



For immediate release

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**RIVER REGION MEDICAL CENTER
INTRODUCES HOSPITALIST PROGRAM
TO ENHANCE PATIENT CARE AND PATIENT SATISFACTION**

DECEMBER 31, 2009, VICKSBURG – Healthcare has come a long way from the days of house calls from a personal physician, black bag in hand. Modern technology and medical advances have radically changed the delivery of healthcare.

On January 2, 2010, River Region Medical Center will institute a hospitalist program to enhance care to patients from Vicksburg and neighboring communities.

Hospitals and physicians across the country are turning to hospitalists to enhance physician accessibility, coordinate treatment, and provide seamless care to patients. A hospitalist is a medical doctor who specializes in caring for the very kinds of medical conditions that need hospital care.

Hospitalists serve as valuable liaisons for both patients and physicians. They work as a team and are available at the hospital or on call, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Like a primary care doctor, hospitalists are trained in general internal medicine and other specialties. Because they practice exclusively in the hospital setting, they know the hospital's specialists and departments well, and can expedite communication and treatment with other caregivers.

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“Having hospitalists on staff increases the amount of contact patients have with doctors while in the hospital and make hospital care more efficient,” said Vance Reynolds, CEO at River Region. “Best of all, the hospitalist provides continuity of care and personalized attention for patients during their hospital stay, enhancing the patient’s experience.”

One job of the hospitalist is to communicate with a patient’s primary care doctor as needed, particularly at admission and discharge. Hospitalists can often shorten a patient’s stay and speed recovery by closely monitoring the patient’s condition and making adjustments to the treatment plan. Once the patient is discharged, the hospitalist transfers care back to the patient’s primary care provider.

Hospitalist programs are designed to help patients obtain good health care both at the hospital and at office practices. Prior to these programs, physicians attempted to see patients in the office setting, where they spent most of their time, and also find time to see their patients who had been admitted to the hospital. This is the ‘old way’. The hospitalist program has emerged to address the growing problem of wait time - - both at the office and the hospital - - and also to address the time constraint on physicians.

“In the past, after morning rounds at the hospital, physicians would leave and go to the office, sometimes not being able to return until the evening,” said W. Briggs Hopson, MD, VP of Medical Affairs at River Region. “Hospitalists provide care at the hospital all the time- - twenty four hours a day, seven days a week including holidays. They are always available to the hospitalized patient. They may see patients several times a day. They never leave the hospital to go to an office practice. Their office is the hospital. This is the ‘new way’.”

Hospitalists are physicians, generally with an Internal Medicine background, who

specialize in the hospital care of patients. They spend 100% of their time in hospital practice. Primary care doctors, whom the hospitalists serve, will be able to spend 100% of their time at their offices, where they can be more efficient.

The hospitalist movement started over ten years ago and was met with skepticism at first. Since its track record has been very positive around the country, patient satisfaction has become the norm. The program at River Region Medical Center will be no different.

Many hospitals across the country, including those in the Jackson area, now have hospitalists on staff to provide consistency, stability and structure for patients, and manage the patient's interaction with other care team members, as well as communication between the hospital staff and family members.

"River Region is committed to providing quality compassionate care," said Reynolds. "Introducing hospitalists should enhance the experience of patients who come to River Region Medical Center for their care."

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