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Contact: Kevin Lavoie, Media Relations Specialist

(937) 384-3892; Pager; (937) 370-1092; E-mail: Kevin.lavoie@khnetwork.org

Training for the Unexpected Keeps Skills Sharp For Emergency Department Doctors, Nurses

KETTERING – If you spent hours consumed with catastrophic “what if” scenarios, most people would think you were crazy. But for those who work in the Emergency Department (ED), craziness is the standard operating mode and hours of “what if” obsession is the prescription that just might save lives.

That is why clinicians from Kettering and Sycamore medical centers spent two days this week training to handle unusual, life-threatening situations. The Emergency Department Nursing Seminar concluded Wednesday, Dec. 16, in the Learning Center at Kettering College of Medical Arts. A collaboration between 120 nurses and 16 ED physicians, the seminar featured simulations of six different events.

“We selected different critical interventions that are key to a successful emergency department,” said Thomas Proctor, MD, Medical Director. “What we are trying to do is get the doctors and nurses together in a non-threatening environment to run these situations so they will be well-rehearsed when it is life and death and quick, coordinated action means everything.”

Scenarios from the seminar include emergency airway interventions, placing a chest tube to fix a

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collapsed lung, and permanent invasive IV placement. The stations were offered for four-hour sessions over the two-day period, and organizers brought in food to make it more of a fun event. This is the second time Kettering and Sycamore have conducted such a seminar. . . the only one of its kind in greater Dayton. Organizers plan to make it at least an annual practice.

“These are things that most of us don’t even see every day – high severity, low volume situations,” Dr. Proctor said. “We all appreciate getting comfortable with the equipment and the conversations, and we have had almost 100 percent participation from the ED group. This puts everyone on the same playing field, builds our team, and makes everyone more confident.”

“I’ve worked at hospitals where they just distributed articles on things like this,” said Heidi Edison, RN. “This is much more helpful because it is hands on and relaxed so you can ask questions. It’s good to have everybody’s input, and we all know that everybody has a certain role in a code (life-threatening situation).”

Setting up this year’s event were clinical nurse educators Pam Lamb, RN, of Kettering, and Holly Long, RN, of Sycamore. Adding support and expertise were Dr. Proctor, KMC Clinical Nurse Manager John Weimer, RN; and Dee Guttadore, RN, Clinical Nurse Manager at Sycamore Medical Center. Physicians donated about 400 hours to the cause.

“The ED is open 24/7, 365 days a year, and we handle everything from pre-birth to end-of-life,” Weimer said. “This is their calling and their mission, and this is what a true Magnet nursing facility does. . . they have doctors and nurses teaching each other.”

“I have worked across the country, and nowhere do you get an opportunity like this,” said Anna Vozobule, who was a traveling nurse for 20 years before coming to KMC two years ago and deciding to stay. “If you only see things like this once a year, you are fumbling in a crash situation. This is really worth the huge commitment it takes to do this seminar.”