



1184 5th Avenue, New York City

*The Child Life Program at Mount Sinai offers a full range of activities and services to make the hospital experience easier, more familiar and more comfortable for children.*

*Our staff of certified Child Life Specialists includes experts in early childhood education, special education, creative arts therapy and recreation therapy.*

*Through play, art, school and socializing with peers, these experts help children retain their creativity, self esteem and independence, and continue their normal development while in the hospital.*

## Reach Out And Read

By Rachel Izes, CCLS

Reach Out and Read (ROR) is an early literacy program within Mount Sinai Hospital's Pediatric Associates which seeks to provide parents and children with the knowledge, support, and materials necessary to make books an important part of their lives. Many of the children who receive services at Mount Sinai's Pediatric Associates are faced with the challenges of living in economically disadvantaged homes. Often the importance of reading is not stressed, and this places them at risk for reading failure and school failure. ROR utilizes regularly scheduled well-child appointments to reach families even before the school system can, and uses the power of the supportive relationships between families and their healthcare providers to help children learn to love books and reading.

The program has three components: volunteers read to children in the clinic waiting

room and model reading aloud techniques for parents, doctors provide parents with guidance about literacy development, and children receive a brand new developmentally appropriate book to take home at every check-up. By incorporating books and early literacy



A patient registers for her first library card

into pediatric health care, we are also incorporating them into the definition of a healthy childhood. This has been an exciting year for ROR at Mount Sinai. We distributed over 14,000 books to patients visiting the pediatric clinic.

The program has broadened its book collection to include a larger supply of adolescent

titles and favorite school-age chapter books. Librarians from the 96<sup>th</sup> Street branch of the New York Public Library have visited the clinic several times this year to encourage families to sign up for library cards and promote local literacy events. Our devoted corps of volunteers now includes several bilingual readers who share books with clinic patients, helping them cope with their "waiting room jitters", and encouraging a joy of books and reading.

We are very proud of the impact ROR has on the lives of our patients and their families. We see these effects daily, and ongoing academic studies continue to demonstrate the positive effects of the ROR model. If you would like to learn more about this exciting program, are interested in becoming a volunteer reader, or would like to make a donation of new or gently used books, please contact Leora Mogilner, Director of Reach Out and Read at (212) 241-5495.

## Making Your Pediatric ER Visit a Little Easier

By Kevin Brooks, CCLS

A visit to the Pediatric Emergency Room can be stressful and frightening for children and their parents. Long waits, confusing medical information, and painful procedures are just a few of the things that can make an ER visit so difficult. While parents can't always prevent emergencies,

there are things they can do to make a child's ER visit go a little more smoothly. Below are some suggestions to help parents prepare for a child's medical emergency.

### Before there is an emergency:

- Organize all family medical records. Include information about any medical con-

ditions, your pediatrician's name and phone number, vaccination history, current medications, allergies, previous hospital visits, past surgeries, etc.

- Have all of your emergency phone numbers posted near a telephone. Include numbers for po-

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## Making Your Pediatric ER Visit a Little Easier *(Continued)*

lice, fire, ambulance, family doctor, parents' work, and child's school.

- Keep health insurance information handy.
- Identify friends and family members who may be able to help with child-care and other needs in an emergency.

### **If there is an emergency:**

- Remain calm. Children feel calmer when they are with a parent who appears calm.
- Be sure you have all of your emergency information with you (see above).
- If possible bring along some snacks and activities (toys, books, homework) for the child.
- You can never predict how long an ER visit will

take, so be prepared for a long visit. Never 'plan' on being discharged from the ER by a certain time.

- If you have time, call your child's primary care doctor and tell them what is going on.

### **Once you arrive at the ER:**

- Remain calm and focus on giving the ER staff the information they need to treat your child.
- Be honest with ER staff. Answer all questions as well as you can.
- Remember that patients in the ER are seen in order of how serious their illness or injury is. If a child who arrives after you is seen first, it is because that child has a more serious condition.
- If your child's condition

worsens while you are waiting to be seen, inform the triage nurse immediately.

- Be honest with your child about what is happening. Reassure them that the doctors and nurses in the ER are there to help them. It is usually best to let a child know what a test or procedure is going to feel like. You can ask for a Child Life Specialist, nurse, or physician to help you with this.
- You and your child should ask questions until you fully understand all of the information that is being given to you.
- Ask the ER physicians to get in touch with your primary care doctor.

## Creating a Safe Haven in the Hospital

*By Shannon Giejda, CCLS*



Hospital stays are often unfamiliar, frightening and sometimes painful experiences. Children and teens might experience a loss of privacy by the constant medical interruptions in this strange environment. Child Life Specialists work with members of the health care team and family to create a safe haven in the patient's hospital room.

Every child or teen has favorite items that can be brought to the hospital to help comfort him or her during their hospitalization. Prepare yourself for your child's visit. If you feel at ease your child is able to sense that and react in the same way. As a fam-

ily, you can prepare a suitcase of comfort items to be brought in such as:

- Favorite pajamas and clothes
- Books and magazines
- Stuffed animals
- Pictures of families and friends
- Posters
- Deck of cards
- Puzzles and board games
- Post cards and/or stationary
- Nintendo or Gameboy games
- Schoolwork
- Favorite pillow or blanket
- Favorite foods
- Journal or diary
- Favorite VHS movies

- Other hobby related items

Your Child Life department loves to engage your child in new and fun activities and games but they might not have your child's favorite toy or game at hand. Having your child's familiar items will create an environment that will enable your child to cope better with their hospitalization. So to get ready for a hospital stay at Mount Sinai, pack your bags and we look forward to seeing you!

## A New CCTV Show — *Art Party!*

By Lesley Phillips, CCLS and Marcy Mennella, CCLS

*Art Party* is a new interactive closed circuit TV show on Channel 78. It airs on Wednesdays between 2:30 and 3:30PM. Each week on *Art Party*, pediatric patients learn how to make a new arts and crafts project. The projects are usually related to a seasonal theme or hospital life. Past *Art Party* projects have included: finger puppets, Mother's Day cards, relaxation collages, and family trees. Art supplies are brought to children at bedside so they can participate from their room, or when possible,

children are invited to take part in the show in the 6<sup>th</sup> floor studio.

The host of the show demonstrates the steps to making the project, and calls from children in their room are encouraged. Visitors such as clowns and puppets are often integrated, as well. After the project is taught, jokes are read from the "Joke Jar" and children are encouraged to call in with jokes of their own. Simultaneously, a second camera is used to video tape the children in their rooms. The second camera also interviews staff members about their opinions on the theme of the

project. This is then aired on television, at the end of the show.

*Art Party* helps children participate from their bedside, and allows them to experience being involved in a community activity. By being able to see their work in progress on the TV, they gain a sense of importance and value in the hospital setting. *Art Party* is run by Child Life Specialists, volunteers, and a Video-therapist. If you have ideas for *Art Party* or any other future closed circuit shows, please contact Lesley Phillips or Marcy Mennella in the Child Life Program at (212) 241-6797.



*Bookmaking on "Art Party"*

## From The Family Resource Center

By Dana Wyles, BSN, MLS

The Family Resource Center has been welcoming increasing numbers of families and friends of Mount Sinai's pediatric inpatients who make good use of our facilities and services. E-mail is being checked, our books for children and adults—both fiction and health-related—are circulating, and lots of health research is taking place on our two computer terminals. MedlinePlus, an online service of the National Library of Medicine, continues to be our most popular consumer health resource. This gateway site takes the consumer to a myriad of authoritative articles on every health topic imaginable, carefully selected to ensure accuracy.

And speaking of accuracy, do you know what to look for in a health web site? All sites are not created equal, and

appearance on the web is no guarantee of quality. Here are some criteria searchers can use to judge any health-related site:



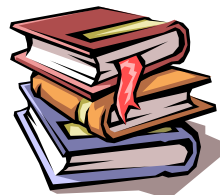
*A parent using MedlinePlus*

- What is the purpose of the site? A site ending in .com may be trying to sell you something; a site ending in .org may have a particular agenda to advance.
- Who is responsible for the site's content? What are the author's credentials? Quality sites always

have a "contact us" section.

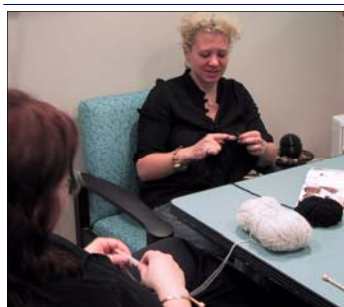
- What is the source of funding for the site?
- Do the medical facts and figures have references?
- Is the information up-to-date? When was the site last updated? Are there a lot of broken links? A good site is updated regularly.
- Does the site ask you to register? Does it tell you what they will do with your information? Does it have a privacy statement?

For questions about the validity of any health information you may find, feel free to contact the Family Resource Center at (212) 241-7636.



## New Knitting Consultant Joins The Child Life Team!

By Cheryl Strauss, CCLS



Miriam knitting with a parent

In February, the Child Life Department at Mount Sinai welcomed a new consultant to our program. Knitting teacher, Miriam Maltagliati, joined our team and almost immediately formed a unique bond with many pediatric patients and their families. Twice a week, Miriam meets with individuals referred through the Child Life staff, both one on one and in groups, to teach the art of knitting. This alternative Child Life service offers an opportunity for relaxation, diversion, and creative expression.

With a ball of yarn and a helping hand, Miriam is often able to help individuals tran-

scend the boredom, fear, and uncertainty implicit within the hospital environment. Time and again knitting proves to be a therapeutically effective venue and one that crosses linguistic and cultural boundaries. In the weekly parent groups, members find solace in the therapeutic rhythm of knitting as well as in the companionship of one another. Special friendships develop as parents knit together and begin to share stories about their children, hospital experiences, and their knitting projects. In fact, several parents exchange phone numbers and even choose to return to the hospital after discharge in order to maintain attendance in these groups.

Miriam's supportive presence

and flexibility create a teaching environment in which opportunities for empowerment and mastery abound. No question is too basic and all feelings are validated. During a time of illness and hospitalization when individuals may feel somewhat powerless, learning a new skill and creating a finished product can be exceptionally rewarding. In turn, this positive self-concept often empowers individuals to take more a comfortable and active role with the medical staff in their own health care or in the care of their children.

The Child Life Department is grateful for the opportunity to work with Miriam and to offer such a unique and beneficial service to patients and

## New Program on The Hematology/Oncology Service

By Marcy Mennella, CCLS

This spring a new program, *One More Story*, was implemented on the Hematology/Oncology Service. *One More Story* was created by Rona Roth, a retired kindergarten teacher, who taught for 24 years. Her passion for creating this program was inspired by one of her students who was diagnosed with cancer. She knew that when she retired she wanted to do something for kids in the hospital. Rona felt strongly that books were a way to help children feel better while in the hospital.

Rona and her volunteers wear child-friendly, denim aprons with transparent pockets displaying brightly colored picture books. The volunteers,



Azita and a patient read together

Trish and Azita, spend time with the inpatient Hematology/Oncology patients, as well as the patients in the Hematology/Oncology Outpatient Clinic. When they arrive, the Child Life Specialists in both areas help to identify the children that would enjoy having a story read to them. Trish and Azita then go to each room and allow the child to choose a book from their apron which is filled with

books for all ages. They also include siblings and parents in their story time, many times enabling parents to take a break while they are in the room.

*One More Story* is a huge asset to the Hematology / Oncology Service. The children are excited when they see Trish and Azita and look forward to their time with them. *One More Story* has already brightened many hospitalized children's days. Future plans are to expand their services to other areas of the hospital this summer.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Rachel Izes  
Sarah Graham  
Kevin Brooks  
Julia Schulman

for receiving MCH  
Applause Awards for your  
outstanding work with  
patients and  
families