



EVERYONE DID WHAT THEY NEEDED TO DO

Southcoast staff put to the test during mass casualty incident

At approximately 11 a.m. on Monday, August 3, Southcoast received word that workers at ABC Disposal in New Bedford had been exposed to an unknown hazardous substance and required immediate medical attention.

During the following five hours, employees at St. Luke's and Charlton put to the test the skills practiced during numerous emergency preparedness drills staged over the last few years.

Just after 11 a.m., the Emergency Operations Plan at St. Luke's was activated in preparation for treating mass casualties.

Employees were diverted from all areas of the hospital to support staff in the Emergency Department. In many cases, managers worked in support roles to help keep critical areas supplied and to see to patient and family needs.

"When we got the call, Mike [Amaral, Director of Environmental Services] said 'get the book,'" said Pat Verrissimo, Trainer for Environmental Services.

"The book" Amaral was referring to was the department-specific Emergency Operations Manual kept in each area. Each manual provides specific responsibilities to be carried out when the Emergency Operations Plan is activated.

"Then Mike, myself, EVS managers and staff assigned to projects just started doing what needed to be done," Verrissimo said. "We did not want to pull staff from floors because they still had jobs to do there."

At 11:30 a.m. victims began arriving at St. Luke's. Staff there

donned protective suits and, under the direction of the New Bedford Fire Department, began the process of decontaminating victims.

At 12:30 p.m. victims began arriving at Charlton and the Emergency Operations Plan was activated there as well.

The temperature that day was over 90 degrees and the humidity was high. Working on the asphalt under intense sun, staff members could only stay "suited up" for about 30 minutes before they became affected by the heat.

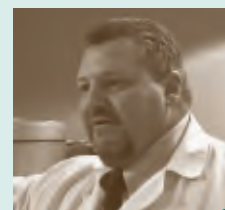
"The suits are made of Neoprene and they don't breathe at all," said Bill Tavares, RN, an ER Nurse at Charlton who worked decontaminating patients. "As soon as you get into them you start to sweat. I probably lost six pounds in the first 10 minutes."

But staff continued working.

"Our ER Techs who worked outside decontaminating patients were soaked with sweat when they came back into the ER," said Micheline Tholl, RN, an ER Nurse at St. Luke's who worked inside treating the two patients who arrived at the hospital in critical condition. "But they came inside and just kept on working."

Tholl, who has worked for Southcoast for 30 years and in the ER for approximately 25, had never seen a mass casualty event before.

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Annual Employee Benefit Fair

Get important information about your Southcoast benefits. Plus:

Raffles
Giveaways

Thursday, October 22

St. Luke's, Mezzanine

Thursday, October 29

Charlton, Mooney Room

Thursday, November 5

Tobey, Education Conference Room

Thursday, November 12

AT&T, Fairhaven Conference Room

7 a.m. to 4 p.m. at all locations.

Dorothy Cox provides a sweet treat to Southcoast Blood Bank donors



The Southcoast Blood Bank at St. Luke's Hospital and Dorothy Cox Chocolates are teaming up this month on a sweet incentive. Anyone who donates blood at the Southcoast Blood Bank at St. Luke's Hospital or at a Southcoast sponsored blood drive will receive a free half-pound of Dorothy Cox chocolate covered cranberries.

Anyone who donates blood at to Southcoast this month, will receive a certificate for a free half-pound of Dorothy Cox chocolate covered cranberries. You choose — milk, dark or yogurt covered. The certificate is redeemable at Dorothy Cox Chocolates, 115 Huttleston Ave. in Fairhaven.

The Southcoast Blood Bank at St. Luke's is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Walk-ins are welcome. For more information or to make an appointment call 508-961-5320 or log on to www.southcoast.org/bloodbank. The Southcoast Health Van also collects blood regularly. The schedule can be found online at www.southcoast.org/van or by calling 508-679-7131.

Patient Comments

"The care I received was of the highest quality. Everyone was very knowledgeable and courteous. I am very proud to say at one point that I was a member of the Southcoast team of caregivers."

Everyone Did What They Needed to Do

continued from cover

"We've had car accidents with multiple victims, but nothing like this," she said. "It was amazing how people came together."

By 4 p.m. that day, 120 people had been treated at both hospitals — 66 at St. Luke's and 54 at Charlton — including ABC employees, EMS paramedics, police and firefighters.

"I want to thank everyone at Southcoast, especially in our Emergency Departments, for their exceptional response to this very serious incident," said Keith A. Hovan, President & CEO of Southcoast Hospitals Group. "I am extremely proud of the many members of our hospital staff who responded with the professional competence and skill expected by our patients in providing emergency care in coordination with emergency response staff from local cities and towns."

In Their Own Words

Countless employees from virtually every area of the hospitals responded when the Emergency Operations Plan was activated. Here, just a few of those involved share their impressions.



"I first heard about the emergency on the police scanner and I went and told the charge nurse so she would be aware of what was about to happen. ... It was the first time I saw the decontamination tent put up and used. The whole thing was pretty astonishing." — *Ed Rapkus, Security Officer, St. Luke's*

"I have come to realize that people are stronger than they think they are. No one ever panicked — everyone knew exactly what to do."

— *Pat Verissimo, Environmental Services Trainer, St. Luke's*



"I've been working on this project for years and I thought I was going to retire before we needed to use it. ... Once we got rolling things went pretty smoothly and staff really worked together." — *Cindy Ziewacz, RN, ER Nurse & member of the Emergency Operations Training Committee, St. Luke's*

"We set up a triage for priority three patients in the White Home — patients who had minor symptoms and did not need urgent care. Once they were decontaminated, these patients came to the White Home where they were assessed to decide if they needed further treatment. If they did, they were transported to the ER." — *Dan Branco, RN, ER Nurse, St. Luke's*



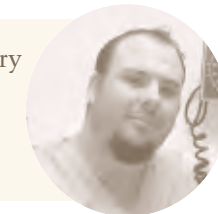
"It was very unnerving at the beginning because we didn't know how many patients were coming and how sick they were. ... Once everyone got in the groove it worked seamlessly." — *Micheline Tholl, RN, ER Nurse, St. Luke's*

"The suits are made of Neoprene and there is a hood and gloves, so no air comes in or goes out. A personal breathing device is attached to the suit, which pulls air through three filters before it is pumped into the hood onto your face. So you have this cool air on your face while the rest of your body is covered in sweat." — *Bill Tavares, RN, ER Nurse, Charlton*



"It was a big adrenaline rush at the beginning, but then you realize that this is real and the patients are real and you do what you have to do to get through." — *Kyleen Vandal, ER Technician, Charlton*

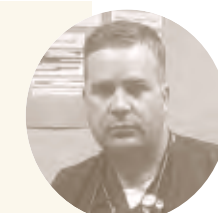
"You're worried because you wonder if the suit will really protect you and you worry about your co-workers and you have to keep your eye on the clock because you have to get people in and out of suits every 30 minutes and at the same time you are keeping your patients as your first priority." — *Todd Baker, ER Technician, Charlton*



"I saw patients as they came out of decontamination and was helping with triage. ... It was amazing to see how many departments pitched in and did what had to be done." — *Cristina Rapoza, RN, ER Nurse, Charlton*

"I've been practicing Emergency Medicine for years and I've never seen anything of this size, so it was almost surreal at first. ... Everyone was decontaminated. That was a decision I made because the fire department couldn't tell me what the exposure was and I knew I couldn't let anyone in who could potentially contaminate the whole ER and have patients and staff get sick."

— *Brian Sweeney, MD, Emergency Physician, St. Luke's & Charge Physician during the incident*



Four Earn HealthQuest 2009 Recognition Awards

How Their “Small Strides” Made a Big Difference

People are motivated to stop smoking for many different reasons. For Kathleen Wilkins, Phlebotomist at Tobey Hospital, it was her grandchildren.

“When you’re 50-something and can’t get on the floor to play with your grandchildren because you’re too winded, it’s time to do something,” she said.

This major accomplishment — one Wilkins says is the “biggest accomplishment in my life” — inspired co-workers to nominate her for a HealthQuest Recognition Award. She and three other winners received awards for not only achieving meaningful personal wellness goals, but also inspiring others to make healthy lifestyle changes.

In addition to Wilkins, this year’s winners include Antonio Dias, Health Unit Coordinator at St. Luke’s Hospital, Gisele LeBlanc, Centralized Scheduling Associate at the AT&T site, and Paula Mendoza, Operations Coordinator for the Hanover Laboratory in Fall River.

Wilkins took advantage of the prescription drug, Chantix, which is now covered under the Southcoast prescription plan, to help her stop smoking. She also joined the gym at the YMCA using the fitness voucher she received for completing the Health Risk Assessment, which was offered through HealthQuest.

“I tried to quit more than 10 times but I always went back to smoking because of the weight gain [from quitting],” she said. “This time I joined the gym at the same time I quit, so weight didn’t become such an issue, and I enjoy the gym so much that I still go.

“I used to have to walk away from gatherings to have a cigarette, and I felt like an outcast,” she said. “I don’t miss conversations to run outside anymore. And my grandchildren will never see me smoke.”

Now in its fourth year, HealthQuest, Southcoast’s employee wellness program, recognizes employees whose co-workers consider him or her to be a role model in one or more dimensions of the Wellness Wheel — a six-slice “pie” that illustrates the physical, intellectual, occupational, emotional, spiritual and social aspects that contribute to total wellness.

“The ultimate value of this program is to have people take a good look at their own health and make positive changes,” said Kris Aimone, Wellness Coordinator at Southcoast. “And it appears that Southcoast employees are doing that more and more.”

Nearly 1,400 Southcoast employees completed health risk assessments in 2009 — up from approximately 400 in 2006. HealthQuest Recognition Award nominations have also increased since the award was introduced in 2007.

Antonio Dias never felt he was overweight, but he’d get winded every time a co-worker asked him to take the stairs with her. When he stepped on a scale and it read 250 (Dias is 5 foot, 9 inches tall), it was the dose of reality he needed to take action. Inspired by a co-worker who had lost weight on the Atkins diet, Dias followed suit.

“I stuck to the diet pretty faithfully, and the weight started coming off,” he said. “Then I started walking at the beach. Walking turned into jogging, then running and biking. Now I go to the gym four times a week.”

Dias feels the change has improved his outlook on life.

“I love having energy,” he said. “Whenever I have free time, I want to go out and do something. This was the first time I worked out and dieted at the same time, and the difference is incredible. It’s nice to walk on the beach with no shirt on and feel good about how I look.”

Today, Dias weighs 188 pounds. “My family thinks I’ve lost too much weight and my mother’s always trying to feed me,” he laughed. “But the HealthQuest program has definitely helped with this journey I’m on, and to maintain the weight loss and good health habits.”

Gisele LeBlanc got motivated to lose weight when she couldn’t fit into her clothes.

“It led me to Weight Watchers,” she said, where she learned to set

smaller, incremental weight-loss goals that she could achieve without feeling overwhelmed. She also joined the Healthtrax fitness center, using the discounted membership offered through the HealthQuest program. Those “small strides” eventually added up to a 58-pound total weight loss that she has maintained since March 2008. Her high blood pressure has also normalized without medication.

“Now I understand what a healthy diet means and how important it is,” LeBlanc said. “And it’s a diet for life because I’m hoping to remain on this healthy track. I never liked to cook before, but now I do and my whole family benefits. Plus, co-workers and friends see my results and have been inspired to join Weight Watchers. It’s a real sense of accomplishment.”

Paula Mendoza’s health habits also have inspired others.

“I’ve always tried to have a healthy lifestyle, to exercise and eat right,” she said. “Getting older, it seemed like a good time to focus on it. Working in this [health care] environment, I see the effects of people not taking care of themselves.”

Mendoza’s good health intentions have extended to her co-workers. She arranged for Aimone to visit the Hanover Lab to conduct health screenings, and she started Salad Day in her workplace.

“Everyone signs up to bring in one ingredient for a salad, then we have a fruit and salad bar that everyone shares,” explained Mendoza. “We try to do this at least twice a month in the summer.”

Her positive outlook on life and work has also influenced her peers.

“She has a smile even when the day seems to have no end,” wrote one of Mendoza’s co-workers when nominating her for the award. “When you work side-by-side with a person who has such qualities, you can’t help but have them rub off on you. Paula has taught me a lot about how to deal with life’s stresses.”

Setting a great example is one of the greatest assets of the HealthQuest Recognition Awards, Aimone said.

“As a health care organization, it is up to Southcoast to communicate about wellness in as many ways as possible,” Aimone said. “If we can prevent health issues and encourage people to make positive changes, everyone wins.”

To learn more about Southcoast’s HealthQuest program, contact Kris Aimone at 508-997-1515, ext. 5054, or at aimonek@southcoast.org.

— Roxanne Jones



Kathleen Wilkins



Antonio Dias



Gisele LeBlanc



Paula Mendoza

NPSG Spotlight:

Goal 07.03.09: Prevent infections caused by drug-resistant organisms.

Point Person: Donna Sassone, RN, Clinical Quality Team

Process Owners: Kimberly Cravinho, CLS, CIC, Infection Preventionist; Robert Ready, RN, Director of Professional Development

Why is it important? Patients continue to acquire health care-associated infections at an alarming rate, making those infections one of the top 10 causes of death in the U.S., according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. People normally carry bacteria and germs on their skin and sometimes have an infection. These germs can rapidly contaminate a patient's environment, including bed linens and rails, bathroom fixtures and medical equipment. They also can easily spread to other people on the hands of doctors, nurses, other health care providers and visitors, as well as on contaminated medical equipment.

What is Southcoast doing? Hand hygiene, contact precautions and cleaning and disinfecting patient care equipment and the patient's environment are essential for preventing the spread of infections. Southcoast has established a Multi-Drug Resistant Organism Prevention Team, which includes members of the Patient Care Services, Respiratory Care, Professional Development and Infection Prevention & Quality Outcomes departments. They are working together to reinforce the processes already in place to prevent infection.

How you can help. Hand washing is the most effective strategy for preventing the transmission of infections. Wash or sanitize



your hands before and after any contact with patients, even if you have worn gloves, and remind visitors and colleagues to do the same. Follow "Standard" precautions for all patients and "Contact" precautions for those known to be infected or colonized with a multi-drug resistant organism or C-diff. Wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment will help keep germs off you. Clean and disinfect patient equipment before it comes in contact with any patient because these items can become contaminated and be a source of transmission. Be aware of what you are touching and where you are going. Never let yourself be fooled into thinking things are clean — you cannot see bacteria without a microscope. Remember, infection prevention is everyone's business. 🧼

Southcoast Center for Cancer Care PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

OPEN HOUSE



Saturday
October 3
1 – 4 p.m.

Southcoast will welcome the public to visit the new Southcoast Center for Cancer Care in Fall River.

Charlton Memorial Hospital
Saturday, October 3
1 to 4 p.m.

- Meet our physicians, patient navigator and care team
- Tour the new center
- Pumpkin decorating station for kids
- Face painting
- Health information
- Prizes & giveaways

Entrance located off Prospect Street at back of Charlton with ample parking.

Rain or shine.



Flu Update



Seasonal Flu:

Vaccines for seasonal flu are available now and will be given free of charge to employees at clinics at all three hospital sites. Clinics will also be scheduled for the AT&T site. Print the consent form from the Employee Health intranet page and bring it with you to the flu clinic. If you choose not to receive a vaccination, print the declination form and bring or send it to Employee Health as soon as possible.

H1N1 (formerly called "Swine Flu")

Vaccinations for H1N1 are expected to be available to employees in October. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention is advising people who smoke or have asthma to also get a pneumococcal vaccine. The pneumococcal vaccine is available through employee health free of charge.

Target populations for H1N1:

- **Women who are pregnant** and household contacts and caregivers with an infant under the age of six months.
- Health care providers.
- Persons 6 months to 24 years old.
- High risk persons 25 to 64 years old.

Flu Myth buster

"The Flu Vaccine will give me the flu."

There is no live virus in the injectable vaccine, so you can't get the flu from the shot. You might get a low grade fever and muscle aches that last about a day or two. **Remember**, the vaccine can take up to two weeks to become completely effective, so you could still get the flu during the two weeks after you get the vaccine.



Seasonal Flu Clinics Schedule

All clinics will be held in Employee Health unless otherwise noted.

CHARLTON

Friday, October 2

7 to 11 a.m., 1 to 3 p.m.

Tuesday, October 6

7 to 11 a.m., 1 to 3 p.m.

Thursday, October 8*

7 to 11 a.m., 1 to 3 p.m.

Wednesday, October 14

7 to 11 a.m., 1 to 3 p.m.

Thursday, October 15*

7 to 11 a.m., 1 to 3 p.m.

ST. LUKE'S

Thursday, October 1

9:30 to 11 a.m., White Home

Friday, October 2

7 to 10 a.m., 1 to 3 p.m.

TOBEY

Thursday, October 1

7 to 9 a.m., 10 to 11:30 a.m. (rolling cart) +

Monday, October 5*

10 to 11 a.m., 2 to 4:30 p.m. (rolling cart)

Monday, October 6

10 to 11 a.m., 2 to 4:30 p.m. (rolling cart)

Thursday, October 10*

10 to 11 a.m., 2 to 4:30 p.m. (rolling cart)

Tuesday, October 13

10 to 11 a.m., 2 to 4:30 p.m. (rolling cart)

Thursday, October 15

10 to 11 a.m., 2 to 4:30 p.m. (rolling cart)

* Denotes volunteers welcome.

+ Rolling cart indicates days when Employee Health nurses will visit areas throughout the hospitals to offer flu shots to employees in their work spaces.

Employees Showed Their Link to Each Other and to Our Patients by Responding in Record-Breaking Numbers

Southcoast employees gave \$145,000 in 2009 through the Employee Appeal — a record-breaking 30 percent increase in just one year.

"This example of employee generosity is an exceptional testimony to the support of our patients, the community and of each other," said Barbara H. Mulville, CFRE, Senior Vice President of External Affairs. "Given that 2008 began a difficult economic downturn affecting everyone, the news that the employee gifts increased by the highest percentage to date is very encouraging. And this year our patients are counting on that support more than ever."

As in past years, Bill King, of Cruise Holidays in Lakeville, has generously donated the Grand Prize for this year's Employee Appeal drawing — a seven-night Caribbean Cruise for two on the Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the

Seas, valued at \$3,500. The winner will cruise in a balcony stateroom through the western Caribbean with stops in Costa Maya and Cozumel, Mexico, and the private island of Labadee. The prize includes roundtrip air and transfers to the Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., embarkation point.

Review your Employee Appeal Packages to learn how you can help continue Southcoast's mission of caring for the health of our patients. Attend your department presentation and receive a special thank you gift.

Your gifts support virtually every aspect of patient care. And it's the success of the Employee Appeal that sets the pace for giving by our volunteers, patients and friends. 🎁



Quality & Safety

Keith A. Hovan
President & CEO, Southcoast Hospitals Group



Over the past couple of months, I have been talking to you about how the cost of health care decreases as the quality of care increases. I have provided you with some dramatic examples of the progress Southcoast has made to improve quality through the elimination of hospital-acquired infections in specific areas.

The connection between the level of quality, improved outcomes for patients and the cost of care is a widely-known fact. And health care providers are not the only ones who know it.

The organizations that pay for health care — the state and federal government as well as private payors — know it, too, and are beginning to tie payment to the quality of care provided.

Why should this concern you?

Physicians and staff on the front lines of patient care are primarily responsible for achieving the expected quality measures. Doing so means that patients are consistently receiving the best evidence-based care associated with particular quality measures, which leads to improved outcomes for patients.

Here is a brief explanation of pay-for-performance programs.

Medicare

Federal Medicare payment rates are updated annually based on how much the cost of providing patient care increases — a rate known as the “hospital market basket adjustment.” Since October 2004, hospitals have been required to report specific quality measures and meet certain quality benchmarks in order to receive the full market basket percentage increase. Hospitals that do *not* report quality information receive a 2 percent *reduction* in their market basket updates. Southcoast has submitted the quality data necessary to obtain full inpatient rate increases since 2005.

Hospital Quality Incentive Demonstration

Southcoast was one of 278 hospitals participating in a three-year Hospital Quality Incentive Demonstration (HQID) sponsored by the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in cooperation with Premier Inc. The project monitors quality outcomes in five specific clinical areas. The top 10 percent of performers in the CMS demonstration project are eligible to receive additional reimbursement of 1 to 2 percent for services provided in each top performing clinical condition for each year of the project.

In the first year of the project, Southcoast achieved reward payments for top performance in acute myocardial infarction (heart attack) and coronary artery bypass procedures. We did not receive reimbursements for the second and third years because even though our outcomes improved, they did not improve as significantly as our peers. CMS and Premier extended the original HQID project for an additional three years to existing participants only. We decided to continue participation for an additional three years, which ended September 30, 2009. Results for year four indicate that we will receive \$140,000 for the five diagnostic categories of AMI, heart failure, pneumonia, coronary artery bypass grafting and hip and knee surgery.

Medicaid

In fiscal year 2008, MassHealth started a pay-for-performance initiative to improve health outcomes for MassHealth (Medicaid) members. Hospitals were measured in the areas of maternity and newborn care, respiratory conditions, surgical care and practices to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities. Hospitals had to meet certain conditions of participation, such as participating in a national patient safety initiative, submitting data that meets validation and submission requirements and achieving quality standards and benchmarks on pay-for-performance measures.

For fiscal year 2008, Southcoast received \$673,787. At this writing, we do not know whether we will receive a 2009 MassHealth pay-for-performance payment or whether the state will allocate funds to the program for 2010.

Private Insurers

Many private health insurance organizations already have incentives for quality as part of their payment systems. Southcoast has pay-for-performance incentives with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Tufts Health Plan and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care. Blue Cross' program is based on mortality, obstetrics trauma, the IHI 10,000 Lives initiative and patient experience survey results. The Tufts program tracks heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia, with incentives built into the Southcoast contract. Harvard Pilgrim's incentives are based on 10 measures within the areas of surgical infection prevention, heart failure care and pneumonia care.

Changes in pay-for-performance

To this point, pay-for-performance programs have been generally based on process — how often we give patients the right care at the right time. But as such programs mature, we expect them to be increasingly based on outcomes. They will also include preventive measures like offering flu and pneumonia vaccines and smoking cessation information.

While front-line patient care staff and physicians have the most dramatic impact in the pay-for-performance arena, all of us can help out a little by taking care of ourselves — including getting a flu vaccine — and encouraging those around us by advocating healthy lifestyles.

Why? First and foremost, high-quality care leads to improved outcomes for patients — and improved outcomes are the ultimate goal. The reward for improved outcomes is lower health care costs for patients, insurers and providers like Southcoast. Everyone wins. ■

the Interview

Gene Cardarelli, PhD, Chief Physicist

Medical physicists are often called the unsung heroes of radiation oncology because their crucial role in treatment planning, delivery and safety is usually behind the scenes. Gene Cardarelli, PhD, FACMP, assumed his post as Southcoast's Chief Physicist in June, and recently took time out from his duties at the Southcoast Center for Cancer Care to talk to Coastlines not only about what he does, but also the personal reason why he does it.



What, exactly, do you do as Chief Physicist for Southcoast?

The Chief Physicist's role in any radiation oncology program is to ensure the safe delivery of radiation, either from linear accelerators, which are high energy X-ray machines, or from sealed sources of radiation placed in patients, which is known as brachytherapy.

What's your role in cancer treatment? How does what you do affect patients undergoing radiation therapy?

Every prescription for radiation therapy treatment must be planned with the physics personnel. I work with dosimetrists, or junior physicists, here at Southcoast to formulate the best way to target the tumor while sparing the surrounding healthy cells. We use a computerized system to calculate the correct radiation dose, I approve the plan, then the radiation oncologist reviews and approves the final plan. The physicist then ensures the staff can implement the treatment plan on the equipment that we have.

What's a typical day like for you?

In addition to formulating the physics of treatment plans, I spend a great deal of time on quality assurance to ensure patient safety. We have daily, monthly, quarterly and annual series of quality-control tests to make sure that our linear accelerators are running properly — that

all readouts are accurate. The linear accelerator is a highly sophisticated piece of equipment that must be carefully and continually calibrated and monitored.

Do you ever meet patients?

We aim to have at least one face-to-face visit with each patient during the initial simulation when we ensure proper set up of the patient's radiation treatment plan.

Not all cancer treatment centers do this. At Southcoast, we try to make it a habit to help put the patient at ease.

Medical physicists have been called the unsung heroes of radiation oncology. Do you feel that way?

From a patient's perspective, that might be true since we don't see patients on a regular basis. But the radiation oncologists couldn't function without us, and they appreciate us. We try to make their jobs easier so they don't have to worry if the math is right — they can have confidence in the physics. It frees them to spend more time with patients.

You've worked at three other cancer centers. What's your impression of Southcoast's?

I'm very impressed. Southcoast has made a significant commitment to cancer treatment — and they've made this a real patient-oriented facility.

What's on the horizon with radiation oncology technology?

There's been a lot of work with combination and targeted therapies that give us a better chance of hitting the tumor volume. There are some imaging agents under investigation that have some potential in this regard.

Is there anything else that people should know about medical physicists?

One of the problems we face is that there aren't many of us. Most of us are over age 50 and fewer are entering the field. The profession does require a graduate degree and a lot of training. I've been teaching at UMass Lowell for the past three years to help generate interest and maybe recruit the next generation. Plus, UMass is planning to start a medical physics program at the Dartmouth campus.

Why did you choose this profession?

My mother died of cancer at 52, and four other members of her family died of the disease before age 60. Having had cancer in my family, I do what I can to help other people. 📧

— Roxanne Jones

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