



## BUILDING WELLNESS, STEP BY STEP

**D**esigning a healthy lifestyle can be confusing business.

Descriptions such as “lite,” “low fat,” “cholesterol free” and “no trans fat” can make you believe a food is healthier than it really is. A cereal may be high in fiber (a good thing), but also high in sugar (not so good) — and you won’t learn the entire truth from the television commercials.

“There is so much misinformation out there,” said Kris Aimone, Wellness Coordinator for Southcoast.

Fortunately for Southcoast employees, the HealthQuest wellness program can help unravel the mysteries of healthy living.

One of the tools it offers, the Health Risk Assessment (HRA), provides employees with a personalized report based on their responses to a survey. The report includes an individual’s health status and recommendations on ways to improve their health.

“Employees have contacted me after completing the assessment and said, ‘I didn’t realize how bad off I was,’” Aimone said. “They’re really surprised and as a result have made healthy changes.”

Those surprises often include discoveries about eating habits. Last year, the majority of respondents said they believed they were eating right, but the details of their diet indicated that, in reality, nearly everyone was taking in far too much fat.

“A lot of times, we are confused about what a high-fat food is,” Aimone said. “Sometimes, we just have to step back and learn how to read labels.”

This year the Health Risk Assessment will have a new look, but essentially will be the same tool for assessing health status. Southcoast has teamed up with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts and “MyBlueHealth” and will be offering its HRA, along with other online tools that are designed to help users improve their health.

These online tools include health coaching, personal wellness plans on exercise, nutrition and stress management as well as tracking tools to help monitor factors that influence health. Family

wellness plans, healthy articles and recipes and an online support community will also be available to everyone who takes an HRA.

Participants may also re-access their HRAs to report any changes in their behaviors.

“You now can go back in and change your answers,” Aimone said. “So you can see how eating less fat in your diet or adding exercise affects your overall results.”

Employees can complete the HRA online, beginning January 4, through the HealthQuest intranet site, and receive immediate results. They also can contact Aimone for a paper version. Either way, the information is confidential.

As in past years, employees who complete their HRA by May 31 will receive a \$15 gift card from one of over 150 vendors, a one month fitness center voucher from either Healthtrax or Southcoast YMCA and will be entered into a raffle drawing. This year, family members who are subscribed under an employees’ to Blue Cross/Blue Shield plan may also complete the assessment. Only employees are eligible for the incentives.

*continued on page 2*

### New Year, New Colors, New Savings!

You have probably noticed that Coastlines started the new year with a bright new look — it’s now in full color! The use of full color provides us with new design possibilities and makes photos more vibrant and interesting.

Most importantly, because of advances in printing technology, this new four-color format actually costs 17 percent less to print than the previous printing method. As we move forward, we will continue to look for ways to increase the quality and decrease the cost of all Southcoast publications.

We hope you enjoy Coastlines’ new look and, as always, welcome your ideas for improvements and stories.

— Patricia Giramma, Editor  
[girammap@southcoast.org](mailto:girammap@southcoast.org)

## News Briefs

**Tarin Palmer** has joined the External Affairs department as a Campaign Secretary. Palmer holds a Bachelors of Science Degree in Operations Management from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and lives in New Bedford.

The Medical Space Planning Department has changed its name to Design, Construction and Project Management to better fits its expanded role within Southcoast. "New features will be coming soon on our intranet page, including links that will allow you to view progress photos of many of Southcoast's design and construction projects as they are underway," said Helio Rosa, CBO, Director of Design, Construction & Project Management. He encouraged all employees to visit department's intranet page for additional information.

### Southcoast named Breast Imaging Center of Excellence

Southcoast's three hospital sites and the Center for Women's Health have been designated as Breast Imaging Centers of Excellence by the American College of Radiology. The ACR bestows this honor on breast imaging service providers that are fully accredited in mammography, stereotactic breast biopsy, breast ultrasound and ultrasound-guided breast biopsy. Peer review evaluations conducted in each modality by board-certified physicians and medical physicists who are experts in the field, have determined Southcoast has achieved high practice standards in image quality, personnel qualifications, facility equipment, quality control procedures and quality assurance programs. 📷

## Patient Comments

*"This is the first time I have been to Charlton and can truthfully say I had excellent care and the hospital staff were the most pleasant and caring people."*

*"Family values integrated in a business environment — that is my impression of your hospital. A staff of loving, caring and understanding nurses and physicians made my stay here a pleasant experience."* 📷

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## Building Wellness, Step by Step

*continued from cover*

Southcoast receives an aggregate report based on the HRAs, which helps the Southcoast Wellness Committee better address employees' needs through HealthQuest programs.

For instance, the 2009 report indicated that employees were getting too little exercise, so lunchtime walking sessions have been established at the Charlton, St. Luke's and Fairhaven sites, and are led by trainers who also offer health tips.

The report does not include the names of any employees who took the HRA.

Aimone travels to various departments offering free biometric screenings, which include blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose and body mass index. Open biometric screenings will also be available on a monthly basis.

In general, the HRA survey finds that few Southcoast employees, about 8 percent, are at high risk for serious health problems. "A lot of companies have 74 or 75 percent of their employees at high risk," Aimone said.

At the same time, the Southcoast staff looks a lot like the general population. "America is out of shape and we fit right in," said Aimone. "These are things we can change."

"You certainly can't expect people to make leaps overnight, but small changes add up and benefit you overall," she said. "I always tell employees to start small. Remove the visible fat from your meat. Take the stairs, rather than the elevator. Park at the far end of the parking lot."

Knowing the correct size for a serving when eating is important.

"There is a lot of evidence that just using smaller plates helps you eat less," Aimone said. "This whole idea of getting your money's worth at restaurants is not good for us."

So far, the HRA results have remained about the same from year to year, but Aimone expects them to improve as people shift their habits. That will benefit not only the individuals, but also Southcoast as a whole. "Workers who are physically fit can be less prone to injury," Aimone said.

Because Southcoast is self-insured, employees' health as a group drives our benefits costs. Reducing health care risks can translate into important savings at a time when Southcoast — like all health care providers are across the country — faces fiscal challenges.

"Personal accountability, in terms of what we do and the choices we make, has an impact on us as individuals and the institution as a whole," Aimone said.

For information about HealthQuest, please visit the intranet or contact Kris Aimone at [aimonek@southcoast.org](mailto:aimonek@southcoast.org) or 65-5054. 📷

– Barbara LeBlanc



(left to right)  
Chien Chien Sun, MIS  
Mitzi Cote, MIS  
Barbara Francoeur, Patient Access, Outreach, Lab  
Stella Moreira, MIS  
Gloria Lopes, MIS  
Cheryl Sowden, MIS

## Rehab Services move to Durfee Union Complex

**I**n the coming weeks, Rehabilitation Services from the Charlton site, along with Somerset Cardiac Rehab, will relocate to the Durfee Union Complex at 283 Pleasant St. in Fall River.



"The new location is centrally located with easy access off Route 195 and plenty of parking for our patients' convenience," said Jennifer Randall, Director of the Diabetes Program, Wound Care & Rehabilitation for Southcoast.

Southcoast will occupy the newly remodeled ground floor and third floor of the building.

"These additions give us the ability to provide the most comprehensive rehabilitation services in the greater Fall River area," Randall said. "And the building's custom layout creates an excellent environment for us to continue our tradition and

commitment to a multidisciplinary model of patient care."

The ground floor will house Physical and Occupational Therapy, Audiology, Speech Pathology, the Diabetes Management Program and Occupational Health Rehabilitation.

"The ground floor clinic has custom-built specialty areas, including a complete audiology suite with a sound-proof booth for testing and separate hearing aide dispensing and repair stations," said Sharon Solomon, Manager of Rehabilitation Services for Southcoast. "We also have a comprehensive hand splinting station for on-site custom hand splint design following patient's individual physician orders."

Other features on the ground floor include a distinct Occupational Health work conditioning area and staff for the specific treatment of patients with work-related injuries and a separately designed space created for the distinct needs of the Diabetes Management Program, which offers patients two private educational classrooms.

The third floor will be dedicated to the Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Program.

"Moving to the Durfee building has allowed us to develop an integrated Cardiopulmonary Rehab Program with the return of the Phase III Maintenance Cardiac Rehab Program, which was previously located at 1125 GAR Highway in Somerset," Solomon said. "The new location will allow cardiac patient to come directly to the facility once they have been discharged from Phase I Inpatient Rehab for a seamless continuation of their rehabilitation for Phase 2 Outpatient Cardiac Program and Phase 3 Cardiac Maintenance Program."

The third floor will also include specially designed and distinct new medical fitness programs and a private patient education classroom. 📷

# Southcoast honored by state for helping patients quit smoking

**S**outhcoast Hospitals Group was honored with the 2009 Make Smoking History Award by The Department of Public Health's Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program (MTCP).

Southcoast Hospitals received the award for its efforts to help patients quit smoking through its implementation of the QuitWorks patient referral program. Department of Public Health Commissioner John Auerbach presented the award at a ceremony on November 18 in Nurses Hall at the Massachusetts State House.

"Southcoast Hospitals made a considerable difference in smoking prevalence rates in the area, which are among the highest in the state," said Commissioner Auerbach. "Their efforts have had a positive impact on the public health of our residents."

Southcoast was an early adapter of the QuitWorks program, which was created by the Department of Public Health for use by health organizations across the state. QuitWorks provides free, confidential information and tobacco treatment counseling by telephone for any Massachusetts resident, regardless of health insurance coverage.

The Fall River, New Bedford and Wareham areas have tobacco use rates that are disproportionately high in comparison to the rest of the state, with rates of 34 percent in Fall River, 26.4 percent in New Bedford and 23.4 percent in Wareham.

"Southcoast Hospitals Group is dedicated to raising public awareness of the health risks associated with smoking and secondhand smoke," said Keith A. Hovan, President & CEO of Southcoast Hospitals Group. "We are also dedicated to providing a healthier, safer environment for everyone who works at Southcoast and everyone who visits with the launch of our region-wide 'Breathe Better' program last year."

Southcoast intends to go totally smoke free on October 1, 2010.

Southcoast is one of the highest QuitWorks users of among more than 30 health care organizations across the state. Follow-up calls to Southcoast patients who were referred to QuitWorks revealed that nearly three-quarters of the participants stated they made a quit attempt and more than one-fifth were able to quit for at least 30 days.

"Southcoast Hospitals has done a remarkable job of helping people to quit smoking," said State Senator Mark C.W. Montigny, D-New Bedford. "People like Southcoast's Patrick Gannon, Vice President of Quality & Safety, and Nicole Almeida, RN, at Charlton Memorial Hospital, have worked tirelessly to implement QuitWorks for a number of years." 📷



(left to right)

Keith Hovan, President & CEO, Southcoast Hospitals Group

Elena List, Project Director of the Center for Tobacco Treatment Research and Training at UMass Medical School

Nicole Almeida, RN, Resource Nurse at Charlton Memorial Hospital, who spearheaded the QuitWorks program for Southcoast Hospitals Group

Nancy Medeiros, RN, Nurse Manager, Charlton Memorial Hospital

Joyce Dolin, RN, Director of Patient Services, Southcoast Hospitals Group

Jim Rattray, Vice President, Marketing & Public Affairs, Southcoast Health System

Donna Warner, Director of Cessation Policy and Programs for the DPH

# Southcoast increases access to primary care in the region

**S**outhcoast Physician Services has opened a new Family Medicine practice at Truesdale Clinic in Fall River, increasing access to much-needed primary care in the region.



Carlos Correia, MD



Jessica Inwood, MD



Felicia Freilich, MD



Kristianna Roberts, DO



Joey Tryon, DO

Southcoast Family Medicine Group includes five physicians who are all board certified in Family Medicine. The practice is located in a spacious new office suite at the expanded medical office building at Truesdale Clinic, 1030 President Ave. in Fall River. Physicians include Carlos Correia, MD, who has been practicing at Charlton Memorial for the past 15 years, Felicia Freilich, MD, Jessica Inwood, MD, Kristianna Roberts, DO, and Joey Tryon, DO.

"Our new family medicine practice will provide families with comprehensive medical care, from childhood through adulthood,"

Dr. Correia said. "We also recognize that families need flexibility with their busy schedules and we will provide both **evening and Saturday office hours** for our patients' convenience."

For more information or to make an appointment call **508-730-3100**.

Southcoast Physician Services and Southcoast Primary Care are the region's largest provider of primary care services, with more than 50 providers in 21 different locations throughout the South Coast. Both are affiliates of Southcoast Health System. 📷

# Southcoast Saves Big with Reusable Pulse Oximetry Probe

**B**lood oxygen level screening has become so routine that many patients expect a small probe to be clipped or taped to the end of their finger whenever they visit a health care provider.



Few patients, however, likely wonder about the cost of the sensors, called disposable pulse oximetry sensor probes, that are tossed out after a single use.

Southcoast Hospitals Group had an answer to that cost question: \$60,000 a month. About a year ago, a task force led by Susan DeStefano, RPFT, RRT-NPS, Respiratory and EKG Manager for Southcoast, set out to see if that cost could be lowered.

What they discovered was impressive. By converting from a disposable to reusable probe, the hospital system could save \$400,000 a year without compromising patient care or safety.

The conversion started in April, demonstrating how in a hospital system as large as Southcoast, small changes can lead to big gains.

“Using the disposable probe had become a costly habit that didn’t benefit patients,” DeStefano said.

The pulse oximetry project is the first significant initiative of the newly formed Utilization & Standards Committee, which is examining how Southcoast uses equipment and other products across its three campuses. Comprised of vice presidents and other Southcoast leaders, the committee seeks to contain costs in advance of the cuts in Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements, as well as other third-party payments that soon will hit all health care providers.

“We will have to reduce costs,” said Ronald LaFleur, Vice President of Revenue Systems for Southcoast. “Sue set a great example for all of us about how to grasp and undertake these changes.”

DeStefano and LaFleur both stressed that patient safety is top of mind as Southcoast examines options for savings. When considering the conversion to reusable pulse oximetry probes, DeStefano’s sub-committee of clinicians and Materials Management staff researched science and other literature for facts on accuracy and safety.

They found the reusable and disposable probes to be equally accurate. Furthermore, with proper cleaning, the reusable probes present no risk of infection and can be a better option when the

tape-secured disposable probes might cause skin breakdown, DeStefano said.

Once the decision to convert was made, an education plan was devised by staff from the sub-committee and mem-

bers of Professional Development at all three hospital sites. E-mails, posters and other communications explained the rationale for change and instructions for use and cleaning, said Laura E. Lusky, RRT-NPS, Respiratory Educator for Southcoast.

Environmental Services was trained to clean the probe and follow up communications addressed issues that arose with the change. Charlton, which already used the reusable probe, was an important resource, DeStefano said.

The oximetry probe is a basic device in Southcoast’s Emergency Departments, Operating Rooms, Intensive Care Units and other departments. DeStefano said all department leaders in all three hospitals readily accepted the change, particularly as disposable probes were still available and the new protocol explicitly allowed for a provider’s clinical judgment on when to use them.

“There was no reason not to change,” DeStefano said. “We will be able to continue providing excellent service to patients and it allows us to use the funds for other equipment or to save jobs.”

Now that the Utilization & Standards Committee has a successful rookie season under its belt (the committee convened in November 2008), LaFleur said Southcoast staffers can expect other initiatives. A change involving IV tubing is already underway and the committee is reviewing several other areas where there could be significant opportunity for savings.

“These kinds of savings are a great alternative to having to reduce staff,” he said. “We hope everyone will participate and embrace these new ideas as we look to improve utilization and standardization throughout Southcoast.”

– Barbara LeBlanc

## 2010 Employee Appeal

So many reasons for giving

**E**mployees choose to donate to the Southcoast Employee Appeal for many reasons. This month a few of the employees who have renewed or increased their gifts explain why they choose to support Southcoast.



“Given the challenges our organization faces in these difficult economic times, I believe we should provide any support we are able to.”

– Marybeth Ferrarini, Risk Management



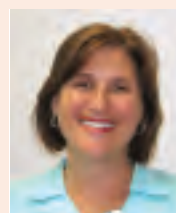
“It makes me feel good to help out.”

– Barbara Meleo, Emergency Department, Tobey



“I increased my gift this year for a number of reasons. I am grateful for my job and I enjoy working here. I also wanted to make it possible for my department to get funds back. Plus, it is so convenient to give through my paycheck.”

– Urszula Andrade, Quality Data Services



“I donate to the employee appeal because I believe in the hospital’s mission of commitment to community health and continuing to provide the best services possible to our patients. I work in Cardiology Services and am proud of the achievements Charlton has made, and continues to make, in this field.”

– Caroline McGuire, Radiology, Charlton

“I gave because this is a difficult time for everyone and everyone is worried about losing their jobs if the hospitals group doesn’t bring in the capital it needs ... I know it’s [a small donation], but when you have a lot of people donate it adds up.”

– April Goff, Radiology, Charlton

# Nutritional Services recreates cafeteria menu with freshness and wellness in mind

You spoke — and Nutritional Services listened!

In early November, the department unveiled a major overhaul of its menu offerings in the Cafeterias based on a customer preference survey held earlier in the year, focus groups and comment cards filled out by customers.



“There was a lot of customer input into the changes we made,” said Paul Seeley, Director of Nutritional Services for Southcoast. “People said they wanted healthier, fresher offerings and more restaurant-type offerings and we have tried to deliver.”

The menu was created with the help of Sodexo’s Executive Chefs and Dietitians and features many local favorites as well as creative and innovative new recipes. Southcoast has a contract with Sodexo, an international provider of food services and facilities management, to oversee food services within the hospitals.

Menu offerings have been standardized across all hospital sites for consistency and to ensure quality.

“We created the menu with freshness and wellness in mind,” Seeley said. “In addition to our wellness-certified deli and salad bars, we have enhanced our wellness program to include a certified wellness item in our Cafeterias each day.”

Wellness-certified meals are lower in sodium and fat and have to meet specific nutritional criteria set by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration based on their category, such as entrée, vegetable side or soup.

Additional changes include increased options and choices including a daily panini and pizza and upscale deli sandwiches with restaurant style ingredients.

“People told us they wanted to see sandwiches closer to the style a restaurant like Panera Bread offers,” Seeley said. “We have also enhanced our food stations and added a new display cooking station to offer meals daily that are prepared when ordered, ranging from stir-fries to tossed-to-order salads.”

For those who like to keep track of what they are eating, nutritional analysis is also available for menu items at each food station. There is also an interactive feature on the intranet, which includes nutritional information and allows users to track your food intake for the day.

Nutritional Services is about to implement a menu hotline. Just dial **FOOD (3663)** to find out what’s on the menu at each hospital site daily.

Seeley hopes the changes will also have a positive affect on people’s wallets.

“As we evaluated our offerings we also evaluated our pricing,” Seeley said. “While there are small price increases in the specialty offerings at the deli, grill and display cooking stations, we have consciously lowered the pricing of our daily sides so that a combination of an entrée and a side will result in decreased cost to our customers.”

On the horizon, Seeley said are more enhancements including:

- “Simply-to-Go” coolers with enhanced offerings for fresh-made boxed salads, sandwiches and other items.
- Offerings to satisfy off-time sweet and salty cravings such as fresh-popped popcorn and gourmet desserts.
- Declining balance cards and gift cards that can be reloaded.
- In-season promotions with fresh, seasonal ingredients.

And more listening to customers.

“We have already received some feedback that will bring about the return of some old favorites to the menu,” Seeley said. “And this month, Cafeteria users will have the opportunity to participate in a customer satisfaction survey to provide insight into the success of the changes.”

Feedback can also be provided any time via the intranet, comment cards found in the cafeterias or by contacting Seeley directly through Groupwise or MOX. 📧



Theresa Cruz, Food & Nutrition, St. Luke's  
Daily special display cooking



Margaret Aruda, Food & Nutrition, Charlton  
Deli station



Amanda Dopart & Rick Branco, Food & Nutrition, Charlton  
Display cooking & panini station



Susan Seremetis, Food & Nutrition, Tobey



# Quality & Safety

Keith A. Hovan  
President & CEO, Southcoast Hospitals Group



*As we enter this new year, we know we will soon also enter a new era in health care based on reform measures now being worked out both on Beacon Hill and on Capital Hill.*

## The Five S's and what they accomplish:

### Sort

Eliminates unnecessary, broken or obsolete items from the work area and frees up valuable space.

### Straighten

Organizes and stores necessary items so the job can be completed effectively — think “a place for everything and everything in its place.”

### Scrub

Thoroughly cleans the work area, making work easier, improving morale and making it easier to spot problems in the making.

### Standardize

Looks at best practices and involves staff input to determine the best way to complete a particular task and make it a standard.

### Sustain

Aims to keep the new changes in place. This is the toughest “S” to implement because habits — even those tied to poor ways of working — are oftentimes hard to break.

We will continue to prepare for this new era by working to make Southcoast an even better place to work and receive care.

Our Six Sigma efforts will continue. We will train a few more Green Belts, chosen from operations directors within the organization, and we will complete the work of “hard-wiring” the improvements started by the last series of Green and Black belts into daily work.

In other words, we will make the identified and improved changes a permanent and regular part of a process.

But as I stated last month, Six Sigma is not for everything. Lean has much broader applications, which we are beginning to explore. In the next few months, we will focus on introducing Lean principals to a wider group of health system staff. Patrick Gannon, RPH, Vice President of Quality & Safety, and I will begin to educate directors and managers on a single Lean concept known as the Five S's and extend that training to line staff.

The Five S's — sort, straighten, scrub, standardize and sustain — help build an environment conducive to supporting smooth-running processes. They take the place of what the Website for Lean Manufacturing Solutions Inc. lists as the five *pre-Lean* five S's: scrounge, steal, stash, scramble and search — a “process” many of you are probably familiar with.

The Lean Five S's replace what is sometimes no better than barely-controlled chaos with a thoughtful, logical process that is proven to improve safety, decrease down time, raise employee morale, identify problems more quickly, develop control through improved visibility and establish more convenient work practices.

Ingraining the Five S's in the work culture has also been

shown to increase service and process quality, promote stronger communication among staff and empower employees to be in control of their work area in a standardized fashion.

Here's an example of how it worked in one hospital that found nurses taking more than 240 seconds each time they went into the medication room.

The hospital asked their nurses how the medication rooms should be organized and how the process would work in a perfect world. Through direct input from the nurses, signing out and administering medications went from taking 240 seconds to 46 seconds.

Saving three minutes may not sound like much — until you think about how many times a nurse may need to give medication during a shift and how many nurses provide medication to patients each day.

But think about those same time-saving principals also being applied other duties a nurse performs and what that might mean in combined time savings — time that *should be spent with patients!*

Health care reform on the state and national levels is moving forward. At the time of this writing, it was still unclear what the final reforms would ultimately look like. Regardless of what happens, we know we will likely be paid less for the services we provide. We must prepare for this by continuing to look for savings on all scales.

To identify new savings, five members of Southcoast leadership will each be placed in charge of cross-functional teams of managers and directors that will be apply lean principles at an organization-wide level — with a focus on identifying additional savings from the elimination of waste. [Remember that waste is generally defined as anything that does not add value to our processes related to delivering services or something that a patient would not be willing to pay for.]

The savings will be sought in keeping with Southcoast's principles, mission and service standards — meeting our patients' needs will remain our top priority. In fact, we expect the effort to improve patient care along with patient and employee satisfaction by creating a more efficient and effective workplace where it is easier to work and easier to give and receive care.

Expect to hear more about these activities in the coming months and expect to be asked to participate. Each and every one of us has something we can contribute and we are counting on your contributions to make success possible. ■

## 2010 Employee Appeal *continued from page 4*



“I give to the Employee Appeal because I feel as a Southcoast employee this is my way of giving back.”

– Anna Marques, Southcoast Home Care



“I started at St. Luke's in December 1992 and have given to the employee appeal over the years. I give what I can each week, and it means a lot to the hospital.”

– David Medeiros, Security, St. Luke's

# the Interview



## Robert Motha, RPh

Director of Pharmacy

*When the H1N1 (Swine) flu pandemic began making headlines early in the year, Southcoast was quick to mobilize in preparation to deliver mass inoculations of the H1N1 vaccine to the public. But, due to a manufacturing issue, only a fraction of the doses of vaccine Southcoast ordered have been delivered.*

*Robert Motha, RPh, Director of Pharmacy, recently explained what happens behind the scenes as Southcoast struggles to deal with an unpredictable vaccine delivery system.*

### **How did Southcoast become a depot for the distribution of H1N1 vaccine?**

Instead of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health shipping to thousands of different providers, they wanted to create depots in each region to increase efficiency. Southcoast fit the mold to become a depot and St. Luke's became the site for the three Southcoast hospitals and our affiliated physician practices.

### **Did any special preparations have to be made?**

It was a concern for us to be receiving the large amount of vaccine we originally anticipated and we had to make plans to store it. Flu vaccine is a refrigerated product and there are requirements for the safe storage of the vaccines. We had to purchase a new refrigerator with the appropriate monitoring devices for temperature control.

### **How did Southcoast decide how many doses of the H1N1 vaccine to order?**

We went to our affiliated physician groups asking them to anticipate their needs and then determined what we would need in the hospitals for inpatients as well as employees. We ordered about 110,000 doses. To date we have received about 6,000 doses. The challenge is we never know when more is coming and how large the shipment will be.

### **How do you determine who receives the vaccine once Southcoast receives it?**

We determine where it should go depending upon guidance from the Department of Public Health and the particular formulation received.

Vaccine comes in various formulations: multiple-dose vials, pre-filled syringes for both adults and children, and a nasal preparation. Multiple dose vials contain the preservative thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative. There has been some controversy over the use of thimerosal with pregnant women. The current recommendation from the state and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention is to vaccinate pregnant women utilizing either of the adult formulations however. The pre-filled

syringe is considered preservative-free, and when that supply is available it has been targeted for use with pregnant women. Pregnant women are advised to discuss their options with their obstetrician.

The pre-filled syringes that do not contain the preservative come in two dosages — one appropriate for adults and one appropriate for pediatric populations three months to four years of age. There is also a nasal vaccine, known as FluMist, which contains a live but weakened form of the H1N1 virus. This vaccine is appropriate for any healthy individual free of any chronic medical conditions four to 49 years of age who is not pregnant.

### **What are the target groups for the vaccine?**

The key target groups [as of December] are pregnant women, infants and children, direct caregivers in health care settings and caregivers for people in target population. So, for instance, the mother of an infant would be part of that target group.

### **How do you learn of a shipment and what do you do?**

Typically I receive an e-mail toward the end of the day telling me that a shipment is coming and the number of doses. The notification does not tell me the formulation, so we cannot determine the actual population we will target with the shipment until we actually receive it.

It takes two to five days for the shipment to arrive. Once it arrives, we check the formulation and determine the appropriate population to be targeted. If the shipment is to go out to office practices or a certain type of practice, such as obstetricians or pediatricians, we contact the practices and have them make arrangements to pick up the vaccine.

### **With deliveries of H1N1 vaccine coming in so slowly, will the flu season be over before everyone who needs the vaccine gets one?**

The flu is expected to come in several waves from now through early spring, so the recommendation is to continue to try to get a vaccine all the way up through April. 📧