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## More kudos for the Burn Unit

Credit-rating agencies were not the only ones to recognize us in recent weeks. The American Burn Association re-verified our long-admired Burn Center, the only one so recognized in the state. We are justly recognized as among the best in many clinical areas now, but, although the Burn Center has been *the* region's source for burn and trauma care for many years now, few outside the nation's medical community give it the kind of attention it deserves. Its excellence stems from the work of many people in the unit, but I'd be remiss if I didn't at least note the special leadership of

## Our credit rating rises again

Last month, Moody's Investor Services upgraded the hospital's credit rating and said our fiscal outlook was "stable." The upgrade is nothing but beneficial to us. Not least, it will save us hundreds of thousands of dollars in interest payments on a yearly basis.

We've gotten more good news this week: Fitch Ratings, the other major credit rating agency that follows the University of Colorado Hospital, upgraded our bonds from "BBB+" to "A-." It graded our outlook as "positive." Like Moody's, it cited our "robust volume growth and robust operating profitability" as reasons for the upgrade.



I hate to repeat myself, but... Wow. These upgrades, especially in the midst of what may be the most tumultuous global economy since the 1930s, are more than just financial boons for us. They are reflections of something genuinely special: 3,500 UCH colleagues and some 800 physicians from the School of Medicine sacrificing, innovating and collaborating our way to a prized recognition of financial success.

## Success in the eye of the beholder

As many - my wife, my kids and all of you - can attest, I am a tad neurotic when it comes to financial matters. But, while we need to savor both the Fitch and Moody's recognitions, we really do need to remember we are in extremely perilous times. Unemployment continues to grow. Credit remains tight. Expenses remain daunting, and many of our needs for more technology, more personnel, more beds, more everything have not diminished. Our brethren hospitals - many right here in Colorado - are being forced to cut back. And we, of course, know that merely keeping our financial footing amid this turmoil will require ongoing discipline, sacrifice and understanding.

To credit-rating agencies, our success means solid financial performance. To health insurance companies, a hospital's success means cost-efficient care. To regulators like the Joint Commission, it means unflagging compliance with protocols.

But to patients, success means something different altogether.

## PRESSGANEY **A high in patient satisfaction, too**

Thus I am equally pleased to note that the January patient satisfaction scores are in, and they are getting much closer to where we want them.

When asked how they would rate the hospital, with 10 being the highest, a whopping 87% of our inpatients gave UCH a nine or a 10. That's up from 80% in December, and 63% as recently as September.

For our outpatient services, our Press Ganey scores (which also measure patient satisfaction) hit the 79th percentile in January. And although the scores have been rising steadily, we were at a low of the 29th percentile in September.

Medical Director **Gordon Lindberg**, MD, PhD, and Nurse Manager **Mary Holden**, RN, MS. Mary, by the way, is also a favorite of the medical staff. It gave her (along with **Evalina Burger**, MD) its Partners in Care Award at the Medical Staff Dinner on January 28.

Hosted by Medical Board President **Andy Meacham**, MD, who may be the funniest urologist in America, the Awards Dinner also cited **Virginia Borges**, **Martin McCarter**, **Neil Pitzer**, **Charles Little**, **Jean Kutner**, **Colleen Goode**, **Rob McIntyre** and **Carolyn Sanders** for their outstanding work during the past year.

"Stepping" kicks off



Stepping into Gear - our contest to see which teams among us can improve their fitness the most during the next six weeks - got underway when 100 people joined me at the event's kickoff on 17th Ave. In all, more than 600 people are participating from every clinical, administrative and offsite area. Results will be

The Emergency Department, doing excellent clinical work while under extreme pressures that often are not of its own making, was at the 22nd percentile in January. That, too, was a significant improvement over prior months.

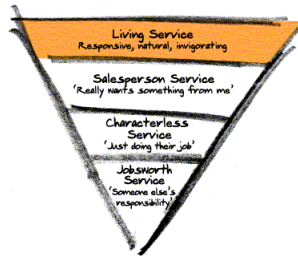
## Farther from good, closer to "great"

These dramatic improvements get us closer to being one of the nation's great hospitals.

The reason is that hospitals typically are so intently focused on quality, safety, staff well-being, operations, regulations and finances that they forget that their customers - most of whom arrive ill or worried or upset in some way - desperately need something just as essential to their health: good, considerate service.

Most hospitals, as we all know, are not as proficient at providing even half-attentive customer service as everyday clothing or grocery stores.

When patients tell me - and they often do - that a clinical encounter was "good," for example, they rarely are talking about their medical outcomes. Indeed, they will take the time to compliment you even when the outcome was a hard-to-hear diagnosis or, worse, the loss of a loved one. Yes, they cite the clinicians' technical skill, but in describing what makes the encounter notable they recount how welcoming the people at the front desk were, how considerate you were in delivering care or providing creature comforts, and how quickly they were noticed, got in and were treated.



When referring physicians tell me that working with UCH was "good," they usually are not talking about medical outcomes, either. They tell me about how quickly one of our doctors could see their patient, how quickly or thoroughly we communicated with them, and how, when their patient returned to them, they knew the recommended course of therapy.

We do deliver consistently laudable clinical outcomes, often the best anywhere. Operationally, we are innovative and ever-more effective. Our facilities and technology are among the most advanced (and beautiful) anywhere. Financially, we have accomplished an eyebrow-raising turnaround. But as anyone who has ever been a patient can attest, such things often are not what finally separate the great hospitals from the good ones.

## The payoffs are personal, too

Our patient satisfaction scores have fluctuated wildly from month to month since we moved to the Anschutz Medical Campus in June, 2007. But if we can keep them up, that means we - all of us individually and collectively - also are on a track that would let us qualify for the patient satisfaction portion of an annual bonus. (Getting any kind of bonus, of course, depends first on meeting our financial goals for the fiscal year, which ends on June 30. We're currently on track for that, too).

But there is a lot more to gain for us than plumper wallets in the middle of a recession. There is fulfilling our vision of being a top ten hospital in all areas.

## Adding "missiatives" to UCH's brew

announced at the end of March.

## Something On Your Mind?

[Talk to me](#)

You may have seen signs like the one below appearing in various off-stage areas around the hospital in recent days. You'll be seeing more of them in the coming months.



They include reminders, I admit, of common courtesies most of us learned as children. As adults, however, some of us came to dismiss them as naïve ideals with no real role in the workplace. Others of us forget them in the crush of daily events and worries.

So what is a big, important scientific and economic force like UCH - one that rigorously bases business as well as clinical decisions on skeptically weighed

evidence and careful reasoning - doing plastering common courtesies onto its walls?

The answer: continuing the crucial upward climb in both patient and employee satisfaction.

Each month you will see another personal initiative you can take that, as simple and naïve as it may seem, can make this a finer place to give and receive care as well as a finer place for us to work.

We believe, too, that each is the kind of individual initiative that will help us fulfill the hospital's mission of healing, research and education.

Hence, the made-up name of these monthly reminders: "missiatives," or initiatives that help us fulfill our mission.

### An immediate return

We're putting these up in no particular order.

The first one, as you can see, is to remind ourselves to act as a host to all our patients and visitors and to each other. Guide them. Make them comfortable. Serve them. I'm confident all of these things do rapidly come back to you personally in the form of help people give you, in the favors done for you, in the considerations shown to you and, not least, in the pride you can take in working at a hospital that is a cut above the rest.

Sincerely,

Bruce Schroffel