

NEWSLETTER FOR FACULTY

June 2002

In July 2001, the UCLA Medical Group implemented a plan to begin expanding the sites of care for medical services for its enrollees to include Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center and specialists' offices in the Santa Monica area. The changes were necessary to accomplish several objectives: first, to decompress the facilities in Westwood, currently achieving record high volumes; second, to direct care that does not require complex and high-level facilities and expertise to the appropriate setting from a clinical and financial point of view.

As a general statement, the transition of some services to the Santa Monica campus has proceeded slowly and successfully over the past several months. Patients who were in a course of care were not asked to change providers or sites of care. More recently, patients have begun to see specialists in Santa Monica in greater number, and a proportionate number of patients have been hospitalized at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center. The overall feedback from patients has been positive. They are satisfied with their physicians, with the timeliness of care availability, and the quality of the facility and care in the emergency room at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center, as well as the inpatient service.

Responses to your questions

We would like to answer some of the questions that continue to be asked by the faculty enrolled in the UCLA Medical Group:

1. What is the status of primary care availability on campus? Some family medicine physicians moved recently to Santa Monica. Are more moves expected?

In order to phase the major building projects west of Westwood Boulevard, it has become necessary to make some moves of physicians from the 200 Medical Plaza. Recently, two of the family medicine residency programs under UCLA's auspices began integrating into a single program. As a result, seven campus-based family medicine physicians did move to the Les Kelley Clinic in Santa Monica in August of 2001. All patients were sent letters outlining their options. Seventy-five to eighty percent of all of these patients decided to remain with their primary physician, and have begun to see them in the Santa Monica offices. In July of 2002, it is expected that all of the present campus-based teaching physicians in Family Medicine will move to the Santa Monica location. We are currently planning for a group of five family physicians to establish a practice in

the 200 Medical Plaza on campus. These physicians will dedicate about eighty percent of their time to seeing patients. This will assist the faculty in accessing primary care near their place of work. We anticipate no significant changes in the number of physicians available on the campus who practice in the Internal Medicine Suite and in General Pediatrics.

The UCLA Medical Group members and the three UCLA hospitals are striving to maintain access for UCLA faculty, staff and families through the health plans offered by the University of California. Our organization is challenged by the economics of managed care in southern California, as are all healthcare providers. We have taken many steps to assure our viability. They all cause a certain measure of pain, but we continue to offer high quality medical care to all our patients, including our university family. While we understand that it is an inconvenience to leave the campus, many of our own medical school and hospital faculty and staff are also making the trip, and report that they are very satisfied with the appointment access, the facilities and the physicians. The communications between the Santa Monica-based physicians and the primary care physicians in Westwood is working very smoothly through both electronic and human means. We trust that, as more enrollees use our Santa Monica physicians and facilities, the concerns over the change will be alleviated. Nonetheless, we have heard your request to maintain broader access to primary care on campus, and we hope that with the opening of a small Family Medicine clinical office in the next few months we will be able to allow more of you to receive primary care on the campus.

2. How much faster can a patient be seen for specialty services in Santa Monica versus Westwood?

While there is variation among the specialties, some general observations may be helpful in clarifying this question. For patients seeking care in Santa Monica, for both primary and specialty services, the patient can often be seen the next day for urgent services, and within about a week for routine referrals. This is rarely the case in Westwood, where a routine specialty referral is generally offered in approximately two to three weeks. For the majority of specialty services available in Santa Monica we have not received any complaints about appointment access.

3. How are decisions made as to which hospital a patient will be admitted, and by whom?

The goal established by the medical group is to move all clinically appropriate admissions to the Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center. The clinician caring for the patient makes a judgment as to whether the patient can be appropriately cared

for at Santa Monica. If so, the patient is referred to Santa Monica. A committee of medical group peers reviews the case if there is question in the mind of the physician, or if other issues are raised.

If the patient is unhappy with the decision, the UCLA Medical Group has an appeal process. The patient should contact Joanne Damiani, R.N. in the office of the UCLA Medical Group. If this appeal is not satisfactory, the applicable health plan also offers an appeal process that can be accessed by calling the customer service representative for the health plan. Addresses and phone numbers for the UCLA Medical Group and the health plans are listed at the end of this newsletter. For patients with a point-of-service option, such as UC Care, the patient may “self-direct” care by selecting to use the Tier II benefit, and then would have the choice of the UCLA Medical Center in Westwood independent of UCLA Medical Group decisions. In certain instances this might require the change of specialty physician in order to have a procedure initially authorized for the Santa Monica campus to be redirected to a Westwood-based physician.

4. What is the status of parking arrangements in Santa Monica? Are the UCLA blue passes accepted in the parking garage? Will a campus shuttle become operational?

At the present time there are no arrangements for UCLA parking passes to be accepted in any of the buildings in Santa Monica. The new parking structure is currently used for hospital employees and the construction crews working on the Santa Monica building project. The University must arrange for off-street parking for the construction project workers per agreement with the city of Santa Monica. We will keep you posted of parking opportunities when and if they develop. There is limited metered street parking available on 15th Street, 16th Street, and Arizona St. There is paid parking available in each of the medical office buildings in which UCLA physicians practice.

We have investigated the possibility of a shuttle service. The campus shuttle will only extend service to the Santa Monica area if the hospital or another organization pays the cost. We regret that the Medical Center is not in a position to absorb this cost in this very challenging financial environment. We are continuing to explore sources of funding for the shuttle service.

The best way to ease your trip is to use your BruinCard ID card, and ride the Big Blue Bus directly down Wilshire to the hospital. There is no charge to ride except during the summer months. The buses leave from the UCLA terminal and from points on LeConte and Westwood Boulevard about every fifteen minutes. The trip takes about twenty minutes. There is a bus stop at Wilshire and 16th Street. The trip will take even less time if you pay to ride the MetroRapid (MTA red buses) down Wilshire, as the bus driver can override red lights, and makes very few stops.

5. Are patients required to seek emergency care in Santa Monica as well?

Patients who experience a situation that may require urgent or emergency care are encouraged to call their primary physician immediately. In true life threatening emergencies call 911. All primary care physicians have after-hours coverage, and the physician to whom you speak will advise on the course to follow. If the physician recommends a hospital emergency room it is strongly recommended that you go to Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center. Your wait time will almost certainly be much shorter, and you will be seen in a more patient-friendly environment. Much of your patient information is accessible through our clinical information system. In the UCLA Medical Center emergency department, patients must be triaged by acuity, and trauma patients and life-threatening emergency situations lead to long waits, not only to see a physician, but to obtain tests and interventions. Self-referring to the UCLA Medical Center emergency room will not necessarily lead to admission at UCLA, as the medical center is experiencing record high census, and if your situation can be accommodated at Santa Monica, you may be referred there.

The UCLA Medical Group is preparing an information card regarding emergency and urgent care. It will be mailed directly to all enrollees of the medical group in the next few weeks. This material will explain in more detail the procedures you should follow when you need care urgently.

6. What is the nursing care ratio at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center compared to the Westwood hospital?

By state law, nurse staffing is required to match the acuity of the patients receiving care. Most hospitals use an acuity scoring system to determine the number and mix of nursing personnel on each unit on each shift. The same scoring system is used in Westwood and in Santa Monica. Therefore, a patient in each hospital is viewed similarly in planning for the unit's staff. On average, the units at UCLA Medical Center will have more nursing personnel, based on the higher acuity of the particular patients' illnesses and care needs. Our physicians who have moved from the Westwood to the Santa Monica campus report that they are very satisfied with the nursing care at Santa Monica and find it appropriate for the needs of the patients.

7. Who can I call if I have questions, comments or problems?

If any faculty member experiences difficulties negotiating the healthcare system at UCLA, he or she is encouraged to call the UCLA Healthcare Faculty Liaison at

