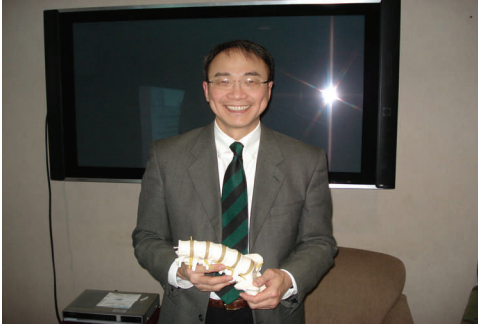




Inside HCA

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Lumbar Spinal Stenosis Presentations



Dr. Edwin M. Chang



Dr. Anthony J. G. Alastra



Dr. John S. Shiau

Over a three-week period in March, our three neurosurgeons, Dr. Edwin M. Chang, Dr. Anthony J.G. Alastra and Dr. John S. Shiau, each gave separate presentations on lumbar spinal stenosis (LSS). LSS is a condition in which the spinal canal narrows and compresses the spinal cord and nerves, causing the patient to experience pain. The doctors explained the potential benefit of installing an X-STOP implant, which relieves pain when placed between two bones in the back of your spine at the level of the pinched nerve. Over three dozen people attended the presentations.

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Texting Now Can Lead to Problems Later

As the use of personal digital assistants (PDA's) and cell phones continues to rise, so does the use of text messaging. According to surveys conducted by the Mobile Marketing Association and the Pew Internet and American Life Project, approximately 80% of users between the ages of 13-24 send text messages (with 63% for those in the 18-27 age range, 31% for 28-39 and 18% for those in the 40-49 range). This rise has inevitably led to health concerns.

Over usage of the thumb due to texting can lead to the development of "Blackberry thumb," a frequently painful condition in which the user experiences pain in their thumbs and/or wrists. According to Healthcare Associates' orthopaedic hand surgeon Dr. Vincent Ruggiero, this has become a real concern. Dr. Ruggiero claims he has seen a significant rise in problems with the hands in the younger population below 18. "We've observed in some young kids, the development of carpal tunnel syndrome and thumb pain from text messaging," he said. "There are some kids who do up to 1,000 text messages a month which seems excessive, but there is no known number for what the limit is for text messaging."

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition in which the median nerve becomes compressed at the wrist, leading to pain, numbness and even paralysis of the hand. "It could creep up on you after a period of several months of doing that activity," Dr. Ruggiero said. If caught early enough, however, the pain can be relieved. "If steps are taken to eliminate the offending activities, it can be reversed," he said.

In addition to the texting, video game playing can also play a role. "Lots of times when the kids are text messaging they're also playing a lot of video games and so the effect can be accumulative," Dr. Ruggiero said. The best way to avoid these health issues, then, is simple. "Pick up the telephone and call people," said Dr. Ruggiero. "That's what I tell the kids."

A Special Message from Human Resources

By Ann Marie Lane

In the past few weeks I have received a clear picture of what being an employee of Healthcare Associates in Medicine means to all of you and to our patients. I am consistently amazed at the care, compassion and consideration given by our staff. As a new employee in this organization, I believe it is a unique and very special place to work and I thank you all for the great warmth and hospitality extended to me since I started in this position.

I would like to assure you all that I will work hard to provide employees of Healthcare Associates in Medicine with a safe and friendly environment in which to work. I will continue to put in place protocols that will ensure compliance and to guarantee that we are competitive as an organization in today's world.

This is an appropriate segue into what I would like to discuss in this newsletter. As some of you already know, I place the utmost emphasis on how we present ourselves to our patients. I cannot begin to emphasize the importance of a first impression. As a result, my directive for the next few months will be to ensure that we focus on our presentation as it pertains to our dress code, how we greet each other and, most especially, how we interact and greet our patients.

While I understand that some days have a more hectic pace than others, we need to always remember that we are professionals. Eye contact or a smile can impact a patient and a colleague in an extremely positive fashion. This must never be underestimated. We always have the time to smile and say "hello" and should remember that we all will find ourselves or a family member in a doctor's office at some point in the future.

How would you want to be treated? With a smile and "hello?" Or do you prefer to be ignored by someone who doesn't even make eye contact? Please think about that as you go through your day and let us continue to raise the bar for acceptable standards here at Healthcare Associates in Medicine.

Implementing the Platinum Rule at HCA

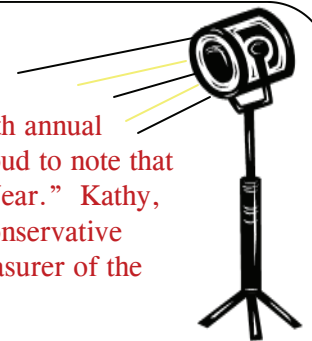
When it comes to the golden rule, there are a few popular misconceptions. Some people think it means that those who have the gold make the rules. Others, meanwhile, subscribe to the theory that you should do on to others before they can do on to you. The real thinking behind the rule, however, is simple: treat others the way you wanted to be treated. While a useful tool to guide one's interactions with others, two other guidelines have now been added to the list: the platinum and double platinum rules. These three rules provide an effective framework for interactions between people or, in healthcare, between the provider and the patient. In contrast to the golden rule, the platinum one argues that you should treat others the way they want to be treated, opposed to the way *you* would want to be treated in the same circumstance.

For instance, while you may not mind something, it doesn't mean others won't. The only way to find out for sure is to ask and to pay close attention. So if a patient requires a certain amount or method of care, while you may not need it in the same situation, it's important that you provide what the patient requires anyway. The double platinum rule, meanwhile, is an extension of the platinum one. While previously you would treat the patient the way they want to be treated, the double platinum rule argues that you should treat them the way they don't even *know* they want to be treated. Essentially, you should go above and beyond the treatment by caring for them the way they need and want to be treated *as well* as by anticipating other ways they may want to be treated but haven't thought of or asked for yet.

The bottom line is that the healthcare provider needs to be attentive and anticipative. Each patient is different and thus has different needs and wants. Physicians and providers need to learn to distinguish these separate needs in order to anticipate and provide the solutions to their problems. By doing so the physician can provide excellent service, the patient can get the help they need and the visits and procedures will be more effective and run more smoothly.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

On Friday, May 8, 2009 the Conservative Party of Richmond County held their 47th annual dinner and dance at The Renaissance on Hylan Boulevard in Staten Island. We are proud to note that our own **Kathy Tramontana** was recognized at the dinner as the "Conservative of the Year." Kathy, the Associate Administrator at HCA, is a long-time county committee person of the Conservative Party. She is also a board member of the Deborah League of Staten Island and the treasurer of the GRACE Foundation. Congratulations, Kathy!





NOTABLE MENTIONS



- Congratulations to **Sebastian Oddo**, the son of **Laura Oddo** who works in our medical records department. Sebastian just wrote his first book, which was released earlier this month. Entitled *Excuse Me, College is Now: How to Be a Success in School and Life*, the book provides tips and strategies on how to survive the stresses of college while maintaining a positive lifestyle. It is currently available at Barnes and Noble and Amazon.com.
- **Terry Dahlstrom** in our phone department had very exciting news of her own. Terry became a grandmother for the first time on Sunday, March 29th when her daughter, **Christine**, gave birth to baby girl Chloe Marie. Chloe Marie weighed seven pounds, eight ounces. Congratulations to both Christine and new grandma, Terry!
- **Denise Mandola** in our workers compensation department is eagerly waiting the birth of her second child. Denise's expected delivery date is Saturday, October 10th, 2009. Denise already has one child, 11-year old Corina. Congratulations to Denise and big sister in training, Corina!
- **Antoinette Strikcani** from our front desk department is also expecting an October baby. It will be the first time for new mom Antoinette. Congratulations!
- A new doctor will be coming on board this summer. **Dr. Daniel S. Markowicz**, who is finishing up a fellowship in adult reconstructive surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery, is joining our orthopaedics department to perform joint replacement procedures. Dr. Markowicz is scheduled to come on board at the start of August.
- The baseball season has arrived and our company team, the **Healthcare Hurricanes**, is looking for new players. For information on games, practice or how to join please call Mike or Johanna at extension 2203.



KEEPING AN EYE ON HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION:

As the cost of health insurance dangerously approaches 20-percent of the United States' Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a conscious effort has been undertaken by President Barack Obama and his administration to tackle the rising costs. We at Healthcare Associates in Medicine, P.C. are taking a close look at these efforts. Upon closer inspection we are coming up with many questions that require serious discussion. With the economy in the current state it is in, the cost of health care in the United States is more important than ever. But are the elements on the table beneficial for all involved or only for a select few?



The phrase "cost containment" has been used without immunity. But whose costs are actually going to be contained? Will it be the insurance companies, who are already trying to cut costs and pay providers less than they're worth? Should these insurance companies be allowed to determine the type of care patients receive? Or will the cost be contained by providers? And what does it mean if providers have to contain costs? Does that mean they have to provide service to fewer patients?

There are other important questions. With limited resources and treatment needed by many, who will make the decision of who receives what when? Will health care become a glorified rationing system where those who have the money receive it and those who don't don't? And what will happen to those who can't afford the increasing cost? Will they receive nothing? Or will they be pushed to the back of the line, waiting months just to receive an MRI to diagnose their ailment?

These are important questions that deserve analysis and debate. President Obama's intentions to provide health care for every American, effects *every American*. As a result we all need to pay close attention to what is being done and what will be done in the near future. We will continue to analyze the situation to help provide a better understanding of this process. Stay tuned...

Mission Statement:

Our physicians, who specialize in neurology, neurological surgery, orthopaedics and pain management are the community's preeminent providers of coordinated neurological, neuromuscular and musculoskeletal services. Dedicated to providing our patients with the very best in medical care, we at Healthcare are committed to the ongoing advancement and development of our specialty services.

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