Leaders address IV fluid bag shortage

WHEN HURRICANE MARIA pummeled Puerto Rico last September, it caused widespread devastation — leaving homes destroyed, businesses leveled and manufacturing plants in ruins. When the facility that produced 40 percent of the nation’s IV fluid bags was rendered inoperable, it set into motion a shortage that has impacted hospitals throughout the United States.

Since October, the MGH — which uses tens of thousands of bags of fluid on a weekly basis — has been actively addressing the IV fluid bag shortage, implementing adaptive strategies, launching its emergency Hospital Incident Command System to help coordinate the response, and creating a multidisciplinary work group to meet daily to further brainstorm safe, effective ways to conserve fluids while continuing to maintain the highest level of quality. On Jan. 9, hospital leaders also hosted a “Town Hall: IV Fluid Bag Shortage” meeting in the O’Keeffe Auditorium to provide a status update and field questions from staff. A video of the presentation is now available for viewing on Apollo, the MGH intranet.

“I Since almost the moment the hurricane hit Puerto Rico, we’ve been working on this situation,” said Paul Biddinger, MD, chief of the Division of Emergency Preparedness. “People have been taking really heroic measures long before this became a crisis. But I want people to understand this is not just a Mass General problem. It’s not just a Northeast problem. It’s a national problem.”

Biddinger explained that hospitals subscribe to a “just in time” inventory methodology, similar to many other industries in the country. “We as a hospital, on average, have on hand three days of consumable items. When we use these supplies, we order new things from the distributor.

(Continued on page 4)
**Sacking the flu**

**JUST IN TIME** for the New England Patriots first playoff game, Michelle Pirri, RN, of the Emergency Department, was selected as the lucky winner of an autographed Rob Gronkowski jersey. Her name was drawn from all employees who received their flu shot or documented their declination in PeopleSoft by Dec. 8, 2017.

“Influenza can target people of all ages, including those who are normally healthy with strong immune systems,” says Pirri. “Working in the Emergency Department we see firsthand how severe and life-threatening complications of the flu can truly be. In fact, four years ago my husband became septic from complications of the flu, requiring him to stay several days as an inpatient here at MGH. It is a powerful reminder how very important it is to take that one minute each year to get the flu shot.”

It is not too late to receive the flu vaccine. Staff can visit Occupational Health, located at 165 Cambridge St., fourth floor, Monday through Friday, 7 am - 5 pm. Walk-ins are welcome or call 617-726-2217 to make an appointment.

“Take it from Michelle and all of your colleagues who received their flu shot so far this year – receiving your vaccine is the best way to protect not only yourself, but your family, coworkers and patients from influenza this winter,” says David Hooper, MD, chief of the MGH Infection Control Unit. “It’s important that we as health care professionals set an example and do everything we can to protect ourselves and our patients.”

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**CareZONE**

*Continued from page 1*

With an average of six people dying every day in Massachusetts from an opioid overdose, this new program aims to offer another avenue of care.

“Every pathway to recovery seems unorthodox at first, until it works,” said Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker. “We have a long way to go, and we do not have all the answers, but we are providing one more pathway to recovery from this terrible disease.”

The Kraft Center for Community Health at MGH was established by Kraft and his family in 2011 with the goal of expanding access to high quality care in new and innovative ways. For the past year, Taveras and The Kraft Center – who partnered with the GE Foundation, Ford Motor Company, the Hearst Group, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP) and the Boston Public Health Commission – have been working to make the mobile van a reality.

The CareZONE van will be staffed with members from the BHCHP medical group and the AHOPE harm reduction team, which is the Boston Public Health Commission’s harm reduction and needle exchange program.

“We see tremendous value in being in the community, building engagement and trust, and partnering with clinical and public health practitioners to offer a path to recovery and not give up on people,” Taveras said.
Kaleidoscope art gallery opens in Pediatric Oncology Clinic

FOR MANY CHILDREN and young adults, expressing their feelings through art is an important way to cope with the myriad challenges of cancer treatment. “Kaleidoscope: Turning Art into Healing” is a program offered by the Division of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology at MassGeneral Hospital for Children for patients and their siblings to share their stories through artistic representation.

Kaleidoscope participants have created paintings, drawings, 3-D art, poetry and photography. They also were asked to reflect on their work and how it related to their cancer experience. “The art and artists’ statements highlight the resilience of our patients,” said Kelsey Skerpan, art therapist for the Katherine A. Gallagher Integrative Therapies Program at the MGH. “Hopefully all who walk through the clinic and view the art will be able to carry with them the message to continue to fight, to hope and to feel connected knowing others are facing similar challenges.

On Dec. 27, 2017, the final products were placed on exhibit in the Pediatric Oncology clinic on Yawkey 8B, where they will remain on display for the coming year. The artists, who attended the opening celebration with their families, were honored and recognized for their honesty, courage and willingness to share their stories and artistic contributions.

Elyssa Denault – a cancer survivor who completed treatment in 2017 for Hodgkin lymphoma – completed a piece entitled “Smile.” During the event, she spoke about the meaning of artistic expression during her chemotherapy treatment. “I am so thankful and honored to be a part of this Kaleidoscope Program,” she said. “Art took me away from what I came to clinic for. Without having it introduced to me here, I would have never thought it would be helpful.”

Elyse Levin-Russman, LICSW, clinical social worker in Pediatric Oncology and coordinator of the event, stressed the importance of celebrating the artists and the meaning of their work. “We asked if you would be willing to share your talents and messages with other children, young adults and families,” she said. “You responded in a way that we couldn’t have begun to imagine. Your reflections and insights remind us of your strengths and will serve as an inspiration for all of us who have been fortunate enough to care for you.”

Revere Youth Zone gets a visit from rock royalty

GRAMMY-NOMINATED PRODUCER, composer and world-renowned guitarist Jon Butcher visited the MGH Revere Youth Zone Dec. 5, 2017 as part of the Career Spotlight series. Butcher – widely considered one of Boston’s rock royalty – inspired the students with his amazing talent.

“Jon shared how in his youth he developed a love of music and the guitar in particular,” said Leslie Heffron, RN, manager of Youth Services at the MGH Revere Health Care Center. “He talked about his career trajectory and encouraged students to find their passion and stay committed to following their dreams. It was a very special day for our Youth Zone members.”

Heffron said after his visit to the group, Butcher was so impressed with the kids’ enthusiasm, intellect and boundless energy that he put together a photomontage tribute of his visit with them, set to his soulful rendition of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.”

“I think it captures the hopefulness and positive spirit of these kids and organization – and my experience there – perfectly, through the lyrics of the song,” said Butcher.

The Youth Zone – run through the MGH Revere Health Care Center – is a free afterschool program for Revere youth ages 9-17. The program aims to engage students in numerous safe activities, clubs and community service initiatives and provide a supportive out-of-school environment.
– IV fluid bag shortage

(Continued from page 1)

who then orders it from the manufacturer to replace them. And that’s great – unless there is a hiccup in the flow, which there now is. That is the situation we are in right now.”

One of the hospital’s early initiatives was described by O’Neil Britton, MD, chief medical officer, who helped to identify “Service Lead” physicians who work closely with Nursing and Pharmacy leaders to coordinate conservation efforts in each unit. “These groups have assumed responsibility for daily rounds to review all IV fluid and IV medication orders for every patient,” Britton said.

Sue Algeri, RN, associate chief nurse, and Colleen Snydeman, RN, director of Quality and Safety for Patient Care Services, provided an overview of a few of the many conservation strategies the hospital has implemented, including providing patients with oral alternatives for all possible medications – particularly electrolyte repletion and antibiotics, promoting oral hydration by substituting IVs with water, Gatorade or Pedialyte, and using intramuscular injections for medications when available. And, Jim Lund, director of Pharmacy Operations, reviewed current medication inventory status and outlined how Pharmacy staff perform daily assessments with Materials Management regarding the allocation of supplies between units and the Pharmacy.

All speakers stressed that, while the shortage is a serious situation, it has not adversely impacted patient care. They all commended staff for their diligence and dedication during the past few months.

“This is what we do best,” Snydeman said. “We leverage the interdisciplinary teamwork and relationships that you all have at the unit level – that’s exactly what’s happening. We thank you all for this important work.”

MGH staff. For more information, visit apollo.massgeneral.org/ivfluids.

IV FLUID SHORTAGE: TALKING POINTS

Below are some important talking points for patients, caregivers and visitors about the situation at the MGH and throughout the U.S.

I heard that there is a shortage of bags of IV fluids.
If I need IV fluids, will I get them?
If IV fluids are the best option for you, you will get them.

Will the IV fluid shortage affect my care?
Our top priority is to provide you with the highest-quality care. We can often use pills or liquid medications instead of medications that are delivered by IV fluids.

What products are affected by the shortage?
Bags of IV fluids are in short supply throughout the United States.

What are IV fluids?
They are sterile fluids in a bag that are given directly into a vein.

Why there is a shortage of IV fluids?
Medical product factories in Puerto Rico that make IV fluids were damaged in Hurricane Maria. This has caused a shortage of IV fluids throughout the United States.