

The Power of **>** One

more than



Volume 1, No. 3
September 14, 2007

It's Our Time!

A message from the DMC Organizing Committee for Change

Well, the end of summer is here. As the season begins to change, we are realizing that it's time for a change at DMC as well. Since we began building our union, we have met so many nurses and learned so much about our colleagues. We have learned that many of the problems we face in our hospitals and on our units are not unique. Nurses are struggling throughout DMC. Why? Because we don't have input in the decisions that affect our patients and our profession. For far too long, we have left the important decisions to the folks who don't work at the bedside.

Administration has a lot to say about why we should work together. But, we've already tried that. We've tried to work harder and harder with less and less. We've tried giving our input. We've tried participating in meetings and committees. Now we're doing something different. We are working together to create an organization of nurses...for nurses and our patients.

We are hearing a lot about what we can and can't do with our union. But, if it would be ineffective, why would administration spend time and patient care resources to influence us and change our minds?

We are dedicating this issue of our newsletter to educate nurses about the process of negotiating a contract and what other nurses have achieved. You will see that every step - from forming our union to ratifying a contract - depends on full participation of nurses. We hope that you are beginning to think about the kinds of changes you would make in your department. We should not get distracted by administration's opinion. Let's focus on our priorities and move forward to make real change at DMC.

Nurses Speak Out

DMC RNs meet with CEO Duggan; deliver strong message: Stop using public funds for anti-union campaign!

On August 28, 2007, a delegation of nurses representing the DMC Organizing Committee for Change went to see CEO Mike Duggan to let him know that we want to make our own decision about forming a union - without interference from his administration. Despite the fact that federal law protects our right to organize, free of intimidation and coercion, Mr. Duggan indicated that he would continue to fight us. We asked him, again, to agree to a Fair Election Process with the Michigan Nurses Association.

We also made it clear to him that we felt it was unethical to divert public funds from patient care resources to his anti-union fight. We reminded him that we are committed to the mission and patients of the Detroit Medical Center and are continuing to work to make DMC the system of choice.

"Even though he cordially welcomed us and said he is aware of our issues, he made it clear that he has other priorities," said Jeanette Reed.

Stand with us as we continue to fight for the right to choose.

TONI WASHINGTON, DR • JANET BRADLEY, DR • JEANETTE REED, HA • CEFERINA SHARPE, HU • KATIE POOLE, CH • CARLIEGH HILLMAN, DR
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Negotiating a union contract is a democratic process. Every member is involved from beginning to end. Here's a basic look at the steps to negotiating a contract:



I want to be in charge of how we practice and care for the children.

Cynthia Tobias
CH • Radiology

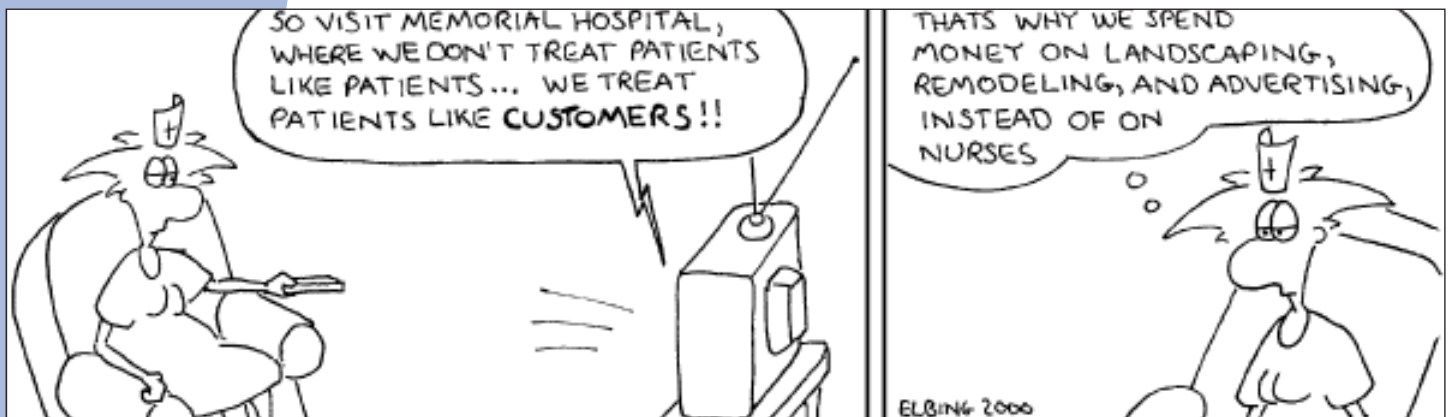


I want to be in a union to ensure safe nursing practice.

David Singleton
HA • 9 Webber

- 1 Win the election.** Once a majority of us vote in favor of forming a union, the negotiating process can begin right away.
- 2** DMC nurses will **elect a Negotiating Team** from a variety of departments and shifts.
- 3** After the Negotiating Team is elected, the Team develops a detailed **bargaining survey** for distribution to all nurses. The surveys are used to get everyone's opinion on ways that we can improve issues like staffing, wages, benefits, etc.
- 4** The Negotiating Team studies the **survey results** to understand union members' concerns and opinions. The results help determine priorities for negotiating.
- 5** The Negotiating Team develops the concepts that become **bargaining proposals**. For example, *"We want advance notice if a supervisor is going to change the schedule,"* or *"We want to separate sick leave from other time off."*
- 6** The MNA staff representative will work in sync with the Negotiating Team to draft written contract proposals and set up a **negotiation schedule** for meeting with hospital administration.
- 7** At the opening of negotiations, the Negotiating Team presents the proposals to administration. Throughout negotiations, the Team **reports back to membership** on their progress.
- 8** When contract negotiations are complete and all proposals have been addressed, the Negotiating Team brings a **tentative contract** agreement to nurses for **approval by voting**.
- 9** If nurses are supportive of the contract, they would vote in favor and that would ratify the contract creating a **binding agreement** between the nurses of DMC and hospital administration.
- 10 Implement and enforce the contract.** Once a union contract is in place, co-workers will be elected to meet regularly with administration to make sure the contract is followed and to represent us whenever problems may arise.

by Carl Elbing



Nurstoons

Five Ways to Improve Staffing

1 Negotiate minimum staffing guidelines.

To ensure that staffing levels accurately reflect patient acuity, skill mix and census, *nurses can negotiate staffing standards into a union contract.* These guidelines can be written in a variety of ways, such as by specifying minimum patient to staff ratios by unit or department.

2 Make joint decisions through a committee.

Most union nurses participate in staffing decisions through patient care and other types of committees. *These committees, where staff nurses and managers meet regularly as equals,* are usually charged with resolving issues related to staffing levels, workloads, skill mix, scheduling practices, professional standards and patient classification systems.

3 Set up avenues for solving specific problems.

With a union contract, nurses always have a way to deal with problems when they arise. Unsafe staffing or heavy workloads can be solved with the help of union stewards in the hospital and through grievance procedures in which, if necessary, a neutral arbitrator has the final say. *Many hospital union contracts include specific avenues for dealing with staffing problems,* such as ways to record short staffing and committees responsible for resolving them.

4 Create incentives to hire adequate staff.

Many nurses negotiate provisions in their union contracts designed to encourage hospitals to maintain adequate staffing. *These include rules that require management to fill vacant positions in a timely manner,* restrict the use of floating and have financial penalties for understaffing.

5 Pursue legislative and regulatory solutions.

Solving staffing problems may also require legislative and regulatory remedies as well. Individually, nurses have no way to impact the decisions made by lawmakers and regulatory agencies. *But through their unions, nurses can use their combined clout to enact and enforce regulations for safe staffing.* Without organized representation, the only voices that policymakers hear are those of insurance companies and hospital CEOs.

For more information call the DMC Organizing Hotline at 248.799.0808.

Question & Answer

I think CEO Duggan is beginning to listen to us. Why not give him a chance to make improvements? We could always form our union later if things don't get better.

Isn't it great that management admits the need for improvements? It shows that even before the union is official, the fact that we are working together is already getting results. The idea is to have a voice in decisions at DMC, as nurses, to determine *now* what we and our patients need – not to wait until more nurses leave the bedside.



I want to empower all nurses. The experienced nurses who have dedicated a lifetime to DMC, the RNs beginning their careers, and the nurses who have journeyed across borders and seas – all have earned a voice.

Ceferina Sharpe
HU • Post Partum



We carry all the responsibility and have no input. Now is the time to claim our power.

Karen Amato
HA • 4 Webber



MNA is the organization that validates all of the reasons why I became a nurse.

Carleigh Hillman
DR • 4 UV Med Surg

*A message
from your
organizing
committee!*

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