

## St. Luke receives award and special designation

February 8, St. Luke Community Hospital in Ronan received word that it has been designated a Community Trauma Hospital by the State of Montana.

“This is formal recognition of the steps we have taken to be prepared for a trauma event,” Leah Emerson, director of nursing at St. Luke, explains.

The steps include having a defined response with the necessary equipment, personnel and supplies on hand “to get the job done,” according to Emerson. She goes on to say that “it’s really a formal recognition of continuous improvement and emphasis on what we have been doing day in and day out for years.”

In addition to the Community Trauma Hospital designation, Ronan has been given the Montana Rural Healthcare Performance Improvement Network’s (PIN) Quality Improvement Award. This honor is in recognition of steps the hospital has taken with local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel to improve the quality of care for trauma patients.

“St. Luke has always worked closely with the local volunteer and paid EMS services to provide quality care to trauma patients,” Shane Roberts, CEO at the Ronan hospital explains. “That’s why, when we saw things we could do to improve how those services were delivered, it was a no-brainer.”

In its pursuit of designation as a community trauma hospital, St. Luke developed an interdisciplinary trauma committee made up of doctors, nurses, ancillary service technicians and EMS personnel. The committee provides an avenue to discuss issues and to discover opportunities for improvement.

Kitty Strowbridge, the Quality Improvement (QI) coordinator at St. Luke, says that trip report documentation of pre-hospital care by EMS personnel had been identified as one area that could measurably be improved.

“By more effectively documenting the kind of care that is being delivered during EMS transport, our trauma team saw an opportunity to elevate the quality of care for the patient,” Strowbridge explains.

In 2008, 54% of St. Luke’s trauma patients arrived by EMS transport. At that time 50% of the transports had trip report documentation.

After the trauma committee identified ways of improving the paperwork, the trip report documentation improved to 92% with 23 of 25 cases recorded between January and July of 2009 having trip reports present.

“That’s a significant increase by any standards,” Strowbridge notes. “And it took commitment on the part of everyone involved, especially EMS, to make it happen,” adding that “although this award is given to St. Luke, the Polson, Ronan and Mission Ambulance services deserve recognition for helping make it happen.”



Kitty Strowbridge explains details of the PIN Trauma Study comparisons to members of the Mission EMS.

St. Luke Community Healthcare is heavily involved in the Montana Rural Healthcare Performance Improvement Network (PIN) that includes 47 critical access hospitals across the state.

The Ronan hospital CEO, Shane Roberts, serves on the board of directors while St. Luke Director of Nursing, Leah Emerson, and Strowbridge are active on various committees in the Network which is extremely rare according to the QI nurse. “That makes us a leader as a critical access hospital in the state of Montana,” she observes.

“Smaller hospitals in many cases don’t have the staff to do what we’re able to do here at St. Luke,” she notes. She adds, “That’s the beauty of an organization like this – it allows for sharing of information, ideas and forms, so that no one has to reinvent the wheel.” Strowbridge says that many of the forms and policies in place at St. Luke are being used all across the state.

“I know how important this (PIN) is for improving quality of care,” Strowbridge observes. “Because for us at St. Luke, we want to do whatever we can to make a trip to the hospital the best experience that we can under any circumstance.”

As a PIN Quality Improvement Award winner, the Ronan hospital, represented by Strowbridge, will be making a presentation to the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Northwest Regional Critical Access Hospital Conference in Spokane, WA, March 23rd.

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