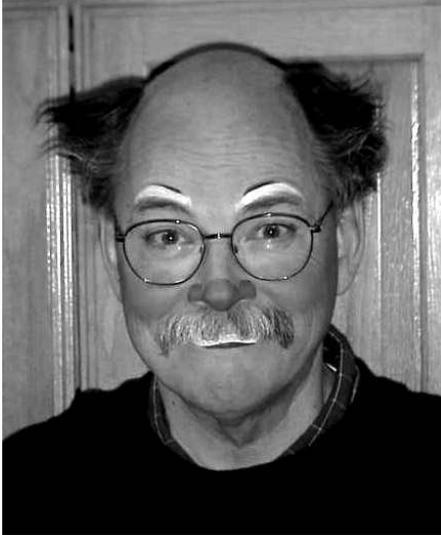


Hillcrest Health System *Therapeutic Humor Program*

Joseph Redman heads up The Therapeutic Humor Program. He recently moved to the plains of central Texas from New Jersey and brought with him a dream. In his new administrative position at Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center located in Waco, Texas the dream is coming true.

Shobi First met Joseph aka *Fungus A. Mungus* on



Patch Adam's trip to China in 2000. At that time he wore a big wig, a big hat and a big squeaky nose. After our workshop he turned into this mischievous clown and the minimum "soft" makeup allows that to show through. He will "fit" a ProNose at a convention, but for the time being we just painted his nose too and for his hair we just went wild with a little hair jell. What you can't see here because it is not a color photo is the effect of the "Youth Red" powder that gives the auguste effect.

By Joseph Redman aka Fungus A Mungus

The program was started in June of 2002 as a pilot program in our pediatric unit, "Kidsville," following a presentation and proposal to the CEO. The pilot program began with *Fungus A. Mungus* making clown rounds three or four times a week, and has continued for the past nine months with positive feedback from patients, families, physicians and staff.

Part of the approved proposal included offering a clown workshop to anyone interested in developing a clown character and learning how to clown in a hospital. Shobi agreed to present the workshop and eight new clowns volunteered for the training. [The hospital clown class was also open to community clowns] Our workshop was conducted in January 2003 and we now have a total of nine caring clowns learning how to play.

The following is an excerpt from the original proposal.



Clown Class: Top row from left: John Lovelace (Clueless), Joseph Redman (Fungus A. Mungus), Kay Henry (Klynky), Beverly Harstad (Apples), Jan Wengler (Ms. Skete), Middle Row: Alice Svoboda (Jazzy), Mary Feltman (Crash), Shobi, Carla Robison (Wiggles), Skye Mathews (Pepper), Norma Seago (Abby Normal); Bottom row: Dianne deMerville (Ellie Gantz), Helen O'Mallan (Hospital Hattie), Aurora Krause (BeBop) and Bette Keeling (Peri Twinkle).

(Excerpts from the Original Proposal)

We propose the creation of a hospital-wide Therapeutic Humor Program. *Therapeutic Humor* is defined by the Association of Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH) to be: "Any intervention that promotes health and wellness by stimulating a playful discovery, and expression or appreciation of the absurdity or incongruity of life's situations. This intervention may enhance health or be used as a complementary treatment of illness to facilitate healing or coping, whether physical, emotional, cognitive, social, or spiritual."

The purpose of the Therapeutic Humor Program is to be an addition to medical treatment and nursing care with the goal of stress reduction, increased resistance to disease, and other positive outcomes.

The concept is based on a model developed by Leslie Gibson, RN, BS, at Morton Plant Hospital in Clearwater, Florida, and other health care systems across the country. A growing number of hospitals are implementing Therapeutic Humor programs into their day-to-day operations as an adjunct to traditional health care approaches and there is an increasing body of research verifying the direct positive impact on the mind/body by the use of humor and laughter as part of the treatment process. A well designed and supported therapeutic humor program complements other actions intended to reduce length of stay and improve a patient's perception of care and well-being. "

Our new clowns come from throughout the organization and as we continue to implement the program, we will meet monthly to continue character development and practice our caring clown skills. Our new clowns have varied interests and want to clown in more than just pediatrics. Some want to play in the oncology unit, others the ER, still others in medical surgery.

To date, three new clowns, Ellie Gantz, Peri Twinkle, and Abby Normal, have accompanied *Fungus* on his rounds, to watch, learn, and play too! Our hope is that the nine of us will spread the concept of therapeutic humor throughout the organization by visiting and playing with patients, families, staff, and physicians every day! Our CEO, Art Hohenberger, supports the program and encourages clowns to be present at organizational parties and celebrations in addition to visiting patients. I think we are on our way to an incredible adventure!

Joseph Redman aka *Fungus A Mungus*

Shobi had the privilege of giving a workshop for this new clown program in Waco, Texas in January. We will report later on its progress in a later issue. The aim of the program is to promote humor in the entire hospital. The CEO of the hospital really supports the clowns and has given staff members time off to take a clown workshop. Shobi found out about this when a couple of the class participants were almost falling asleep on their feet. At lunch break they ran up to their floor and took a nap! I found out they are both night nurses. They had gotten the two days off to do the workshop, but had been up the whole night before. They really wanted to clown. And clowns they became. A round of applause for this hearty health care workers



The two night nurses: *Clueless and Wiggles*.

Your Sense of Humor and Your Health Brochure

Hillcrest has this brochure which is put out for its patients and staff. It is designed to help patients learn some basics for improving their sense of humor and your health. It includes a humor survey, humor and health tips, humor statistics, and additional reading and Internet references for more in-depth information

What a great idea to promote humor the humor program and to promote health. It certainly is better than anything that sits in the waiting rooms at my hospital.

Did you know that one minute of hearty laughter is equal to ten minutes of exercise on a rowing machine. Would you rather laugh or row?

Children can make an excess of 40 different facial expressions. Adults can make about 5 different facial expressions.