

DECEMBER 2014

Addressing the questions of the day: Medicine Room wait times

By Patient Relations Coordinator Jim Mobley

Here you are—in the waiting room again with little to do but ponder the great questions of the day. Questions like, “Who’s going to be on *Dancing with the Stars* next year?” or “Is it OK to be a loser if you’re the *Biggest Loser*?” and “What is going on back there that keeps us waiting so long for the Medicine Room?”

For the first two questions I won’t even try to answer, but for the last one, I’ve got some ideas. You see, after your child has been assessed for an appointment in the Medicine Room, it takes a small army to get things ready to go.

For medicines, blood products and treatments, your doctor or practitioner has to review the protocol, review your child’s lab work, calculate the proper dose, place the order in the computer and initiate the order. Each step takes time, and each step can be delayed by emergencies or other

patient care needs. There are many times when all of these steps don’t take place until after you leave the clinic.

After the orders are initiated it takes quite a while to get everything ready for your child to receive treatment. Blood products take about two hours to prepare, and chemo takes slightly less. There are several steps to make sure your child will receive the correct product or medicine.

In the pharmacy, the order has to be checked independently by two pharmacists before they can prepare the medicines. Blood products can’t be release until the Blood Bank has received a final word from the nurse that the patient’s vitals are good and the patient is ready to receive the treatment. Only then can they send the blood product to the Medicine Room.

Once medicines or blood products are delivered to the Medicine Room,

they must be checked again for accuracy. For chemo, two nurses, separate from one another, must check the medicine making sure it is just what the doctor ordered—correct medicine, correct dose, correct patient. Then, when both a nurse and a room are available, the patient will be called back.

For treatments other than chemo or blood products there might not be as many steps to go through to get ready for the treatment. The Medicine Room tries to see as many patients as they can while they are awaiting blood or chemo to arrive. That’s why some patients’ wait times will be shorter than others.

While Medicine Room wait times might seem long, all the checks and double checks are important for the health and safety of your child and all St. Jude patients.

It takes many people and departments working together to make your child’s Medicine Room treatment safe and successful. I guess there’s no such thing as, “Just run on over to the Medicine Room and get your treatment.”

Now, I wonder who’s going to be on *Dancing with the Stars* next year?

Meet your new patient relations coordinator

By Patient Relations Coordinator
Jim Mobley

I have the best job at St. Jude. Others may tell you differently. But get this: It is officially in my job description that I must walk around the inpatient units and the outpatient clinics and get to know our patients and their families. I get to have conversations with you for a living.

Now, I’d love to just sit and chat about your favorite team or maybe your favorite foods, topics near to my heart. But, I also need to find out how the St. Jude team is doing in the care for your child. I’d love to hear about things we need to improve and things we are doing well. Hopefully, with your input, we can make sure that we are offering the best care and services we can give.

I’ll also be functioning in the role of patient advocate in the grievance process. That process allows me to make sure St. Jude follows up promptly and thoroughly on any concern you may have about the care your child is receiving. So, be on the lookout for a big ole, gray-goateed man walking the hallways. I’d love to visit with you.

If you would like to talk to me about a concern or anything else, call me at 901-595-8383 or stop by my office, B1127A, which is right across the hallway from the Teen Room in the Patient Care Center. I look forward to meeting you.



All are encouraged to get flu vaccination

Influenza (the flu) is a virus that causes symptoms like fever, chills, cough and body aches. In patients who have weak immune systems, the disease can be severe.

St. Jude infectious disease doctors recommend that all St. Jude patients receive the flu vaccine each year.

Having everyone around the patient vaccinated helps provide a circle of protection against the flu. For this reason, it is also recommended that staff members, caregivers and siblings, 6 months of age and older, get vaccinated.

Look for signs on bulletin boards around the hospital for times and locations where you, other caregivers and siblings, 4 years of age and older, may receive free flu vaccinations.



Talking about Medicines

Discard unused and expired medicines

Medicine cabinets across America are bursting at the seams with unused and expired medicines. Many people do not know what to do with them, so they just toss them in the trash, pour them down the sink or flush them down a toilet. However, this is no longer considered the correct way to dispose of most medicines because our drinking water and other parts of our environment can become contaminated. It is also important to properly dispose of medicines to keep your family safe from accidental poisoning.

Here are a few tips on how to properly and safely dispose of your medicines.

Prescription Drug Take-back Events. These events are held by various law enforcement agencies around the country. They allow the community to turn in any unwanted prescription and over-the-counter medicines. To find out more information on the next event date and locations in the Memphis area, visit the DEA's website at www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov and click on the icon "Got Drugs? Dispose unused Rx."

What should you do if you missed the latest drug take-back event and you need to throw out some medicines before the next event?

Most medicines can be thrown in the household trash after following a few steps. In most cases do not flush medicines down the toilet or pour them down the sink. There are a couple of exceptions to this rule for opioid pain medicines and other controlled substances. The FDA recommends flushing these to reduce the risk of children and household pets accidentally swallowing these drugs.

For all other prescription and over-the-counter medicines that you need to dispose of you can remove the medicines from the original containers and place them in a sealable bag or container. Mix wet coffee grounds or used kitty litter with the medicine to make it unappealing to anyone who might find them in the trash. Then, seal the bag or container and toss it in the trash.

To learn more about how to properly dispose of medicines, visit the FDA's website at www.fda.gov.

Discount for Starry Nights light show

The annual Starry Nights light display at Shelby Farms Park in Memphis will offer half-price tickets for St. Jude patient families every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evening beginning November 21. Patients must show their hospital wristband to receive this discount. The regular admission price is \$20 per car, and patient families pay only \$10 per car.

Starry Nights will be open November 21 through December 28. If you would like to find out more about this huge, drive-thru holiday light display, visit www.shelbyfarmspark.org/starrynights.



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For the latest details on upcoming events, see the bulletin board in the Patient Care Center lobby near Patient Registration.

St. Jude Parents is published on the first of each month by Patient Education and Bio-medical Communications. Your questions and comments are important to us. **We want to print advice and tips from St. Jude parents to other St. Jude parents.**

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