

JULY 2008

Pulse

THE MEDICAL STAFF NEWSLETTER OF WATERBURY HOSPITAL



**A MESSAGE FROM
STEVEN E. SCHNEIDER, MD**
Vice President
of Medical Affairs



Pictured in Waterbury Hospital's Special Care Nursery are (L to R) **Patrice Jones, PAC**, and **Suzanne Walker, PAC**, with newborn Gracie Hossein.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS SKILLED PARTNERS AND DEDICATED PRACTITIONERS

This month *Pulse* focuses on the critical roles played by physician assistants (PAs). At Waterbury Hospital, PAs are woven into the fabric of patient service and care. They provide extraordinary experience and medical knowledge that proves a huge asset to patients, physicians, staff and the Waterbury community.

Medicine is an applied science, and our PAs apply it very efficiently. They work closely with physicians, nurses and other medical professionals as sub-specialists, diagnosing, managing care and helping to ensure stability and improved standards of care.

PAs help us achieve our patient continuity goals and are a good fit in our teamwork-centric culture. Dependent practitioners by state regulations, they look to physicians as mentors and ultimate decision makers. Yet many of the PAs on our staff have been practicing their craft for years and are viewed by their associates as highly skilled medical strategists, tacticians and leaders. They expand our hospital's capabilities, treat a variety of illnesses and acquire sophisticated skills.

I first worked with PAs during my emergency medicine residency in the Army in the early '70s. The PA discipline, in fact, evolved as a result of Army medics returning from Vietnam with extensive battlefield medical experience. They lacked the academic credentials and extra training required to serve as physicians, but they knew medicine, particularly emergency procedures. What they needed was a formal path that would allow them to practice these skills without returning to a stringent academic setting and residency process that together take several years to complete.

Graduate programs and extensive certification requirements were created to meet this need. PAs complete a 28-month training program, and all have American Academy of Physician's Assistants certification. Many earn additional degrees; they complete 100 hours of training annually, and are re-certified every six years.

In our Emergency Department, they are the "bread and butter" of emergency medicine, and every pediatric patient is "touched" by a PA. They support neonatal care, pediatrics, orthopaedics, general surgery, radiology, pulmonary and our hospitalists, and are affiliated with many private practices. They also help train future PAs: Waterbury Hospital works closely with Quinnipiac College and the Yale School of Medicine supporting PA education programs.

Though we rely on their experience and skills, this is a critical partnership that is still developing. PA staff will play an increasingly important function as hospitals and medical practices continue to evolve. Our shared vision is to grow together, finding the best ways to utilize their special talents and diverse experiences, and strengthening their roles and the value they provide for Waterbury Hospital.



Steven E. Schneider, MD
Vice President of Medical Affairs



Pulse

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

Mark Garber, MD

Emergency Department physician hones skills...naturally.



Mark Garber studied animal science and agriculture before serving as a hospital corpsman during the Vietnam era. After his experience in Southeast Asia, he trained as a physician's assistant, practicing in medically under-served areas of the south Bronx and later in southwest Texas along the Mexican border.

He attended medical school in Mexico while working as a PA in Texas, and completed his residency training in emergency medicine at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia. He is Board Certified in emergency medicine and a fellow of the American College of Emergency Physicians. He has been an attending physician in the emergency departments of Norwalk and Greenwich Hospitals, and is a faculty member of the University of Bridgeport's College of Naturopathic Medicine, the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, and the University of Connecticut and Yale Schools of Medicine.

Dr. Garber serves on the hospital's Integrative Medicine Committee, and is certified in Holistic Medicine. He has studied nutrition, botanical remedies, manipulation and homeopathy, incorporating these techniques, as possible, with his emergency patients. He also shares this knowledge with medical students and residents.

"I enjoy finding ways to help our Emergency Department patients traditionally and through alternative paths," Dr. Garber explains. "I see a lot of patients who don't take good care of themselves. I speak with them about nutrition, supplements and other dietary factors that could help them improve their overall health."

Dr. Garber has published extensively and lectures throughout the region. He has lived and traveled in Mexico, Europe and North Africa, is fully bilingual in English and Spanish, and conversant in German and French. A talented musician, he still enjoys travel and spending time with his two college-aged children.



PORTRAIT

Emergency Department

The Emergency Department (ED) treats more than 55,000 patients annually. Many of these patients are evaluated and treated by the hospital's experienced and highly trained Physician Assistants. The PAs who work in the ED are graduates of a nationally accredited training program and have successfully passed their National Board of Medical Examiners certifying exam. The ED PAs work in the Prompt Care area, treating minor illness, back strains, fractures and dislocations. They order and help interpret diagnostic laboratory tests and radiographic studies. They also perform a variety of procedures, such as suturing and reduction and splinting of dislocated extremities. In addition, PAs work in the main ED where they help treat patients with more serious conditions, such as asthma and pneumonia, chest pain, abdominal pain, and surgical conditions. They also work with trauma patients and children.

LYNN BAYLIS, PA

Emergency Department

The ED PA's are valued and well-respected members of our department. Soon we will have six full-time PAs staffing the ED. With our increase in staff, we have been able to take an active role in initiating a new program in the ED called the "rapid-assessment triage/treatment program." Janet Richardson, RN and I have been running this program and staffing will include other practitioners. The program expands the role of the PA in our department. It is very exciting, and we have been very successful with it. By expanding the roll of PAs, we have been able to improve patient care. We have decreased patient waiting time and have decreased our patients' length of stay in the ED. We have a great group of PAs, and we work well together.



Pictured below are the Family Birthing Center PAs (clockwise from left): **Patrice Jones, Jim Corless, Suzanne Walker, Megan Sawyer Canedy, Pediatric APRN and Dave Parrotti.**

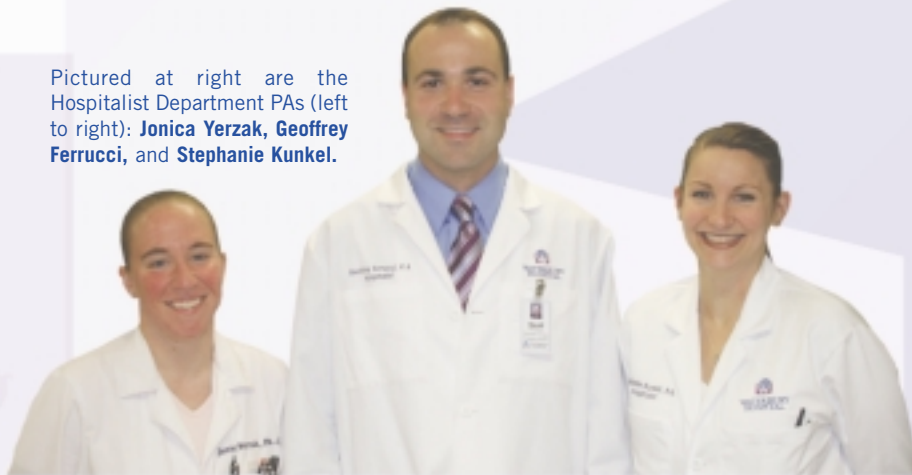


ROLES OF CARE



The role of Physician Assistants at Waterbury Hospital

Pictured at right are the Hospitalist Department PAs (left to right): **Jonica Yerzak, Geoffrey Ferrucci, and Stephanie Kunkel.**



Pictured at left are the Emergency Department PAs (from left to right): **Beverly Waczek, Noelle Noah, Jason Vogt, Lynn Baylis and Kate Sylvester.**



Hospitalist Department

Hospitalist PAs are licensed health professionals who practice medicine with physician supervision in a hospitalist-PA team model.

The hospitalist PA exercises autonomy in diagnosing and treating acute-care medical hospital patients. PAs provide high-quality care around the clock, participating in daily rounds, offering continual care and cross coverage in the evenings and on the weekends.

The PA performs a range of duties such as admissions, including thorough H and Ps, ordering, and interpreting of tests/procedures; laboratories, radiographic images, PICC lines, Dobhoff

catheters and much more. They order specialty consultations and help facilitate the discharge process. On the hospitalist team, PAs teach students and have opportunities to do invasive procedures, working closely with our physicians.

In addition, the hospitalist PAs participate in quality, safety and other hospital initiatives and on various committees. They attend Grand Rounds and multi-disciplinary rounds with other hospital staff to improve communication, decrease length of stay, and reduce re-admissions.

IN MY OWN WORDS

Thoughts of a Hospitalist PA at Waterbury Hospital

by **Geoff Ferrucci, PA-C**

The Physician Assistant is a relatively new profession. Since its inception in the 1960s, the field has experienced tremendous growth in the US and other countries including England, Australia and Canada. Current PA oriented journals frequently report new medical venues opening its doors for PAs to practice. This expansion and the fact that we get to positively affect other human beings, is why I chose to become a PA.

Practicing internal medicine among the hospitalists at Waterbury Hospital is a pleasure. Their insight and expertise in acute care internal medicine is impressive. They support PAs and foster the MD/PA model, which is the basic foundation of our relationship. I enjoy the day-to-day at Waterbury Hospital and feel that I am a part of the team. As in most professions, there is a steep learning curve. At Waterbury Hospital, the hospitalists, nurses and specialists are experienced and helpful and have contributed to my fund of knowledge and made an impact on my technique at delivering quality health care.

At Waterbury Hospital, an individual's contributions to care are acknowledged and appreciated by colleagues and patients in a number of ways. I have received feedback from patients and their families ranging from a big hug, a thank you, to a box of chocolates. It is reassuring, rewarding and thoughtful. Co-workers also show their kindness and professionalism by assisting me so I'm never overwhelmed, and by treating me to coffee when I need it!

PAs are similar to physicians and nurses -- we come in many shapes and sizes, and we're all committed to the patient's health and well being. The roles of PAs are diverse and each specialty has its own distinct personality. I speak with confidence and experience when I tell aspiring PAs that Waterbury Hospital offers a rewarding venue for expressing their talents and for helping others.

Family Birthing Center



The role of the Physician Assistant and the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) in the Family Birthing Center is to work under the supervision of the attending neonatologist to provide in-house medical coverage 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to the Special Care Nursery (SCN). The PAs and APRNs attend all C-section deliveries, as well as high-risk vaginal deliveries for conditions such as prematurity, fetal distress, suspected infection, forceps, or vacuum resuscitation. They are

certified in pediatric advance life support, as well as neonatal resuscitation. PAs perform and assist procedures in the SCN, such as endotracheal intubation for surfactant instillation and mechanical installation, umbilical vessel catheterization and chest tube insertion. They participate in all daily rounds on all SCN patients. During off-shift hours, they are the first provider called to attend any problem that might arise.

JIM CORLESS, PA

Family Birthing Center

"In the Special Care Nursery, PAs are an essential part of the program . . . we're involved in everything, and play a strong role in training our student PAs. Physicians call me for consults and treat us respectfully -- we're fully accepted and valued. It's a very supportive environment -- we all work together closely, and rely on one another."

Orthopaedic Department

The Orthopaedic Physician Assistants are a very busy team. There are seven hospital-based PAs working with and supporting 18 orthopaedic surgeons. They cover all aspects of orthopaedic care, including the in-patient management of pre-op and post-op patients. They work as the first and second surgical assistants in the operating room, provide Emergency Department care of fractures and other orthopaedic problems, manage a weekly orthopaedic clinic and provide pre-operative education for patients in an informal weekly Joint Replacement class. More than 3,000 orthopaedic surgeries were performed at Waterbury Hospital in 2007. That includes the more than 900 hip and knee replacements that are performed annually, as well as surgeries for sports injuries, advanced spine care, hand and wrist injuries, elbow, elbow injuries, shoulder injuries, and foot and ankle conditions.

JOAN DOBACK, Chief PA

Orthopaedics

"This is a large, well-blended and experienced team. The PAs work comfortably with our surgeons, and are seen as integral to the flow of care in our hospital. We're seen as critical thinkers, experienced and reliable, well trained and vital. Physicians trust and respect us, and look to us for a variety of patient care and support services. They are our mentors and teachers, yet they value our contributions. We are proud to be part of the team that was named by Healthgrades© to be among the top 5% of hospitals in the nation for Joint Replacement Surgery, and to be ranked the #1 hospital in Connecticut for Joint Replacement Surgery in 2008.



Pictured above are the Orthopaedic Department PAs (left to right): **Steve Kaufmann, Joan Doback, Chief PA-Orthopaedics; Alan Houle, Juliet Rivera, Leslie Bebb and Mike Houle.**

Pulse

is published monthly by the Public Relations/
Marketing Department at Waterbury Hospital

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