

2012 Cultural Competency Series

The Cultural Competency series tells the stories of UPMC employees who put patients and others first, by being culturally competent and by recognizing each other's differences.

There's one medical condition that all people must deal with as they grow older — aging itself. The aging process affects all of us in different ways, and as the quality of medical care has dramatically increased over the past few decades, so has the lifespan of the average American. The fastest growing population in the United States is those who are 85 and older, and with the first wave of Baby Boomers reaching retirement age in 2011, we have only begun to feel the profound effects of this demographic shift.

To ensure that older patients receive the best possible care, the Aging Institute of UPMC Senior Services and the University of Pittsburgh offers state-of-the-art educational programs for health care professionals and the public, and also promotes innovative research on aging. The Aging Institute is an educational resource that those within the UPMC system as well as members of the community can draw upon for guidance, and it is an invaluable tool for caring for the elderly.

"Our focus is to ensure that health care staff are knowledgeable about how care to older adults needs to be provided," says **Betty Robison**, gerontology educator at the institute. "We have to be more skillful in general. We are dealing with older patients who are seeing multiple physicians, taking multiple medications. They have higher risk of infections, and issues like chronic disease escalate. We need to have a heightened awareness of how care for older adults is different."

Over the last several years, the staff at UPMC McKeesport have worked closely with the Aging Institute for training on how best to treat what is a predominantly elderly patient base. Of the inpatient admissions, 58 percent are 65 and older and 21 percent are 85 and older. Older

adults are typically the core customers of a hospital, and that's especially true with UPMC McKeesport.

"The Aging Institute is a great resource for knowledge in regard to developing contemporary practices for caring for the older patient," says **Doris Gaudy**, director, Patient Services at UPMC McKeesport. "We recognize that we need to have a focus on strategies for enhancing care for this patient population."

"Our journey with the Aging Institute began a couple of years ago," says **Cheryl Como, PhD**, vice president, Patient Services at UPMC McKeesport. "When Betty shared a program on geriatric sensitivity with our entire staff, she didn't expect the classes to be so well-attended and for there to be such enthusiasm."

UPMC McKeesport nurses displayed the same level of enthusiasm when they worked with the institute to achieve certification as Geriatric Resource Nurses, who receive additional education about the care of older adults. There are now 20 Geriatric Resource Nurses, at least one for each nursing unit in the hospital. It was this level of engagement that inspired UPMC McKeesport to try to become a NICHE-designated hospital.

NICHE — which stands for Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders — is a program from the Hartford Institute at the New York University College of Nursing that seeks to achieve systematic nursing change that benefits hospitalized older adults. To receive NICHE designation, a hospital must improve patient outcomes, enhance staff knowledge and skills, increase patient satisfaction, reduce the length of stay for older patients, reduce the costs associated with hospital care for older adults, and improve compliance with regulations and industry standards. In April, UPMC McKeesport became the first NICHE-designated hospital in western Pennsylvania.



That is a success that will only further improve the quality of care UPMC McKeesport provides to its older patients. "When you become NICHE-designated you have access to the wealth of information that NICHE has gathered," Dr. Como says. "You get the best practices, the protocols, and educational materials."

Changes in how UPMC McKeesport thinks about caring for older patients are felt in ways both large and small. Prescriptions and discharge instructions are written in a larger print to make them easier to read for older people with vision problems. Serious complications, such as functional decline and delirium, are closely monitored and addressed. Even the physical structure of the hospital is undergoing changes to reflect this new focus on treating older adults.

"We're in the process of building two or three geriatric-friendly suites in our emergency rooms," Ms. Gaudy says. "The clocks and signage will be in a font that's large enough for older patients to read. And we'll have gurneys that can be lowered very close to the floor as an intervention to enhance the hospital's fall-prevention program."

"Two or three years ago, when we undertook any physical plant change, we were blind to the needs of our older patients," Dr. Como says. "It's at the top of our mind now."

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This focus on older patients will only grow stronger and more widespread throughout UPMC over time. Many employees already have participated in an interactive educational program called Ageless Wisdom, in which people can wear glasses that simulate cataracts or walk with corn kernels in their shoes to mimic arthritis. It's one thing to say that we need to be more understanding of the needs of older patients, but gaining first-hand knowledge of what elders must deal with can be a profound experience.

"We all know what it's like to be young, but we all don't know what it's like to be an older adult," Ms. Robison says. "Giving people an opportunity to experience that makes a huge impact. The nursing students remember that training; it sticks with them. Any time you can learn by doing, it sticks with you."

*The best way to encourage cultural competency is by sharing outstanding examples. If you or someone you work with has helped a patient with special needs, tell us about it! Email your story to inclusion@upmc.edu and if it's chosen, your story will be included in the Cultural Competency series in Extra. By treating people the way **they** want to be treated, we ensure that inclusion is at the core of everything we do.*



A Day in the Life of a Patient at UPMC East



UPMC East is gearing up for its opening in July by following the steps of its patients, starting from the moment they arrive at the hospital.

By running "Day in the Life" scenarios, UPMC East associates are learning what works and what needs to be refined. With some associates acting as patients, all staff will run through what happens from the time a patient is admitted to the time he or she is discharged. "We will simulate what will happen when we

open," says **Caitlin Colkitt**, project coordinator, UPMC East.

These activities will allow leadership, clinical, and nonclinical staff to see what needs to be perfected before the first actual patient comes in the door. Scripts are used to make sure the scenario tests important details, such as department-to-department handoffs, regulatory compliance, use of eRecord, and the culture of hospitality, just to name a few. Between 10 and 15 observers will watch each step of the process, and offer guidance when needed.

UPMC East's first formal Day in the Life scenarios were held May 23 and May 30, with one more to come. Associates have been practicing their roles daily since they moved into the hospital in May, gearing up for the Day in the Life scenarios and the hospital's opening. This sort of practice is especially needed in a hospital where everyone is a new associate — there aren't associates who have been in the facility for 10 or 15 years who can show their colleagues the ropes. "On your first day, you don't know what elevators to take, you don't have phone numbers memorized, and you may not remember where every supply is stocked," says **Anmarie Lyons**, senior project manager and executive director of Operations, UPMC East. "There's a lot more going on for our team because all these things are new to all of us. This is a different experience than a typical onboarding at an established facility."

Throughout the activity, scribes and runners will be receiving feedback on the Day in the Life activities and transcribing it. In the three hours after the scenario, senior leaders will summarize the data in preparation for a two-hour debriefing session in the afternoon. The entire hospital is involved in both sessions, and it is a completely nonpunitive training process. "We're not testing the actual competences of the staff," Ms. Colkitt says. "We want to know if we know the correct processes. This is a safe learning environment, and it's meant to make us better."

UPMC East Open House

All UPMC employees and their families are invited to attend an open house at UPMC East in Monroeville from 5 to 8 p.m., Friday, June 15.

To attend, visit UPMCEast.com/EmployeeOpenHouse and complete the event registration form. To ensure your reservation, print and bring a copy of your registration confirmation with you. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended. Light refreshments will be served.

UPMC East is located at 2775 Mossdale Blvd., near the intersection of routes 22 and 48.