A funny thing happened on the way out of MRI ...

by Steve Long

Our new MRI scanner will have been up and running for almost two weeks when you read this article. I was fortunate to be one of the test patients while our MRI techs were learning the ins and outs of our new scanner here at Skiff, after having been to Ohio for training for a couple of weeks prior. I was really looking forward to the scan for several reasons. First, I wanted to experience for myself the new, much more powerful MRI. Second, I wanted to immerse myself in the “Ambient Experience” and see if it lived up to all the hype I have been giving it (it does!) Finally, I have a history of diverticulitis and was hospitalized last year for a perforated colon, so I was really interested in seeing what my intestines looked like a year later.

I went into the new scanner and was really impressed with the video images and the lighting of the Ambient Experience. I found the table to be comfortable and the MRI itself to be very large. Interestingly, with the lights in the room going through their variations, I never could figure out exactly how far the inside of the MRI was from my face. I think it was about 18 inches, but it could just as easily been four feet ... it was not claustrophobic at all! The scan itself went very well, and there was no discomfort from the contrast (I couldn’t even tell when it was injected), and the noise was not bad at all (more like a loud hum than anything).

I finished the scan and was talking to our fabulous techs about how good the experience was when they started asking me strange questions like, “Do you have heartburn? Do you have right shoulder pain? Do you have a fullness in your right upper abdomen ...?” After answering yes to all these questions, I was really wondering what was going on. They answered my quizzical look with, “You have one of the largest gallbladders we’ve ever seen and it’s full of gallstones!” Needless to say, I was floored. I had no idea that I had this problem, but there it was. In the last two weeks I’ve talked to my family doctor and to Dr. Formaro and I am now scheduled for a laparoscopic cholecystectomy before Christmas. To say I am likely one of the most thankful people for our new radiology equipment would be an understatement!

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to attend the national Press-Ganey executive leadership conference. This conference had a number of different speakers talking about patient satisfaction and quality of care. Oddly, there was one chart that kept coming up at all the sessions (bottom right corner of the page):

This slide shows all the ways a hospital can lose Medicare reimbursements in the future. Currently, if a hospital chooses not to report quality data, it loses 2 percent of reimbursements, so almost all hospitals (including Skiff) report our data. The value-based purchasing program ramps it up a notch and, in 2013, puts 2 percent of our reimbursements at risk if our scores on core measures and patient satisfaction do not compare well with other hospitals. Also, beginning in 2013 is a 3 percent reduction in reimbursement associated with readmission rates that are higher than national benchmarks. In 2014, another 1 percent is put at risk if our rates of hospital-acquired infections, falls, errors, etc., are higher than national benchmarks. Also, in 2014, hospitals that have not met the meaningful use guidelines will begin to lose 1 percent of their reimbursement. Because we already submit quality data and are ahead of the game at meeting meaningful use guidelines, our hospital is at risk of
Aim at health for Holiday Fitness Frenzy

Don’t let your hectic holiday schedule get in the way of good health. With endless festivities focused on food, it’s easy to gain weight this time of year. Focusing on healthful exercise and eating habits will get you through the holidays feeling good about yourself! You won’t have to weigh in for the Holiday Fitness Frenzy challenge but you will earn points for exercise, eating five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, and drinking six (6) eight-ounce glasses of water daily. Focusing on these positive behaviors will help you be sensible with all those holiday goodies! At the end of the challenge, which will run Dec. 5 through Jan. 1, you will earn up to 8 credits on your Healthy You report card.

Pick up a point log at the Food Fair today (Thursday, Dec. 1). Point logs will also be available on the Kudos bulletin board outside the cafeteria. The best gift you can give yourself and your family this holiday season is the gift of health!

A letter of appreciation from page 1

Dr. Clevenger who gave my son back hope that there will be again better days; to the ICU nurses Lisa D., Ellen R., Ramona D. and Tamera for being so attentive to all his meds and to their gifted listening skills; and from myself, thanks to my boss, Steph, for being so understanding and supportive, and my coworkers who didn’t judge me or my son.

I am so honored to be part of your organization.

Sincerely and thanks,

Mary Snider, RN

Press Ganey from page 1

losing 6 percent of our Medicare reimbursement (essentially this is about $600,000 per year). But wait, perhaps you’ve read about the Super Committee that failed to find the $1.2 trillion in savings by Thanksgiving? Because of this, Medicare payments will be reduced by 2 percent beginning in January 2013. This means that we are guaranteed a 2 percent reduction and have an overall risk of an 8 percent reduction in three to four years (a potential reduction of $800,000 per year).

Troubling as that is, the Medicare demonstration program that we are currently a part of is set to end in June of 2016. This program delivers about a 10 percent increase in Medicare reimbursements as compared to years prior to 2010. This means that, in a worse-case scenario, we could lose nearly 20 percent of our Medicare revenue by 2016. That represents a cut of nearly $2 million per year at that point. Sounds gloomy, doesn’t it? Here’s the bright side: Few other hospitals are as big, or that are bigger, got the 10 percent bump from the demonstration program, so compared to us, they are going to begin to feel big-time pain as soon as next year. In addition, many hospitals were not as far along the electronic health record path and they are spending their EHR money setting up their systems. We have the ability to focus those funds on other badly needed technology upgrades.

The bottom line to all this is that we have been given a huge gift and have a window of opportunity to invest in technology (funds won’t be easy to get in the future), focus on improving quality and patient satisfaction, and become more efficient, so when those huge cuts come down the pike over the next several years, we will be ready for it. We are doing the right things to prepare for the future, it’s just a matter of doing all the hard work and making the difficult decisions in the time we have been given.

One last thing – the next round of townhalls is fast approaching and will be held on the following dates:

- 6 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 7 – board room
- 3 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 8 – Inservice Room
- 11 a.m., Friday, Dec. 9 – Inservice Room
- 9 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 10 – board room
- 7:30 a.m., Monday, Dec. 12 – board room
- Noon, Tuesday, Dec. 13 – Inservice Room

The prize for this set of townhall meetings will be four Newton Club tickets to the kick-off race next season! One lucky person will win four tickets to the NASCAR K&N race on Saturday, May 19, and a second person will win four tickets to the NASCAR nationwide series race on Sunday, May 20. If you attend the townhall and sign in, your name will be entered in the drawing. I look forward to seeing you there!
Recognition luncheon to be held Dec. 16

The Skiff Employee Recognition Luncheon will be held on Friday, Dec. 16 in the Inservice Room. All employees, physicians and board members are invited to attend. Soup, sandwiches and holiday dessert will be served from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., with the awards ceremony beginning at 12:15 p.m. Please join us as we enjoy a meal together and congratulate the following employees for reaching a milestone in their career at Skiff.

- 35 years: Bob DeBruyn
- 30 years: Barb Lester, Janet Deaton, Heuay Thongvanyh, Deb Corlew and Susan Winecoff
- 25 years: Jean Ferguson and Jolene Yeager
- 20 years: Dan Newton, Julie Roozeboom, Loretta Bowman, Deb Drewis, Karen Moomaw and Carla Johnson
- 15 years: Ann Cutts, Jenny Thompson, Natalie Pendroy, Megan Tindle, Sharon Neff, Colleen Jacobsen, Deb Huysen and Judie Chance
- 10 years: Sandi Dean, Cindy Lickey, Diane Versendaal, Patty Dykstra, Adam Hammer, Vicky Norrish, Linda Maher, Misty Smith and Janece Schmitz

A correction to last issue

The Nov. 17 issue of Vital Signs listed the incorrect hobbies and interests for Natalie Pendroy in our individual profile section. It should have read: “Going to grandchildren’s activities and just spending time with them. Sewing, flower gardens, antiques, travel with my mother, love to decorate our home inside and out for the holidays.”

Getting to know … Debra Huysen

With Skiff since: 1996
Department: Emergency Department
Title/job: Secretary
Education: Boone and Knoxville (Iowa) school districts; DMACC-Ankeny, medical secretary
Schedule: part-time, 7-3 p.m.
Main duties: Secretarial tasks, as well as preparing various monthly reports for Ambulatory and Concurrent Chart Reviews.
Favorite thing about Skiff: The way everyone comes together and works as a team. I look at it as a Skiff family/community. I have made some very good friends through the years here at Skiff.
Family: Husband Scott; my older son Lance and his wife Heather Ross (who live here in Newton), have blessed us with two wonderful granddaughters, 6-year-old Addison and 3-year-old Aliviah. Our younger son Derek lives and works in Cedar Falls (he graduated from UNI in 2004).
Hobbies and interests: Spending time with my granddaughters. Love to read and enjoy going for walks. Enjoy nature and am a big animal lover. One of my favorite things to do and consider it a inexpensive vacation, I like going to Cedar Falls and spend several days just walking around Cedar Falls and walking through the many trails there with Gordie, my “granddog” (a Sheltie). I also enjoy riding with my husband on his Harley.
Something people might not know about her: Gosh, I don’t know where to begin because I have had several unusual things happen to me through the years. I was on a cruise ship that caught on fire in 1997. One of the Ragdoll cats I have (Butdee) has a rare disease that usually only dogs get; the Lloyd Veterinary Medical Center at Iowa State in Ames was able to finally diagnosis him. What they have learned with Butdee and his condition is used in their classrooms now and through the years (since 2005). The students we have when going for his check-ups all know about Butdee before they meet him.
Something that makes her laugh: My grandchildren.
Favorite candy/treat: Spiced jelly beans or candy corn.

Winter slip/fall safety tips for hospitals

As the temperature drops, the number of slips and falls rises. Each winter, multiple Iowa Hospital Association members report serious employee injuries from slips and falls in hospital parking lots or inside entryways. Winter’s wet and icy conditions are dangerous and hospital employees need to take precautions.

- Always use proper foot gear for the conditions outside.
- Avoid high heels, cowboy boots and leather- or plastic-soled shoes.
- Take small steps to keep your center of balance under you when you encounter questionable areas that are wet, icy and/or snow-covered.
- Use care when entering and exiting your vehicle. Use it to help support your movements.
- Report all slip/fall hazards immediately to John Bartello, Safety and Security, at Ext. 4365.

Remember, when it’s winter in Iowa, don’t let yourself fall.
– Environment of Care Committee (safety committee)

Upcoming webinar to review diabetes in 2011

You’re invited to the webinar “2011: A Year of Diabetes in Review and Into the Future,” from noon-1:30 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 7, in the Inservice Room. This webinar will be sponsored by One Touch. Lunch will be provided.

Feel like you haven’t had time this year to keep up with all the new advancements and changes in diabetes education? Join us as we review new advances in diabetes management from 2011 and what will be coming in 2012. We will cover areas of diabetes management such as medications, devices, tools and therapies.

Program goals: The goal of this program is to gain better insight into understanding new advances in diabetes management from 2011.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this knowledge-based program, the participant will be able to identify new medical devices and products for diabetes management; describe the new medications, their purpose, use, side effects and outcomes thus far; explain the 2011 Diabetes Standards and how they differed from 2010; compare and contrast the top performers in 2011 as it relates to CGM, GM, Medications, etc.; and discuss soon to be released therapies/tools for 2012.

This educational program will provide 1.5 contact hours of continuing education credit.

Call Jenny Thompson at Ext. 4303 or e-mail her at jthompson@skiffmed.com to register.
From Mt. Rushmore to the shores of Hawaii, where in the world ...

... have you been in your Skiff apparel? In the first photo above, COO Brett Altman shows his Skiff pride while visiting Mt. Rushmore with his family. Above right, Events and Community Coordinator Leisa Zylstra displays Skiff pride near the surf. On page 5, you can see another photo of Leisa – this time enjoying a warm Hawaiian welcome while letting everyone know that she chooses Skiff.

If you submit a photo of yourself wearing Skiff gear while on vacation – or if you simply get “caught” by PR staff wearing your apparel while out in the community – you will receive 2 bonus WeSpark points. Submit travel pictures to Stephanie Alexander at salexander@skiffmed.com or Leisa Zylstra at lzylstra@skiffmed.com, along with a few details about where you were in the picture. Pictures and details will be included in Vital Signs. This is an ongoing initiative with no deadline.
Hy-Vee Club Room

Holiday

In this $5 class, dietitian Jenny Thompson will prepare you to celebrate a tasty and healthy holiday season. Recipes and samples will be provided. Participants will earn a credit for their Healthy You report card. Call (641) 792-7030 to register.

6 P.M., TUESDAY, DEC. 6

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST EMPLOYEES

Don Brown
Business Office Director

Susan Junge, RN
Med-Surg

Thanks for making parade float possible

We’d like to include a thank you for the people that helped make Skiff’s float in this year’s lighted parade a success. We truly appreciate all the following for their help and participation:

- Bob Webster for all of his help with the float preparation and for pulling the float in the parade.
- Dennis Taylor (husband of Jane) for all of the time and work he put in decorating and undecorating the float and returning the hayrack.
- Jan and Ron Backus for their help in locating a hayrack for us to use.
- Niki Nemic for her help in purchasing decorations and decorating the float.
- Ellen Graber for donating many strings of lights.
- All the people who took the time to ride on the float: Steve Long and family; Dr. Charles, Dr. Formaro and Ashley, Connie Annis (Auxiliary President) and her sister, Patty Dykstra and grandchildren, Lori Korte, Niki Nemic, Lisa Année’s children, Bob Webster’s grandchildren and Jane Taylor’s grandsons.
- Stephanie Alexander for handling the registration and paperwork for the parade entry.

– Jane Taylor and Lisa Année

Jane Taylor, Dr. Charles, Lori Korte, Dorothy Long, Patty Dykstra and family members were among those who rode on the Skiff float during the lighted parade on Nov. 25.
Answers from Skiff’s recent diabetes quizzes

Thanks to everyone who completed the Diabetes Quiz in honor of National Diabetes Month. There were two quizzes and the answers are as follows:

1. The proper tool/tools for effective diabetes management is/are: (a) Food (b) Exercise (c) Diabetes medication (if prescribed) (d) All of the above

2. You took your diabetes medicine and haven’t eaten all day. Now you feel weak and dizzy. You should: (a) Do nothing now and eat a large dinner later. (b) Drink some juice now and then eat (c) Take some more of you diabetes medicine (d) Lie down and wait until you feel better

3. Normal fasting blood glucose: (a) 40-70 mg/dl (b) 80-120 mg/dl (c) 110-160 mg/dl (d) 160-240 mg/dl

4. Gestational diabetes is a form of diabetes that occurs only during pregnancy: (a) True (b) False

5. Bargaining, anger, depression, and acceptance are normal feelings that may occur to people who must live with diabetes: (a) True (b) False

Quiz 2

1. Diabetes is a condition in which the body does not make enough insulin or does not properly use the insulin it does make. (a) True (b) False

2. A meal plan for people with diabetes is: (a) The way most American people eat (b) A healthy diet for most people (c) Too high in carbohydrates for most people (d) Too high in protein for most people

3. An appropriate form/appropriate forms of exercise to help control diabetes is/are: (a) Walking (b) Using exercise equipment (c) Using exercise videos/tapes (d) All of the above

4. Pills taken for diabetes: (a) Raise your blood glucose (b) Improve your blood flow (c) Help your body use insulin better, make more insulin or both (d) Contain insulin

5. Insulin cannot be taken in pill or tablet form: (a) True (b) False

Congratulations to these employees for correctly answering the quiz:

- Ruby Timmins
- Arlys Boyington
- Nancy Steingreaber
- Margena Doty
- Mary Thompson

Prizes include: Digi-Walker Pedometer, One Touch bag, Humalog water bottle, Abbott Jersey and a Diabetic Meals in 30 Minutes or Less. Winners may pick up their prize at today’s Employee Holiday Food Fair from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. in the cafeteria or by contacting Jenny Thompson at Ext. 4303.

Skiff employee one of five generations

“Christmas baby” Lexus Ayers, born Dec. 25, 2010 at Skiff, is joined above by (from left) great-great-grandmother Doris Hunt, 79; great-grandmother Cindy Ahn, Laboratory, 57; grandmother Kim Ayers, 36; and dad Mason Ayers, 18.
Winter storms: Safety tips for weathering a storm in progress

The article below is the second of a three-part series provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The next edition of Vital Signs will include information on what to do following winter storms.

When a winter storm is imminent or already occurring in your area, it’s time to put your plan into action. The first thing you want to do is pay attention to any winter storm watches or warnings that have been issued for your location.

Safety tips for staying indoors
You’ll want to be able to receive all of the latest weather updates during a winter storm, which means you’ll need more than one reliable source of weather information. We recommend the following:

- Listen to your NOAA Weather Radio or check The Weather Channel and weather.com frequently for weather updates and emergency information.
- Use extreme caution with electric space heaters. Keep them at least a few feet away from anything flammable, such as drapes, bed sheets or blankets. Never place them on top of furniture or near water, and never let children play unattended around them.
- Keep a fire extinguisher close by the area in which you plan to use a space heater or kerosene heater.
- Use your fireplace, wood stove or other similar heater only if it is properly ventilated and does not leak gas into your home’s indoor air space.
- Conserve heat and fuel, if necessary, by temporarily closing off heat to unused rooms.

When a winter storm is imminent ... it’s time to put your plan into action

- Eat regularly and drink plenty of water, but avoid caffeinated and alcoholic beverages. Instead, drink warm, sweet beverages, or try soups or broths.
- If you use an electric generator, make sure you keep it outdoors (never bring a generator indoors) and connect appliances to it using only heavy-duty, outdoor-ready cords.
- If you experience a power failure, use battery-powered flashlights and lanterns instead of candles whenever possible.
- If you do use candles, never leave them unattended when lit.
- Wear warm clothing in multiple layers as needed.
- Monitor body temperature, both your own and that of your family members. Because infants younger than 1 year old lose body heat more easily than adults, make sure they wear warm clothing and try to keep your home warm inside if you have an infant at home. If you cannot maintain a warm temperature inside your home, try to make alternative arrangements.

You tell it, Rhondi!
In addition to decorating the outside of her apartment for autumn, Rhondi Machin of Environmental Services also showed her Skiff pride with an “I choose Skiff” yard sign.

Continued on page 8
Flu activity in Iowa includes a novel strain

Routine surveillance by the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH), the State Hygienic Lab and other partners across the state indicate that a novel strain of the influenza virus has been detected in three children in Webster and Hamilton counties. This virus, an influenza A/H3N2 recombinant virus, has also been detected in other states in recent months (Pennsylvania, Maine and Indiana).

Symptoms are similar to the regular seasonal flu. All three children sought medical care but were not hospitalized, and have recovered.

This influenza A/H3N2 virus contains components of human, avian, H1N1 and swine influenza. All spread has been human to human. Although spread appears to be limited, two other family members had reported influenza-like illness around the same time but weren’t tested. No further cases have been identified in the last week.

None of the cases had any animal exposure. Because the virus is unique, surveillance has been increased at clinics and emergency rooms in Webster and Hamilton Counties.

All health-care providers in Iowa should continue to submit their first 3 positives for Influenza A virus. This will allow SHL to perform subtyping and determine if any further cases are likely.

For more information on influenza testing at SHL, please visit www.shl.uiowa.edu/services/influenza.

Tidbits

- It is again time for the annual load bank testing and inspection of the hospital’s emergency generator and electrical system. In order for this equipment to be reliable, it is very important that we have the transfer switches inspected and tested at this time, as well. This will cause a momentary interruption of electricity when they’re switched over. This has been scheduled for 2 p.m. today (Thursday, Dec. 1). If you have any questions, call Bob DeBruyn at Ext. 3068.

- Baxter clinic is collecting scarfs, hats, gloves and mittens for the Salvation Army and local schools. Anyone who would like to donate, please call the clinic at (641) 227-3045 and they will make arrangements for collection.

- Did you recently exercise your right to vote in local elections? If so and if you’re a WeSpark participant, be sure to add 1 point to your activity log. Thanks for letting your voice be heard!

- The PR and Marketing department is the process of trying to coordinate a fundraiser with Discovery Toys, to help employees looking to Christmas shop for the little ones in their life. Twenty percent of all sales would go to the Skiff Foundation. Keep an eye on your e-mail for information on a time and date.

- Our condolences to Dan Newton on the death of his father, Melvin.

Winter safety from page 7

indoor as soon as possible.

- Wear multiple layers of clothing to stay warm, as well as a hat, scarf, mittens, a waterproof jacket and boots.

- Make sure you stay as dry as possible, as water against the skin can chill the body quickly.

- If you need to de-ice or refuel your car, or use a snow blower, avoid getting gasoline or alcohol on your skin. These will cause your body to lose heat outdoors more quickly.

- Don’t ignore shivering. If you shiver persistently while you’re outdoors, it’s a sign that you need to return inside.

- Avoid over-exerting yourself while shoveling snow or performing any other hard work or heavy lifting. Extreme cold puts extra strain on your heart and cardiovascular system, so heed your doctor’s advice if you have experienced any signs of heart disease or high blood pressure in the past. If you don’t have to do outdoor chores in the cold, wait until the storm passes and the outside temperature warms up.

- Avoid ice wherever possible. It’s extremely easy to fall on ice-covered pavement, sidewalks, stairs and curbs, and many winter weather injuries occur every year on icy surfaces like these. Use rock salt or other de-icing chemicals to keep your porch, driveway and sidewalk as free of ice as possible, or spread sand to reduce the risk of slipping.

Travel safety tips

If at all possible, avoid driving during a winter weather event, as even small amounts of snow and ice can make traveling on roads extremely dangerous. If you must drive, keep the following tips in mind:

- Stay on main roads and highways, and stick to the flattest roads you can. Avoid hills and roads with sloping surfaces wherever possible.

- Drive only during daylight hours, and avoid driving alone if you can.

- Bring blankets with you to keep warm in case you become stranded. Also bring bottled water or warm beverages, to avoid becoming dehydrated.

- Let family members know where you’re going and when you’re expected to return.

- If a snowstorm or blizzard forces you to stop, pull off the highway and turn on your hazard lights. If you have a distress flag or sticker, hang it from your radio antenna or apply it to your window. Remain in your car, where rescuers are most likely to find you.

- If you’re stranded for an extended period of time, run your engine for about 10 minutes every hour to stay warm. Open a window slightly for ventilation while the car is running, to prevent any carbon monoxide buildup. Remove any snow that builds up on your car’s exhaust pipe.

- If you have to spend the night in your car, turn on the interior overhead light so rescuers or work crews can see you.

Know your terms

Depending on the amount of snowfall and the expected duration of a storm, the National Weather Service may issue one or more of the following:

- A winter weather advisory means that a significant winter storm or other hazardous winter weather is occurring, imminent and is an inconvenience.

- A winter storm watch is issued when significant winter weather (such as heavy snow, sleet, freezing rain or a combination of these) is expected but not imminent for the watch area. Severe winter weather is possible within 12 to 36 hours.

- Winter storm warnings are issued when a significant winter storm or hazardous winter weather is occurring, imminent or likely, and is a threat to life and property.

- Blizzard warnings are issued for winter storms with winds of 35 mph or higher, blowing snow that reduces visibility to a quarter mile or less for at least three hours, and which cause dangerous wind chills in the warning area.

- Frost/freeze warnings are issued when below-freezing temperatures are expected and may cause significant damage to plants and crops. In areas where freezing temperatures are rare, people living in homes without heat should take added precautions.