

Afternoon Tea Service: Simple Ideas for the Patient Experience



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At approximately 2:00PM each day, the participants of the Health Scholar Program round on each patient in the Mother-Infant Unit of St. John's Regional Medical Center to offer a light afternoon snack of cookies and refreshments. Known as "Tea at Two" within the hospital, the concept was first implemented by the unit leaders in 2010. Due to expanded roles and responsibilities, unit leaders found less time to complete this act of kindness. To avoid discontinuing the service, the unit leaders engaged their Health Scholars. "The Health Scholars are such a tremendous help to our busy staff," says Charge Nurse, Haley Morrow. "Without them, we wouldn't be able to continue with passing out tea and cookies to patients on a daily basis. The patients and families are very appreciative of the gesture, especially the kids visiting."



Health Scholar Valerie M. participating in Tea at Two at St. John's Regional Medical Center

Health Scholars are pre-health professionals gaining hands-on experience through the Health Scholar Program. Participants complete a 30-hour initial training and must pass two exams in order to begin the program. As part of their training, participants learn about medical topics, service excellence, hospital rules and regulations. The topic of patient safety is a continuing theme throughout training. Prior to 2:00 PM, the Health Scholar confirms each patient's diet to ensure that the tea and cookies do not conflict with any restrictions.

This complimentary service also gives Health Scholars an opportunity to check-in with each patient about their stay. Since Health Scholars are in patients' rooms to request their refreshment preferences, they can also help identify additional patient needs, remove food trays from lunch, or refresh water pitchers. Health Scholars are educated on the steps of effective rounding as designed for the nursing staff. While they may not be able to fulfill all items and requests on their own, the Health Scholars can relay information to the patient's nurse and assure the patient that her request has been heard. Their interactions with patients allow Health Scholars to practice their own communication skills, including conflict resolution and compassionate language – which better prepare them as future health care professionals. According to Sarah Short, a current Health Scholar in the Mother-Infant Unit, "Tea at Two allows me to visit the patients and newborns each day. As a future Physician Assistant, I know this experience helps me develop good bedside manner and become more comfortable with patients."

As health care increasingly focuses on documentation and efficiency, Tea at Two is a personal touch that puts a smile on the face of patients and staff alike.

For information about the Health Scholar program, please contact info@copehealthsolutions.com.