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St. James Mercy Hospital Intensifies Flu Prevention Efforts

Flu Shots and Surgical Facemasks Part of Effort to Stem Flu

January 15, 2014...Hornell, NY...Flu season is here and this year St. James Mercy Hospital (SJM) is taking additional steps to prevent the spread of flu, including enhanced efforts to vaccinate all employees and distribute surgical facemasks. When worn by employees, these masks offer a physical barrier to flu transmission. This is a comprehensive endeavor to protect patients, residents, visitors, and employees from exposure to the flu virus.

While an annual flu vaccine remains the single best method for preventing the flu, a surgical facemask, when worn by employees, provides added protection to patients, residents, employees, and visitors. SJM offers the flu vaccine to all employees and, beginning this year, requires employees who have not been vaccinated to wear a facemask in clinical care areas and other areas where patients/residents reside. This is a requirement of the New York State Department of Health.

As a matter of standard practice, SJM enforces universally-recognized precautions to prevent the flu. These include hand washing, the use of hand sanitizers, placed conveniently throughout the hospital and nursing home, as well as goggles, and gowns. In addition, St. James Mercy Hospital adheres to rigorous infection control guidelines and policies every day to ensure a clean environment for patients, residents, staff, and visitors. These practices are especially important during flu season. Antiseptic wipes are located in patient/resident rooms, workstations, hallways, and other treatment areas and are easily accessible to hospital and nursing home employees responsible for sanitizing medical equipment and surface areas.

During last year's flu season, the New York State Department of Health recorded 45,352 confirmed flu cases, 9,537 patients hospitalized and 14 pediatric deaths from influenza.

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“Flu prevention is a priority at our hospital and nursing home, and our employees work every day to lessen the spread of flu virus by adhering to strict infection control practices and prevention guidelines,” said John Carroll, Interim Medical Director. “Starting this year, hospitals, nursing homes, and other facilities must document the number and percentage of personnel vaccinated against the flu to state and federal authorities.”

“We also want to remind the public that if they or any family members have the flu or other contagious disease, to avoid visiting patients in the hospital and or residents in the nursing home, who are particularly vulnerable,” said Dr. Carroll.

For more information and flu facts visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>.

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