

Humorizing Healthcare

FUNsulting, etc.'s Newsletter

A newsletter for people who want to add more humor into healthcare.

August 2007

Vol 1 No 1

WELCOME TO FUNsulting, etc.'s Newsletter

FUNsulting, etc.'s Newsletter is a somewhat regular newsletter from FUNsulting, etc. whose mission is to redefine excellence in healthcare through humor. Each edition includes fun, funny *and* practical articles and resources which will enhance the humor potential in healthcare without sacrificing the integrity of the care that is delivered. Remember, a laugh a day gathers no moss (or something like that). Enjoy!

FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

We Changed Our Focus – Just for the Health of It!

FUNsulting, etc. is going to the hospital! And to home care...to hospice...to the pharmacy...just for the health of it.

FUNsulting, etc. has spent 11 years serving a wide variety of clients in many different industries. Recently, the vast majority of our clients have been in healthcare. With a decade of experience in hospice social work and leadership, it became clear that my background and expertise were well suited for helping staff and leaders in healthcare find a little more fun in their work. So, we have decided to focus our work on **redefining excellence in healthcare through humor**.

We're banking on the fact that a laugh a day will *not* keep the doctor away!

FUNsulting, etc. now offers presentations and workshops to healthcare staff and leaders to help them tap into the power of humor to manage stress and become better at working in and leading healthcare. It's not just about *using* humor though, it's about building on a foundation of excellence *with* humor. I believe this potent combination is just what the doctor (and the nurse, the social worker, the administrator, etc.) ordered to improve the care of patients.

A new and improved website at www.FUNsulting.com describes our new direction and plans are in the works to enhance the site to be a greater resource to healthcare staff

and leaders. In addition to articles and products, a new video will be online by early fall. Additionally, we have a new blog where you can enjoy regular commentaries on the humor (or lack thereof) found in healthcare and related topics.

With all the challenges found in healthcare today, the wonderful people who deliver that care deserve a laugh and a bolt of *lighten*-ing in their work. FUNsulting, etc. hopes to provide that...and more.

POSITIVE RESULTS

Dying for a Good Laugh

I had been called to the home of a patient who had died during the night. While in the other room doing the paperwork, I had a clear view of the patient in the hospital bed as the family took turns paying their last respects. When all of the sudden the patient sat upright! There was a tremendous gasp followed by laughter after the family realized that the patient's daughter had sat on the bed's remote control which caused the body to "rise." It was certainly a wonderful opportunity to confirm that laughter *is* the best medicine. – Karen Doty, hospice nurse, Yonkers, NY

THE BEST MEDICINE

Documenting Humor

The following are entries found in actual medical records (sources unknown):

Patient refused autopsy.

Patient was referred to hospital by private physician with green stools.

Discharge status: Alive but without permission.

Large brown BM. Walking down the hall.

Prescription for suppositories: Insert 1 daily until exhausted.

DISCHARGE PLANS

Humorizing Healthcare

Humor is not an intervention that will be measured by Medicare or the JCAHO. Yet it can be one of the most effective treatments for leaders, staff and even patients.

Humor is a warm touch of humanness in the cold bedpan world of hospitals, clinics or home care agencies. Patients do not seek your services because they feel good nor because they want to be there. Yet because of your own stress and challenges, they can inadvertently be treated as a medical record number, a diagnosis or an insurance plan. A dose of humor can provide a heartfelt smile in an uncomfortable situation.

Consider these three ways to bring a little more humor into your patient care repertoire.

Humorize the Environment. The patient care environment is not typically designed for fun. Duh. Regulations control procedures, caseloads are high and every surface and apparatus is cold. Still, there are ways to make the environment a bit more fun without compromising the need for quality, professionalism or air conditioning. Think about these ways to make routine processes more fun:

- Place large cartoons or funny signs on the ceiling above exam tables. While “positioned” on a table for a rectal exam, I could see a Post It® note my internist had placed on the wall. It said, “My view is worse!”
- Put a cartoon bulletin board in every exam room or waiting area. Invite your patients to contribute to it. One of my favorite cartoons shows a patient struggling to close his hospital gown. The nurse says to him, “Don’t worry, it covers more than Medicare!”
- Create a supply of humorous materials to give patients. This could include books, magazines, audio tapes, etc.
- Decorate bland patient care areas with posters or funny signs. On the door to one hospital’s maternity unit was a sign that said, “Push, push, push!”

Punch up Procedures. Most procedures are invasive and uncomfortable. Most patients know this in advance and build up anxiety ahead of time which can make the procedure even more difficult. Consider what you can do to help them relax:

- Make funny CD’s or DVD’s available to patients who have extended waiting periods before or during procedures like chemotherapy, MRI’s or when giving blood. A little Bill Cosby or Jerry Seinfeld could go a long way to relax patients.
- Attach funny signs, posters or instructions to the equipment used during procedures. For instance, a sign on the side of an MRI machine that said, “Torpedo Tube #1” would be hilarious.
- Include humor in pre-procedure instructions. With all the disclaimers such as “there is a risk of death in this procedure”, patients are not necessarily comforted

by the preparatory paperwork. Consider adding a few lines of humor to make the serious information go down a bit better. Add an instruction like this: "Passing Gas is not only socially acceptable in our post-colonoscopy room, it's encouraged!"

Have FUN with Patient Interactions. If you're my nurse or doctor, I want to know that you are stress free, competent, and a fun human being. So include humor in your interactions with patients:

- Ask *them* about humor. In your initial assessment, determine if humor is important to and welcomed by the patient. If it is, it gives you permission to incorporate it in your work. If it's not, you that may be a clue that the patient has fears or anxieties about their visit.
- Decorate yourself! Pediatric nurses have the best uniforms in healthcare which makes them less threatening to their young patients. This works in adult care too. Dr. George Russell, a physician in Boulder, CO, wears a red clown nose while using jokes to see if his patients are paying attention and to gauge their mental state. Patients find it reassuring that their doctor has a sense of humor.
- Share a joke, cartoon or funny quote with patients. While reassuring my mother about her upcoming colonoscopy, the nurse said, "Don't worry darlin', everything will work out in the end!"

You probably didn't learn about humor in medical school or nursing school but research shows that it *is* a therapeutic intervention. Give your patients the gift of laughter as a way to enhance the *care* in healthcare.

QUOTE: A hospital should also have a recovery room adjoining the cashier's office. – Francis O'Walsh

BACK QUOTE: The art of medicine consists in amusing the patient while nature cures the disease. – Francois Marie Voltaire

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