Highmark Inc. and Consortium Ethics Program Partner to Integrate Ethics Education for Highmark Case and Care Managers

Ethical issues in the delivery of health care arise in acute care institutions, home care and rehabilitation facilities and also at third-party payer organizations. One local health plan addressing these issues is Highmark Inc., one of the largest independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association in the nation, serving 4.8 million health plan members in Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Through the leadership of Donald R. Fischer, M.D., senior vice president and chief medical officer and Carey T. Vinson, M.D., vice president of quality and medical performance management, Highmark Inc. made a decision to join the Consortium Ethics Program (CEP) in 2006. CEP Director Rosa L. Pinkus, Ph.D. facilitated Highmark’s initial involvement. Highmark, along with CEP arranged a series of onsite seminars at the health plan as a way to introduce case and care managers to the basic issues of health care ethics.

Under the direction of Mary C. Goessler, M.D., medical director of quality and medical performance management, Highmark broadened its ethical stance by establishing a relevant ethics program that reflected the specific and unique ethical needs that arise for health plan providers. Dr. Pinkus and members of the Ethics Consultant Education Team, who are also designated CEP representatives at Highmark, developed an institution-wide ethics education series. The Ethics Consultant Education Team/CEP representatives at Highmark are Joan Braszko, L.S.W.; Dolores Fulhman, M.S.N.; Mary Ellen O’Boyle, M.P.H.; Mary Goessler, M.D.; and Gloria Showmaker, Ph.D.

In the summer of 2010, the Ethics Consultant Education Team at Highmark working with Dr. Pinkus began specifying what the unique issues within the organization were. Since the team members were knowledgeable about Highmark’s organizational culture and had completed four years of education with the CEP, they were in the best position to craft an onsite educational plan. Before developing a formal plan, the team conducted focus groups specifically with case and care managers to uncover the dilemmas they were facing on the job. After identifying these dilemmas, the team was able to translate them into ethical issues.

A corporate ethics education plan was approved by a steering committee of senior management and medical directors chaired by Dr. Goessler. The purpose of the ethics education plan was to utilize CEP resources to obtain speakers on the ethical issues identified in the focus groups and then eventually to have members of the Ethics Consultant Education Team educate Highmark staff. The team consulted with Dr. Pinkus to arrange for speakers and topics that could be taught through webinars to case and care managers. At this time, webinars on topics of boundary issues, confidentiality, etc. are being presented to case and care managers by the Ethics Consultant Education Team members.

The team of representatives at Highmark is only one example of how CEP members can take the “train the trainer” approach to CEP education. By encouraging CEP representatives to become “ethics resource persons” within their institution, the program encourages use of the educational approaches to health care ethics beyond the classroom. Partnering with frontline professionals, such as the team at Highmark, enables the CEP faculty to do what it does best, assist in translating “cutting edge” ethics knowledge into educational experiences directed toward assisting the everyday work of the frontline employees.

The CEP is the regional, health care ethics education network in Western Pennsylvania with a mission to cost effectively assist health care professionals, their institutions and the local health care community in developing and sustaining awareness and expertise in clinical health care ethics through education. To learn more about the CEP, go to www.cep.edu/CEP.

Highmark Inc., based in Pittsburgh, is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans. Highmark serves 4.8 million members in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. For more than 70 years, Highmark’s commitment to the community has consistently been among the company’s highest priorities as it strives to positively impact the communities where it does business. For more information, visit www.highmark.com.

Jameson Hospital School of Radiography and School of Nursing Hold Graduation Ceremonies

Jameson Health System’s School of Radiography and Specialty programs held its annual graduation ceremony at Mohawk High School Auditorium, Bessemer, PA. There were a total of twelve graduates, five in Radiography, one in Nuclear Medicine, two in Magnetic Resonance Imaging, one in Mammography and one in Computerized Tomography.

Radiography graduates were: Tracy Esposito from New Castle, Nicholas James Hunter from New Wilmington, Michael J. Lechner from Hermitage, Stephanie Rae Pridon from Poland, Ohio and Victoria Jeanne Geyer from Youngstown, Ohio. Specialty program graduates were Sarah E. Brown, New Castle from Nuclear Medicine; Amanda Lenn, New Castle and Marisa A. Lukasko, Sharpsville from Diagnostic Medical Sonography; Elizabeth Kennedy Moffatt, New Castle and Bonnie S. Sanchez, Fontana, California from Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Matthew P. Kamensky, Lowellville, Ohio from Computerized Tomography; and Jenna Tanner, New Castle from Mammography.

Michael J. Lechner won the outstanding academic award and Stephanie Rae Pridon won the Lucien Clinical Excellence Award for outstanding clinical student. Tracy Esposito won the Phoenix Award, given to the graduating student who had to overcome the most personal obstacles to complete their education.

In addition, 39 students received diplomas from the Jameson Memorial Hospital School of Nursing at commencement exercises held in Orr Auditorium, Westminster College in New Wilmington. The following students received awards:

Kevin Shaw - Julie Wujciowicz Award - given to the graduate who has exhibited determination, perseverance, dedication and compassion in surmounting financial, physical, social or other adversities of life.

Robyn Bennington - Lawrence County Medical Society Award - for outstanding ethical conduct.

Ryan Vatter - Leo and Mitz Robinson Memorial Award - for exceptional ability in meeting the psychosocial needs of the elderly in the community.

Jonalyn Brickner - New Castle School of Nursing Alumni Award - for clinical excellence throughout the program of study.

Bonnie Overby - Jameson-Shenango Alumni Award - for the best all-around nurse as chosen by the graduating class.

Jonnalyn Brickner - Travis A. French Award - for exceptional ability and understanding in the care of the childbearing family.

Cassandra Reed, Jennifer Spataro, Amanda Masotto - Rene D. Jenkins Memorial Award - for outstanding contribution to the School of Nursing.

Kimberly Tindell - Spirit of Nursing Award - awarded by the School of Nursing faculty to the graduate who best embodies the spirit of nursing.

Robyn Bell - Mark L. Rosenblum Student Nurse Scholarship Award - given to the graduate who has consistently demonstrated a high level of scholastic achievement.

The following are graduates and their hometowns:

New Castle, PA: Robyn Bell; Kathleen R. German; Mary Janacone, Courtney Link, Susan Mays, Bonnie Norris, Amanda Wagner and Amanda Weaver; Sharon, PA: Michelle Cooper, Cassandra Reed, Rhiana Snyder and Jennifer Spataro; New Wilmington, PA: Megan Alilulis and Samantha Morgan; Grove City, PA: Ryan Vatter; Mercer, PA: Robyn Bennington and Alissa Newton; Bessemer, PA: Linda Corcoran; Transfer, PA: Gregory Gerasimiek; Greenville, PA: Megan Baker and Michelle Baker; Dallington, PA: Jonalyn Brickner; Beaver, PA: Katica Kovacs; Sharpsville, PA: Samantha Ricciardi, Larry Lisi and Amanda Masotto; Ellwood City, PA: Karlie Zito; Volant, PA: Kevin Shaw; Pulaski, PA: Brittany Main; Youngstown, Ohio: Elizabeth Carrier and Bonnie Overby. Lowellville, Ohio: Michelle Lisko; Hubbard, Ohio: Kari Holden; Barghill, Ohio: Julianne Jablonski; Niles, Ohio: Carla Scherich; Vienna, Ohio: Dawn Schultz; New Springfield, Ohio: Kimberly Tindell; and Streetsboro, Ohio: Vickie White-Muir.

For more information, visit www.jamesonhealth.org.