

1st PERSON



How Presbyterian Healthcare “Got Steppin’” to Safe Handling Awareness!

by Shannon M. Hazen, RN, BSN, OCN

Having been an oncology nurse educator for several years, I know that the topic of “Safe Handling of Hazardous Drugs” does not always get staff riveted and on the edge of their seats. It is not necessarily easy to get people excited about proper PPE application and disposal techniques. So when I was approached by Carmel Pharma, makers of PhaSeal and sponsors of National Safe Handling Awareness Day, about a unique project idea to raise safe handling awareness, I got really excited! Our Novant facilities implemented the use of the closed system transfer device, PhaSeal, last year. We have seen a tremendous safety culture shift here in our Presbyterian Hospitals with regard to chemotherapy handling. The Oncology staff has truly embraced practice changes that make our chemotherapy areas safer, and we are very proud of this accomplishment. This opportunity sounded like a great way to continue that momentum and further promote the concepts we had worked to hardwire in our staff.

When Carmel Pharma’s marketing director called me to discuss her project idea, she talked about making a type of fun music video about safe handling. I was trying to envision how you could make that process fun—gowns, gloves, and hazardous waste bins? Was she for real? The idea was to get the video loaded on YouTube and get as many hits as possible to bring attention to the upcoming Safe Handling Awareness Day webinar, as well as to safe handling in general. After agreeing to work on the project, my colleague and I quickly began to brainstorm how we could get people in our oncology departments involved and how we might

convince them to perform on camera. Not only would we have to get people on the edge of their seats, but they would have to get up off their seats and dance! Little did we know how many “hams” we had on staff.

I worked with the video director to coordinate the types of scenes he might want to create and how many people we would need for each scene.



I then began to contact all my most enthusiastic colleagues to tell them about this fabulous opportunity to showcase our cancer program’s safety accomplishments at a national level and to ask for their support. Then I sent out the selected background music track to everyone who had agreed to participate so they could start perfecting their moves.

And speaking of our moves, what if we didn’t really have any moves? I became a little nervous about the “group dance” that was planned; a more choreographed group shot with lots of people dancing in chemo PPE. Part of the scene would mention “a well-choreographed safe handling program.” What if we were not well choreographed? It suddenly occurred to me that in the absence of a choreographer, as the onsite coordinator, I might be asked to choreograph. YIKES! If you find yourself in need

of an oncology nurse, I am great to have around. If you need a choreographer, I am *not* who you are looking for. So I started my search for someone who could help us look hip and put together and was lucky enough to find Dominique, a generous Zumba instructor, totally willing to help with our project.

On the day of shooting, staff showed up when and where they were supposed to—almost exactly as planned! We shot around eight hours of footage with doctors, nurses, pharmacists, environmental services staff, techs, and more, all grooving to the music and showing off their best safe handling moves. The group scene was absolutely the most fun. It’s amazing that you can work with people for years and never know that they missed their chance on “So You Think You Can Dance.” The experience was awesome and added a great element of fun and focus to an everyday practice that is often underemphasized. We were so proud of the final video product, and the momentum from the day has carried over long after we “wrapped.”

I had the privilege of moderating a program at this year’s ONS Congress and presented the “Get Steppin’ to Safe Handling” video to that audience. It was so great to see the kind of reaction we were all hoping for when this project began. The audience smiled and enjoyed the music, but they also got the message: Safe handling practices are an important part of the work we do and there is a right way to do it. Now *that* is something to get excited about! 🎉

Shannon M. Hazen, RN, BSN, OCN, is Regional Oncology Education Coordinator at Novant Health, Presbyterian Cancer Center, Charlotte, N.C.