

The Faith Connection

~ News and Ideas for Your Health Ministry ~

November 16, 2009

The Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program, 1515 Locust Street, Suite 705 ~
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412-232-5815, ParishNurse@mercy.pmhs.org

News: 2009 Symposium



Very Rev. Lawrence A. DiNardo, Vicar for Canonical Services, Diocese of Pittsburgh; Sister Susan Welsh, RSM, CEO and President of Pittsburgh Mercy Health System and Dorothy Mayernik manager of Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program were part of the opening for the 17th Annual Symposium held November 7 at Mercy Hospital in Pittsburgh.

The day continued with our keynote speaker, Jean C. Kennedy, encouraging the parish nurses and health ministers to be on the “*Forefront of Changing Health Care*”.

We sincerely thank the presenters of the breakout sessions: Lorraine Starsky, RN, BSN, Diabetes Nurse Consultant, Allegheny County Health Dept.; James Joyce, MBA, MHA, VITAS Innovative Hospice Care; Mary Ann Haslett, BS, PraiseMoves Certified Instructor; LuAnn Richardson, PhD, CRNP, Assistant Professor, Duquesne University School of Nursing; and Nancy Marshall, MA, Database Consultant. We are grateful for the help of the parish nurses who facilitated the small group discussions, allowing participants to network and share experiences.

Thank you to everyone who attended!



Congratulations to the winner of the symposium bulletin board display, Diane Battaglia, parish nurse at St. Albert the Great Parish in Baldwin and Diabetes Nurse Educator at UPMC Mercy. Diane's poster theme was "Choose Life" by living in faith, hope, and love and by practicing healthy lifestyle behaviors of healthy eating, regular physical activity, and stress management.

Upcoming Events

◆ Parish Nurse Basic Preparation Course 2010

Winter Session

- ✓ January 22 & 23
- ✓ February 26 & 27

Summer Session

- ✓ June 7 – 10

Cost: \$395. RNs will earn 30 CEs and be commissioned as Parish Nurses.

As an educational partner of the International Parish Nurse Resource Center (IPNRC), we are among the first to offer the newly revised curriculum. The four-day course consists of 16 modules taught by parish nurse educators who have completed IPNRC's faculty prep course and by others who have expertise in the content area.

The course is open to other health professionals and lay persons who are interested in promoting health and wellness in their churches. Those who are not RNs will be commissioned as Health Ministers.

We will be holding this educational event at Beulah Presbyterian Church in Penn Hills, located just off the Churchill exit of the Parkway East.

We must have 10 persons registered by December 15th to insure that the January-February session will be conducted. Please submit your application as soon as possible.

Limited scholarship funds are available.

Contact dmayernik@mercy.pmhs.org or

Call 412-232-7151 for more information.

Parish Nurses Making a Difference

The following article was written by our parish nurse, Esther Gass, for her church's newsletter. Several months ago Esther started a Grief Support Group at Beulah Presbyterian Church in Penn Hills. This article was prompted by conversations during those meetings.

“But I didn't know what to say”

Many people feel uncomfortable about knowing just what to say to someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one...so often they don't say anything, or just a quick “how are you doing” and keep on going. Folks think that they shouldn't mention the loved one who has died because it will bring sadness to the person who is trying to adjust to the loss. The reality is that most people want to talk about their deceased loved one, reminiscing or expressing how they are doing.

I've had new insights into that lately as we talk in the Grief Support Group at Beulah. I have been so blessed to lead this group and am witnessing small steps and wonderful growth being taken by the participants to further heal from the heaviness of grieving. One of the discussions was about how difficult it was to return to worship after the death of the loved one. When returning to church it was with a feeling of being very alone and trying to decide where to sit now that the loved one was not there. I hurt as the group members talked about no one or only a few folks coming up to them to inquire how they were doing. Some shared that no one even mentioned the deceased loved one. It was just like he/she never existed, several remarked. They talked about how they would have loved to talk to someone about their loved one or heard a story about them or just have someone acknowledge their grieving.

I was saddened to listen to this conversation, for in my mind, Beulah is a loving and caring family. So the next week I asked the group, “What's the best thing someone can say to one who is grieving?” We agreed that saying “How are you doing?” just doesn't fit well. They all remarked that when someone said that, they would just say they were doing ok or some generic answer because they felt most folks wouldn't be comfortable if they really answered that question.

So what is the best thing to say? They had some suggestions that I just want to pass on to you, so that we as a congregation can be a caring support to the many Beulah members who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Many of the group members said, no words are necessary, just a hug means a lot.

Continued

But I didn't know what to say, continued

- “I’ve been praying for you,” brings comfort in the knowledge that others are praying for them.
- “I know you must be lonely (or hurting) since _____ died.” (This leaves the conversation open that they can pick up and continue to talk if they are so inclined.
- “I really miss seeing _____ in church, etc. He/she always had a kind word for others” (or “I remember a time when she/he did _____ with me.”)

The Grief Support Group members all said that one of the most special things others can do is to share a memory about their loved one. And they all agreed it was not helpful to hear the old clichés, such as “He’s/She’s better off now or home with the Lord.” or “You need to get out more” or “Pull yourself up.” It is difficult when you are grieving when someone says something like “It’s been 6 months now (or whatever time frame) since your _____ died. You should be over that by now.” The journey through grief is different for everyone, with many variables, and does not have a time frame. That fact was very evident to all of us the first week we met and stories were shared.

One of the most powerful ways we bring God’s presence and love to the bereaved is by listening to the stories they tell about their loved one.

It is a wonderful gift we give to others when we listen and care. Also, you might want to ask the person what they need rather than doing what you personally would need.

It is a privilege to walk this lonely journey with these men and women...to share in the sacredness of their stories. They are working through their grief to find healthy ways to move on in their life while still honoring the memory of their loved one.

So the next time you pass someone who you know is grieving, if you’re not sure what to say, give them a hug...words are not necessary...hugs say a lot!

Esther Gass

October 10, 2009

Focus on Health and Wellness: H1N1

December 6 – 12 is National Hand Washing Awareness week. With so many parties and activities during the months of November and December, we are at higher risk of spreading colds and flu due to the increased contact with people.

See Parish Nurse Resources below for many great hand washing poster ideas.

For more information about H1N1 and seasonal flu go to:

www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivity
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination
www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/index
www.medscape.com/viewarticle/707843

“Seasonal Flu Checklist” from
www.redcross.org/www-files/Documents
www.immunize.org/express/issue821.asp

Bulletin Articles for December

Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my help and my God. Psalm 42:5-6

Holiday Depression and Stress

The holiday season is a time full of joy, cheer, parties, and family gatherings. However, for many people, it is a time of self-evaluation, loneliness, reflection on past failures, and anxiety about an uncertain future.

WHAT CAUSES THE HOLIDAY BLUES?

Many factors can cause the "holiday blues": stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, over-commercialization, financial constraints, and the inability to be with one's family and friends. The demands of shopping, parties, family reunions, and houseguests also contribute to feelings of tension. People who do not become depressed

may develop other stress responses, such as: headaches, excessive drinking, over-eating, and difficulty sleeping. Even more people experience post-holiday let down after January 1. This can result from disappointments during the preceding months compounded with the excess fatigue and stress

COPING WITH STRESS AND DEPRESSION DURING THE HOLIDAYS

- Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable. Try to set realistic goals for yourself. Make a list and prioritize the important activities. Be realistic about what you can do and cannot do. Appoint a designated nagger who will remind you when you are overdoing it.
- Remember the holiday season does not remove reasons for feeling sad or lonely; there is room for these feelings to be present, even if the person chooses not to express them.
- Leave "yesteryear" in the past and look toward the future. Life brings changes. Each season is different and can be enjoyed in its own way. Don't set yourself up in comparing today with the "good old days".
- Do something for someone else. Try volunteering to help others in your parish or community. *Presence precedes presents.*
- Enjoy activities that are free, such as driving around to look at holiday decorations; taking the children downtown to see the replica of the Vatican Nativity Scene at the Steel Building; the animated characters in Macy's windows or the PPG Wintergarden Santa Claus display. Make a snow person!
- Be aware that excessive drinking will only increase your feelings of depression. Alcohol is a depressant.
- Spend time with supportive and caring people. Reach out and make new friends or contact someone you have not heard from for awhile.

- Save time for yourself! Recharge your batteries! Let others share responsibility of activities.

Prayer

Lord God, help us to spend time with people who feel forgotten, lonely and over stressed during this Christmas Season and may we share your love and witness your name to others. In Jesus Christ Name, Amen.

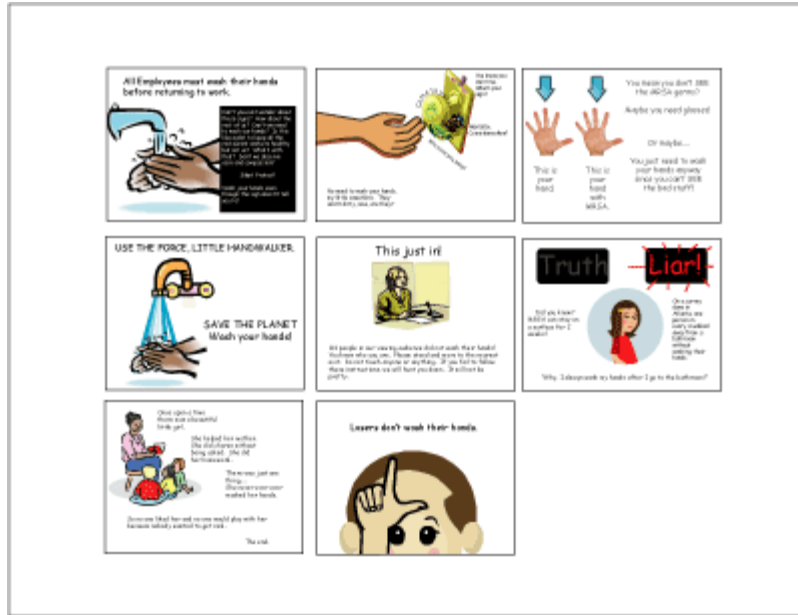
Written by Lalla Smalley and the Mood Disorder Treatment Research Program

Parish Nurse Resources

December 6 – 12 is National Hand Washing Awareness Week. While most people have the knowledge of how to wash their hands, many need to be reminded. There are many posters available free of cost. Print several and post conspicuously as gentle reminders to scrub. Don't forget to teach the children. There are many activity pages and learning games available on the Web.

For hand washing posters, go to [Google](#) and type in "Hand Washing Posters".

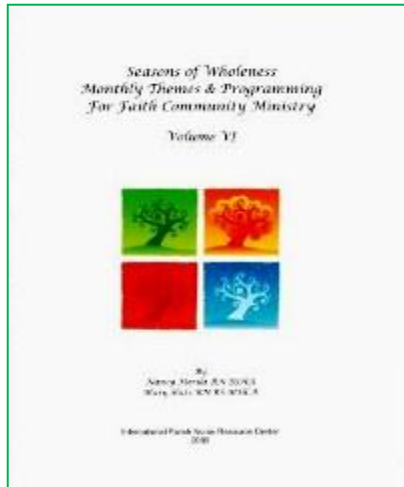
This is just an example of the many available for free.



The posters above can be printed off of the following site: www.gha.org/pha/bulletinboards . This site offers a "low literacy" handout giving information about the flu and the signs that immediate attention is needed.

International Parish Nurse Resource Center (IPNRC)

Seasons of Wholeness Volume VI



The latest edition of health articles includes 24 months of health information organized topically with 1 newsletter, 4 bulletin blurbs, websites for additional information on the topic, and numerous ideas for worship/education/ service projects. It is available in either book or CD form.

Parish Nurse Store

Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program offers products that are designed to help you in your health ministry and parish nurse program. If you are having trouble getting the word out about how much your health ministry is doing and accomplishing, ask us about our wonderful **Outcome Database**. This easy to use computer program allows you to chart what you are doing with your clients and groups. The reports that can be produced will help keep you organized, but more importantly will show your pastor and the ministerial team how valuable your ministry is.

Check out our website for more details about other products – www.pmhs.org and click on “Parish Nurse”.



***Thank you for reading The Faith Connection!
We pray for God’s blessings on your ministry.***