



KershawHealth earns Zero Harm awards again

Also, Gunn details measures taken after water main break

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For the second year in a row, KershawHealth earned two Zero Harm awards during the S.C. Hospital Association and S.C. Medical Association's joint Trustees, Administrators and Physicians (TAP) Conference. The awards recognize the achievement of not having any -- literally, zero -- surgical site infections during elective hip and knee surgeries during the last 30 consecutive months.

"This is certainly a very impressive achievement," KershawHealth Board of Trustees Vice Chair Dr. Tallulah Holmstrom declared while reporting to the board during its meeting Monday night. "Seventy awards were given out and we received two of those. The state has about 65 hospitals, so about 130 some-odd awards could have been given out. To receive two of the 70 awards is something we really should celebrate."

Holmstrom presented the awards to KershawHealth Director of Infection Control and Prevention Paula Guild.

The Zero Harm awards were only part of what Holmstrom said were several reasons to celebrate Monday night. In addition, KershawHealth is one of only seven hospitals in the state to receive a Safe Surgery Hospital designation this year.



"That's really a multidisciplinary approach to making sure each and every patient who goes into our (operating rooms) is afforded all of the evidence-based knowledge -- to make sure their experience is safe, appropriate and timely: the right care at the right place at the right time," Holmstrom said.

She presented a certificate for the designation to surgeon Dr. Paul Christenberry, anesthesiologist Benjamin Blackmon, lead certified registered nurse anesthetist Jamie Compton and Director of Surgical Services Jessica Geddings.

"We're in pretty illustrious company when it comes to the safe surgical (designation). Some of the names on that list ... including MUSC and Palmetto Health Richland," Holmstrom said. "It's really something KershawHealth and our surgical division ... and the board should be proud of."

Holmstrom and Chief Quality Officer Divya Reddy "tag teamed" on a report out of the board's most recent quality committee meeting. They spoke about "care transitions" where the hospital is working internally -- by looking at HCAHPS, a measure of patient satisfaction -- and with other agencies outside the hospital to reduce readmissions.

"It's the thought that hospitals aren't out by themselves on an island," Holmstrom said. "It really does take a village to provide care, and even though we talk a lot about population management, at the end of the day, the individuals who walk in the door -- what they want is personalized, individualized care. So, when it comes to care transition, we need to figure out as a community how we wrap around all of the services, not just those delivered in our own hospital walls, or even our own service lines -- because our patients are interfacing with other home health agencies, other hospices, other providers of care."



Holmstrom said care transitions is becoming “exceedingly important” for individual patients but also impacts the management of the community’s overall health.

Reddy also reported KershawHealth’s home health and long-term care units have launched a “Think DRINK” campaign, focusing on the importance of fluid intake for their patients in order to reduce urinary tract infections (UTIs). Holmstrom said home health patients are having high rates of UTIs, but long-term care has reduced its UTI rate to about 1.3 percent.

“It’s a huge success, and what we want to do is borrow their experience and, perhaps, translate those efforts into the home healthcare setting. What really matters is fewer people are suffering,” Holmstrom said.

Another highlight from the report is the implementation of bedside shift reports so nurses coming on duty can receive updates about a patient from a nurse going off shift at the patient’s bedside. Reddy said the amount of communication and involvement under the new setting is “amazing.”

Holmstrom, who is ending a 6-year term on the board, thanked her fellow trustees for allowing her to serve on the quality committee.

“I’m not quite sure how things are going to be moving forward,” Holmstrom said, referring to the Nov. 1 scheduled takeover of most of KershawHealth’s business by Capella Healthcare and MUSC Health. “What I do know is quality is always going to be at the forefront, and if it’s not, it should be, because if we’re not delivering quality healthcare, we need to fix that. It should be our primary focus. I firmly believe if you do that, everything else -- the finances, the metrics, the politics and everything else -- will fall in line.”

She said she knew it would be important to the district board (the current group of trustees) because it will still have authority over the Karesh Long-Term Care Center.



"And I have no doubt it is going to be exceedingly important to the new Capella board, because they'll have an acute care healthcare delivery system to deliver. So, it may look a little different in the weeks and months to come, but the focus on quality is going to always be needed."

Water main break

Early Monday morning, a main water line on Haile Street broke, affecting a number of home and KershawHealth. CEO Terry Gunn said the break caused water pressure to drop at the hospital.

"The reason that's important is we've got two large code-required back flow preventers that require a certain amount of pressure, otherwise, they shut down to prevent any backflow of hospital water waste contaminating the city water supply," Gunn said. "We got totally shut down. When that happens, the boilers have to be shut down, so we can't have heat (and) that can cause some backflow issues in the hospital so the water can be at risk of becoming contaminated."

Gunn said equipment such as sterilizers and dishwashers, and processes such as preparing food and ice for patients and their families were affected as well.

"It impacts everything we do," he said.

Gunn said KershawHealth did make the decision to cancel all surgeries for the day.

"We had a very robust day of surgery, but we felt like it was best to err on the side of safety--" and being a safe surgical site, Holmstrom interjected "--and all patients (and) physicians were contacted in advance and notified of the situation," Gunn said.

He said the city was able to repair the break around 9:30 a.m. Monday, but took a while for pressure to build in the medical



center's three-story buildings. Gunn said water samples were sent to the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control. Camden City Manager Mel Pearson said samples came back negative for any contamination.

Gunn said the hospital enacted its interim sterilization procedures, including using distilled water for hand washing in operating rooms. He said the hospital planned to resume surgeries the next day and reported each patient contacted agreed to return for their procedures Tuesday.

"This is not the first time this has happened. We are concerned and once we get past the crisis and stabilization process, I do think it would be wise to sit down with the city leadership to see if there are some other alternatives we can (have) to prevent the water pressure from dropping below where it shuts down the hospital -- whether that's a redundant line, or something that can be done to ensure we've got a constant flow of water into our facility that's appropriate for patient care," Gunn said.

In other business:

- Gunn said the hospital will hold "town hall" meetings with employees Oct. 7 as part of a welcome for Capella and MUSC Health. The meetings will include Capella CEO Michael Weichart, Capella Executive Vice President/President - Hospital Operations Mark Medley and others. The meetings will be held at both the main campus and Elgin center.
- The following day, Oct. 8, Gunn said, Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center, MUSC and Capella executives will meet to work on a strategic plan with a company out of Chicago.
- Gunn said Medley will be in Camden Nov. 10 with the Studer Group to work with KershawHealth and Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center on creating outstanding patient experiences.



- Executive Vice President and COO/CFO presented information on August's finances. During the discussion, Gunn revealed KershawHealth is aggressively recruiting for a new urologist.
- Trustees praised Holmstrom and fellow Trustee Bobby Jones for their service to the board. Holmstrom and Jones are rotating off the board, although they may continue to serve until such time as Kershaw County Council reappoints them or appoints someone else to their seats.
- Following a lengthy executive session concerning the Capella/MUSC transaction, the board voted unanimously to approve a medical staff credentialing report, some by-law changes and to create an October 2015 budget based on August's actual expenditures.

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