

**When the Going  
Gets Tough ...**

# **... the Tough Tell the Story**

**Jeanine Nistler**

Communications Director

**CENTRA**CARE Health System

# ■ Pakistani holy warriors quit aiding Taliban/3A

**Saturday**  
Nov. 17, 2001  
www.sctimes.com

## ST. CLOUD **Times**

St. Cloud, Minnesota

**Weather**  
Today: Sunny, breezy  
High: 64 Low: 40  
Details: 8A

141ST YEAR, NO. 147

# Hospital investigates 2 deaths



**Authorities rule out equipment failure, staff error as causes**

**By Hiran Ratnayake  
and Sue Halena**  
Times staff writers

St. Cloud Hospital officials hope to have an explanation by the middle of next week for the recent deaths of two hospital patients.

Staff error and equipment failure were ruled out as medical authorities reviewed records, spoke to employees and tested instruments this week, said Dr. Daniel Whitlock, vice president for medical affairs at the hospital.

The investigation, involving the Minnesota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is examining the cause of the two deaths and whether they could be related. Infection appears unlikely in one case, Whitlock said.

A 23-year-old Willmar man and a 78-year-old Litchfield man died Sunday after having knee surgeries at the hospital. Both cases showed symptoms of a

bleeding disorder but not fever, Whitlock said.

The Kandiyohi County coroner's office at Rice Memorial Hospital in Willmar identified the 23-year-old man as Brian Lykins. The Litchfield man has been identified by family acquaintances as Wayne Hulterstrum, 78.

Staph infection and flesh-eating disease have been ruled out, hospital spokeswoman Jeanine Nistler said. Anthrax cultures came back negative in both cases, Whitlock said.

### Deaths unusual

Hospital President John Frobenius said differences

found in the two cases have made him increasingly doubtful that the two are related.

The two patients had different types of surgery done by different surgeons and staff in different rooms with different air systems, hospital officials said.

Frobenius expressed sympathy for the families involved.

Frobenius said he spoke Friday to state health commissioner Jan Malcolm and was assured that the hospital is safe.

Between the time of the surgeries and the two

See DEATHS, 4A ►



**Brian Lykins**  
Died Sunday  
at St. Cloud  
Hospital

Times photo by Jason Wachter

Dr. Daniel Whitlock, vice president for medical affairs at St. Cloud Hospital, spoke with the media Friday about the two recent deaths at the facility.

# 1 DEAD, 1 CRITICAL

## Freshman arrested in Rocori shooting

**Schools  
will ease  
students  
back in**  
Officials plan  
shortened day

By Sarah Colburn  
scolburn@stcloudtimes.com

COLD SPRING — Some classes will resume today in the Rocori school district, but things will be far from normal.

Rocori high school and middle school students will begin two hours late and operate from the middle school building. Officers, counselors and some religious leaders will fill school hallways and the entrances.

"As people come back to school they need to have the feeling they're safe and secure," Rocori Superintendent Scott Staska said.

High school students will spend the morning in the middle school gymnasium. Parents may attend the



Times photo by Dave Schwarz, dschwarz@stcloudtimes.com

Students and parents embrace Wednesday afternoon after the fatal shooting at Rocori High School. One student is dead, another hospitalized.

Worried  
parents  
rush to  
high school

By Kelly Scott  
and Dave Aeikens  
kscott@stcloudtimes.com;  
daeikens@stcloudtimes.com

COLD SPRING — A Rocori High School student died and another was critically injured Wednesday in the state's first fatal shooting in a high school.

Aaron Rollins, 17, a senior, died at St. Cloud Hospital after being shot once in the neck. Seth Bartell, 16, a freshman, was in critical condition after being shot twice, once in the head and once in the chest. He underwent surgery at St. Cloud Hospital, where doctors say his survival would be measured hour by hour.

A teacher stopped suspected shooter John J. McLaughlin, 15, who was taken into custody moments after the shooting. He is in Stearns County Jail.

Police and school officials are prevented by law from releasing the names of the victims, particularly in cases where they have not

## Media Release

March 16, 2011

Contact: Jeanine Nistler  
Director of Communications  
CentraCare Health System  
(320) 229-4983  
nistlerj@centracare.com

### St. Cloud Hospital, state health department investigate unusual bacterial infections

**St. Cloud, Minn.** – St. Cloud Hospital is working with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to investigate unusual bloodstream bacterial infections among a group of 23 patients. The preliminary investigation has focused on patients who were hospitalized on one unit from October 2010 through early March 2011.

Hospital and MDH officials believe the patients acquired the infections during their hospital stays.

"We are deeply saddened and sincerely regret this situation," said Craig Broman, St. Cloud Hospital president. "We take this matter very seriously. Our highest priority is to provide safe, quality patient care."

The preliminary investigation suggests the infection occurred because a nurse may have inadvertently introduced bacteria into intravenous (IV) bags of painkillers while diverting drugs for personal use. St. Cloud Hospital has suspended the nurse and a criminal investigation is under way. St. Cloud Hospital followed proper reporting procedures with local, state and national regulatory bodies and federal authorities.

- More -

# 23 PATIENTS INADVERTENTLY INFECTED HOSPITAL NURSE SUSPENDED



Times photo by Jason Wachter, jwachter@stcloudtimes.com

**Linda Chmielewski, vice president of hospital operations and chief nursing officer at St. Cloud Hospital, (left) and Craig Broman, hospital president, describe the investigation Wednesday. For a video, visit [scetimes.com](http://scetimes.com).**

## Officials probe theft of medication from IV bags

By David Unze  
dunze@stcloudtimes.com

A St. Cloud Hospital nurse is suspended pending an investigation into claims that the nurse inadvertently introduced bacterial infections into 23 patients while stealing pain medication from patients' IV bags for personal use.

The 23 patients were in one, unidentified unit of the hospital at various times between October and early March and were treated for the resulting symptoms, the most common of which was fever. Those patients have been released from the hospital, although one had to be readmitted for symptoms related to the infection.

A criminal investigation is under

way involving the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Food and Drug Administration, and hospital officials asked anyone who might have been affected by the infections to call its Quality Resources Department at 255-5788.

It appears that the nurse, whom hospital officials wouldn't identify, used a syringe to remove the pain medication from IV bags and replaced it with either saline or air to make it appear the level of pain medication hadn't changed, said Linda Chmielewski, vice president of hospital operations/chief nursing officer.

"All of us at St. Cloud Hospital are troubled and saddened by this situation. This is a serious deviation from our rigorous standards that we are so very proud of," she said at a news conference Wednesday at the hospital.

The patients were among "hundreds" who would have stayed in the particular hospital unit where the nurse is thought to have diverted the medication, hospital spokeswoman Jeanine Nistler said. Those patients were at the hospital for treatment of a wide range of medical issues in a unit that holds 50-65 patients at a time, she said.

The bacteria found in the patients' blood was *Ochrobactrum anthropi* and *Klebsiella oxytoca*, according to the hospital. The bacteria occurs in the air or on surfaces and usually isn't found in people, Chmielewski said.

The hospital in December and January had identified the bacteria in at least one patient and in mid-February noticed an unusual increase of positive blood cultures



St. Cloud Hospital Clinical Director of Surgery Larry Asplin shows Wednesday how a checklist is used by each person in the hospital's operating rooms before starting surgery as a way to avoid making preventable errors. TIMES PHOTO BY KIM ANDERSON, KAM@DOWNSIDEOUTTIMES.COM

# HOSPITAL HAS FEWER ERRORS

By Frank Lee  
frank@cloudtimes.com

Preventable errors at St. Cloud Hospital fell for a third year, while the number increased slightly in hospitals statewide, according to today's mandated report by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Despite the increase in incidents in a statewide level, the number of events resulting in serious injury or death to a patient decreased from 107 in 2010 to 89 in 2011, the lowest level of harm since 2007, according to the MDH.

"Even though some of our long-term patient-safety efforts are paying off, we must never lose sight of the fact that each adverse event has an impact on a patient and that patient's family," Minnesota Health Commissioner Ed Ehlinger said in a statement.

The number of "adverse health events" reported at St. Cloud Hospital decreased by one to nine — none of which resulted in death — continuing a trend from previous years; however, three falls at the CentraCare Health System facility resulted in "serious disabili-

## ADVERSE EVENTS UP SLIGHTLY STATEWIDE

The number of reportable adverse events in Minnesota hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers and community behavioral health hospitals increased from 105 in 2010 to 116 in 2011, according to a report released today by the Minnesota Department of Health.

• The number of serious falls rose 71, a decrease of 11 percent from 2010 and more than 25 percent from a high of 93 serious falls three years ago. Only the most serious falls are required to be reported through this

system; therefore, every prevented fall means serious harm or death to a patient has been avoided.

• After increasing for the past few years, wrong-site or genitourinary procedures declined by 23 percent in 2011 from 31 to 24.

• After two years of sustained work by staff in labor and delivery units to implement processes for counting sponges and other items, no retained foreign objects were reported in labor and delivery in 2011.

Source: Minnesota Department of Health

ty" — down by two since the last MDH report.

CentraCare, like other providers, has adopted preventive processes.

"We actually have a time-out process at the beginning of every surgery, so there's a time out to make sure everyone is on the same page," said Dr. Mark Mathias, vice president of medical affairs for St. Cloud Hospital.

Larry Asplin, clinical director

of surgery at the hospital, said, "It's a protocol that is followed 100 percent of the time, and that's part of the initiative of the Minnesota Hospital Association that we adopted quite a while ago."

### Statewide increase

The number of reportable adverse events in Minnesota hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers

- **Building trust & credibility – internally & with media**
- **Internal audiences first**
- **Transparency vs. stonewalling**
- **Key messages**
- **Bridging**
- **Appropriate spokesperson**

# **The CDC says ...**

- Be first.
- Be right.
- Be credible.

**To function in a crisis,  
people need to have answers to:**

- What is happening?
- Why is it happening?
- What will happen next?
- What can I do?

**Stress  
affects**

**comprehension**



**Keep it simple:**

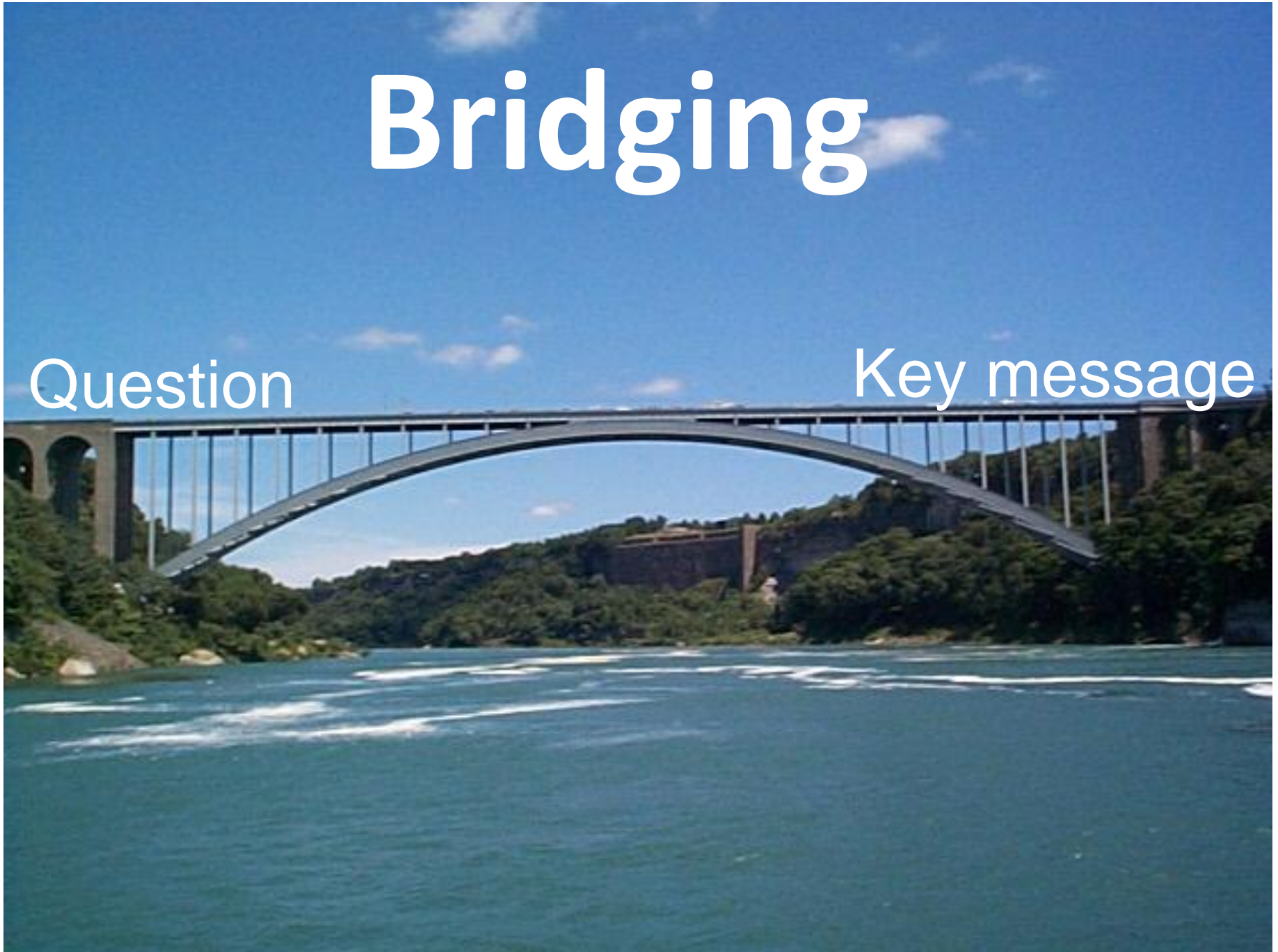
# **3-3-30 method**

- **3 short sentences that convey ...**
- **3 key messages in ...**
- **30 words or less**

# Bridging

Question

Key message



***Now, it's your turn.***

- Who are your audiences?
- What do they care about?
- What do they ***need*** to know?
- Who will speak for your organization?
- What ***can*** you say? What ***will*** you say?
- And ... Who approves information before you release it?

Jeanine Nistler  
Communications Director  
**CENTRACARE** Health System  
St. Cloud, Minnesota

[nistlerj@centracare.com](mailto:nistlerj@centracare.com)  
(320) 229-4983