends, they make sure there is no gap. Either the assignment is extended or they have someone else ready to come to work.”

For more information about Med Travelers, contact Landry Seedig at landry.seedig@amnhealthcare.com or 972/830-4407 or go to www.medtravelers.com. *

Addressing the Nursing Shortage: Recruiting Highly Skilled Nurses from Abroad

BY BARBARA WRAY

In 2006, Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital in Houston was facing a 10.5 percent vacancy rate for nurses. The nursing shortage in the United States, combined with a growing percentage of the current nursing staff nearing retirement, was putting an increasing strain on existing resources. While contract nurses could fill immediate needs, this strategy did not provide a cost-effective, long-term solution to the hospital's staffing requirements.

Luckily for the hospital, the chief nursing officer at the time knew from previous experience that she could look to O'Grady Peyton International for help. O'Grady Peyton has a longstanding presence in the global health care staffing arena and is part of AMN Healthcare, the largest temporary health care staffing and management services company in the United States.

Finding the Solution

There has been a persistent shortage of nurses throughout the country since the 1990s, and the hiring of experienced foreign-educated nurses who come with full U.S. registered nurse licenses has helped address that shortage. O'Grady Peyton recruits nurses and allied health care professionals from English-speaking countries around the world for long-term assignments.

"Like me, our chief executive officer was trained in the United Kingdom," said Gillian Alexander, who was assistant director of nursing at Memorial Hermann Southwest when the hospital began working with O'Grady Peyton and now serves as chief nursing officer. "We wanted nurses who also had trained in the United Kingdom, who spoke English, and who had strong clinical skills and good, basic, hands-on nursing experience."

Moving Forward

The hospital contacted O'Grady Peyton and got to work. Alexander and the chief nursing officer flew to London, where they interviewed 30 nurses and accepted 25. Following the visit, they continued to conduct nurse interviews over the Internet. Of the 25 who were accepted, 20 nurses arrived in the United States.

"Our nurses treated them well, including them in parties and activities," Alexander said. "We have a strong orientation program, and it didn't take them long to acclimate."

Memorial Hermann converted 16 of the nurses to regular staff in 2007 and eventually terminated three. Some of the others left for various reasons including moves, and nine are still with the hospital. Two work in the emergency room, two more in the intensive care unit, and the others in medical surgical.

A Nationwide Challenge

Visa retrogression, an action by the U.S. Department of State that rolled back visa processing dates, created a delay in visa issuance of several years and consequently a long line of unfulfilled applications for employment-based green cards. These delays have slowed the process of hiring international nurses at Memorial Hermann considerably.

"Fortunately, we've ended up with 20 highly trained international nurses since then, but we still have 32 nurses waiting to come," says Alexander. "The delays are upsetting to the nurses and to us. They are fabulous nurses, and we're eager to have them here."

"O'Grady Peyton has remained committed to providing quality international health care staffing and has maintained and supported an active pipeline of nurses despite visa delays. These health care professionals will be eligible to work in the U.S. over the next 1-5 years as their application dates become current and visa numbers are available to them," said Sinead Carbery, vice president of sales and placement at O'Grady Peyton.

In terms of the nursing shortage, Memorial Hermann is in a better position than it was in 2006. While the hospital has taken other steps to fill vacancies and improve retention, working with O'Grady Peyton has had a definite impact. At this time, Memorial Hermann has a 92 percent retention rate and a 1.5 percent vacancy rate for nursing.

"Nurses with these kinds of skills are hard to find, but we currently have no vacancies," Alexander said.

For more information about O'Grady Peyton International, contact Sinead Carbery at sinead.carbery@ogradypeyton.com or 888/570-0038 or go to www.ogradypeyton.com. *

Report: Emergency Room Wait Times Longer

Patients at U.S. hospitals are experiencing the longest wait times in emergency departments since reports were first made available in 2002, according to a report from Press Ganey Associates Inc., a leading provider of quality improvement solutions for the health care industry.

From the moment patients walk into a hospital emergency room until the time they are discharged from the emergency department, the average time spent in 2009 was four hours and seven minutes – an increase of four minutes compared to 2008 data and 31 compared to 2002 data.

The data, included in Press Ganey's *2010 Emergency Department Pulse Report: Patient Perspectives on American Health Care*, is based on evaluations of more than 1.5 million patients treated at 1,893 hospitals in 2009.

For more information, go to www.pressganey.com.

Hospitals Continue to Feel Effects of Recession

Although the U.S. economy is beginning to show signs of recovery, hospitals continue to be adversely impacted by the lingering effects of the economic recession, according to new survey data from the American Hospital Association. The survey found that nearly three-quarters of hospitals reported reduced operating margins, and 44 percent reported a reduced access to capital. Nearly a quarter of hospitals reported that their ability to access capital is worsening, and 67 percent of hospitals have not started or continued capital projects that were put on hold due to the recession, according to the study.

The AHA survey data also noted that patients continue to delay or forgo care as family budgets remain tight, with 70 percent of hospitals reporting fewer patient visits and elective procedures.

Facing difficult financial challenges, more patients and families are enrolling in programs for low-income populations, like Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program. These programs traditionally do not cover the cost of hospital care, placing increasing financial strain on hospitals. With states facing significant budget shortfalls, intense pressure has been placed on these programs. Exacerbating this trend is that nearly nine in 10 hospitals reported an increase in care for which the hospital received no payment at all.

The report is based on AHA analysis survey data from 572 non-federal, short-term acute care hospitals collected in March and April 2010. For more information or to see the full survey results, go to www.aha.org.

Survey: Demand for Psychiatrists Peaking

Demand for psychiatrists is growing faster than for any other medical specialty, according to a new survey by national physician search firm Merritt Hawkins, an AMN Healthcare Company.

The firm's *2010 Review of Physician Recruiting Incentives* tracks more than 2,800 physician recruiting assignments Merritt Hawkins conducted nationwide from April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010. During that period, the company fielded 179 requests for psychiatrists, up 47 percent from the previous year and 121 percent from three years ago. The increase in demand for psychiatrists is noteworthy because it is taking place during an economic recession that generally has inhibited recruiting of other types of doctors.

"When the economy goes down, mental health problems tend to go up," said Mark Smith, president of Merritt Hawkins. "But there is more to the rising demand for psychiatrists than the recession. A combination of factors is driving a psychiatrist shortage that could soon reach crisis levels."

More than half of all psychiatrists are 55 years old or older and nearing retirement age, Smith noted, while fewer medical school graduates are showing an interest in psychiatry. As the supply of psychiatrists decreases, population growth, population aging, economic challenges and two wars are driving demand for mental health services higher. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services projects that demand for psychiatric services will increase by 19 percent from 1995 to 2020.

Complete survey results are available at www.merrithawkins.com.

Paper: \$3.6 Trillion in Waste Can Be Eliminated

The U.S. health care industry can eliminate \$3.6 trillion in health care waste over the next 10 years by addressing a series of operational inefficiencies, according to a white paper published by Thomson Reuters.

The report analyzes the country's leading public and private sector efforts to reduce waste in the health care system and identifies proven strategies that have been deployed to cut costs and improve patient care.

"Last year, we published a report concluding that the U.S. health care system wastes \$700 billion a year," said Bob Kelley, vice president for health care analytics at Thomson Reuters and co-author of the paper. "This new report describes a possible path for significantly reducing that waste."

By systematically incorporating best practices into the organizational structure of the health care industry, the paper says, it's possible to cut waste 5 percent per year. Over 10 years, that would add up to \$3.6 trillion and keep total health care expenditures at their current rate of about 17 percent of the nation's gross domestic product.

The study can be found at www.factsforhealthcare.com (registration required). *

Turning Bad into Good: Debt Purchasing Agency Helps Hospitals Recover Exhausted Receivables

BY LAURA TUMA

Angleton Danbury Medical Center Chief Financial Officer Bill Garwood was immediately interested when a friend suggested that the hospital consider selling its exhausted receivables to a debt purchasing agency. After all, the small public hospital had little hope of collecting the accounts and needed capital rather than a write-off.

After investigating several agencies, Angleton Danbury chose SquareTwo Financial Healthcare Funding (then known as Healthcare Funding Solutions). In May 2009, Angleton Danbury sold \$19.5 million in bad debt to SquareTwo. The hospital received an immediate lump-sum payment, and Garwood sat back to see what would happen.

“After a few years in this business, you learn to prepare for trouble,” he said. But there was none: no patient complaints about SquareTwo’s collection methods, no complications with the accounts that had been sold, no burden on the hospital’s staff.

“The initial placement went so smoothly that we wanted to do it again,” Garwood said. In February, Angleton Danbury sold an additional \$11.5 million in old debt. That placement went so smoothly that the hospital now sells SquareTwo debt returned from its primary collection agency on a monthly basis, ensuring the hospital of a constant income stream and freeing up employees for other tasks.

The value of Angleton Danbury’s bad debt sold monthly has varied from \$500,000 to \$1 million, and the hospital usually receives less than a penny per dollar owed, depending on the age of the debt and other factors. In one recent month, Angleton Danbury sold exhausted accounts worth \$800,000 and received about \$7,000.

“That’s a lot of money to a small hospital like ours,” Garwood said. He admits that he originally expected a higher payment for the hospital’s debt but now understands SquareTwo’s approach to pricing. “I came to realize that every set of accounts is unique and different and that their pricing guidelines protect everyone. We’ve had minimal buybacks and no complaints.”

SquareTwo President Mikel Burroughs explains that the company manually reviews files line by line to detect any accounts that are uncollectable because of death or bankruptcy and then places a value on the remaining accounts. In general, these remaining accounts are at least 12 to 18 months past due

and could not be collected by the hospital or a primary collection agency.

“There’s a huge cost on our end to collect that debt,” Burroughs said. “Agencies that overpay for hospital debt are forced to push harder on the



consumer, and that’s what often leads to complaints. We have to collect 2.5 times what we pay to make a profit, so it’s important to us to price fairly. We open up our whole analysis with the hospital CFO and director of patient accounts so they understand our pricing strategy and know how we’re going to collect that asset.”

SquareTwo uses an unusual collection method based on licensed attorney firms rather than contingency collection firms, according to Michael Toth, director of portfolio acquisitions.

“Most debt purchasers turn accounts back to the contingency collection agencies that already had them, but we don’t consider that an effective way to collect 2-year-old debt,” Toth said. “We use all licensed attorney firms that approach the business like it’s the first call they’ve received. We find this to be a more effective tactic, as well as one that limits complaints hospitals receive.”

East Texas Medical Center Tyler became SquareTwo’s first Texas customer when it sold \$39 million of accounts receivable in 2007. Byron Hale, senior vice president and CFO, reports that ETMC Tyler received no negative feedback and sold a \$15 million book of bad debt in 2009. Hale says that experience also was positive.

“We have been pleased with the efficiency and responsiveness of SquareTwo staff during all aspects of our relationship with them,” Hale said. “They display a high level of knowledge and professionalism both before and after the accounts have been sold.”

For more information about SquareTwo Financial Healthcare Funding, contact Michael Toth at mtoth@squaretwofinancial.com or 281/251-3445 or go to www.squaretwofinancial.com. *

Survey: Readers Find Revamped Sharing Useful

This issue marks the one-year anniversary of the redesigned *Sharing*. Over the course of the last year, the publication has provided readers with real-life examples of how Texas hospitals have benefitted from the products and services of 23 companies endorsed by the Texas Hospital Association. A recent readership survey revealed that almost one in five respondents had contacted a company after reading about it in *Sharing*.

"We are pleased that readers are finding the articles in *Sharing* useful and informative," said Jim Dixon, president/ chief executive officer of HealthSHARE. "We redesigned the publication to make

it a more valuable resource for hospital leaders as they try to make the best purchasing decisions for their facilities. Time is limited, and in this uncertain economy, it's more important than ever to make well-informed choices. The case studies in *Sharing* demonstrate how the Texas Hospital Association is partnering with proven companies to help members get the most bang for their buck."

To read past issues of *Sharing* go to www.healthshare-tha.com.

HealthSHARE's Speakers Bureau Continues to Grow

Does your organization need a speaker on health care-related topics? Health-

SHARE's Speakers Bureau may be able to help. Subject-matter experts from Texas Hospital Association-endorsed companies are available on a broad spectrum of topics, including capital financing, executive recruitment, retirement plans and nursing leadership. Customized presentations also may be arranged. Almost three dozen experts have joined the bureau since it was launched last year.

There is no fee for using the HealthSHARE Speakers Bureau, and most speakers offer their services as a free service to hospitals and health care-related organizations. For a complete listing of topics and speaker credentials, visit the Speakers Bureau section of the HealthSHARE website at www.healthshare-tha.org. *

THA-Endorsed Companies Help Support THT Annual Conference

Many Texas Hospital Association-endorsed companies lent their support to the Texas Healthcare Trustees 2010 Annual Conference, held July 29-31 in San Antonio. With more than 500 total attendees, this year's conference was one of the most successful to date, in large part due to the generosity of these companies. The following THA-endorsed companies were sponsors:

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Attendees meet with sponsors during the Texas Healthcare Trustees 2010 Annual Conference in San Antonio.

Look for HealthSHARE representatives at these upcoming events:

Oct. 11-12

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Nov 9-11

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**THA 2011 Annual Conference
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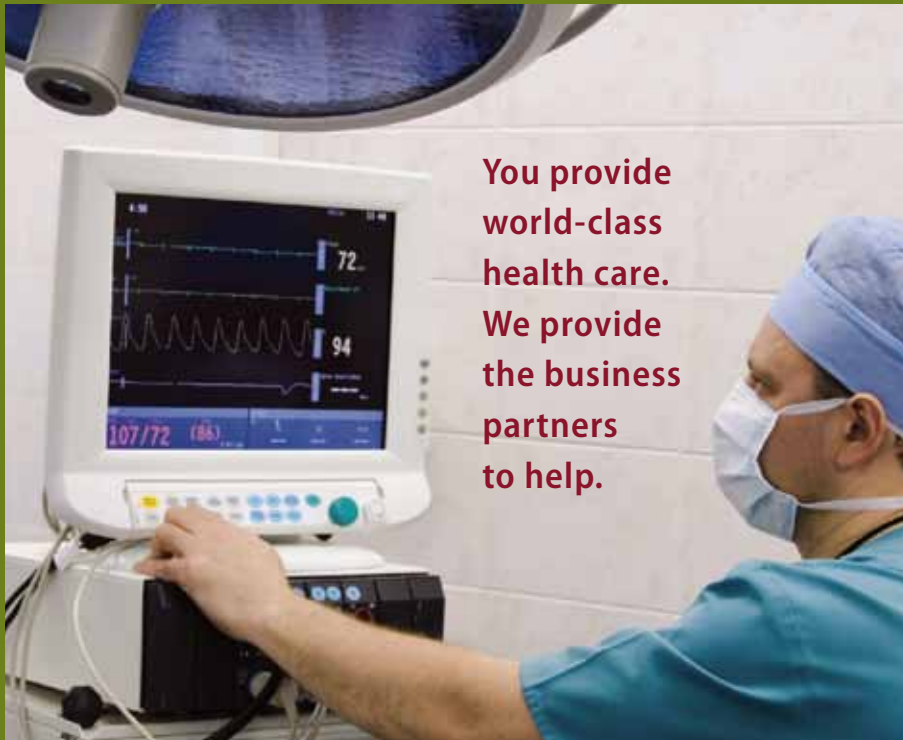


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