

CEO News & Views

an update from Bruce Schroffel



July 29, 2009

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Kudos

Another Nice Word About NICU

While on rounds one recent evening I encountered a nurse practitioner (I'm not sure I got her full name) who also works at several other hospitals in town. Though we'd never met before, she stopped me to say how much she admires our Neonatal Intensive Care Unit staff, saying there was no other like it.

To paraphrase her, she emphasized that their quality,

Our epic journey begins

About an hour after **Steve Hess**, our new chief information officer (that's him, below), started his first working day at the hospital, we yanked him into a meeting of my Kitchen Cabinet (which is made up of our vice presidents) and began pelting him with questions and suggestions about bringing in our much-anticipated, much-needed new information system.

As you will recall, at its June board meeting the Board of Directors unanimously approved engaging Epic, the Wisconsin-based software company, to customize and provide an integrated information system that will replace almost all the discrete, department- or unit-specific systems that have grown up organically through the years



It took a year and a half of meetings, investigations and evaluations to bring this massive (upwards of \$60 million and 3-to-5 years of effort) undertaking to this point. It's fair to say this vast new adventure has now begun.

Sooner or later, it will involve and touch everyone - our patients, all of us who work her, our partners - in our hospital community. Profoundly, and for the better.

Hitting the ground running

It's not going to be easy, of course. In all, more than 100 people representing both clinical and operational concerns will be doing the daily lifting. All will operate under an as-yet-to-be-named project director, and will be based over at 9th & Colorado in what used to be the second floor lab. Team members will all have "hotel space" - a literal and figurative place for them to hang their hats and work - here at Anschutz.

And then there's communicating all this. I anticipate that adapting to an integrated information system, for all its crucial advantages in patient safety and operational efficiency, is going to be as much a culture change as our move to the Anschutz Medical Campus was two years ago.

Too much information? A lesson we learned then was that as crucial as communications were before the move, they were triply important after the move as we probed, tested and learned to work in a big, new environment.



independent thinking and teamwork is exceptional. She added that her colleagues shared the view.

The unsolicited enthusiasm may not have the public cachet of our recent *US News & World Report* recognitions, but it spoke volumes about that terrific team and the services it delivers to some very worried families and vulnerable babies.

Something On Your Mind?

[Talk to me](#)

Consequently, we're shaping a communications plan and a naming contest for the IT project now, too. Along with open forums to discuss our progress, it'll be rolling out in late August or early September. It may not stop until long after we've begun using the system throughout our many operations.

I have little doubt, moreover, that this grand reach may increase our workloads somewhat in the near term. For a group of people that already includes more jugglers than Barnum & Bailey, that probably doesn't sound very tantalizing. But these are also the challenges that define us, and that have brought us into the top rungs of academic (which, to me, is to say the best) hospitals. Consider this a drive to secure our place among the great health care institutions.

Why it's epic

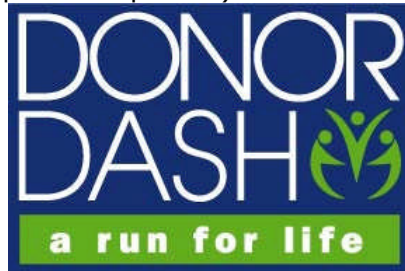
As you know, I don't usually get into this much detail in *CEO News & Views*. My goal, after all, is to help put our complex professional lives into the larger picture of what's going on both within and without our ambitious community.

But it's important for all of us to understand just what a momentous push has begun for the hospital as a whole, for all of us who make it run and deliver care here and, most importantly, our patients. It will require not only epic financial support but epic commitment, epic intelligence, epic adaptability and epic effort over a long period of time.

If we truly can take advantage of the benefits it can provide, however, it will lead to epic improvements in the way we deliver care.

Racing and transplants

I ran in the Donor Dash in Washington Park July 19, an event to raise awareness of the ongoing need for people to donate organs. (Our hospital, which of course boasts the fifth-busiest organ transplant center in the United States, was the race's premier sponsor). While running - I'd love to tell you my race



times, but I'm going to rule they are protected information under HIPAA regulations - I ran among not a few who have either donated or received organs. Their participation in an athletic event gives you an idea of just how truly wondrous, restorative and life-enhancing transplant can be.

All things possible. As luck would have it, our new advertising campaign kicks off on KMGH Channel 7 next week with exactly that kind of illustration. The ad features the true story of one of our transplant patients. She's a 20-year-old runner who, despite

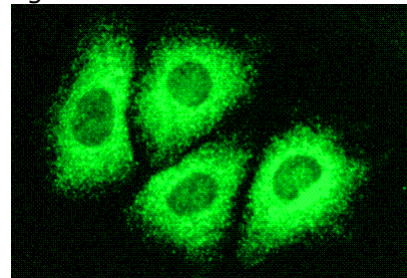
her age and obvious fitness, all-too-unfairly fell desperately sick and was rushed to a hospital. There, it was discovered she had had liver failure and was in desperate need of a liver transplant. She was next rushed to UCH, where Dr. **Igal Kam** and his team performed the surgery. A mere three weeks later, she was back outside, running in the Bolder Boulder. (I ran in that race, too, and I'd love to report my race times, but, well, you know how strict HIPAA rules are.)

The last scene of the ad - it will also be on the station's Denverchannel.com site starting August 4 - shows our patient, Summer, running again. She's back in college. It's hard not to feel proud to be a part of an organization that produces stories like that, day after day, in unit after unit. I hope we never take them for granted.

Stripping pretense from the Hep C problem

Several of our brethren hospitals have been rocked recently by employees who have endangered and actually harmed patients by stealing and abusing drugs.

This is an awful tragedy in every sense of the word, but there should be no pretense that it couldn't happen anywhere addicted people have access to dangerous drugs and the opportunity to exploit them. We, much like the hospitals victimized this time, have tight, unforgiving security and guidelines around the often-dangerous drugs we work near each day. We have protections in place in our hiring procedures. We enforce strict zero-tolerance policies. And in the wake of those recent upheavals (that's the Hepatitis C virus, right), we are once again inspecting procedures and protection to see if we might have missed something the last time we improved them.



Everyone's commitment. Ultimately, however, it is up to us to make even the even the tightest security hold. By definition, we are often in a position to harm as well as help patients, colleagues and, not least, ourselves. Call me idealistic, but I believe that our positions require us to be personally strong and controlled enough to keep everyone around our especially vulnerable workplace - patients, family members, visitors and each other - safe at all costs.

All worthy hospitals, including ours, obviously work hard to avoid hiring drug abusers in the first place. If a colleague is abusing anyway, we work hard to help identify, rehabilitate or isolate them from patients as well as temptation. As recent events show dramatically, without literally everyone's commitment we are not always successful.

Have a great week,

Sincerely,



Bruce

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