



Caring Notes



Cliff's Corner "REBOOT"

I recently read a quote by Maya Angelou "Nothing will work unless you do." It reminded me how much T.H.E.'s success and failures are interrelated to one another, and we are all part of a larger circle.

It is seen first-hand in the article about the Billing Department. How it takes everyone – from the Call Center and Front Desk to the providers – to make sure our patients receive quality care and T.H.E. can bill for it.

As employees and stewards of

this great organization, it is our responsibility to "do." To make sure that everyone who walks through our clinic doors is treated with dignity and respect. That we are efficient because it is better for our staff and the patients we serve, and that we find solutions willingly and openly even when it seems difficult. The expectation is high, but so is the good work that you "do" – making and maintaining people's health.

T.H.E. has always been a can-do organization staffed with results-oriented people. Let's keep "doing" and make every effort to be our best and make a difference.

--Clifford Shiepe

In This Issue

Cliff's Corner
"REBOOT"

Save the Date
Family Picnic on July 15

Connecting with Billing:
The Team that
Shows Us the Money

Meet
Christopher Edwards:
Our New
Facilities Manager

Tran Vo Farewell:
Saying Goodbye
After 16 Years

Kitchen Divas Recipes:
Broccoli Walnut
Cranberry Salad
and Spa Water



JULY 15

Remember to mark your calendars for our Annual T.H.E. Family Picnic happening Saturday, July 15, from 11am to 3pm. Meet up at Kenneth Hahn Park at 4100 S. La Cienega Blvd in Los Angeles. You bring the cheer and T.H.E. will provide the food and fun games. Family members welcome.



CONNECTING WITH BILLING

“Our department is part of a circle,” Lilia Roche, Billing Manager says modestly about her four-person billing team. The Billing Department works tirelessly to submit invoices for the care provided to our patients. The money received helps pay the day-to-day expenses of running a business. Lilia and her team Evelyn Portillo, Macy Martinez, and Christian Castrejon bill an average of 975 visits per week.

Lilia insists that everything starts with the Call Center. When a patient contacts the Call Center and makes an appointment, a record is started which is at the heart of the work Billing requires.

“The next part of the circle relies on the Front Desk, checking in patients and screening them to make sure

they are assigned to us and the reason for their visit is correctly entered.” Lilia says. “Then, providers need to complete their encounters with the patient, complete the medical record and lock the records, before Billing is able to do its part in the circle.”

Once a patient has been seen by a provider, the Billing Department “scrubs” the claim made for each visit to make sure that everything is in order -- the diagnosis, the procedure, the insurance — before submitting it to the designated insurer.

From there, receipts are collected, sent to Finance, which then pays the bills. This keeps everything moving and makes sure T.H.E. remains open and able to provide care to the community.

How many billing codes does the Billing Department work with?

In October 2016, T.H.E. transitioned from using billing codes based on the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Diseases - Ninth Edition (ICD-9) to its newest catalogue system (ICD-10).

ICD-10 codes provide more detailed information for measuring healthcare service quality, safety and efficacy. Billing staff now needs work with about 68,000 diagnostic codes, instead of 13,000 under the previous system.

These codes help the Billing Department submit more accurate bills for payment and have fewer rejected claims.



Recent and Ongoing Challenges

Most recently, T.H.E. received new patients from recently merged practices that had paper charts. This was a demanding task and a large amount of work for the Billing Department, because they had to create paper encounters for new patients at old practices, bill for them, and then transition them into the system electronically when seen at T.H.E. “It was a lot of paper,” Lilia said, referring to the thousands of patients brought into the system with the addition of three physicians in the last two years (Dr. Feig, Dr. Hunter and Dr. Pitts).

The most challenging part of billing is preparing statements for patients who, for various reasons, may not have insurance or qualify for any programs. T.H.E. sends nearly 500 statements to patients every quarter. Prior to sending, each invoice is reviewed to make sure Medi-Cal or any type of coverage is not overlooked.

After preparing and mailing statements to patients, Lilia identifies collecting funds against those invoices as the next challenge of the Billing Department.

Ultimately, Lilia says about the Billing Department, “It is my goal is to make sure that every week we get revenue.”



AYE intern Omar Manzon with Billing Department members Macy Martinez, Lilia Roche (Manager), Evelyn Portillo and Christian Castrejon.

FUN FACTS ABOUT CHRISTOPHER

Ask Christopher Edwards what his dream vacation is, and he'll gladly tell you about three that he has in mind. The first one is intriguing--a restaurant in Italy that is built into a cave and can only be approached by boat. His sister first showed him the destination online and he has been set on experiencing a meal there ever since.



But just as quickly, he will let you know vacationing in the Fiji Islands is also a top spot on his list.



Why?

"I just love the ocean," he answers and then adds a third destination to his Wish List of Travel. "Australia," he says, that's another place I want to see. In fact, I think that's going to happen next year."



Meet Our New Facilities Manager
Christopher Edwards

With more than 13 years' experience in retail management and maintenance operations, and a Bachelor's degree in Speech Communications with a minor in Business Administration, Christopher Edwards joined T.H.E. on May 8 as Facilities Manager.

"There are a lot of different aspects to my job," Christopher explains regarding his new position. "I'm responsible for making sure the facilities are clean, organized and in good repair. We deal with everything from plumbing issues, furnishings, ordering products and delivering mail to different locations."



What is Christopher Edwards' management philosophy? He smiles and readily answers, "I have this philosophy where I have to tell you more about what you do right than what you do wrong. My job as a manager is to tell you what you're doing right and then I encourage you on the things that you need help on. When you do that, I think you develop a good staff and so far I have an incredible team."

Besides overseeing efficient operations of facilities, safety is an important component of his responsibilities -- "there are fire drills that we have to do, to make sure that people are ready in case of an emergency."

"I'm always looking for things that can challenge me," Christopher said describing what pulled him towards working for T.H.E.

"I think it was the challenge of having multiple clinics and being able to go and visit them and give people instruction on how to make things better. I like the idea of a challenge and the idea of moving it from one place to the next."

In regards to Christopher's management style with his staff -- "I have this philosophy where I have to tell you more about what you do right than what you do wrong. My job as a manager is to tell you what you are doing right and then I encourage you on the things that you need help on. When you do that, I think you develop a good staff and so far I have an incredible team."

"I'm still in the process of shaping goals, but one of my goals is getting all of my staff on the same page. To accomplish that, he has initiated weekly meetings and trainings on Wednesdays "to make sure everyone knows how to clean correctly or to discuss any concerns or issues. The purpose is to bring everyone together so every location is able to run like a franchise that will run exactly the same, whether I'm there or not."

FAREWELL TO TRAN VO

“I enjoy the patients. Working here has been very fulfilling and rewarding, to know you make a difference in patients’ lives.”

Tran Vo began making a difference in the lives of patients, fellow colleagues and staff more than 16 years ago when she joined T.H.E. in 2001.

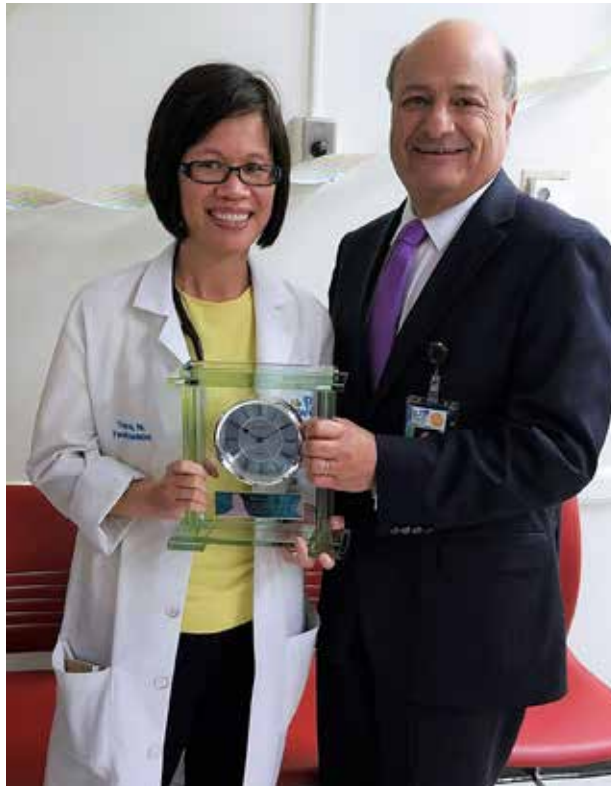
Comparing now to then, Tran reflects that there have been a lot of improvements since being on King Boulevard. “We didn’t have a lot of fancy things – I didn’t even have a desk!” Tran recalls with a laugh. “We shared desks with each other. We were standing, charting, to get our work done. But then eventually there were improvements. I tell new providers now ‘You don’t know how lucky you are.’ The patient load is the same as before, but facility wise T.H.E. is much better for all the changes.”

What’s next??

Tran will continue seeing patients as she works alongside her husband Carl, a family practitioner, at his private practice in El Monte. She will also be getting her two children (a daughter who is 11 and a son who is about to turn 8) off to school. “Having more time with my kids is the part I am looking forward to,” Tran says. “It’s more flexible and is pretty close to my home, so I can leave in the middle of the day, go pick up my kids and come back to work.”

Asked what she’ll miss most about T.H.E. – her co-workers.

“I’ve loved it here. It’s different here. It’s like a family. We really work together, we support each other.”





KITCHEN DIVAS

RECIPES



T.H.E. was HAPPY to work with three community partners and the UCLA Healthy Aging Partnerships Prevention Initiative (HAPPI) on disease prevention. Chef Brittney Green, from the Kitchen Divas worked with Black Women for Wellness and presented cooking tips and demonstrations along with healthy recipes. Enjoy!



Broccoli Walnut Cranberry Salad

Plant Based * Low Fat * High Protein

For ease in digestion, we recommend blanching the broccoli and soaking the nuts and seeds in this recipe. These steps are optional because this salad can be enjoyed fresh if that agrees with your body system and schedule.

Ingredients:

2 heads broccoli
 1-2 Tablespoons red onion, minced
 1/3 cup dried cranberries (soaked 1 hour – 30 minutes, optional)
 3 Tablespoons pumpkin seeds (soaked 1-2 hours, optional)
 ¾ cup walnuts, chopped (soaked 4-6 hours, optional)

Dressing:

¼ cup balsamic vinegar
 1 Tablespoon honey (or sweetener of choice)
 2 Tablespoons Almond or Peanut Butter, smooth
 2 Tablespoons Olive Oil, cold pressed or substitute water to avoid fat
 ½ teaspoon salt

DIY SPA WATER

Say goodbye to sodas and hello to healthful, refreshing spa water this summer. Brittney says you can make your very own spa water at home. Pick out your favorite fruits and/or herbs, mix them with cold water and refrigerate a few hours for the flavors to infuse. Popular combinations are lemon slices, cucumbers, strawberries, oranges, slight crushed mint leaves, parsley, basil, fresh rosemary, thyme, cilantro -- whatever herbs you prefer. It's up to you. ENJOY!

Instructions:

1. Soak walnuts in filtered water for 4-6 hours and pumpkin seeds 1-2 hours separately. Rinse well. Walnuts and seeds can be drained together.
2. Wash and cut broccoli florets into bite size pieces. Blanch by submerging into boiling water for 2-5 minutes and carefully place in ice cold water for 30 seconds to stop cooking. Drain.
3. In a small bowl, whisk ingredients.
4. To serve immediately: Place broccoli in a mixing bowl and pour over the dressing and minced onions. Gently stir to combine. Sprinkle with walnuts, cranberries and pumpkin seeds.
5. To serve at a later time: If broccoli is blanched, do not combine the dressing and topping until just before serving.
6. To serve without blanching the broccoli: Combine raw broccoli, onions, cranberries, walnuts, pumpkin seeds and dressing and serve immediately or store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for 1-2 days.

Tip: Soaking nuts helps release a digestive inhibitor, making them easier to digest, so rinse well with filtered water!