

AMAZING PEOPLE DOING AMAZING THINGS

Hospital Department of Professional Development & Clinical Support Vital To Our COVID-19 Preparedness Efforts

The staff of Exeter Hospital's Department of Professional Development and Clinical Support (PDCS) is used to jumping in when needed to deliver training, but generally they have time to plan their curriculum. That wasn't the case in March, when they were tasked with providing "just-in-time" training for clinical staff who were being deployed to assist in other areas as part of our COVID-19 response. Those in need of training included RNs and clinicians from outpatient areas of the Hospital and Core Physicians practices, who were redeployed to inpatient units or the Emergency Department, as well as those from Surgical Services, the ED, and the Cardiac Cath Lab, who were asked to work in critical care.

The Professional Development Specialists knew they had to work fast to develop an easy way to identify existing competency levels so they would have a clear picture of what training was needed and by whom. They gathered the info by developing a tool for unit leaders to use to quickly and accurately identify the skill sets of each of their employees, after which they set to work creating dozens of competencies for the newly deployed staff.

"Our Professional Development Specialists and Clinical Documentation Specialist worked closely with department leaders to create needs-based competencies; develop on-line resources; determine critical documentation; and facilitate COVID mock codes," says **Jean Mellott**, RN, Department Director. "We also rounded in all areas of the Hospital to make sure staff were comfortable with the new skills." This was a vital piece of our organization's preparedness activities, as at the time we expected a surge of COVID-19 patients in April, which could have easily overwhelmed our health system if staff hadn't been willing to step up and be trained to take on different roles. "It was a great deal of work and effort on the part of the team to put everything together in such a short timeframe, but the fact so many of our colleagues were willing to do this for our organization also made it very rewarding," Jean says. "It really did feel as if we were all working together as one team."

One of the most challenging periods was in mid-March, when the Department was tasked with conducting personal protective equipment (PPE) training for nearly 600 front-line staff members from throughout the organization. "In just a two week time span we developed the training, held dozens of in-person video training sessions during which we were available to answer questions, and designed an online module to make the training more accessible to all staff," she says. "It was very hectic, and took a lot of resources, but I'm proud of the way our team put their heads down and did what they needed to do."

In addition to all of the above, Jean's staff also developed resource manuals and playbooks for Hospital units, including those areas that were transformed into "surge" units (such as Endoscopy and the Hospital conference rooms). This involved coordination between many different areas – **Facilities, Security, Human Resources, Information Services, the Lean Office, Respiratory Therapy, Core Physicians' Clinical Education Team** and Clinical Operations Project Manager, **Dave Lessard**, and more. "**Everyone** has done their best to meet the demands of this crisis," says Jean. "Not only our department, but across the entire organization. To look back and see what we accomplished in such a short period of time is truly amazing."

Jean wishes to thank her entire team for all of their contributions: Professional Development Specialists **Katie Atilano**, RN, **Doris Bertram-Morin**, RN, **Gail Dailey**, RN, **Anne Meginniss**, RN; **Mike Nickerson**, ARNP, and **Beth Paris**, RN; **Susan Taylor-Foss**, RN, Clinical Documentation Specialist; **Sue Kimball**, Senior Systems Administrator; **Jen Mitchell**, Senior Secretary; **Kim Pirger**, Senior Secretary; and **Kathy Sargent**, Information Technology Support Specialist. "Without their contributions, which were crucial to our efforts, we wouldn't have been able to accomplish what we did," Jean says.



Some of Exeter Hospital's Professional Development Specialists: **Gail Dailey**, RN; **Katie Atilano**, RN; and **Beth Paris**, RN.