Connecting With ...

Andrea Ludka

Andrea Ludka is the director of Physician Services which includes Physician Liaison, Physician Recruitment, Medical Staff Services, and Continuing Medical Education.

She has worked at Munson Medical Center for 16 years, most recently managing the Physician Liaison office, and before that was a manager in Corporate Communications. She is married to Ben, a Traverse City native and teacher, and they have three girls: Olivia, 11, Helen Frances, 8, and Rose Marie, 4. She enjoys exploring and participating in her children's hobbies with them.

What are your responsibilities as director of Physician Services?

Physicians are our partners in much of what we do here at Munson. So we see our role as maintaining open communication, building lines of trust, and being responsive to their concerns and needs. We are a conduit for linking the inpatient and ambulatory settings. We provide a diverse range of services that allow for opportunities to connect physicians and their offices with the medical center and vice versa.

What rises to the top of your “To Do” List for 2015?

First of all, we want to listen and provide top-notch customer service to our physicians and their offices. Sometimes that means acknowledging that we have heard them and we don’t have an answer or simple solution. Secondly, we want to continue creating and building relationships with our physicians and their staff, including articulating and balancing their needs and the hospital’s needs. We are a very complex organization and when you look at that complexity from the ambulatory setting it’s amazing.

What would you characterize as the greatest challenge for Physician Services?

From the liaison perspective, it is continued integration discussions about processes and technology that will create efficiencies for both the inpatient and ambulatory setting—an ease of use. In recruitment there are some critical specialties that we need to secure for our future. For Medical Staff Services, we understand that 87 percent of our medical staff is in private practice and it’s key to work closely with the physicians, their office, and medical staff leadership. Since the majority of our providers are in the office setting, our CME team is always thinking outside of the box about ways to provide education to them in that setting. Their work is invaluable.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your role?

I don’t know that it boils down to one simple thing, but I love coming to work every day, working with this team, the physicians, and their offices. Many days can be compared to “finishing your final exam.” Accomplishment comes in many forms and it’s an awesome feeling to love what you do.

What would you characterize as the strengths of Munson Medical Center?

By far its people, their talent, commitment, and of Munson Medical Center?

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MSU-College of Human Medicine Researcher Joins T.C. Campus

Traverse City now hosts a Michigan State University College of Human Medicine assistant professor who hopes to expand rural health research in northern Michigan and help physicians and community organizations connect to research opportunities at the university.

Her research agenda includes plans to conduct studies that will help uncover perinatal causes of childhood disorders and also find effective ways to promote healthy lifestyle behaviors for families living in poverty or facing other challenges.

Epidemiologist Jean M. Kerver, PhD, MS, RD, has not yet fully settled into her office in the Munson Professional Building, but she is excited about her new role that began on Jan 5.

“My plan is to write federal research grants that will help me achieve my research goals while bringing funds into this community,” she said. “I also can help connect physicians or community members to other researchers at MSU. I have strong collaborative relationships with many researchers in different academic areas of the university, so I will be able to tap into a big research network.”

Kerver’s role is part of a new effort by MSU’s College of Human Medicine to establish a statewide research network and promote public health in rural communities. Researchers also are being recruited for the Marquette and Midland areas. A second researcher is planned for Traverse City in the future.

New Open Bore MRI Planned for MCHC

A new MRI for Munson Community Health Center will offer a patient-pleasing open bore and advanced technology to allow radiologic studies not capable with the old machine.

Radiology Director Dan Fly said the Siemens Magnetom Aera 1.5 T 70 centimeter Open Bore System will replace the current 1 T machine.

“The new MRI is an ‘open bore’ machine with a larger width compensating for patients with a larger body habitus and the bore of the machine is much shorter,” Fly said. “Patients will be more comfortable and not feel like they are inside a tube. We will be able to do so many more advanced tests there than the previous machine allowed us to do.”

The new machine will allow patients to receive neuroradiologic, cardiac, orthopedic, and breast studies that currently only can be performed at the hospital.
“The new MRI also will help to reduce sound pressure levels by 70 percent for certain neurology and orthopedic studies,” Fly said.

The old MRI has been wrapped, and a crane is scheduled to be on site today to remove it from the building. The new system is scheduled to be installed on Feb. 23 and plans call for it to be ready for patients in early March. During the replacement process, Radiology will be extending the operational hours of the Madison Street MRI to help meet the demand for MRI services. Radiology scheduling staff also will be sensitive to patients who may be extremely claustrophobic or who require an “open bore” system. Fly said these patients will be scheduled for their studies using open bore devices at Munson Healthcare system hospitals Kalkaska Memorial Health Center, Charlevoix Area Hospital, or Otsego Memorial Hospital.

Other future Munson Medical Center MRI improvements include replacement of the Madison Street system in 2016 with a Siemens Magnetom Skyra 3.0 T Open Bore MRI. This new technology will also perform a variety of new neurology, cardiac, orthopedic and breast studies and provide improved services to the Emergency Department and inpatient areas. To establish much needed system redundancy, the replacement location will be in the Munson Medical Center main campus.

For MRI scheduling questions, please contact Radiology Scheduling at 2-7200. For any other questions, contact Annette Wilkins at 5-7200 or email at awilkins@mhc.net.

Ronald McDonald House Donation

Representatives from Ronald McDonald House Charities visited the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit this week to present a check for $62,650 to help purchase a new external infant transport isolette for babies that need to be transported to Munson Medical Center’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Here the charity’s officials are joined by NICU, Nursing, and Munson Healthcare Regional Foundation staff to celebrate the donation. A transport isolette is shown at right.

Part of Kerver’s responsibilities will include helping MSU’s medical students in Traverse City with research projects.

Kerver is no stranger to the area. With her husband, she purchased property in the area eight years ago, and looks forward to her family moving here at the end of the school year. She currently spends two days a week in Traverse City and three days in East Lansing.

“I am thrilled to have this opportunity,” she said.

Kerver has a doctorate in human nutrition and a master of science degree in epidemiology – both from MSU. She has served as an assistant professor and extension specialist in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics since 2012.

As part of her current research, Kerver has ongoing studies in Lansing, Jackson, Shiawassee County, and Detroit that she hopes to build upon to start new research projects in the Grand Traverse region.

“I have a big focus on mobile technology apps to promote health,” she said. “I also have a specific interest in postpartum weight loss and childhood obesity prevention.”

Kerver has been the principal investigator of a pilot study involving lifestyle habits of Arab-American women during pregnancy and another ongoing study examining the effects of iodine insufficiency during pregnancy on cognitive function of offspring. She is a co-investigator on two pending studies, including one that would investigate the prenatal origins of human disease.

Physicians and others interested in research may schedule an appointment by contacting MSU College of Human Medicine Community Clerkship Assistant Health Ann Alpin at 2-8223. Kerver also can be reached by email at jkerver@mhc.net.