



Health information

Hospitalists: A new breed of doctors

These doctors see you through your hospital visit from when you come in the door to when you go home.

By Linda Powell

If a hospital stay at CHRISTUS Spohn is in your future, don't be surprised if you're cared for by a kind of doctor you've never heard of: a hospitalist.

The hospitalist's sole responsibility is to care for hospitalized patients, from admission to discharge—hence the name.

CHRISTUS Spohn Hospital Corpus Christi—*Shoreline*, in partnership with IPC—The Hospitalist Company, recently started a hospitalist program with Jose Pujol, M.D., and Daniel Muro, M.D. These doctors practice exclusively on-site, ordering appropriate tests, monitoring patients' conditions, making treatment decisions with input from primary care doctors and coordinating patient care among all members of the hospital staff.

The surge in popularity is fueled by several factors.

- Hospitalists become especially skilled at treating health problems common among hospitalized patients, such as pneumonia, infections, heart attacks and congestive heart failure.
- Because they are hospital-based, hospitalists can respond more quickly whenever a patient or family member has a question or concern.
- Hospitalists can recognize and react quickly to any changes in their patients' conditions—a real advantage. In terms of treatment, patients are simply better off when doctors can check on them several times a day.
- A growing body of research suggests that hospitalists improve the overall quality of patient care.

There have been more than 100 studies published on the effect of hospitalists, and the results are generally quite positive. Most studies show that they help reduce the risk of medical errors, the length of patient stays and hospital costs.

Dr. Pujol is enjoying his role as a hospitalist. "I don't have to manage an office—I can spend all my time coordinating patient care, which is what I really like to do," he says.

"The primary care physician [PCP] refers his patient to me for the duration of the hospital admission," Dr. Pujol explains. "While the patient is in the hospital,

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his care is in my hands; I order tests, prescribe drugs and treatment, then communicate the patient's care to the PCP. When the patient is discharged from the hospital, his care returns to the referring physician."

This summer, two additional hospitalists, Wilder Diaz-Calderon, M.D., and Alicia Hart, M.D., will join the team and serve CHRISTUS Spohn Hospitals Corpus Christi—*Shoreline* and *South*.

Hospitalists are available 24/7 and give primary care physicians, especially those with solo practices, the freedom to focus on their outpatient practices and still provide quality care to their patients in the hospital.

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