



**Tom Royer, M.D.,
President and CEO
CHRISTUS Health**

Welcome to the first edition of *Royer Rounds*, our quarterly newsletter designed for medical staff members of CHRISTUS hospitals. The goal of *Royer Rounds* is to inform our physicians about CHRISTUS system projects and initiatives that are of interest to them and provide a resource for best practices to be shared throughout the organization.

Throughout CHRISTUS, from Mexico to Texas to Louisiana, we are proud to have more than 9,000 physicians on our medical staff rosters, rising from approximately 7,000 when CHRISTUS was formed in 1999. Your support and continued dedication to the health profession makes our mission *to extend the healing ministry of Jesus Christ* come alive in the communities we serve together.

In this and future editions of *Royer Rounds*, we will bring you regular updates on the Unity Project, which is the system-wide standardization process to adopt one software platform at all CHRISTUS facilities.

As you are already aware, information technology is a key driver in the optimal performance of any health care system. Our goal is to provide systems and resources that will provide the momentum necessary to improve our information flow - ultimately impacting patient satisfaction, your satisfaction level and our Associates' satisfaction with their jobs.

(See DR. ROYER, page 4)

CHRISTUS HEALTH SYSTEM UPDATES

Information Management/The Unity Project

The Unity Project is being launched as an organization-wide Process Redesign, Data Standardization and Systems Consolidation effort that will span 2 – 3 years, and will touch virtually all CHRISTUS facilities and departments. The project will involve implementing the MEDITECH software applications, and will result in replacement of most of the McKesson systems and upgrade of the existing MEDITECH systems in operation today.



The use of information technology in medicine has steadily risen over the past decade. Not only have healthcare technology vendors like MEDITECH continued to develop software to support physician access to clinical information, but a rise in the use of consumer-based electronics like Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) in the clinical environment has provided new ways for physicians to utilize technology in the delivery of patient care. (See UNITY, page 3)

Best Practices/Touchstone:

Change in Submission Process

CHRISTUS Health encourages our physicians and Associates to submit Best Practices for consideration in the Touchstone Awards program. Several changes to the review process for Best Practices will be initiated this year with the anticipation of making the selection process more objective, improve information flow and readability, and assist in making it clearer to meet the criteria for Touchstone consideration. **What this means for submitters** - the Best Practice submission must follow the format outlined on the CHRISTUS intranet site under Best Practices (*How to Submit a Best Practice*). We will be hosting informational Webinars in February to outline the new process. If you would like to receive information on the Webinars or have questions about the Best Practice submission process, please contact Nicky Scott at Nicola.scott@christushealth.org or at 713-680-4829.

Physician Satisfaction Surveys Coming Soon

The second annual system-wide physician satisfaction survey process will begin the first week of February. Active medical staff members should watch for an envelope from DMR Research. The survey can be completed by mail or online this year. Results of the survey help us work in partnership more effectively with our physicians. We sincerely appreciate your taking a few minutes to participate in this survey.

Royer Rounds Editorial Board:

Thomas C. Royer, M.D.
President and CEO,
CHRISTUS Health

Benton Baker, III, M.D.
System Medical Director,
CHRISTUS Spohn Health System
and CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Health
Care; CHRISTUS Health, and
Vice President and Chief Medical
Officer, CHRISTUS Medical Group

Richard C. Davis, M.D.,
VPMA and Chief Medical Officer,
CHRISTUS Spohn Health System

John A. Gillean, M.D.
Senior Vice President and Chief
Medical Officer, CHRISTUS Health

Marc Lawrence
Director, IM Physician Services,
CHRISTUS Health

Linda McClung
Senior Vice President –
Communications, Public Affairs and
Philanthropy, CHRISTUS Health

William B. McMillan, M.D.
VPMA and Regional Chief Medical
Officer, CHRISTUS Health
Southwest Texas

Mario Quintanilla, M.D.
System Medical Director of
Informatics, CHRISTUS Health

Elmore Rigamer, M.D.
System Medical Director Louisiana,
CHRISTUS Health

Eileen Sampanes, R.N.
Director Clinical Performance
Support, CHRISTUS Health

Terry Siebert, M.D.
System Medical Director, Gulf Coast
and Southeast Texas, CHRISTUS
Health

Editor: Teri Moffitt Cardenas
Teri.cardenas@christushealth.org

Revenue Cycle Revelations *Point of Service Cash Collections*

The area of health care finance changes daily – with more burden of covering health care costs being shifted to the consumer. All health care providers have experienced insurance companies requiring patients to pay more out-of-pocket expenses in the form of co-pays, co-insurance and deductibles. Additionally, patients without insurance coverage are increasing at an alarming rate. Over 45 million people in the United States are currently uninsured. In CHRISTUS' service areas, over 20% of the population has no insurance coverage.

These numbers impact all health care providers. In fiscal year 2004, CHRISTUS Health wrote off \$200,000,000 to bad debt, that is the cost of care for patients who have the ability to pay but choose not to. This is completely separate from CHRISTUS Health's charity care programs and other community benefits which total hundreds of millions of dollars.

To counter this negative financial trend in bad debt and in an effort to sustain the needs of our ministry, CHRISTUS Health has implemented a point-of-service cash collection program. The program is designed to accommodate both emergent and non-emergent patients who have the ability to pay. The Emergent patient, generally a patient presenting to the Emergency Room, is required to pay a deposit **after** the medical screening process. The Non-Emergent patient, which typically presents to receive such services as out-patient surgery, radiology services or laboratory services is asked to pay the amount their insurance company will not pay, such as their co-pay, deductible or other uncovered amounts. In some instances, a patient may be rescheduled if they require additional time to secure their out-of-pocket expenses. In all rescheduled situations, the physician's office will be notified. In the event a patient cannot pay, financial arrangements will be offered. Financial counselors are also available to assist patients with questions or concerns regarding their financial responsibility or help them find programs where they can qualify.

CHRISTUS Health is adapting to the changing environment of payment for services. Our goal is to work with all our patients to provide them as much assistance and guidance in this area as possible.

CHRISTUS Patient Satisfaction and Emergency Department Satisfaction Scores Hit All-Time Highs

The system score for inpatient satisfaction came in at the 69.3rd percentile (85.8 means score) for December, an all-time high for the system. The scores for emergency department patient satisfaction made significant improvements in December, hitting the 51.2nd percentile (82.4 mean score), compared to the 35.8th percentile in November.

ROYER rounds



THE UNITY PROJECT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Over the next few years, CHRISTUS will continue to expand technology capabilities for physicians through the Unity Project and other key measures designed to enhance quality in care delivery, improve access to clinical information for physicians and other caregivers, and enhance the patient experience both in our facilities and in the community.

Healthcare economic evolution such as pay for performance, the promulgation of the recent quality initiatives and medical error and litigation containment are driving many of the newer information technologies. Physicians understand the importance of embracing technology for assistance and at times in their defense. Decisions around the technology needs for medical practice, identifying ways to build and implement new technologies, and preparing physicians for these systems will be key components to implementation planning as we go forward. Physicians must take an active role in these initiatives, or risk payers, regulatory bodies, or the government doing so for them.

To meet this need, Dr. Mario Quintanilla is working closely with CHRISTUS leadership to establish physician advisory functions. One aspect of this will be formation of a group of medical staff from across the organization to meet on a regular basis and provide input to technology decisions and deployment strategies. This group will represent a variety of disciplines to ensure broad understanding of clinical requirements for information technology. There will be an enterprise-wide council as well as smaller local hospital advisory units that will participate. If you are interested in learning more about these initiatives or participating in the process, please contact Dr. Quintanilla at 713-668-9443 or medtel@hotmail.com.

LEARN MORE ABOUT ROYER ROUNDS

Royer Rounds is a quarterly physician newsletter produced by CHRISTUS Health. The main goal of *Royer Rounds* is to provide system updates on projects important to medical staff physicians including information technology, quality, patient safety initiatives, compliance, hospital process and re-design, billing and collections, and Best Practices.

The next deadline for article consideration is **March 1st** for the April 2005 edition. If you would like to submit an article for consideration by the Editorial Board, please send your article via e-mail to: Teri Cardenas at teri.cardenas@christushealth.org or for more information, please call 713. 680.4822. Thank you!

You may also access Royer Rounds online at www.christushealth.org under the "Professional Resources" section.

DR. ROYER'S WELCOME (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

As health care providers, we are committed to delivering high quality, accessible care that meets or exceeds our patients' expectations. That pledge also brings challenges in today's health care arena.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that both the number of Americans living in poverty and the number without health insurance rose for the third straight year. Texas leads the nation in the number of uninsured with Louisiana following in third place.

These trends continue to place burdens on health care providers, especially non-profit providers such as CHRISTUS, to run the most efficient operational systems so we can commit more to our charity care and similar programs. We also want to continue re-investing in our facilities, equipment and technologic advances to provide our communities the best care possible – and provide you the best hospital environment to work in..

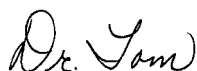
If you haven't had a chance to see our FY2004 Annual Report, CHRISTUS provided more than \$441 million in total community benefits last year. If you would like to check out the Annual Report, you may visit www.christushealth.org and view it online or contact our Community Health department at 713.683.2086 to have a copy mailed to you.

In future editions of *Royer Rounds*, we will communicate process re-design and quality initiatives designed to improve our operations, but more importantly, help CHRISTUS provide the best patient experience *anywhere*. I am happy to report that our patient satisfaction and emergency department (ED) satisfaction scores were the highest ever this past December 2004. In addition, our Associate Satisfaction is at an all time high. I commend you for your role in these results.

Thank you for your dedication to the most incredible profession in the world. Your leadership, support and willingness to work as our partner were critical elements to our current successes and allow us to achieve even greater successes in the future.

As we embark on a new year filled with hope, filled with promise, let us remember that "there are no speed limits on the road to excellence." (David W. Johnson)

Sincerely, you have my deepest appreciation, my respect and my most humble admiration.



***CHRISTUS Health's mission is to extend the healing ministry of Jesus Christ.
To learn more about CHRISTUS Health or access our Living Well online library of health
information, please visit us at www.christushealth.org.***