

# True Team Effort

## South Bend Embraces Innovation

By Charlee Beasor

**T**he old adage of “strength in numbers” certainly rings true for the status of health care in South Bend and the surrounding area.

Together, various groups – hospitals, schools, businesses and local government – are working to introduce ground-breaking concepts. Though each uses a different method, the goal is the same: enhance health care and create a culture of medical innovation.

At Memorial Hospital & Health System, with president and CEO Phil Newbold at the helm, new ideas are just as important as money in the budget.

That’s one of the reasons he created the Innovation Café, an empty deli that the hospital converted into a teaching laboratory for hospital staff members and outside businesses.

“We teach principles of innovation to employees or other hospitals around the country,” Newbold explains. “Every hospital is going to have access to that. We’ve developed this through our own kinds of experiences and are sharing all of that with as many people (as we can) in the region. I think it’s going to help position this region as a more creative, imaginative, innovative place.”

### Education and collaboration

While new ideas are a necessary part of enhancing the health care culture, another important step is collaboration to put those ideas into practice. The South Bend Medical Mile is one such partnership.

Five organizations – Memorial Hospital, The South Bend Clinic, the South Bend Medical Foundation, Madison Center and the Indiana University School of Medicine-South Bend (IUSM-SB) – have joined forces.

The expansion of IUSM-SB two years ago played a role in the creation of the Medical Mile. Initially, the school had a two-year program – students would come to South Bend for their classroom learning and then leave the city and spend their residency years in Indianapolis.

Once the medical school expanded to a four-year program, Newbold says the five organizations needed to work together to create residency positions.

“Interestingly, the word’s out that these are such great rotations, we have people leaving other rotations to get those in South Bend. We are looked at as having one of the most attractive and dynamic medical school third- and fourth-year rotations,” he observes.

The Medical Mile came together with donations from the five organizations – all of which are located within a mile of each other. “Basically we’re trying to pool some resources and do some things together that none of us could do separately, and it’s the strength of that,” Newbold acknowledges.

Along with the growing programs at IUSM-SB, a specialized type of medical education is part

**The Medical Mile in South Bend includes (from left) Indiana University School of Medicine-South Bend, South Bend Medical Foundation, The South Bend Clinic, Memorial Hospital of South Bend and the Madison Center.**





**Quickcare Charts, electronic medical records for immediate care facilities, were created by Memorial Hospital for its MedPoint Express Clinics. The system allows patients to receive increased attention from the physician or nurse practitioner.**

of the curriculum at Radiological Technologies University (RTU), which opened in the fall of 2009 in downtown South Bend.

The school was founded by Brent D. Murphy and offers graduate level programs in medical physics, dosimetry and health physics. The degrees enable individuals to work with various aspects of radiation therapy, a field currently facing a shortage of workers. The RTU web site notes that the shortage is due to “a large increase in technology available at a time when the technical knowledge base has decreased.”

RTU offers both resident and online programs and now also has satellite offices in other states and countries, though its home base remains in South Bend.

### Specialized electronic records

As patients come and go from the various medical centers, as well as urgent care facilities around the city, physicians and nurses need to be able to access the medical records electronically.

Chris Endres, director of operations at Memorial Hospital, worked with a California company (Raintree Systems) to develop a new type of electronic medical record (EMR) that is well suited for MedPoint Express clinics, featured inside Martin’s grocery stores and Walmart locations.

“The electronic medical record is something that we are going to have to have, and should have, and is important for the continuity of care for our patients. At our retail clinics, it’s important we can see patients in 15 minutes or less and if we can’t, the whole thing caves in on itself,” Endres says.

The clinics are typically staffed with one physician or a nurse practitioner. That person has to not only get patients in and out relatively quickly, but also process paperwork in a timely manner. The lag time was what prompted Endres and his colleague Ryann DeMoff, the practice supervisor for MedPoint Express, to create an entirely new EMR system.

“One day we were so frustrated ... we went inside a room, closed a door and didn’t come out until we created a virtual EMR product on paper,” Endres recalls.

Endres took the product to Raintree, and the company developed the Quickcare Charts that the clinics now use. Steve Welty, national director of business development for Raintree, says the Quickcare Charts are the “best application any of us

have seen for the market.”

“It’s an ideal product for the immediate care market. They’re (Memorial) one of our most visionary customers out there. It’s one of the few health systems from CEO down that is completely committed to innovation,” Welty explains.

### Highlighting prevention

It’s not just the private sector that is developing innovative health care in South Bend. The local government is also getting involved, setting an example with county employees by opening the St. Joseph County medical clinic, free for anyone on the county’s health insurance plan.

Same-day appointments for annual exams, injury and illness are all provided at the clinic, along with preventative screenings.

County Commissioner Andy Kostielney says the prevention aspect has so far turned out to be beneficial to the employees and the health care price tag.

“The first employee that went in there ... he was referred to a specialist and was diagnosed with lymphoma,” Kostielney shares. “When you’re trying to be proactive, everybody wins – most importantly, our employees.”

Kostielney describes the initial situation as one that, while it might have cost the county more upfront, it will save money – and a life – in the long run.

“The more serious claims won’t become as serious, or they will be averted all together. The hope is that we’ll start having fewer larger claims as people stay healthier,” he states.

The county expects to see real cost savings within three years.

“About a year into it, we’ve noticed some improvements in certain areas, but we’re anticipating better things to come. Health care costs are going to do nothing but increase. Anything we can do to help curb those (should) be looked at,” Kostielney adds.

#### INFORMATION LINK

**Resources:** Phil Newbold and Chris Endres, Memorial Hospital & Health System, at [www.qualityoflife.org](http://www.qualityoflife.org)

Andy Kostielney, St. Joseph County Commissioners, at (574) 235-9534

Radiological Technologies University at [www.rtuvt.com](http://www.rtuvt.com)

Steve Welty, Raintree Systems, at [www.raintreeinc.com](http://www.raintreeinc.com)