

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

## CONCIERGE SERVICE LIGHTENS PERSONAL LOAD FOR PATIENTS, STAFF

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JACKSON, Miss. – From helping a patient's wife try to find a comfortable and low-cost way to transport her recuperating husband 1,700 miles back home to planning an employee's wedding, Circles Concierge aims to provide personal assistance services to the patients, visitors and employees of the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

Circles, a subsidiary of the Medical Center's food services vendor Sodexo, boasts of several services ranging from full-service travel planner and personal shopper to all-purpose coordinator and home-maintenance guru. The program is part of the existing contract with Sodexo as a "value-added service," said Dodie McElmurray, administrator for clinical support services at University Hospitals and Health System.

Patients and their visitors have access to the same concierge services that are often found at hotels, such as laundry and dry cleaning services, arrangements for accommodations, transportation and floral services. The main benefit is peace of mind, McElmurray said.

"They can concentrate on their loved ones getting better and let the concierge take care of some of the details," she said.

Heidi Werther, Circles director of business and client development, said a patient's wife was appreciative of the help she received in securing transportation for her and her husband back home to Idaho.

"There was a budget to stay within and the patient's wife was looking for comparable, comfortable travel options that would not constrict the healing process for her husband," she said.

After several inquiries into an RV, flights, rental vans, buses and trains, the concierge professional arranged a flight and an SUV rental as a solution that worked best for the couple.

For employees, Circles can handle many personal requests. Werther said UMMC employees have requested help with various needs, such as finding a house cleaner, tickets to shows, and dinner and hotel reservations.

Werther said an employee requested information on small jazz groups for a 2010 wedding, including price ranges and demo tapes. Circles provided six options to the employee.

Circles' clients only pay for goods and services that require payment, such as tickets to events, flights, postage stamps or shipping. Fees for errand-running services may apply, but a concierge professional can provide further information.

A Circles professional can be contacted by calling 4-7778 from 6 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Friday and from 7 a.m.-9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

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The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. University of Mississippi Health Care represents the clinical programs of the Medical Center and includes University Hospitals and Health System and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's citizens. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at 601-984-1100 or visit us on the Web at <http://info.umc.edu/>.