UVM Medical Center Files CON to Create Unified EHR Across Four Network Hospitals

The University of Vermont Medical Center recently filed a certificate of need (CON) application with the state of Vermont to create a unified electronic health record (EHR) across four hospitals in the University of Vermont Health Network. A unified EHR will significantly improve patient care by having all of a patient’s information available to a health care provider, regardless of location, whenever it is needed.

The capital cost associated with the project subject to CON review is $112.4 million, which includes $3.1 million in capitalized interest. The total cost of the project over the first six years of implementation and operation is $151.6 million. Done independently, it could cost up to $200 million for the four hospitals to upgrade their own systems and would lack the network connectivity. Additional benefits include greater ease for patients to pay bills, schedule appointments and more easily view their own health information online. Non-network providers and hospitals will also have access to more complete information on their patients.

Learn more about the CON from Doug Gentile, MD, our Chief Medical Information Officer.

A Fresh Approach to New Year's Resolutions

We’ve all been there. After a holiday season filled with the things you’re not supposed to do, you vow to wipe the slate clean starting January 1. By February 1, your enthusiasm has faded and the bad habits creep back. Read this blog post about how to jumpstart your year with healthy habits, and sustain them!
Champlain Housing Trust to Purchase Burlington Motel

**Investment will provide temporary housing for people with medical needs**

The Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) and University of Vermont Medical Center have launched a new effort to address homelessness and stem the growth in health care spending through an innovative partnership that deepens the connection between housing and health care.

**In addition to a capital commitment, the UVM Medical Center is pledging its support for operating costs.**

Using funds invested by the UVM Medical Center, CHT will convert the Bel Aire Motel on Shelburne Street in Burlington into eight rental apartments to house people who are either frequent users of health care services or who are patients but no longer need hospital care. The apartments will house 12 residents who lack a safe place to call home, at once improving their ability to recover and opening up beds for new patients in need of hospital care.

One such collaboration resulted in a 60 percent drop over one year in the cost of providing medical care to a small group of people experiencing homelessness, saving more than $1 million.

The Bel Aire property was purchased in December, and renovations will be made over the winter with expected occupancy in April. The building will be converted into six studio or one-bedroom apartments, one two-bedroom apartment and one four-bedroom apartment. The apartments will house tenants with a range of supportive needs, from those who could benefit from case management in their efforts to live independently to those who will benefit from medical respite – or patients who don’t need hospital care but who are unable to recover on the street or in tent encampments.

**VOICES OF SUPPORT**

“The Bel Aire housing project is another great example of a community partnership coming together to meet the needs of the patient population we serve. The Bel Aire adds to the housing options available to keep people healthy and out of the hospital.”

Steve Leffler, MD, CMO, UVM Medical Center

“The purchase of the Bel Aire and conversion to apartments is part of a larger successful, coordinated strategy to house people experiencing homelessness. The UVM Medical Center’s involvement has been critical, and we look forward to transforming the property in the coming months.”

Michael Monte, COO/CFO, The Housing Trust

“The Bel Aire project represents medical respite for many of our patients who do not have safe homes for a period of recovery after hospitalization. In many instances, they cannot be adequately supported in a shelter, and at the Bel Aire they will be able to receive support from community agencies, as if they were in their own homes. This service will undoubtedly reduce the number of visits to the Emergency Department as well as readmissions in the hospital.”

Susan Onderwyzer, LICSW, manager, Case Management & Social Work, UVM Medical Center
Philip Mead, MD, Takes a Graceful Bow

When Philip Mead and his wife Ann came to Vermont with their two young sons following a five-year residency at the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center and a two-year hitch in the U.S. Navy, it was only supposed to be a temporary move. “We planned to stay a few years,” he says today, “then go back to Manhattan. That was over 45 years ago.”

And what a productive time it has been. During his first decade at The Medical Center Hospital of Vermont, Dr. Mead spent his time on Labor and Delivery and in the OR, delivering babies and performing gynecological surgery, both of which he found immensely satisfying. “There’s nothing as exciting as a birth,” he says, “but I’ve also been privileged to explore other interests throughout my career.”

As he explored some of those other interests, he was able to do work that had implications beyond Vermont. He was instrumental in establishing Infectious Disease as a sub-specialty of Obstetrics/Gynecology. In addition, the protocol that he and the Medical Center Hospital of Vermont midwives helped develop for Group Strep B in pregnancy became the standard management around the world.

Naturally, he has plenty of birth stories. He remembers the frantic father who brought in his wife in labor, only to drop her off and leave because it was a huge sap run. He remembers delivering two sets of triplets vaginally within two weeks of each other. This was a time when triplets were a rarity, and the births made the national news.

Teaching was also a big part of his work, and he was very active working with the OB/GYN residents. One day, he was called in to interview a resident candidate who, like himself, had grown up in upstate New York. The two hit it off, and that resident was hired. His name was John Brumsted, MD.

Along the way, there were other milestones: he helped develop our hospital epidemiology program and took on the role of hospital epidemiologist. “We started the program from scratch, and we really had an impact on lowering infection rates.” Later on, he added chief compliance officer to his resume, followed by a stint as chair of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department, coming full circle to the specialty that brought him here.

In 2003, Dr. Mead retired. But that wasn’t the end of his service to this organization. In 2007, he joined our Board of Trustees, where he has become immersed in helping to steer the organization through the challenges of modern health care. He’s enjoyed learning about the new concepts in health care reform. “As a clinician and a patient, the idea of population health management - helping people stay as healthy as they possibly can - is very exciting.”

He’s also very supportive of our efforts to continue to build a robust health network. “Getting people the best integrated care efficiently is so important.”

(Continued on page 5)
THE NEXT CHAPTER

In December of 2016, Dr. Mead, who turns 80 in June, retired from the Board of Trustees. But don’t imagine him sitting around his house waiting for the mail to come. He’s very busy with his grandchildren, two of whom are at Champlain Valley Union High School here in Vermont, and two little guys in Maryland. He’s also a jazz trombonist who plays regularly with “The Dixie Six” and “The Hip O’Cratic Five,” which includes fellow physicians Martin LeWinter, MD and Ben Littenberg, MD. And then there’s his vegetable garden and his apple orchard.

Through it all, there’s been one constant, whom he continually mentions as he talks about his life: his wife, Ann. They met when he was a medical student and she was a nurse. He spied her, and, in trying to meet her, managed to spill a cup of coffee all over her. So began their 50-plus-year love affair.

“I couldn’t have done any of this without her,” he says. “She’s just a tower of strength.”

And there’s one more constant in Dr. Mead’s storied career: his respect for the people who have been his colleagues. “Everyone has just been extraordinary,” he says, “smart, focused, kind and hard-working. I’m so proud to have been a part of this hospital these many years.”

Flu season is officially here!

Eileen Whalen weighs in on why it’s so important for you to get your flu shot.

Ski and Save!

The “Vermont Travel Club Card” saves UVM Medical Center employees up to $40 on single day lift tickets and more saving on multi day tickets at Stowe, Sugarbush, Jay Peak, Okemo, Stratton, Mount Snow, Bolton Valley, Killington, Burke Mountain, Smuggler’s Notch, Sunday River and ski areas in Utah. Plus you save 10% on dining and up to 20% on lodging when you travel to your ski destination of choice. To receive your discount register online when using the discount code, uvmmmedical2017 at www.vermonttravelclub.com and click on sign up.

Important Information about Breast Density on our Blog

Sally Herschorn, MD, discusses the role of breast density, simplifying a conversation that has been in the news lately.
Staff Participate in FEMA Training

In November of 2016, a team of employees took part in a week-long Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) training session offered by the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP). The training took place in Anniston, Alabama, at the nation’s premier all-hazards training center, with participants working in a fully equipped site, including a functional hospital, to learn and practice emergency preparedness.

The team participated in multiple training components, including a health care emergency response training session and a health care leadership session. Said Joseph Pawulak, inventory buyer/analyst, who participated in the hospital emergency response training along with other hospitals such as Porter Medical Center and Rutland Regional Medical Center, “The instruction was excellent, and the camaraderie between hospitals was great. We saw about 170 patients in four hours - and had the fastest time for that year in set-up and tear-down of the drill site.”

Also participating as part of the emergency response team was Linda Dean, senior code alert operator, who was part of a Command Center and learned how each person plays a valuable role on the team during a crisis. “The instructors made the learning fun, while emphasizing the seriousness should we ever have to put the plan in place.”

Betsy Brown, lead operator at the main switchboard, appreciated the experience of working in face-to-face contact with other staff, patients and the public. “I am accustomed to working behind the scenes. Participating in a very realistic training environment was a real eye-opener. I was thrown into the role of security supervisor in the Emergency Department. My communication skills really helped me in that role, and I have a new appreciation for what it’s like to work in the ED environment in a time of crisis.”

Andrew Kehl, RN and Karen Dearborn-Moore, RN participated in the Health Care Leadership session, working with over 50 participants from other hospitals around the country to plan for a large event following the Hospital Incident Command System. “The principle behind the Hospital Incident Command System,” said Kehl, “is to create clear reporting lines and to create a system that facilitates adequate and appropriate use of limited resources.”

Said Environmental Health Specialist Greg Klimas, “It was an incredible opportunity to learn how the CDP and FEMA train for mass casualty events and compare that to our internal patient decontamination procedures and capabilities. I feel really good about the time and effort the UVM Medical Center puts into its Emergency Preparedness Program and how prepared we are for a similar event.”

“This was an impressive, highly realistic multi-disciplinary simulation that incorporated all aspects of care involved in a mass casualty incident. I returned having learned much about crisis response. . . I highly encourage others to attend in the future.”

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LOIC FABRICANT, MD

Participants praised the comprehensive training.
Supporting Children with Autism  By Bette Gilmartin and Ana Bulnes

Ana Bulnes, social worker, South Burlington Dialysis, pours her heart and soul into sharing her expertise and giving of herself to others.

While on vacation in Morocco in 2015, Ana learned that services there for children with autism were extremely limited; that Morocco is still catching up to best practices in this field; and that there are a limited number of pediatric autism specialists. Often, children with autism are not even able to attend school, which Ana knows can cause problems for these children and their families.

In recognizing these issues, Ana asked around and set to work creating a small network of professionals to help. This past September she spent a month in the city of Beni-Mellal serving 13 families and providing roundtable parent education.

“The families were amazing,” she says. “They were so welcoming, kind, generous and appreciative of the educational support we provided.”

Ana is now working on written reports and recommendations for the children’s parents and is in the process of writing a basic booklet for parents of children with autism. She is also working on a Facebook page to support parents of autistic kids throughout the world.

“There’s so much knowledge out there about how to support children with autism,” says Ana, “and not all families have easy access to this information. I’m happy to help these families where I can.”

For further information on parenting children with autism, contact ana.bulnes@uvmhealth.org.

Ana, left and above, connected with the children and their families.
Mark Levine, MD, Named Vermont Commissioner of Health

New Vermont Governor Phil Scott has appointed Mark Levine, MD, associate dean for graduate medical education at the Larner College of Medicine and designated institutional official at the UVM Medical Center, as the state’s next health commissioner.

Levine will succeed Harry Chen, MD, who has served as commissioner since 2011 under the administration of Peter Shumlin.

A primary care physician and professor of Medicine, Levine also serves as vice chair for Education in the Department of Medicine. He has practiced general internal medicine for more than 30 years, with special interests in solving complex diagnostic dilemmas, health promotion/ disease prevention, screening and clinical nutrition – and this has provided personal perspective on the challenges our health care system presents for physicians and patients.

“My passions include the integration of medical care with public health, population health, and health policy,” Levine said. “This position will allow me to get involved in important priority setting and planning to improve the health of all Vermonters. I am excited about being able to work every day to help improve people’s health.”

His priorities as commissioner will include addressing chronic disease – “the most expensive part of health care” – the opioid epidemic, mental health services and social determinants of health.

Levine plans to finish up his current work by the end of February, and will begin his new job in early March. “I’ve loved my GME role, and we’ve made great progress – I would have loved to see that play out further. I have a great and rewarding practice that I’ve had over 20 years, with wonderful patients. It’s a big deal to transition their care as smoothly and comprehensively as possible. But the time is right to transition to this new role, and I am grateful to have this once in a career opportunity.”

Nursing Professional Governance Team Celebrates Milestone

For the past year, a team of nurses and nurse leaders has been working to develop an innovative structure of nursing professional governance at UVM Medical Center. This structure empowers bedside nurses and nurse leaders to create positive change impacting outcomes, the patient-family experience and nursing practice. This month we will transition from our past unit-based practice council model to the new nursing professional governance structure.

On December 14, members of past nursing practice councils newly elected members of nursing professional governance and nursing leadership gathered to celebrate this milestone.
Holiday Spirit Alive and Well in December

Yes, we know it’s January... but we heard a few stories about how staff – and even one visitor – helped to make the season bright, and had to share.

Holiday Kindness at the Harvest Café By Gerald Stearn

On Christmas morning, customers at The Harvest Café were treated to breakfast, thanks to the kindness of a stranger.

Many people who ate breakfast at the Harvest Café on that morning were surprised, others a little taken aback and most everyone left with a smile after Merly Gauntero of Colchester asked patrons if she could buy them breakfast.

She said that about a week earlier she had decided she wanted to share her happiness and good fortune. Her second cousin had recently passed away in a hospital in the Phillipines, and she wanted to come in and spread a little cheer for hospital staff and families.

Before leaving, Merly told me she would be spending the afternoon celebrating with her family, after brightening Christmas day for many of our visitors.

Revenue Finance & Reimbursement Department Reaches Out to Families in Need

In addition to making a donation to the UVM Medical Center annual Holiday Toy Shop, the Revenue Finance and Reimbursement Program organized a team to participate in the Vermont CARES volunteer gift-wrapping event. They also coordinated a friendly contest with GE, our new neighbors at 40 IDX Drive, to see which organization could raise more money for the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf before Thanksgiving. While GE edged us out with their total, the UVM Medical Center team raised enough money to donate 30 turkeys and $198.

San Remo Drive Ortho Staff Don Their Ugliest Holiday Sweaters

The Orthopedics Team on San Remo Drive celebrated the season with an Ugly Sweater contest. Hard to pick a winner here, folks.
AWARDS & RECOGNITION

**Colon SSI Performance Improvement Team Receives Becoming One Team Award**

The Colon Surgical Site Infection (SSI) Performance Improvement Team has been recognized for reducing our SSI rate by 50 percent over the past year. Congratulations to all involved for this phenomenal interdisciplinary team effort!

**UVM Medical Center Receives Carbon Way to Go! Challenge Award**

More than 11,000 people from 333 groups participated in this year’s Way to Go! Challenge, including businesses, organizations and schools from all over Vermont. The UVM Medical Center was one of an elite group of organizations to receive the 2016 Carbon Cup Award. Our stats were: Commute miles – 67,354; carbon saved – 46,096 lbs. Twenty-one organizations competed in this category.

**Karen Knudsen Receives Good Catch Grand Prize**

Congratulations to Karen Knudsen, RN, who has received the Good Catch Grand Prize Award. Karen helped a fellow nurse in taking care of a neonate when she recognized that the Phillips monitor was out of “Neomode” and had defaulted “Adult Mode.” In adult mode, NICU monitors can result in low-non-invasive cuff blood pressures and can impact patient care. Thanks to Karen, Phillips installed a central monitor that would prevent the NICU monitors from ever defaulting out of Neomode – a change that will impact patients beyond Vermont.

**James Boyd Invested as Inaugural Hamill Green & Gold Professor of Neurological Sciences**

Dean Frederick Morin, MD, has presented James Boyd, MD, as the first Robert Hamill Green & Gold Professor. Boyd’s investiture marks UVM’s 104th endowed professorship – one of the highest honors the University can bestow on faculty members. Dr. Boyd is director of the Frederick C. Binter Center for Parkinson’s Disease and Movement Disorders at the UVM Medical Center. The new position honors Dr. Hamill, a professor emeritus of Neurological Sciences who served for 20 years as chair of the Department of Neurology.
**Working Together, We Improve People’s Lives**

Hello Employees of the UVM Health Assistance Program:

Thank you for making a huge difference in the lives of many, including two members of my family who benefit greatly from the financial support they receive from the Health Assistance Program. These proud, hard-working, self-supporting individuals were each struck with debilitating diseases in their forties and were both forced into having to apply for disability assistance and Medicare insurance. After their diagnoses, both continued to work as long as they could until it became impossible. The medications they take provide them some relief: the ability to live independently. Without your program, my sister and brother-in-law would most likely lose their home. More importantly, both of their life expectancy rates would be greatly diminished – and this is no exaggeration.

On behalf of my family and everyone you are able to serve, thank you for this amazing program and the many kindnesses you have extended with your support.

Diane

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**AWARDS & RECOGNITION**

**Drs. First, Halsey, Recognized by Vermont Medical Society**

Lewis First, MD, professor and chair of Pediatrics at The Larner College of Medicine and UVM Medical Center, has been awarded the Distinguished Service Award – the highest award VMS can bestow upon one of its members. The Distinguished Service Award recognizes meritorious service in the science and art of medicine and outstanding contributions to the medical profession, its organizations and the welfare of the public.

David Halsey, MD, formerly clinical professor of Orthopedics and Rehabilitation at The Larner College of Medicine and an orthopedic surgeon at UVM Medical Center, has been named the Physician of the Year. This award is granted annually to a physician licensed in the state of Vermont who has demonstrated outstanding performance in the quality of care given to his/her patients.

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**HANDBAGS FOR A CAUSE**

The UVM Health Network executive assistants gathered handbags that they were no longer using, filled them with toiletries, gloves and costume jewelry and donated them to the Steps to End Domestic Violence shelter.

*Pictured here, from left to right: Helen McCarthy, Cynthia Boucher and Tina Bemis.*