

fragile:

HANDLE
WITH CARE



Helen Neal had tender skin that was susceptible to painful tearing that took weeks or even months to heal. Her children wished she could wear a sign saying “*Fragile: Handle With Care*” during her hospitalization at Mercy Medical Center.

“Mom (Helen) was on prednisone for more than 20 years and was an extreme case. Her caregivers were trying to be careful, but we realized that there was more to learn about caring for Mom,” says Sandy Williams, Helen’s daughter.

So, Sandy – with the support of her brothers – decided to email Tim Charles, President & CEO of Mercy Medical Center, and ask for his help in educating staff about the special handling required by patients with fragile skin. After receiving her request, Tim referred her to Laura Reed, Chief Nursing Officer and Sr. Vice President of Patient Care Services.

Laura and a team of Mercy professionals met with Sandy and her brothers, resulting in the creation of Project Helen (an education and awareness program named after Sandy’s mother). Helen Neal died at age 90 in 2010 just before seeing the final results of their efforts.

Since its initiation, the program has broadened to encompass a wide variety of skin concerns in addition to fragile skin. Mercy’s Skin Team is made up of staff members from each hospital floor, the Operating Room and Hallmar residential care facility. The team meets monthly and has been instrumental in advancing the program, which includes posting alerts outside

the rooms of patients with skin concerns and improved documentation at shift hand-offs to ensure their special needs are thoroughly communicated.

“We appreciated having this family come forward to share their experience,” says Jane Korver-Yergler, RN, BA, Certified Wound,

Ostomy, Continence Nurse in Mercy’s Wound Healing Center. “Our team understood that we needed to develop a plan to address their concerns. We took their feedback to heart, developed a fragile skin care protocol and have continued to expand that program to address a variety of skin concerns. This patient-centered approach is the heart of *The Mercy Touch*®.”

Sandy adds, “Now my family knows Mercy has

compassion. We’ve seen it.”

This story is a shining example of *The Mercy Touch* at work. It also illustrates why Mercy took its commitment to patient-centered care one step further in 2012 by becoming a member of Planetree, a pioneer in personalizing, humanizing and demystifying the healthcare experience for patients and their families.

Founded by a patient, the Planetree Model is committed to enhancing healthcare from the patient’s perspective. It empowers patients and families through information and education, and encourages active participation.



Helen Neal, who passed away at age 90, and her children helped launch Project Helen, part of Mercy’s skin education and awareness program. Helen is pictured with her husband, Denny.