



### Safer Needles and Sharps

Maine hospitals have adopted sharps safety programs to reduce the number of potentially dangerous needle sticks among healthcare workers. Converting to safer needles and sharps devices is just part of hospitals' efforts to create and sustain a safe work environment and prevent workplace injuries.

MHA has kept members abreast of sharps safety guidelines and sponsors education on compliance with the guidelines, product availability and the trial and selection of sharps safety devices.



### Literature and Medicine

Hospitals in Maine have been participating in a program that uses the reading and group discussion of fiction, poetry and nonfiction to offer healthcare professionals and others an opportunity to reflect on the complex nature of their roles and responsibilities in relation to those they serve and work with.

Doctors, trustees, managers and hospital staff explore the human dimensions of their work, question the assumptions they bring to it and develop connections for themselves between the scientific language of medicine and disease, and the humanistic language of their patients' lived experiences. MHA helped plan and promote this worthwhile program.



### Statewide Trauma System

The Maine Hospital Association was instrumental in planning and encouraging the development of the state's voluntary statewide trauma system. All of Maine's acute care hospitals participate in the system, which is supported by three trauma centers.

The trauma system allows hospitals to identify the types of trauma patients they are able to care for routinely, those who should be swiftly stabilized and transferred and those who should be sent directly from the scene to the trauma center. MHA staff and member hospital representatives serve on the Trauma Advisory Committee charged with overseeing the trauma system.



### Interpretive Services Projects

MHA work groups of hospital representatives developed educational guidance materials aimed toward improving access to hospital services for people who are deaf or have limited English proficiency. All MHA members received copies of the final work product including: annotated hospital policy guidelines, annotated forms, disability access symbols on a diskette, sample Code of Ethics statement for interpreters and assistive communication products information.

The MHA Telehealth Interpretive Services Project continues to improve access for people who are deaf by working with the Pine Tree Society on a federal grant to establish the availability of statewide interpreter services by video-link 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

***Few institutions have undergone as radical a metamorphosis as have hospitals in their modern history.***

—Paul Starr, "The Social Transformation of American Medicine," 1982

**Patient Satisfaction Survey**

The MHA Patient First Initiative works with a national firm to collect and assess objective hospital patient feedback through a uniform statewide survey process. Participating hospitals apply survey results through quality and service improvement education sessions that also include training in national “best practices” in the area of caregiver-patient communications.

A number of continuing care facilities participate in a different satisfaction survey project that is specifically tailored to their resident populations. Another national vendor assists MHA and the participating members to collect and report back the valuable feedback that is used to improve the quality of care at each facility.



**Patient Rights**

Maine hospitals are concerned with making sure patients are satisfied with their care and rectifying any problems that arise during the course of their stay. MHA has worked collaboratively with the Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Licensing and Certification to develop standard language for hospitals to use in notifying patients of their right to file a complaint with the hospital or directly with DHS. The notice can be customized by hospitals and informs patients of how to activate the hospital complaint process. The notice also provides a toll-free number for patients to call if they wish to file a complaint directly with the Division of Licensing and Certification.



**Smoke-free Campuses**

One-third to one-half of all smokers will die from tobacco-related illnesses. Studies of work-site smoking polices have shown that smoke-free facilities increase smokers' motivation to attempt quitting. As part of MHA's continuing efforts to promote health and create healthier communities, the Maine Hospital Association worked with the Maine Medical Association and the Maine Osteopathic Association in developing a series of recommendations and steps for hospitals to take in evaluating their readiness for smoke-free campus designation. Maine hospitals have taken a variety of steps toward implementing smoke-free campuses. Strategies may include providing employees and the community with smoking cessation services to help kick the habit.



**Quality Training**

Through MHA's membership meetings, special issues briefings, trustee forums and other education sessions, hospitals receive information on a wide variety of topics that support quality improvement activities. Focus has been on the quality monitoring and improvement work expected by state and federal certification boards and national accreditation agencies, and specific tools and strategies hospitals can use in quality management programs. Some examples of sessions presented and planned are an overview of Six Sigma, ISO 9000 for healthcare, magnet hospital criteria, change management and patient safety strategies including failure mode and effects analysis. MHA will continue to provide local access to high-level education resources for Maine hospitals.

6 Σ



### **Maine Hospitals for a Healthy Environment**

Maine's hospital community is voluntarily pledging to take a number of important steps over the next several years to improve the environment.

Under the agreement, Maine's 39 hospitals will agree to work toward virtual elimination of mercury from the hospital waste stream by 2005 and organizing mercury thermometer exchange programs; progressive reduction of products and packaging containing PVC; establishing pollution prevention programs to reduce the use of hazardous materials (e.g., solvents, disinfectants) in laboratories, clinical areas, and building maintenance; using their purchasing power to influence manufacturers to provide more environmentally preferable product choices for healthcare; and reducing the overall volume of hospital waste by 50 percent by the year 2010.



### **Forensic Examination Improvements for Sexual Assault Victims**

MHA, in collaboration with the Maine State Police Crime Lab, the Department of Attorney General Victims' Compensation Board and the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault, sponsored regional education sessions on the comprehensive medical, legal and psychosocial care of patients who have experienced sexual assault or abuse. The sessions provided information on the education, training and role of the sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) and the proper collection and storage of evidence for law enforcement. This work resulted from changes in Maine law to improve the evidence collection process and funding for victims of sexual assault.

In the hospital setting, quality takes on a variety of meanings. It encompasses technical excellence: the skills and competence of professionals, the ability of diagnostic and therapeutic equipment, procedures and systems to accomplish the curative and supportive goals of care. It is also about the patient-centered and pride-filled approach to care delivered by the dedicated professionals who treat patients in Maine hospitals.

Quality is ensuring best practices are used to treat illnesses. It's creating a safe environment where patients feel cared for and able to ask questions. It's creating and sustaining a stable and satisfied workforce. The accountability, patient satisfaction, workplace safety and other programs described in this document all further hospitals' quest to give the right treatment in the right setting at the right time.

But the work doesn't stop here. Every day, hospitals learn more about how to avoid errors, improve treatments and provide better care for the patients they serve. As new information is learned and procedures and programs are developed, hospitals will incorporate that knowledge and technology as appropriate in their practice. The Maine Hospital Association will continue to offer training and support to our members to ensure that the people of Maine get the best possible care.

***We recognize our imperfections and constantly strive to improve our performance, seeking humanistic and scientific solutions that ensure positive and coordinated outcomes.***

—The Positive Medicine Credo, "The 50 Most Positive Doctors in America," edited by Mike Magee, MD, 1996

Copyright 2002  
Maine Hospital Association

For more information on  
hospital quality initiatives, contact:

**MHA**



Maine Hospital Association

33 Fuller Road  
Augusta, Maine 04330  
Tel. 207-622-4794  
Fax 207-622-3073  
Website: [www.themha.org](http://www.themha.org)