

Hospital Provides Complementary Therapies to Augment Healing Process



by Sharona Ben-Sorek, MS, RPT, HTCP, Instructor-in-Training with Debra Woodell, AS, HTCP

“We dress the wound; God heals it.”

The sign over the main hall at Bon Secours DePaul Medical Center in Norfolk, Virginia welcomes patients and visitors with this simple but meaningful thought.

The Faith Community Health Ministry (FCHM) at Bon Secours DePaul takes things a step further toward supporting the healing process. Coordinator Lisa Wright-Martin, FNP-BC heads Bon Secours DePaul’s Healing Support Team (HST), which is staffed by volunteers who provide Healing Touch (HT), aromatherapy and therapeutic music as complementary adjuncts to patients medical care. These services are free to patients and their families during their hospital stay. Staff members can also take advantage of shorter (10-15 minute) sessions during their breaks for stress reduction.

The program began in palliative care with the efforts of Pamela L.Schroeder, MSN, RN,C, CHPN, then Director of the FCHM. Her interest in providing holistic health care resulted in a policy that would ultimately become the seed for the current HST.

As part of the community project requirements for her certification in Healing Touch, Debra Woodell joined Schroeder in 2005 to begin the process of establishing guidelines, marketing, and providing in-service opportunities to educate medical staff. By 2006, a team of six individuals were providing HST services. A requirement is that these volunteers refrain from marketing their

services if they have private practices. All members of the HST who provide HT are certified by Healing Touch Program.

Upon query of the nursing staff for patients who might benefit from, and would welcome, the team’s services, practitioners then visit the patients and offer the services they can provide. Family members and patients may also request services independently of nursing referrals. Once consent is given by the patient or family, a *Do Not Disturb* sign is placed on the door, and the session begins. A 30-45 minute session of soothing music, HT, and/or aromatherapy serves to transform the environment into a space for peaceful healing and relaxation.

Documentation of visits are included in the patient’s chart, and records are kept by the HST as well. In the event that a patient does not wish to receive HST services at the initial visit but is interested in pursuing it at a later time, informational material on HT and how to contact the HST is left at the bedside.

During the reporting period from January 2010 - May 2011, based on documentation available, clients reported an average drop in pain of 3.85 points, and an average drop in stress/anxiety level of 4.95 points after HT sessions. Both categories were

rated using a 0-10 distress scale, where “0” means no distress and “10” is the worst possible distress.

Patients and families are provided with pre-paid comment sheets to provide feedback to the team. They may give the

completed forms to a staff member or drop them in a mailbox at their convenience.

Some comments received include:

"These services provided to us so freely, made our difficult situation so much easier to bear. Thank you for this special service/ministry here at Bon Secours."

"Hopefully, one day, this service will be valued enough to have available full-time and scheduled."

"I was able to calm down and allow the medications I was on [prescribed by the doctor] to work. I continue to practice the things she [HTCP] taught me in my daily routines."

"Very helpful for relieving stress and pain. Very powerful experience spiritually and physically. The clinician was a very caring person."

"Mind/body/spirit was tended to during my 4-week stay!"

"Healing Touch is a perfect fit in offering whole-person care - meeting the needs of mind, body and spirit."

Lisa Wright-Martin notes, *"Our Health System is responding to the changing landscape of health care through Clinical Transformation – a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to redesign care delivery to achieve excellence throughout the care continuum. A primary goal is to measurably improve quality, and create holistic, patient care experiences."*

As a result of the success of Bon Secours DePaul's HST, a program was also launched in 2008 at Bon Secours Mary Immaculate Hospital, another local facility. Members of the HST also take things to the streets. Well, maybe not the streets exactly, but team members have provided presentations and/or HT mini-sessions at a variety of events in the Hampton Roads area. HeartAware Screening events, Day of Dance, Old Dominion University's Stress Free Zone, Breast Cancer Survivors' Conference/Retreat, breast cancer support groups, retreats for people living with HIV/AIDS, education sessions for staff at Bon Secours DePaul Medical Center, Sentara Obici Hospital, Sentara Virginia Beach General Hospital, and information session/demonstrations for Bon Secours hospice volunteers, are a few of

the outreach activities in which team members have participated.

In addition, members of the HST were featured speakers at the November 2010 Southeastern Virginia Oncology Nurses' Society conference, and at Bon Secours Hampton Roads Faith Community/Parish Nursing Foundational Preparation Course in February 2011. Team members have also been involved in coordinating, assisting at and teaching HT classes in the area, and facilitating several local HT practice groups.

All told, during the period from February 2009 through April 2011, 349 people were seen in 20 different community venues by the members of the HST, not including hospital visitations and HT classes/practice groups.

"The results we have observed and recorded over the past six years at Bon Secours DePaul repeatedly reflect the benefit of these services for our patients. My hope for the future is that they will become standard options for all patients in every medical facility," notes Debra Woodell.

Portions of this article were previously published in the May/June 2010 edition of the Bon Secours Hampton Roads Faith Community Health Ministry Network Newsletter.

About the authors:

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Debra Woodell, AS, HTCP is actively involved with her local community. She serves on Bon Secours DePaul Medical Center's Healing Support Team, is the Healing Touch provider for patients of the Bon Secours Hospice Program and organizes/provides for a variety of community organizations and events. She also serves as an HT practice group facilitator and HT mentor.