

Rome Memorial Hospital Receives Accreditation Without Recommendation From The Joint Commission On Accreditation Of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)

ROME (April 2004)-- Rome Memorial Hospital's Laboratory Department recently earned accreditation without any recommendations for improvement from the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) during its bi-annual survey, announced Department Director Sunanda Sanyal.

JCAHO evaluated the laboratory's performance in complying with nearly 300 standards related to quality control, safety, infection control, leadership, management of human resources, management information, ongoing performance improvement activities and other issues. JCAHO is the nation's oldest and largest healthcare accrediting body.

What this means, said Sanyal, is that "not only is the Laboratory Department providing quality care to our patients and physicians, but the laboratory is striving for and meeting regulatory requirements."

"We are very conscientious about what we do because we know that physicians depend upon our diagnostic results to make treatment decisions for their patients," Sanyal said. "Our staff is knowledgeable and supervisors set the standard for achieving excellence, leading by example."

Rome Memorial Hospital's Laboratory Department provides full-service clinical and pathological testing for residents of the greater Rome area. In 2003, the laboratory performed approximately 427,000 tests; in 2002, approximately 394,000 tests; and in 2001, 379,000 tests, said Sanyal.

JCAHO is no longer using the "report card" method of scoring laboratories, she said. The department's most recent scores were 98, 99 and 96 out of a possible score of 100. Instead, they are now "giving recommendations" on needed improvements and upgrades. Therefore, the hospital's performance is excellent based on the fact that JCAHO had no recommendations, she said. "We earned JCAHO's Gold Seal of Approval™."

Another major change that JCAHO has adopted is that it now uses "tracer methodology" in order to review the laboratory's level of quality and excellence. Previously, JCAHO surveys focused more on documentation to ensure that procedures were being followed. Now, JCAHO begins by pulling a patient's chart and tracing the process back to the laboratory to see how and why a particular specimen was taken. Surveyors follow a sample of patients through their experiences of care in the organization to evaluate individual components of care and systems of care. "JCAHO's focus is now much more on the patient," said Sanyal.

At any point during the process, the JCAHO representative can look at information from other departments as well. "The JCAHO representative could pick any chart and that chart could belong to any department," said Sanyal. During the department review, Sanyal said she had extensive cooperation from other departments. In particular, "Mary Deutschmann, our director of medical records, was very important in the process because she eased chart review."

Rome Memorial Hospital's Laboratory Department was one of the first hospitals where tracer methodology was used. "JCAHO is trying to make sure that hospitals do the right thing the first time and every time," said Sanyal.

She points out that JCAHO is not something you plan for in 3 months, 6 months or even a year — "it's an ongoing process," she said. "We have to live by the standards every day."

"The Laboratory Department is comprised of very conscientious supervisors and staff and we have very good systems in place," she added. The Department supervisors have created an environment of excellence by example, said Sanyal, where people on a daily basis perform at a high level of proficiency. "I would like to thank the entire staff and supervisors who are a very conscientious, knowledgeable group of individuals," said Sanyal.

Approximately 84 people work in the hospital's Laboratory Department at seven collection sites, including Rome Memorial Hospital's main campus on the first floor at 1500 N. James St.; 1617 N. James St.; Rome Medical Group, 1801 Black River Blvd.; Beeches Office Complex, Turin Road; Boonville Family Care, 13407 State Route 12, Boonville; East Shore Medical Office, 200 Spencer Ave., Sylvan Beach, and 117 W. Liberty Street.