

HPAE POSITION PAPER I – SEPTEMBER 2022

Citation and Notification of Penalty

To: Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center and its successors 1945 ROUTE 33 Neptune, NJ 07753

Inspection Site: 1945 ROUTE 33 Neptune, NJ 07753

Inspection Number: 1473469
Inspection Date(s): 04/29/2020 - 10/29/2020
Issuance Date: 10/29/2020

U.S. Department of Labor
Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Inspection Number: 1480762
Inspection Date(s): 06/26/2020 - 12/08/2020
Issuance Date: 12/08/2020

Citation 1 Item 2 c Type of Violation: Serious
29 CFR 1910.134(f)(2); Employee(s) using tight-fitting facepiece respirators were not fit tested prior initial use of the respirator, whenever a different respirator facepiece (size, style, model or make) was used, and at least annually thereafter:

(a) Facility located at 1945 ROUTE 33, Neptune, NJ 07753
Nurses, Patient Care

Citation and Notification of Penalty

Company Name: Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center
Inspection Site: 1945 ROUTE 33, Neptune, NJ 07753

U.S. Department of Labor
Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Inspection Number: 1480762
Inspection Date(s): 06/26/2020 - 12/08/2020
Issuance Date: 12/08/2020

Citation 1 Item 2 b Type of Violation: Serious
1910.134(c)(7)(iv): The employer did not provide protective equipment, including respirators, in accordance with the requirements of 29 CFR 1910.134 when a change in the work environment or a change in the physical or physiological burden of work creates a need for such equipment.

Citation 1 Item 1 Type of Violation: Serious
1910.132(a): Protective equipment, including respirators, was not provided whenever it was necessary to protect employees from exposure to SARS-CoV-2 virus. On or about 6/11/2020, employees caring for COVID-19 patients were not provided respirators for protection from exposure to SARS-CoV-2 virus. At a minimum, a N95 respirator is effective in filtering out 95% of aerosolized SARS-CoV-2 virus. This violation put employees at risk of contracting COVID-19 and exposed them to SARS-CoV-2 virus.

ABATEMENT CERTIFICATION AND DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR THIS ITEM

Date By Which Violation Must be Abated:
Proposed Penalty:

Amount Due: \$15,422.00
Payment Due Date: 15 working days after receipt of this letter

Violation Must be Abated by: 11/25/2020
Your Citation: Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center
Inspection Number: 1480762

I do not agree with the proposed penalty and/or correction deadline(s) and/or contest.

Questions or Concerns?
If you have any questions or concerns regarding the citation, penalties, and/or correction deadlines, please call us at (856) 596-5200.

Citation and Notification of Penalty

Company Name: Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center
Inspection Site: 1945 ROUTE 33, Neptune, NJ 07753

Citation 1 Item 2 a Type of Violation: Serious
The alleged violations below have been grouped because they involve similar or related hazards that may increase the potential for injury or illness.

January 05, 2021
\$13,494.00

ABATEMENT DOCUMENTATION

Date By Which Violation Must be Abated:

New Jersey's largest hospital corporation brings in billions in profits while receiving millions in government subsidies during a global pandemic.

Are patients and workers benefiting from these windfall profits?



HPAE
Putting care first

INTRODUCTION

Jersey Shore University Medical Center's Registered Nurses (RNs), members of HPAE Local 5058, have been at the forefront of the war against the coronavirus pandemic since it was barely a rumored overseas outbreak. The sickest members of our community filled our hospital seeking relief from a terrifying infectious disease unlike any the world has ever seen. Heroically, these frontline healthcare workers have sacrificed, suffered, and persevered while treating patients sick from COVID-19. They have borne the brunt of the challenges of fighting this global pandemic while working for Hackensack Meridian Health (HMH), a hospital corporation that grew even wealthier during this pandemic, seemingly at the expense of its valiant workers.

Under these incredibly stressful conditions, the nurses have also had to fight their employer for workplace protections including much-needed personal protective equipment, such as respirators, and training on how to don and doff protective equipment. The hospital was at one time inundated¹ with fake respirators.²

Working conditions at Jersey Shore University Medical Center during the pandemic led to many nurses leaving the hospital, exacerbating a staffing shortage across the hospital that has now grown into a full-blown crisis. Nurses raised concerns about this mass exodus with management only to find management impervious to their concerns.³ So, the JSUMC nurses conducted a survey of their members.

Surveyed nurses talked about a workplace and a community they love – Jersey Shore University Medical Center – and desperately wanting to see their hospital thrive. Yet they are heartbroken watching an employer that is seemingly intent on degrading a community resource just to save on some of the costs of workplace protections that the workers fought for and won over decades. They are just as concerned that this employer seems more intent on maintaining an adversarial relationship with their unionized nurses than taking concerns to heart.

"Management does a poor job of staffing every single shift. There needs to be better structure, there needs to be rules that protect us while we work. Since I've been there, I have seen five different ANMs (Assistant Nurse Managers) leave to take other jobs elsewhere. There needs to be change, stability, and more support for your hardest working staff members."

– RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response⁴

HACKENSACK MERIDIAN HEALTH BACKGROUND:

A Profitable Non-Profit

Hackensack Meridian Health (HMH), a non-profit corporation, is one of two of the largest and wealthiest health care entities in the state of New Jersey, with over 36,000 employees.⁵ HMH has 12 acute care hospital locations, one substance use disorder hospital, two children's hospitals, 12 urgent care centers, 332 affiliated physician offices, 18 laboratories, one medical school, for a total of 568 locations across the state, mostly in central and northern New Jersey.⁶ The merger between Meridian Health and Hackensack University Health was finalized on July 1, 2016.

In 2019, the year before the COVID-19 pandemic, HMH had its biggest year-to-date profit, euphemistically called “excess revenue over expenses,”⁷ at year end: **\$691,427,000.**⁸ The first year of the pandemic saw a drop in profit for HMH, but it still ended 2020 with **\$429,525,000** in total profit.⁹ The second year into the pandemic saw HMH end the year with almost pre-pandemic profits, **\$558,684,000** in total profit.¹⁰

Despite an enormous “excess of revenue over expenses” every year since the inception of HMH, worker and patient safety seem to have declined. From the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 through the end of 2021, HMH accumulated 19 Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) complaints and/or fatality investigations (12 of the 19 investigations were for fatalities).¹¹ Most have resulted in OSHA citations. But HMH would rather spend hundreds of thousands of dollars fighting these citations than crafting a plan of correction and paying fines. Ultimately, HMH has failed to invest in the safety, training, and recruitment of its workers during the pandemic, all of which fail the patients.

In addition to large profits, HMH was the beneficiary of large sums of money allotted by the federal government, through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The CDC databases for tracking the dispersal of CARES Act funds nationwide, shows that HMH was allotted **\$925,867,507** in General Provider and High Impact relief funds.¹²

In an Office of Legislative Services’ FY2023 New Jersey state budget analysis, the NJ Department of Health (NJ DOH) stated that HMH was going to receive **\$100,000,000** of ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Funds.¹³ The NJ state budget bill included additional ARPA money going to HMH’s Carrier Clinic Inpatient Behavioral Health Expansion – **\$5,000,000**, as well as state appropriations going to HMH Medical School – **\$2,000,000** and Jersey Shore University Medical Center – **\$250,000.**¹⁴ In total, HMH will receive **\$105,000,000** in ARPA funds.

Should a health system that made almost two billion dollars (\$1,679,636,000) in profit over the past three years alone, be allotted \$1,030,867,507 in federal pandemic relief funds? What does HMH need relief from?

Jersey Shore University Medical Center HPAE Member Survey¹⁵

From December 31, 2021 to July 19, 2022, **HPAE Local 5058** polled members at JSUMC, with almost half of the membership responding.¹⁶ Member responses show unequivocally the lack of trust workers have for hospital management's attention to working conditions, staffing levels, and patient safety. Unionized nurses at JSUMC reported not feeling their efforts are supported by hospital management, nor do they feel respected or protected.

A diverse representation of units responded to the survey from the hospital with only two units providing ten percent each to total respondents; the other 80 percent of respondents were disbursed over 52 units or job positions. 99 percent of respondents were staff RNs.

- 47% said they do not have the support they need from other personnel to care for patients due to staffing shortages;
 - 29% said they did have the support of other personnel when needed.¹⁷
- 54% said they would not feel safe being treated as a patient at JSUMC;
 - 20% said they would feel safe being treated at JSUMC.
- 58% said they do not feel safe at JSUMC as a staff member;
 - 19% said they did feel safe as a staff member.
- 52% felt their suggestions about safety would be ignored if they expressed them to management;
 - 21% felt their safety suggestions would be acted upon by management.
- 67% said JSUMC is not a good place to work;
 - 12% felt it was a good place to work.
- 79% said that morale is low in their clinical area;
 - 10% said morale was high.
- 77% said their workload is often excessive;
 - 7% said their workload was not often excessive.
- 88% said their work performance is impaired when the workload is excessive;
 - 3% disagreed with this statement.

In early April, an emergency room nurse and union leader there who had been outspoken in his fight for more personal protective equipment contended he was fired because of his complaints.

Asbury Park Press | May 15, 2020

"Over the past three months, we have lost many experienced RN's due to the lack of organization and support the department needs. Morale is beyond poor; it is in the toilet. Then, with this last wave of COVID and over 50 staff members out sick, the nurses went from a four-patient assignment to a six-patient assignment. Some nurses having multiple ICU patients and COVID patients, this has been beyond unsafe. Internal triage held up wards of 50 patients with COVID patients mixed on with non-COVID patients. The worst being no staff available to care for these people. These patients were sitting in soiled clothing. Not medicated as per orders due to lack of staff. Upper management chose not to place us on divert or bypass. It is beyond sad that HMH cannot properly care for the community in these tough times. Yet, they are putting patients and staff at risk."

— RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

- 84% said they are more likely to make errors in tense or hostile situations;
 - 5% said this was not true for them.
- 50% said they often experience tense or hostile situations in their department;
 - 22% said they did not.
- 79% said hospital management does not do what is necessary to keep staff safe at work;
 - 7% felt hospital management did what was necessary to keep staff safe.
- In comparison 35% said departmental management does not do what is necessary to keep them safe at work and 34% said departmental management did what was necessary to keep them safe.
- 81% said that hospital management does not support their daily efforts;
 - 4% said hospital management did support their daily efforts.
- In comparison 31% said that departmental management does not support their efforts and 42% said departmental management did support their daily efforts.
- 88% said that hospital management is not doing a good job;
 - 3% said hospital management was doing a good job.
- In comparison 31% said departmental management is not doing a good job and 39% said departmental management was doing a good job.
- 78% said that staffing levels in their clinical area are insufficient to handle the number of patients;
 - 9% said staffing levels in their clinical area were sufficient.
- 61% said the hospital does not do a good job of training new personnel;
 - 14% said the hospital does a good job training new staff.

"We have operated without a manager for two years. Our ANMs are doing the best they can but they shouldn't have to take on patient care tasks with managerial tasks. Everyone is so burnt out and these handouts of chocolate bars, a cafeteria voucher, or a petting zoo is an insult. We are adults, worthy of dignity and respect and not kindergarteners, dazzled by candy and a puppy."

— RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

Nothing could be more damning than to have 54 percent of RN respondents say they would not feel safe being treated at JSUMC, even though they work in the hospital. With 58 percent of respondents stating they do not feel safe working in the hospital and 79 percent stating that hospital management does not take adequate steps to keep them safe, it is a clear indictment of HMH's lack of urgency around these issues.

CORONAVIRUS

'We feel disposable': NJ nurses union cites lack of protection during coronavirus pandemic

NorthJersey.com | July 20, 2020

HMH's disregard for the safety of employees, and by extension patients, reflects a culture that views safety as inconsequential. Rather than viewing workers as essential to the contribution of financial health as well as helping to build a positive reputation, HMH prefers to wage war on its workers through intimidation and retaliation. One example, Adam Witt, RN, former **Local 5058** president, was fired in 2020 after complaining about the lack of proper PPE in the first weeks of the pandemic.¹⁸ An arbitrator awarded Mr. Witt his job back but instead of reinstating him to his nursing position HMH is spending thousands of dollars litigating the arbitrator's decision.

"The staffing is absolutely unsafe. I was recently in a three-patient assignment and another patient coded and I was pulled away from my patients to assist with the code. I am frequently in a three-patient assignment and our patients are suffering. We are unable to turn patients to reposition them appropriately and have had two falls due to poor staffing. If we have a 1:1 it is floor to cover. The PCT is stuck watching the patient. If we have a patient that is supposed to be a nursing 1:1 that doesn't happen either, and the nurse is assigned a hopefully more stable patient. Recently a nurse started TTM on a patient but had another patient in their assignment. These conditions are incredibly unsafe and make me not want to come to work. On top of that we are not compensated nearly enough. Every day I come to work I am putting my license on the line by working through unsafe conditions. My license is how I make a living to feed my family and pay my mortgage. If I lose my nursing license, I lose a lot of things in my life. I don't think the staff get the compensation and benefits they deserve."

— RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

TRENTON BUREAU

How the powerful NJ hospital interests beat back stronger health laws during COVID

NorthJersey.com | April 23, 2021

"I was excited to be hired for what I thought was my dream job. I quickly learned that the hospital finds its team members dispensable. I would love the floor I work on if we were better paid and better staffed. There are travel nurses with no loyalty to the hospital that are making four times the amount current staff nurses make. If staff nurses at this hospital were treated better, I do not think so many people would be leaving to become travel nurses. Nurses are also now coming back WITH COVID infections since we are so short staffed because management is telling them to do so."

— RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

Occupational Health & Safety

Almost 60 percent of respondents said they do not feel safe at work and 79 percent said that hospital management does not do what is necessary to keep staff safe. This speaks to two areas of safety: personnel safety from workplace violence and personnel safety related to occupational hazards. In this paper we address the occupational hazards specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁹

Occupational Health and Safety During COVID-19

During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, healthcare was unprepared for the onslaught of tragedy. Front line healthcare workers put their lives on the line every day, working grueling hours and facing endless patient deaths. In the first few weeks of the pandemic, based upon worker statements, many hospitals would not allow workers to wear personal protective equipment (PPE such as masks, respirators).

“Every day that I work is overwhelming for the nurses and staff, and unsafe for patient care. It is draining and exhausting. Nurses, I included, are in literal tears during the shift because of how overwhelming it is. Yet, hospital management does not seem to care about this. They provide us with the poor patient survey results and want to know what we, the nurses, can do to improve the scores. We are already giving everything we have! We have become transport, EVS, and kitchen staff, just to name a few.”

— RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

Soon it was very clear that masks were the first line of defense to control the spread of the virus. A national shortage of PPE ensued, with workers desperate for proper PPE. During this time, complaints were filed against hospital employers by workers and labor unions for violation of Occupational Safety & Health Act (OSHA) regulations.

Beginning with the first HMH complaint in April 2020 through December 2021, HMH amassed 19 complaints/investigations, eight of which were filed by HPAE. The remainder were filed by workers in HMH facilities not represented by HPAE. The

19 complaints have narrowed down to 15 (the other four were possibly withdrawn by complainant, *see Table 2*). Just in the eight complaints filed by HPAE, OSHA found 33 violations, most of which involved PPE/respiratory protection for workers (*See Table 1*). Of the remaining facilities with workers not represented by HPAE, there were 18 violations, many of which involved PPE/respiratory protection.²⁰

‘How do you ever truly recover from seeing so much death?’ Anguished nurses face the pandemic’s second wave.

NJ.com | November 8, 2020

Table 1: Hackensack Meridian Health OSHA Violations at Facilities with HPAE Members

OSHA Citation – 29 Code of Federal Regulations/CFR	Number of OSHA Investigation Cases Receiving This Citation
PPE Violations	
1910.132 (a)	1
Respiratory Protection Violations	
1910.134 (e) (7) (i)	1
1910.134 (e) (7) (iv)	1
1910.134 (a) (2)	2
1910.134 (e) (1)	2
1910.134 (e) (2) (ii)	2
1910.134 (f) (2)	7
1910.134 (k) (1)	3
1910.134 (k) (5) (iii)	2
1910.134 (m) (2) (i)	2
Hazard Communication Violations	
1910.1200 (e) (1)	1
1910.1200 (h) (1)	1
Recordkeeping – OSHA 300 Log Violations	
1904.35 (a) (3)	2
1904.35 (b) (2) (iii)	1
1904.4 (a)	3
1904.39 (a) (1)	2

Another distinction related to HMH's OSHA violations, during the first 21 months of the pandemic, of those 19 complaints/investigations (currently 15), 12 (currently 11) of them were categorized as Fatality/Catastrophic (see Table 2). In each instance an HMH worker died of COVID-19, which was presumed to be contracted on the job.

At one point at Jersey Shore University Medical Center, HMH had procured counterfeit N95 respirators. Even after alerting HMH that the N95 masks provided to workers were counterfeit, workers continued to report that counterfeits remained in HMH's supply.²¹

Federal workplace safety regulators are investigating complaints that Jersey Shore Medical Center gave trash bags for staff to wear and weren't providing properly fitting respirator masks to prevent infection.

NJ1015.com | May 14, 2020

Hackensack Meridian has invested much time and money in legal fees to appeal the OSHA fines and would prefer to have all citations stricken from its record. OSHA inspectors do not hand out citations indiscriminately; for HMH to fight so hard against this federal agency for its numerous safety transgressions speaks to HMH's lack of commitment to protect workers and patients.

Table 2: OSHA Establishment Search of Hackensack Meridian Complaints/Investigations²²

 UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

[f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [r](#) [e](#) [m](#) [y](#)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

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[OSHA](#) [STANDARDS](#) [ENFORCEMENT](#) [TOPICS](#) [HELP AND RESOURCES](#) [NEWS](#)

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Establishment Search Results

Establishment	Date Range	Office	Zipcode	State
Hackensack Meridian Health	01/01/2020 to 12/31/2021	all	all	all

Please note that inspections which are known to be incomplete will have the identifying Activity Nr shown in italic. Information for these open cases is especially dynamic, e.g., violations may be added or deleted.

[Sort By: Date](#) | [Name](#) | [Office](#) | [State](#)

[Return to Search](#)

By Date

Results 1 - 15 of 15

[Get Detail](#) [Select All](#) [Reset](#)

#	Activity	Opened	RID	St	Type	Sc	SIC	NAICS	Vio	Establishment Name
1	1569014.015	12/15/2021	0213900	NJ	Complaint	Partial	623110			Hackensack Meridian Health Nursing & Rehabilitation - Shrewsbury
2	1515264.015	02/18/2021	0213900	NJ	Fat/Cat	Partial	623110	2		Hackensack Meridian Health Nursing & Rehabilitation - Shrewsbury
3	1505865.015	12/10/2020	0213900	NJ	Complaint	Complete	622110			Hackensack Meridian Health Jersey Shore University Medical Center
4	1486544.015	08/04/2020	0214500	NJ	Fat/Cat	Partial	623110	1		Hackensack Meridian Health Nursing & Rehab - Regent Care Center
5	1483597.015	07/17/2020	0214200	NJ	Fat/Cat	Complete	622110	1		Hackensack Meridian Health System
6	1477909.015	06/05/2020	0214200	NJ	Fat/Cat	Complete	622110	1		Hackensack Meridian Health System
7	1476465.015	05/28/2020	0214200	NJ	Fat/Cat	Partial	623110	3		Hackensack Meridian Health Residential Care Inc., The Harborage
8	1476526.015	05/28/2020	0213400	NJ	Fat/Cat	Partial	622110	3		Hackensack Meridian Health, Inc.
9	1474520.015	05/11/2020	0214500	NJ	Fat/Cat	Complete	622110	1		Hackensack Meridian Health Hospitals Corporation
10	1474325.015	05/06/2020	0214200	NJ	Complaint	Partial	623110	4		Hackensack Meridian Health Residential Care Inc., The Harborage
11	1474055.015	05/06/2020	0214200	NJ	Complaint	Complete	622110	1		Hackensack Meridian Health System
12	1473553.015	04/29/2020	0214500	NJ	Fat/Cat	Partial	622110	1		Hackensack Meridian Health Hospitals Corporation
13	1473005.015	04/24/2020	0214200	NJ	Fat/Cat	Complete	622110	3		Hackensack Meridian Health System
14	1472295.015	04/13/2020	0214500	NJ	Fat/Cat	Partial	622110	1		Hackensack Meridian Health Hospitals Corporation
15	1472186.015	04/10/2020	0214500	NJ	Fat/Cat	Partial	622110	2		Hackensack Meridian Health Hospitals Corporation

7

Hackensack Meridian Health Financial Wealth

An analysis of Hackensack Meridian Health audited financial statements and IRS Form 990s reveal an extremely wealthy healthcare system, even despite the COVID-19 pandemic. HMH is a non-profit in name only when looking at the “excess of revenue over expenses.” Even though HMH showed a small operating loss in 2021, its non-operating income more than made up for it. In comparison to pre-pandemic 2019, HMH profit was just \$132,743,000 less in 2021.²³ While that may seem like a huge financial loss on its face, 2019 profits were \$691,427,000, almost three-quarters of a billion dollars.²⁴

HEALTH

OSHA investigating Jersey Shore Medical Center over staff safety complaints

Asbury Park Press | May 15, 2020

- In 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, HMH made **\$429,525,000 in profit.**²⁵
- In 2021, **HMH made \$558,684,000 in profit**, the second year of the pandemic.²⁶
- Between 2017 (the first full year of the merger between Meridian Health and Hackensack University Health System) and 2021, **HMH made \$2,272,554,000 in profit.**²⁷
- HMH ended 2021 with **324 days cash on hand**, meaning it could continue to pay all expenses for 324 days if all revenue stopped. The state median for all hospitals in 2021 was 188 days.²⁸

Even though HMH shows significant losses in the first six months of 2022, there was no precipitous downturn from operations. In fact, the operating margin was only about one percent worse than last year and Federal rescue funds made up for the operating loss at the end of the second quarter, leaving HMH in the black.²⁹ By far, the biggest losses are related to losses on investments, as experienced by anyone trading on Wall Street.³⁰ And still, as seen in Becker’s Hospital Review in August 2022, HMH is viewed as financially strong.³¹

“Jersey Shore has become a very difficult place to work. Every time I go to work now, I expect to be severely understaffed and have an unsafe patient load. Patient care is suffering. Staff morale is non-existent. We feel no support from department management or upper management of the hospital. A nurse should not work in fear of losing their license due to unsafe work conditions. We feel like that every day. Two nurses responsible for 40 or more patients as well as the constant flow of new patients? No lunch breaks? Large room assignments? This is not safe! No wonder why amazing, experienced nurses are leaving when area hospitals are offering over \$100 an hour extra to staff the hospital to make it safer and help patient care.”

– RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

BUSINESS

Feds: Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore broke rules in failed unionization drive

Asbury Park Press | February 8, 2022

Conclusion

Hackensack Meridian Health has managed to portray themselves as a worthy investment and yet there is little accountability for how they have invested in improving worker and patient safety in their facilities. In actuality, it is a billion-dollar, highly profitable corporation that capitalizes off the labor of overworked underpaid staff, while the corporation is rewarded with record profits.

Since the merger of HMH took place, executives have targeted workers and have subjected them to a demoralizing and unsafe working environment. HMH has chosen to fight to have OSHA citations erased from its record and avoid fines, even for all the fatalities of workers during the pandemic; and HMH has intimidated and retaliated against workers who insist on health and safety precautions.³²

It seems HMH has its priorities skewed: rather than attempting to tear down its workers, it should be building them up; rather than trying to evade the law, it should be obeying the law; rather than making working conditions for workers intolerable to the detriment of patient care because HMH does not want a unionized workplace, it should be rewarding those workers for the sacrifices they make every day for the sake of their patients.

It is past time for HMH to do the right thing.

"I have seen how much it has changed since it was Meridian and now Hackensack Meridian. After merging, it seemed the hospital became more of a corporation that only cares about money and how to make more of it with the least possible resources they can use and reducing benefits at the same time. I don't believe they actually care about patient safety or any employee whatsoever. All they really care about is money and it shows in the way they treat their employees and the fact that they don't care if a unit is so short staffed patient care is compromised. I feel upper management will ask what they can do to improve things just to try to make employees think they care but never actually listen or care what employees give as feedback. They are fully aware there are issues but do nothing about it."

– RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

Additional Comments from Survey Respondents

"Staffing ratios are absolutely absurd in the ED. There are too many patients for the ED to function regardless of staffing most days. The ED staff is literally dropping like flies with little to no replacements making the environment hostile and extremely unsafe. The ED nurses RISK THEIR ACTIVE LICENSE plus PATIENTS everyday they come to work. Our managers are trying, we get that. But the HMH SYSTEM NEEDS TO DO BETTER! We can't even blame our managers because they are here toileting patients, transporting and assisting with patient care on their days off or over their 40 hour week! HMH is the problem!"

– RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

"We have had more nurses leave my unit in the last year than I have seen in my entire career! We are constantly training brand new nurses to work in an ICU. I believe since April we trainees over 30 new nurses and many of them leave. It's not fair to the experienced nurses to constantly be training new staff and then having them leave to go work at our sister hospitals for more money! Many days we have no secretaries and only one housekeeper who leaves at 3 p.m. Nurses are cleaning equipment, moving patients, and answering the phone, answering the door and screening visitors."

– RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

"I am disgusted and sickened by how obvious the differences are when working on units that make money for the hospital (PACU, SICU, etc.) versus units that don't make as much money for the hospital (ED). Administration should be ashamed of themselves... The ED had patients lying on the waiting room floor because there were no beds in the hospital... It's all about the money. No one cares about us or the patient."

– RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

"We are extremely short staffed on nights. Often, we have a charge nurse with a six-patient assignment and, sometimes, only eight nurses for the entire floor. I feel that I can't provide the best care for my patients because I have too much going on. We are short PCTs as well, so a task I could delegate I can't always. If I was a patient on my floor, I would not be happy. Management on my floor has been somewhat helpful in my opinion, but this is a larger issue that HMH needs to take responsibility for."

– RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

"I love my job and I love the people I work with. This is my community in which I live and geographically my job is perfect. However, the hospital management makes this job extremely difficult to love. When treated with such disrespect and disregard I am saddened as to where the future of this organization is going. The bottom line is always important, and I understand that, but when it is so blatantly obvious that it is the absolute focus for this organization, above patient safety, it is shameful to work here. When you drive past billboards that boast 'patient safety' and 'Best Hospital in NJ,' it's really disgraceful because the staff knows how it really is. HMH doesn't care about keeping patients safe because if they did, they wouldn't constantly short staff us the way they do."

– RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

"When it comes to teaching new hires, the hospital doesn't care if they learn proper, evidence-based practice, because if they did, they would provide more than one nurse educator for a unit that staffs close to 80 nurses. They would provide more than two assistant nurse managers for each shift that staffs with close to 17 nurses most days. If HMH truly wants to be the best hospital in NJ, then show us. Give us the resources we need to succeed and to treat our patients better. Enough with cutting corners and saving a buck, it takes money to make money. Show your nurses, the absolute backbone of the organization, that you value them."

– RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

"The system is broken. And to top it all off, hospital management continues to belittle the nurses, not giving us the same raises as the rest of the hospital employees, not compensating us fairly. It is awful. They are trying to break the union and it is disgraceful. I am no longer proud to work for Hackensack Meridian Health System. Hospital management should be supporting their nurses, not trying to break us down."

– RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

"The ER is a disaster zone. The expectation to provide adequate care for six-plus patients when, in some cases, that includes multiple ICU patients in addition to four other patients on top of that who are the highest acuity and require a room and not to be left sitting in the hallway is dangerous and unrealistic. Staff is exhausted, burnt out, and truly in fear for their licenses."

– RN, HPAE Local 5058 survey response

Notes & Sources

1. Christina Jewett. *Health Workers and Hospitals Grapple With Millions of Counterfeit N95 Masks*. Kaiser Health News, 11 February 2021, <https://khn.org/news/article/health-workers-and-hospitals-grapple-with-millions-of-counterfeit-n95-masks>
2. Christina Jewett and Jay Hancock. *Counterfeit N95 Scam Widens as Senator Demands FTC Investigation*. KHN.org, 12 February 2021, <https://khn.org/news/article/counterfeit-n95-scam-widens-as-senator-demands-ftc-investigation>
3. As of August 16, 2022, JSUMC had 398 job openings (see Footnote 11).
4. Any identifying information in responses to the survey referenced in this paper from Local 5058 members was removed. Statements are presented anonymously for the protection of the workers.
5. Hackensack Meridian Health website, <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/en/About-Us>
6. Hackensack Meridian Health website, <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/en/location-search#sort=%40distance%20ascending>
7. This is a Generally Accepted Accounting Principle (GAAP) term that is used in audited financial statements, see HMH Audited Financial Statements Summary Statements of Operations.
8. Hackensack Meridian Health 2019 Audited Financial Statement.
9. Hackensack Meridian Health 2020 Audited Financial Statement.
10. Hackensack Meridian Health 2021 Audited Financial Statement.
11. OSHA Establishment Search database originally showed 19 investigations; when viewed on 28 July 2022 that number was reduced to 15 (possibly due to withdrawal of those complaints), but 11 still fell under the fatality/catastrophic type, https://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/establishment.search?p_logger=1&establishment=Hackensack+Meridian+Health&State=all&officetype=all&Office=all&sitezip=&p_case=all&p_violations_exist=all&startmonth=01&startday=01&startyear=2020&endmonth=12&endday=31&endyear=2021
12. CDC Provider Relief Fund General Allocation, <https://data.cdc.gov/Administrative/HHS-Provider-Relief-Fund/kh8y-3es6> and CDC High Impact Relief Fund, <https://data.cdc.gov/Administrative/HHS-Provider-Relief-Fund/kh8y-3es6>
13. OLS Analysis, FY2023, Department of Health, DOH Response to OLS Questions, <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/budget-finance/governors-budget>
14. NJ Senate Bill, FY2023, pp. 89, 264, <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2022/S2023>
15. Using a survey based on an HMH management tool for assessing the climate of the work environment, Local 5058 made a few additions but essentially kept the survey close to its original form.
16. Local 5058 had 612 responses out of 1400 members.

17. With 398 job postings at JSUMC, it is understandable why RNs would feel they do not have the necessary support from other personnel to care for patients. The open positions cover ancillary support staff as well as clinical staff. HMH job listing webpage, accessed 16 August 2022, [https://jobs.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/search-jobs?orgIds=19511&ascf=\[{key%22:company_name%22,value%22:JERSEY%20SHORE%20UNIVERSITY%20MEDICAL%20CENTER%22}\]](https://jobs.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/search-jobs?orgIds=19511&ascf=[{key%22:company_name%22,value%22:JERSEY%20SHORE%20UNIVERSITY%20MEDICAL%20CENTER%22}])
18. Charges were filed with the National Labor Relations Board in 2020; An arbitrator decided in Witt's favor that he was fired without just cause and told HMH to reinstate Witt. HMH has filed a complaint in federal court to vacate the award and the Union has moved to confirm it.
19. We will provide a position paper on workplace violence and the role it plays in the daily work lives of JSUMC nurses at a later date.
20. Spencer Kent. *Fed-up health care workers allege that N.J. hospital is putting their lives at risk.* NJ Advance Media for NJ.com, 13 May 2020, <https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/2020/05/fed-up-health-care-workers-allege-nj-hospital-is-putting-their-lives-at-risk.html>
21. Based on emails from RNs regarding the fake masks and the OSHA complaint filed by HPAE.
22. Screenshot of OSHA establishment search page, accessed 3 August 2022, https://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/establishment.search?p_logger=1&establishment=Hackensack+Meridian+Health&State=all&officetype=all&Office=all&sitezip=&p_case=all&p_violations_exist=all&startmonth=01&startday=01&startyear=2020&endmonth=12&endday=31&endyear=2021
23. Hackensack Meridian Health Audited Financial Statements, 2019 and 2021.
24. Hackensack Meridian Health Audited Financial Statement, 2019.
25. Hackensack Meridian Health Audited Financial Statement, 2020.
26. Hackensack Meridian Health Audited Financial Statement, 2021.
27. Hackensack Meridian Health Audited Financial Statements, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021.
28. Calculation based on Days Cash on Hand ratio using data from Hackensack Meridian Health Audited Financial Statement, 2021. State median provided by NJ Health Care Facilities Financing Authority, <https://www.njhccfa.com/njhccfa/what/reports2.html>
29. Hackensack Meridian Unaudited 1st & 2nd Quarter Financial Statements.
30. Supra.
31. Ayla Ellison. *8 health systems with strong finances.* Becker's Hospital Review, 18 August 2022, https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/finance/8-health-systems-with-strong-finances-2.html?origin=BHRE&utm_source=BHRE&utm_medium=email&utm_content=newsletter&oly_enc_id=6811B0562389D0A
32. Spencer Kent. *Nurse fired after defending coworker, union says.* NJ.com, 8 April 2020, <https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/2020/04/nj-nurse-fired-after-defending-hospital-coworker-union-says.html>

<p>Citation and Notification of Penalty</p> <p>To: Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center and its successors 1945 ROUTE 33 Neptune, NJ 07753</p> <p>Inspection Site: 1945 ROUTE 33 Neptune, NJ 07753</p> <p>Inspection Number: 1473469 Inspection Date(s): 04/29/2020 - 10/29/2020 Issuance Date: 10/29/2020</p> <p>Item 2 b Type of Violation: Serious</p> <p>29 CFR 1910.134(c)(7)(iv): The employer did not provide respirators to employees as required by 29 CFR 1910.134 when a change in patient care or a change in physiological burden required respirators.</p> <p>U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration</p> <p>Company Name: Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center Inspection Site: 1945 ROUTE 33, Neptune, NJ 07753</p> <p>Item 1 Item 1 Type of Violation: Serious</p> <p>29 CFR 1910.134(a)(2): On or about 6/11/2020, the employer did not provide appropriate respirators when necessary to protect employee health:</p> <p>a) Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center located at 1945 Route 33, Neptune NJ: On or about 6/11/2020, employees engaging in direct patient care of symptomatic Patients Under Investigation (PUI) for COVID-19, were not provided with respirators for protection against aerosolized SARS-CoV-2 virus. At a minimum, a N95 NIOSH-certified filtering facepiece respirator is necessary to protect employees from aerosolized SARS-CoV-2 virus.</p> <p>ABATEMENT CERTIFICATION AND DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR THIS ITEM</p> <p>Date By Which Violation Must be Abated: Proposed Penalty:</p> <p>11/25/2020 \$9639.00</p> <p>Amount Due: \$15,422.00 Payment Due Date: 15 working days after receipt of this letter</p> <p><small>You must correct each violation by the date listed in the Citation and Notification of Penalty. Please see the violations and the correction deadline for each violation starting on the date listed above.</small></p> <p>DOCUMENTATION AND CERTIFICATION</p> <p>Violation Must be Abated: Your Citation: Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center Inspection Number: 1480762</p> <p>Questions or Concerns? If you have any questions or concerns regarding the citation, penalties, and/or correction deadlines, please call us at (856) 596-5200.</p>	<p>1945 ROUTE 33, Neptune, NJ 07753</p> <p>Citation 1 Item 2 c Type of Violation: Serious</p> <p>29 CFR 1910.134(f)(2): Employee(s) using tight-fitting facepiece respirators were not fit tested prior to initial use of the respirator, whenever a different respirator facepiece (size, style, model or make) was used, and at least annually thereafter:</p> <p>(a) Facility located at 1945 ROUTE 33, Neptune, NJ 07753</p> <p>U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration</p> <p>Inspection Number: 1480762 Inspection Date(s): 06/26/2020 - 12/08/2020 Issuance Date: 12/08/2020</p> <p>ITEM</p> <p>11/25/2020 1945 ROUTE 33, Neptune, NJ 07753</p> <p>Item 1 Item 1 Type of Violation: Serious</p> <p>29 CFR 1910.134(a)(2): On or about 6/11/2020, the employer did not provide appropriate respirators when necessary to protect employee health:</p> <p>a) Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center located at 1945 Route 33, Neptune NJ: On or about 6/11/2020, employees engaging in direct patient care of symptomatic Patients Under Investigation (PUI) for COVID-19, were not provided with respirators for protection against aerosolized SARS-CoV-2 virus. At a minimum, a N95 NIOSH-certified filtering facepiece respirator is necessary to protect employees from aerosolized SARS-CoV-2 virus.</p> <p>ABATEMENT DOCUMENTATION AND CERTIFICATION</p> <p>Date By Which Violation Must be Abated: January 05, 2021 \$13,494.00</p> <p>Citation and Notification of Penalty</p> <p>Company Name: Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center Inspection Site: 1945 ROUTE 33, Neptune, NJ 07753</p> <p>The alleged violations below have been grouped because they involve similar or related hazards that may increase the potential for injury or illness.</p> <p>Citation 1 Item 2 a Type of Violation: Serious</p>
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