

Medical Staff Update

January 2017

New Chief Takes the Helm

A new role for Sajen Mathews, MD

Sajen Mathews, MD, begins his two-year term as Chief of Staff with a clear sense of priorities and opportunities. Included on his to do list? Continue to rapidly grow service lines, hit new benchmarks in patient safety, improve communication among physicians, and address physician burnout—an issue Dr. Mathews wants to see elevated in resources and attention.



“St. Jude offers a unique atmosphere: some of the best doctors available anywhere, incredible camaraderie, and a level of technology and advancement that is typically only seen in academic research hospitals,” explains Dr. Mathews, a board-certified gastroenterologist who has helped build the hospital’s gastroenterology services into a multi-specialty center of excellence in digestive diseases. “Although our capabilities are increasingly those of a tertiary center, our culture and relationships are those of a community hospital—preserving that by improving communication and increasing our physicians’ professional and personal satisfaction contributes to our ongoing success.”

Dr. Mathews also hopes to continue the hospital’s progress in patient safety, such as the recent 40 percent drop in C-diff rates. “We have outstanding physician champions working on every key patient safety measure and hospital-acquired infections, surgical site infections, fall rates and overall harm rates have all dropped in the last year,” explains Dr. Mathews, who helped oversee the improvements as Chairman of the Patient Safety and Performance Improvement Committee. “We need to be innovative and persistent in pushing key safety measures to zero, as these numbers are not only critical to patient care and satisfaction but to the hospital’s safety rating, reputation, and continued growth.”

The Yorba Linda resident and father of two college-age children says adapting to and navigating the regionalization effort across the new Orange County/High Desert market will be another focus for 2017. “As this new regional effort takes shape, there will be many opportunities to share our expertise and best-practices—and we have many to be proud of,” explains Dr. Mathews, who served as Chief Resident during his training at USC before joining St. Jude in 2001.

In Service to His Country: Congratulations to Donald Bittner, MD

Donald Bittner, MD, a St. Jude orthopedic surgeon and Captain in the U.S. Navy Reserve, was recently awarded the Legion of Merit Medal for “exceptionally meritorious conduct.” Presented at a military ceremony in November, the medal—which must be approved by the President and supported by a three-star general—cannot be earned through superior performance of normal duties but only through extraordinary service and achievement.

Dr. Bittner, who spends his weekends and vacations flying to naval posts across the country, received the honor for his innovation and success in improving the physical, mental and emotional readiness of the soldiers under his command. His leadership in addressing not simply soldiers’ physical wounds and health, but also their personal and emotional issues, propelled the 13 detachments under his command to extraordinary levels of readiness.

“It is a privilege to work with the remarkable men and women who sacrifice so much our country—no additional recognition was needed,” explains Dr. Bittner, who currently serves as Deputy Chief of Staff, Total Force Integration, Navy Medicine West. “It was an amazing and humbling moment to receive a medal for the privilege of helping them.”

Dr. Bittner’s 22 years of service in the Navy Reserve includes a 12-month deployment to Afghanistan, where he oversaw the construction of dozens of battlefield hospital stations and clinics while also performing hundreds of surgeries on soldiers, civilians and Taliban combatants. Often operating in difficult circumstances, Dr. Bittner became well-known for “miracles,” such as the successful revascularization of the arms of a 12-year-old Afghani boy whose limbs had been torn off by a farmer’s thrashing machine.

Quarterly Grand Rounds: Mark Your Calendar

Had an interesting case recently? We are looking for interesting cases (from any specialty) to present at our quarterly Grand Rounds scheduled for Jan. 1, May 3, Aug. 5 and Oct. 4. Format includes case presentation by you, followed by a Q & A, and additional perspective offered by a related specialty.

These informative and well-attended meetings begin at noon, include lunch and are held in the Erickson Education Center. Please contact Linda Palamara, Medical Staff Coordinator, at 714-992-3000 ext. 3752 if you are interested in presenting a Grand Rounds case.

Medical Staff Meetings

Attendance counts toward points needed to maintain Active, Senior Active and Courtesy Staff status. All meetings are held in the Erickson Educational Center Conference Room.

Cardiothoracic QRC

Jan. 11, Feb. 8, March 8,
 April 12, May 10, June 14,
 July 12, Sept. 13, Oct. 11,
 Nov. 8, 7:30 a.m.

Medicine QRC

Feb. 2, March 2, April 6, May 4,
 June 1, July 6, Sept. 7, Oct. 5,
 Nov. 2, 12:30 p.m.

Surgery Dept./QRC

Feb. 1, March 1, April 5, May 3,
 June 7, July 5, Sept. 6, Oct. 4,
 Nov. 1, 12:30 p.m.

Women & Children's QRC

Jan. 11, Feb. 8, March 8,
 April 12, May 10, June 14,
 July 12, Sept. 13, Oct. 11,
 Nov. 8, 7:30 a.m.

Anesthesia Clinical Service

Feb. 14, April 11, June 13,
 Oct. 10, 7:00 a.m.

Emergency Medicine Clinical Service

Jan. 27, March 24, May 26,
 July 28, Sept. 22, Nov. 17,
 12 p.m.

Radiology Clinical Service

Feb. 15, May 17, July 19,
 Nov. 15, 12:30 p.m.

Pathology Clinical Service

Feb. 6, May 1, Sept. 11,
 Nov. 6, 7:30 a.m.

General Staff Meeting

April 25, 6 p.m.
 Nixon Library

Annual Staff Meeting

Nov. 7, 6 p.m.
 St. Jude Medical Center

Brian Helleland named St. Jude's Chief Executive

The St. Jude Medical Center Board of Trustees has named Brian Helleland, COO, as our ministry's new Chief Executive. It was recently announced that St. Jude President and CEO Lee Penrose accepted a position within St. Joseph Hoag Health's new regional structure. Lee's new title is Chief Operating Officer of Acute Operations for the Orange County/High Desert Market Region.

"With Brian's leadership, I am excited about what the future holds for St. Jude and look forward to finding frequent excuses to visit to share in your continued success and accomplishment," says Lee, who began his new duties January 3rd. "Although my office address will be further away, the physicians and employees at St. Jude will continue to be my inspiration for the uniqueness and importance of the work we do."

St. Jude Welcomes New Physicians

Henry Cheng, MD
 Family Medicine

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Ajita Deodhar, MD
 Radiology

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John Kang, MD
 General Surgery