Spiritual Care Team Makes Services Accessible to All Patients
Thursday, April 12, 2018

Until recently, the only way for patients at University Hospital to attend a service at Hope Chapel was to leave their room.

For many, illness made that an impossible journey. So the spiritual care team decided to bring the religious services to them. Now patients can view a variety of services either live streamed on their phone or tablet or by watching pre-recorded events on their device or room TV.

"It’s really just to allow them the opportunity to create meaning and to create community,” said Genny Rowley, a Baptist chaplain at University Hospital. "So that sense of isolation decreases at least a little bit.”

The annual service of gratitude, which was live streamed and recorded in November, continues to have meaning for patients and staff. The service included leaders from different faiths sharing poems and prayers from their traditions. A Native American elder gave a blessing that Rev. Susan Roberts, an Episcopal priest and senior chaplain, recalls as particularly moving.

Staff have told her they’ve watched the service and it helped give them new perspective.

“There’s such a mind-body-spirit connection”, Roberts said. “Research shows that prayer is the most commonly used non-pharmaceutical therapy for pain. The wellness of our spirit can really impact how we progress in our healing,”
When Roberts came to University Hospital 10 years ago, she was the only full-time chaplain. Now the spiritual care team includes three chaplains at the hospital.

Imagine Perfect Care funding helped pay for the live streaming and the recording, which the team plans to continue as they build a catalogue of services.

A guided meditation in the Serenity Interfaith Chapel Room was also recorded. A Catholic mass will soon be taped. The team is also looking for ways to represent the LDS faith in a recording that would be keeping with their preferences and practices.

And they would like input from patients and staff.

“If they have services they would like to see or if there’s something that would help them feel connected, we want to hear about that,” Rowley said. “We don’t know what people need until they tell us.”

One family at the hospital around Christmas mentioned that they wouldn’t be able to go to their traditional service near home. They were excited to hear there was going to be a Christmas Eve service taped. By viewing the service filled with carols, readings and scripture, they didn’t feel like they had to skip the holidays just because their family member was sick.

Patients at Huntsman Cancer Institute, which has a chapel and two chaplains as well, will also be able to access the services, because they are available to the public online. That means staff who are off-site could also participate in a service. If memorial services for staff are held in the chapel, a wider variety of employees could participate by viewing the event online.

The team believes University Hospital is the only hospital in Utah offering the live streaming and recorded services.

By Julia Lyon