

Grand Rounds

St. Barnabas Presents at State Healthcare Association

CHATTANOOGA — Responding to an invitation from QSource, Tennessee's Medicare quality improvement organization, a local nursing home administrator described to more than 200 state healthcare leaders how her facility maintains a zero-restraints policy and zero in-house acquired skin wounds.

Brigetta Nethery, administrator of St. Barnabas Senior Living Services in downtown Chattanooga, was an expert speaker at the annual Tennessee Health Care Association (THCA) Government Update November 28 in Knoxville.

"The incidence of physical restraints and pressure ulcers are of great concern in Tennessee," says Nethery. Last year, Tennessee ranked near the top nationally in terms of the number of restraints used in its 325 nursing homes.

Nethery says most professionals in the field consider lower restraint use almost impossible to achieve. However, St. Barnabas has used no restraints for nearly two years, with the exception of a mitten for a patient whose movements would dislodge his tracheotomy cord.

In addition, St. Barnabas is known as a wound care center for its successful treatment of existing skin wounds and prevention of new ones, resulting in a zero in-house acquired wounds.

Ms. Nethery, together with Donna Rutherford, St. Barnabas director of nursing, explained to conference attendees how consistent staffing is critical to the facility's achievement, especially of front-line caregivers such as the certified nursing assistant (CNA). CNAs

rely on their personal knowledge of the residents in their care, and inconsistent staffing greatly affects the quality of care residents receive.

"Many nursing homes use agencies to staff their facilities," said Ms. Rutherford. "When CNAs don't stay long enough to really know their residents, it's nearly impossible to control quality outcomes."

Even during the upheaval of normal operations in July with the fourteen-block move of the skilled nursing facility to its new home, St. Barnabas has used no agency staffing.

"Consistent assignments are the basis of all our quality interventions," says Nethery, who has 25 years in the nursing profession. "We are determined to maintain our quality stan-

dards, despite setbacks in re-training our existing and new CNAs, who've had to learn and/or maintain our clinical interventions in a brand new environment."

St. Barnabas was the first nursing home to enroll in the Advancing Excellence campaign. Voluntary participation in this coalition-based, two-year campaign was a natural outgrowth of St. Barnabas' commitment to quality care. At the state level, THCA now includes 109 participating nursing homes. The campaign is designed to improve the quality of care and quality of life for those living or recuperating in America's nursing homes.

St. Barnabas offers aging services on two campuses in downtown Chattanooga.