Part 5: Beaumont Health Strategic Imperative series

Developing a culture of learning

As Beaumont Health transforms into a learning organization, all of us will have a role to play in creating a better environment of care for patients through ongoing learning and development.

“We want to have a culture of learning that builds upon itself,” said J. Paul Conway, senior vice president and chief human resources officer and co-champion of the learning organization imperative of Beaumont’s strategic plan.

Becoming a learning organization goes beyond creating traditional educational opportunities for employees and physicians. “Being part of a great health care organization today means that each of us is challenged with learning new skills and information,” said co-champion Les Rocher, M.D., senior vice president, chief academic and clinical officer. “We want to create the tools and environment that promote this learning. By building a learning organization on the platform of our rich tradition of medical education, we advance our goal of providing exceptional care at Beaumont Health.”

What does a learning organization look like?

Characteristics of a learning organization include transparency of information and making sure that information is fluid across shifts, departments and sites. This ongoing knowledge-sharing encourages all employees to learn from each other—and to use errors as opportunities to improve.

“We need to be the best in terms of outcomes, service and safety, and we do that by learning,” said Carolyn Wilson, executive vice president and chief operating officer.

The initial focus on Beaumont’s journey to become a learning organization will be to:

- Create a culture of learning
- Generate innovation to learn how to achieve extraordinary outcomes
- Prepare the workforce to deliver a better health care environment

Specific plans for each of these areas are being developed this year and will include developing a strategic plan for research and identifying emerging workforce needs. The learning organization imperative is closely connected to Beaumont becoming...
OUWB students orchestrate new research symposium

Top-notch research was on display again at Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak. Students of the Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine organized a first-of-its-kind research symposium in January.

The students, members of the Robert J. Lucas Surgical Society, a student-run organization dedicated to gaining exposure to the surgical field through guest speakers, advising, mentorship and events, started discussing the idea in June. They decided to make the inaugural Robert J. Lucas Surgical Society Research Symposium special by including students from other medical programs throughout Southeast Michigan.

“Part of the society’s mission statement is to support student research and contact with the Surgical Department. We wanted to take that to another level, and let students present in a more competitive format,” said Katherine Williams, an OUWB student and president of RJLSS.

First through fourth year medical students from OUWB, Wayne State University, University of Michigan and Michigan State University were invited to submit abstracts in academic and community research, clinical research and surgical research.

The symposium took extensive planning and was run by RJLSS students. Along with their busy medical school schedules, the students planned the logistics of the event, marketed the event and developed judging criteria for the Beaumont physicians who picked the top 12 abstracts.

Physicians chose the winning abstracts through a blind selection process that replaced names and titles with numbers. The highest scoring abstracts were given spots at the symposium.

With more than 100 abstracts submitted from across Southeast Michigan, the symposium highlighted some of the best research in the state.

Alan Koffron, M.D. Beaumont Health System chair of Surgery said, “All the presentations were on par with those I see at national meetings. The students conducted the event in a thorough, traditional, professional manner, with only advice and secretarial help from the department side. It was truly resplendent and surely a testament to the school and what it can create.”

Alan Wang, treasurer of RJLSS and second-year medical student at OUWB, was a main organizer of the symposium. He believes next year’s symposium should increase in scope and have more students from outside OUWB submit abstracts.

“We accomplished our goal and gave students the experience of preparing a symposium and presenting research. We plan for the symposium to get bigger and better in the coming years,” said Alan.

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the employer of choice for Southeast Michigan. “It’s about having a culture of growth, development and engagement in everything we do,” Paul said.

Doing your part

In a learning organization, people at all levels place a high value on education, development and lifelong learning. Each person takes ownership and engages in their own ongoing development, and supports other team members in their pursuits as well.

For clinicians, education and development usually connect with improving effectiveness and patient outcomes at Beaumont Health. And all of us should seek out opportunities that help us become even more effective in delivering the best patient- and family-centered experience.

Supervisors and employees are encouraged to have regular conversations about development goals and how to achieve them. These conversations can result in pursuing education and training available internally through scheduled classes and online training modules and/or more formal education that may be partially reimbursed through tuition assistance.

Additionally, a learning organization uses a host of less formal approaches to enhance growth, development and results, including things such as on-the-job development, involvement in special projects and assignments, process improvement initiatives, team-based problem solving, etc.

“Our most important asset is our people and we want to invest in them,” said Dr. Rocher.
Dorothy House was at a festival in Farmington Hills with her certified therapy dog, Amos, when a stranger approached her. The woman asked if Dorothy and Amos volunteered at Beaumont Hospital, Farmington Hills and, when Dorothy said they did, she burst into tears.

“I was hoping I would find you some day,” the woman told her. “I just wanted to tell you how much joy you brought to my dad in his final days.”

Beaumont volunteers have many such stories – being thanked by people they have never met, or receiving long, gracious emails and phone messages – and they are among the reasons Dorothy enjoys volunteering so much.

“When you see people smile and they don’t have much to smile about – it’s therapy for us, too,” she said. “I think we get as much out of it as the patients do.”

April 10-16 is National Volunteer Week and Beth Frydlewicz, system director of Volunteer Services for Beaumont Health, said Beaumont has much to be thankful for, with a virtual army of volunteers helping within the system every day. Last year, more than 3,800 volunteers contributed more than 384,000 hours of volunteer time in 488 different service areas. That amounts to more than $9.4 million in donated time – and an immeasurable amount of energy, inspiration and good cheer.

“I don’t think people understand the scope of volunteerism that goes on at Beaumont Health,” she said. “There really is a connection to the community.”

Volunteers come to Beaumont from all walks of life and they all have a common goal and a common underlying principle.

“What better way to spend the time you have than helping people?” asked Genevieve Schram, who volunteers in the spiritual support department at Beaumont Hospital, Wayne. Genevieve, who assists adults with special needs find employment through her day job, said she wanted to volunteer to further reach people and help them outside of her own church.

“I was looking for something to do to help people,” she said. “This is wonderful. It’s incredible to be involved with a patient’s life and be a comfort to them when they need it. It’s as rewarding for me as it is for them. I think it builds me up as much as it builds them up.”

Many are inspired to serve because of the care they experienced in the past, or through caring for a loved one. Amer Sufi, a volunteer at the Emergency Center at Beaumont Hospital, Troy, said he was impressed with what he saw when his father was in an intensive care unit in California. When he moved to Michigan, he sought ways to give back to the community.

“I always wanted to volunteer,” said Amer, an accountant by day. “I called a lot of places to find an opportunity, but most of them just asked me to send them a check. I’ve been writing checks all my life, I told them – I want to be involved.”

At Troy, Amer rounds on patients in the EC, helps staff get whatever they need, transports patients to different areas of the hospital and more. He took to it so well that he was asked to train new volunteers and now oversees a busy volunteer crew in the EC. There were only 21 volunteers on three shifts when he started in 2008, now there are 130.

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Volunteers
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“We have so many more opportunities for volunteers and patients now have so much more personal contact,” Amer said. “This is a wonderful way to make a difference. You feel like you’re really engaged; you’re not just stocking cabinets. You are directly helping people.”

Volunteering at a health system can also help people interested in a medical career refine their goals or decide which field to go into. Marcell Brikho, a volunteer at Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, started when she was in high school. Now a student at Oakland University, she has helped organize programs to seek out other high schoolers interested in medical careers to inform them about the many volunteer opportunities available.

“It opens so many doors. We want them to take advantage of these volunteer opportunities and make it apply to their future,” she said. “There are so many things you don’t learn in text books. When you see things in real life, it’s completely different.”

Famous Amos: Volunteer dog fondly remembered

The little heart that gave so much love to patients and staff at Beaumont Hospital, Farmington Hills, recently gave out.

Amos, the certified pet therapy dog who spent his Thursdays in the cancer center and at the main hospital, lost a brief battle with lung cancer in March.

“He was just a special little guy. He did everything right,” said Dorothy House, his owner. “There was not one thing about him that I would have wished was different.”

Dorothy met Amos through another of her volunteer efforts. She and a friend regularly helped out at the Dearborn Animal Shelter—they would collect returnable bottles and cans from the nearby Ford plant and return them to donate the money to the shelter to pay for veterinarian care for the animals there.

She still remembers the day Amos, then a stray but apparently well cared for, was turned into the shelter for adoption. He was an older dog—somewhere between 7 and 10—but Dorothy said she still couldn’t believe he was continually passed up, and nobody came to claim him.

“Little did anyone know how much love he had left to give,” she said.

Dorothy had a feeling, however, and adopted him as soon as she was able to. Amos and Dorothy were eventually recruited by Terry Seraceno, founder of Doctor Paws Pet Assisted Therapy, who thought he had the perfect demeanor. Amos did, too—he passed all of his tests with flying colors, and was an immediate hit in the hospital.

“Anybody that wanted to hold him – he just fell into their arms,” Dorothy said. “He was so special. He even won over a lot of people that said they weren’t dog people.”

Amos loved spending time at the hospital as much as Dorothy did. He got excited when it came time for their weekly visits, even pulling Dorothy from the car to the hospital doors—where his first stop was his “treat drawer” in the administration wing. While visiting, he had a special way with staff and patients alike.

“All the love he got, he gave it all back,” Dorothy said. “He just brought joy to so many people.”

Cynthia Bonkowski, manager of Volunteer Services at Beaumont, Farmington Hills, said Amos is sorely missed.

“He had a purpose and a place here and he will always be remembered and loved by all of us,” she said.
Beaumont, Wayne helps pitch-in for Jaws of Life

The Wayne-Westland Fire Department will be able to purchase a new Jaws of Life, thanks to a little help from Beaumont Hospital, Wayne.

The hospital donated $2,500 toward the purchase of the $27,000 equipment. The fire department had been soliciting donations for a new set of Jaws of Life since late last year.

“It’s always been important to us to give back to the communities we serve,” said Eric Widner, division president of Beaumont Hospital, Wayne. “This was an easy decision for us. It is vital equipment and it will help save lives.”

The Jaws of Life currently in use by the department is more than 20 years old—and their back-up set is older still, according to Capt. Fred Gilstorff, who has led the fundraising effort. The equipment still works, but it is rapidly approaching the end of its life cycle.

“They are nowhere near as capable as the new units,” Gilstorff said.

The equipment the Wayne department will purchase includes three different tools. It has a spreader to pry things apart, a cutter to create openings in twisted metal and a sort of hydraulic ram that is used to lift heavy equipment – like a broken dash board, for example – off a pinned victim. They are also battery powered, while the old equipment runs off hydraulics. They can be put into use faster, meaning that victims pinned in wrecked vehicles can be freed more quickly.

“They’re more powerful and they’re safer for us to use,” said Gilstorff. “It’ll be a vast improvement. This is a big deal for us and we’re very appreciative of Beaumont for this donation.”

Everything baby arrives at Beaumont with the baby fairs

Baby fever is arriving at Beaumont Health! The Grosse Pointe, Royal Oak and Troy hospitals are hosting annual baby fairs sponsored by Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals in April.

The fairs provide expecting parents with educational information and mini-parenting classes on comfort measures in labor and breast-feeding basics, just to name a few. The Troy and Grosse Pointe baby fairs provide car seat safety checks. All fairs will provide free raffled prizes, free food, mom and baby-friendly vendors, meet-and-greet tables with health professionals and more.

New this year, Grosse Pointe will host a parenting symposium featuring keynote speaker Stacey Sharpe Mollison, co-founder of Simply Smart Kids, an organization created to empower parents and caregivers to maximize their children’s success before they enter school. For more information visit www.beaumont.edu/baby-fair.
Take the family and join the fun at Beaumont-sponsored walks

This year, Beaumont Health is sponsoring two spring walks to support the health of the communities we serve. Consider signing up the family and getting some exercise together at one of these two walks:

**The Heart Walk**
Saturday, May 14
West Riverfront Park
Downtown Detroit
8 a.m. to noon
Register now!

**Arthritis Walk**
Saturday, May 21
Detroit Zoo

Check-in, registration, refreshments and fun, start at 7 a.m. The walk features a one-, two- or three-mile course. Be sure to enjoy fun activities for the entire family. Participants age 2 and older must register to receive a zoo ticket. The program begins at 8 a.m., followed by the walk. Registered walkers may stay and enjoy the zoo until 5 p.m.

Free parking. Register now!

Registration for these walks is free, also there is no need to fundraise. Just get out there and show them your Beaumont Health spirit!

Stay tuned for more information about the Walk for Miracles, Saturday, June 4, which is the only walk that benefits Beaumont directly.

Women with stress urinary incontinence sought for first US research study to determine effectiveness of new noninvasive treatment

Could a one-a-day pill be the answer for women with stress urinary incontinence – a condition resulting in leakage with coughing, sneezing and laughing?

Urologists at Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak are seeking postmenopausal women with stress urinary incontinence, or SUI, for a research study of a compound that may strengthen pelvic floor muscle and reduce the leakage of urine. Beaumont doctors are first in the U.S. to study the use of enobosarm, an investigational medication to treat women’s SUI.

“Our hope is that this daily pill will enhance the pelvic floor muscle and reduce stress urinary incontinence in women,” said Kenneth Peters, M.D., principal investigator and chief, Urology, Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak. “The pelvic floor muscles are very important in controlling urinary continence.”

Kathy Abourezk doesn’t go anywhere without extra pads. She has lived with SUI since 2007 and she says it has gotten worse. “It’s not predictable,” she said. “I never know when I’ll have leakage.”

SUI affects people’s lifestyle, at home, work, leisure and in their relationships.

“I would welcome a safe and effective treatment option for stress urinary incontinence, especially since existing nonsurgical options like wearing pads or doing Kegel exercises are extremely limited, and at times, marginally effective,” said Dr. Peters.

When she found out she was a candidate for the pill study, Kathy was eager to participate. “Surgery wasn’t something I even considered. It was not an option. I like the idea of just taking a pill. I’m hopeful this study medication will help me and other women.”

The study is being conducted only at Beaumont and is evaluating the effects of orally administered enobosarm, 3mg once a day, in postmenopausal women with SUI. Dr. Peters and his team plan to enroll up to 35 women to test the safety and effectiveness of enobosarm. Participants will take the study medication for 90 days.

For more information on the study and its criteria, call Urology Research at 248-551-3355.

“Beaumont urologists helped develop the protocol for this study with GTx Inc., a Memphis, Tennessee-based biopharmaceutical company, and is the only center offering this treatment,” explained Dr. Peters.
Often our life experiences shape our passion for the future. Melissa Akash, vice chief of Medicine for advanced practice providers, began competing as a rhythmic gymnast at 8 years old.

Her years of experience as a rhythmic gymnast made her extremely disciplined, focused and ready to face a challenge. “All of the training and hard work made me realize I wanted a career that was technically and academically challenging,” she says. “I also love helping people so I decided to go into the medical field.”

Ultimately, Melissa decided the physician assistant program at Saint Louis University was a great fit. After school, she moved back to Michigan and began her career at Beaumont Hospital, Troy in 2008 as a physician assistant. Two years later, she was promoted to her current role.

Her job is both clinical and administrative. During a typical week, she sees patients who are admitted from the Emergency Center, where she takes their medical history, conducts a physical exam and coordinates their plan of care. On the flipside, Melissa creates the coverage schedule for all of the physician assistants and nurse practitioners for the Troy hospital. This team provides a full admission service to most of the patients in EC and the Medical Observation unit.

Melissa enjoys being involved in many hospital initiatives such as Communication in Health Care and kaizens while managing the everyday medical concerns of her patients. “I love that I can focus on patient care and have an administrative role to help make things better,” she said.

When she’s not at Beaumont, she spends her weekends with her husband, Andrew, and 1-year-old daughter, Madelyn or is traveling to judge rhythmic gymnastics competitions throughout the United States and most recently, in Europe. “It’s amazing to see the kids grow and catch up with old friends,” she said.