

Hospital Clown Newsletter

The Gentle Art of The Caring Clown

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CLOWNS ON ROUNDS

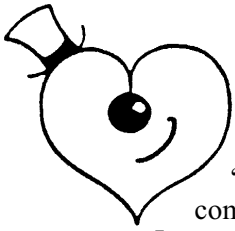
“*Dr. Yikes*” (Michael Reagon), “*Dr. Gigglebritches*” (Loretta DeAngelus), and *Dr. Oops*” (William Hart)

From Upper New York State comes *Clowns on Rounds, Inc.* This program exists in Albany, New York at Memorial Hospital and Stratton VA Hospital; in Schenectady, New York at Ellis Hospital and Sunny view Rehabilitation Hospital. Plans are progressing to include Schenectady's St. Clare's Hospital and the Hospital in Glens Falls, New York.

Clowns on Rounds are paid professional entertainers "disguised as clown doctors." Depending on the facility, "rounds" are made once or twice per week. The clown doctors work in pairs and are on duty for up to seven hours per day.

Michael Reagan a.k.a. "*Dr. Yikes*" is the motivating force behind this program. He started clowning after he observed his aunt clowning at a nursing home. In Michael's words: "I started clowning in 1988 when I saw what humor did for an old woman who was being hospitalized with a broken pelvis. It was her birthday and she was in a great deal of pain and discomfort. I asked my Aunt if she could stop in between her birthday parties. When she did, the old woman was laughing and carrying on as if nothing were wrong. I said out loud, 'I want to do that!'"

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CLOWNS ON ROUNDS

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“It took a few years after being caught up in competitions and birthday parties, but finally

I saw an article in Laugh Makers Magazine about the Big Apple Circus Clown Care Unit ®. Bill Hart and I spent a day with their director, Michael Christensen, as well as making rounds with their *Doctors of Delight*. We went home and started *Clowns on Rounds* in 1992.”

Michael is dedicated to the profession of caring clowning and shares some of his methods of evaluation and organization. He has set up a nonprofit organization, found fund raisers, hired administrators, and his program now even has health benefits for staff. With all this he continues to do his clown rounds three days a week! Following are excerpts from *Clowns on Rounds* material which he so kindly shares with us.

Mission Statement

The purpose of Clowns on Rounds, Inc., a not for profit corporation, shall be to encourage in patients, a positive attitude toward their illness, and through humor, to help alleviate the fears, anxieties and stress experienced by patients, their families, friends and care givers.

Concept (Some Excerpts)

Using medically related routines, the “clown doctors” attempt to diffuse some of the anxiety and fear experienced during treatment.

Visitors are reminded that there still exists a healthy part of the patient that needs treatment as well. And humor is the right prescription.

A care giver’s job by nature involves life and death situations. By being witness to the results the “clown doctors” can achieve, it gives these people the chance to celebrate the life part of their jobs.

Patients can expect to have their funny bones examined, receive a red nose transplant or perhaps a parking ticket for being in the hospital too long. By asking permission to enter a patient’s room the “clown doctors” give a patient some control over their lives. The clowns also tailor their performance to each patient’s ability to enjoy the visit. They are just as quick to hold a hand as they are to tell a joke.

Evaluation Program

Objective: In order to insure that this program is providing the best service possible, an evaluation from the patients, Clowns on Rounds supervisors and the facility staff member has been established.

Purpose: Questionnaires presented will evaluate our employee's appearance, attitude, observation of safety regulations and procedures, and opinions on their entertainment value. It will also gauge the program’s effectiveness with regards to the effects the Clowns on Rounds program has on the mood of the patients and overall

hospital environment during, as well as after the clowns’ visit.

Procedure: The evaluation will be conducted in three parts.

1. A postage paid Business Response card will be placed in patient discharge packages for a period of one month twice per year in order to acquire a sampling of the percentage of patients reached in addition to evaluation of the program in general.

2. The Program's Director will accompany each employee on rounds twice per year to evaluate their entertainment practices and to insure that the employee is following proper guidelines.

3. Random sampling of the facility staff with a standardized evaluation form designed to obtain their opinion with regards to the Clowns on Rounds employees that visit their facility and their feelings on the effectiveness of this program.

Results: After gathering all the pertinent data, the Program Director will inform the Evaluation Committee of the results. A meeting between the Program Director and a liaison of each facility will be held to discuss those results.

Setting up a Program

Here are Michael Reagan's suggestions on what you need to do to set up a program like *Clowns on Rounds*:

Set up your organization with Not for Profit 501 (c)(3) Status. Find an attorney that will take you Pro Bono (non paying). Some state Bar Associations require a certain percentage pro bono community work. (Clowns are very visible and what would give an attorney more positive advertisement than a clown in a hospital!)

Go in with a written plan, a mission statement, budgets, etc. From there you will create a Board of Directors (Michael suggests recruiting doctors’ wives who are enthusiastic about the clown work). Bylaws etc. with come will come about as the non profit organization is formed.

Set up a Pilot program with an evaluation program:

To fund his pilot program, Michael sent out about 100 letters to doctors and received two thousand dollars in contributions.

Their pilot program cost approximately \$2,300.00 (2,000 for personnel). This was for one clown doctor, two days per week for up to six hours per day for eight weeks.

Clowns on Rounds, Inc., [10/98 Note: , the program is now directed by Loretta DeAngelus “Dr. Gigglebritches” pictured on cover in the middle. 518/786-6939.

Dr. Yikes carries a “plunger” (toilet plunger bottom) stethoscope with one of those flushing toilet key chains hidden under it. It’s great for “flushing out those arteries.” He also attaches a slinky to the lid of a plastic hospital water pitcher, so when he takes the lid off he has “spring water.” We will hear more from these Doctors of Delight in the coming issues.