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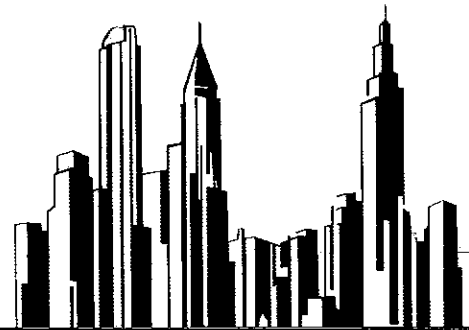


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Our website: www.hfmametry.org
New Board of Directors – Page 27-28



MAY 2009
VOLUME 42
NUMBER 4



FEATURES, DEPARTMENTS AND NEWS

- 7 Incoming President's Message**
By Cindy Strain, FHFMA
- 8 Universal Coverage And The Revenue Cycle**
- 9 Outgoing President's Message**
By Mary E. Kinsella, FHFMA
- 11 From The Editor's Desk**
By Michael J. McGrath, FHFMA
- 12 HFMA Summary Of Committees 2009-2010**
- 17 Joseph A. Levi Annual Institute
February 26-27, 2009**
- 21 "Clean" Claims, Verification, Coordinations Of
Benefits Aand Other Delights**
By James G. Fouassier, Esq.
- 25 Better Healthcare Buildings
Make Better Business Sense**
By Steve Wey
- 26 Myths About Patient Receivables**
- 27 Board of Directors**
- 29 Annual Business Meeting May 2009**
- 40 Annual Business Meeting May 2009
2008-2009 Corporate Sponsorship
Program Awards**
- 45 Federal Trade Commission's Identify Theft Red
Flag Regulations: Are You Complainant?**
By Greg Park
- 47 Tidbits**
By Josephine Ross
- 48 A Hospital CFO Top 10 Resolutions
For A Positive 2009**
By Lewis D. Bivona, Jr., CPA, AFE
- 49 Joseph A. Levi Annual Institute
February 26-27, 2009**
- 55 NYS Institutional Cost Report Seminar
Summary Article For Newscast**
By Christine Apicella and Tracey Roland
- 57 A System-Wide Approach To
Service Line Planning**
By Walter Morrissey, M.D.
- 59 What Good Is Preauthorization
If The Provider Can't Rely On It?**
By James G. Fouassier, Esq.
- 61 Patient Identity – A Hospital's
Clinical Responsibility**
By B. Christopher Linder
- 63 Metro NY HFMA Chapter Congratulates
Marianne L. Muise, FHFMA**
- 64 The Two-Pocket Theory**
By Leo Paul D'Orazio, MBA, FACHE
- 66 The Whippersnapper League**
By Sofia Jacobs

BETTER HEALTHCARE BUILDINGS MAKE BETTER BUSINESS SENSE

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Substandard building systems can have a deleterious effect on the health of a hospital's patients and staff, as well as a significant negative impact on the bottom line. In fact, fully optimized building systems are critical to a hospital's well-being. Their results are measured in better-quality care, improved patient outcomes, minimized environmental impact — and a healthier bottom line.

Sicker buildings, sicker people

Recently, the Center for Health Design (funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) undertook a scan of the medical literature. This survey found more than 600 articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals demonstrating the effects of unhealthy hospital environments on patients and staff.

A number of studies focused on causal relationships between air quality and infection rates. In one example, six patients and a nurse were infected with epidemic methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. The outbreak was traced to a room's ventilation. In another case, the source of infection proved to be the exhaust ducting of an adjacent isolation room's ventilation system.

In all, more than 120 studies linked infection specifically to the physical structure of the hospital.

Built-in infection fighting

Hospital designers and builders place serious emphasis on these and other statistical data showing environmental links to patient outcomes and staff turnover, plus other evidence-based design criteria. In a recent survey of 50 senior-level hospital executives, 60 percent considered the link between the physical environ-

ment and staff recruitment/retention "strong" or "very strong." Almost 70 percent similarly linked their hospital buildings' environment strongly or very strongly to staff/physician satisfaction.

In response, when renovating, rebuilding, or undertaking new construction, planners are creating hospitals that help patients recover more safely; support caregivers in performing their jobs better; and produce more cost-effective, efficient healing environments.

Many design improvements are now being deployed in Pebble Projects. This research program, run by the Center for Health Design, helps hospitals compare design innovations with preexisting conditions. The nearly three dozen hospitals participating have begun to "ripple" positive design practices throughout the healthcare industry.

Example: in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Bronson Methodist Hospital — a pebble institution — reports an 11 percent decrease in nosocomial (hospital-acquired) infection rates. Planners at Bronson Methodist attribute the improvement to the use of private rooms, a new ventilation system design, and more sinks to encourage frequent handwashing.

Other Pebble Project hospitals include Parrish Medical Center, Titusville, FL; St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, Boise, ID; and the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute, Detroit, MI. Each describes dramatic reductions in staff turnover and improvements in patient satisfaction. Managers in these centers credit noise-reducing acoustical ceiling tiles and walls, updated and/or natural lighting, and improved indoor air quality (IAQ) via increased ventilation and airflow.

Good buildings, good business

Since the U.S. Centers for Disease Control estimate that hospital-acquired infections alone represent a \$5 billion loss annually, the opportunity to realize significant savings by investing in healthier building designs is compelling.

According to the U.S. Green Building Council, energy-efficient buildings increase worker productivity 15 percent

through better IAQ, better lighting, and improved air quality control. In addition, such structures produce lower environmental and health costs associated with air pollution.

Even older, existing hospital structures can retrofit new energy-saving technologies and make other evidence-based design changes to improve IAQ, deliver a more comfortable environment, and drive cost savings. New healthcare buildings can deliver healthier environments and savings through proven design qualities, proper equipment installation, and correct control and maintenance.

Where do you start?

The healthcare building design and construction industry has the data, know-how, and tools to improve your existing facility or undertake the most efficient design for your new one.

Begin with a comprehensive building systems audit by a professional high-performance building engineer. This will determine how well your hospital building and systems are performing, suggest ways to optimize that performance, and identify and quantify specific cost savings.

Make sure your audit firm fulfills the following requirements:

- Experience in designing, installing, and servicing building systems comparable to your building's size and activities
- A successful track record in design, service, and installation of building systems
- Proven ability to understand and apply total building solutions to address your business mission and operating budget targets

With audit in hand, you'll be well on your way to designing a building that can deliver better healthcare — and help you do better business.

For more information, contact: Kristin Kubicki, Marketing and Communications Manager, at TRANE New York – New Jersey at phone 973-434-2136 or email: Kubicki@trane.com.