

Mercy Touch Magazine editor Sharon Konchar got an inside look at Mercy's busy Emergency Department.

# A SNEEK PEEK

AT MERCY'S ER

A Level III trauma facility, Mercy Medical Center's Emergency Department is fully equipped with state-of-the-art technology to handle healthcare emergencies.

I was lucky enough to spend a day with ER Nurse Mackenzie Groteluschen (a.k.a. "Mack") to get a behind-the-scenes look at the Emergency Department in action.

First of all—this is not like the TV shows, other than the lingo. Instead, the ER staff dilutes any drama by reassuringly informing patients and their families about what is going on, and providing top-notch professional and efficient care. Sure, the wails of ambulances sound in the background and monitors emit loud warning sounds, but the people who work in the ER are very real and they know people are trusting them with their lives.

A diminutive ball of fire, Mack begins her shift at 3 a.m. and is full of energy, proficiency and patience. She darts from typing information into a

computer in the nurses' station to patients' bedsides to consults with ER physicians like the ball in a pinball machine.

"You just get used to doing three things at once," she says with a smile.

As Mack talks to a patient who just arrived with high blood pressure, shortness of breath and excessive ankle swelling (signs of potential heart distress), another nurse approaches the patient's bedside to start an IV, while a lab tech waits in the wings to collect blood for testing to provide physicians with needed information. Providing emergency healthcare definitely takes a team.

Each person who tends to a patient at Mercy Medical Center must ask his or her name and birthday—every time! It gets a little repetitive, but this Mercy Patient Identifier safety initiative is the



Be prepared for your next emergency visit – download a health history form to fill out and keep in your billfold at [www.mercycare.org/ER](http://www.mercycare.org/ER)

single most effective way to ensure the right care is given to the right patient. The patients take it in stride after a brief explanation.

Today, we don't have any cases of emergency heart attacks or accident victims, but the place is hopping with a wide array of people seeking immediate care. Mercy's ER does not support call-ahead wait times as the hospital does not want a patient to waste valuable life-saving time by picking up the phone or possibly delaying treatment due to reported wait times. Instead, Mercy prefers to offer a 30 minute or less guaranteed wait time.

Surprisingly, most patients bring a list of current medications and dosages, which is greatly appreciated by the medical staff. As someone who can never remember medication information, I was motivated to pick up a Mercy Health Medication Record, which folds down to about the size of a credit card, and place it in my billfold.

Soon Mack is alerted that a patient is arriving via ambulance. An older gentleman, he is disoriented and difficult to understand—the result of a blood sugar level of just 34. An IV is immediately started to provide fluids. Later, after getting some food and juice into his system, his blood sugar level eventually rises to a healthy 147 and he's released to go home.

Another patient has become a familiar face to the ER, as she has been a patient 10 times in four months for various concerns. And she is not an exception—this often is the case for individuals who do not have a family doctor or just want immediate care, explains Mack. Mercy does have an urgent care facility both at the north and south side of Cedar Rapids, but

for a variety of reasons, patients may opt to go to the ER.

As Mack's day winds down, she carefully transitions her patients to the care of a co-worker. I don't know about Mack, but my feet are tired!

**"I don't know about Mack, but my feet are tired!"**

Sharon Konchar  
Mercy  
Marketing Department

Nurse Mackenzie Groteluschen (a.k.a. "Mack") is an energetic force in Mercy's Emergency Department. Working in the busy ER means you get used to doing three things at once, says Mack.



The area's only accredited Chest Pain Center.