



The respiratory care staff at Rolla's Presentation Medical Center were recently crowned the 2007 North Dakota Sputum Bowl champs during the North Dakota Society for Respiratory Care state convention. Left to right: Curtiss Thomas, Kathleen Langan and Chris Albertson.

First in phlegm

Hospital staff earns honor at state convention

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Of The Star

Members of Presentation Medical Center's (PMC) respiratory therapy staff were able to hawk up a few more correct answers than the competition and were crowned this year's state Sputum Bowl champions.

The annual Sputum Bowl, a knowledge contest similar to the game show Jeopardy, is a part of the North Dakota Society for Respiratory Care's three-day state conference, and was held on April 2, in Grand Forks.

A total of 10 three-member Sputum Bowl teams representing hospitals from across the state competed in the event, which included the PMC team of Kathleen Langan, director of respiratory therapy, Chris Albertson, registered respiratory therapist, and Curtiss Thomas, certified respiratory therapist.

In the competition, two teams at a time square-off against each other in a battle of respiratory medical knowledge. Team members listen to a question read verbally and the team that buzzes in first has 10 seconds to answer correctly and score a point. At the end of 10 minutes the team with the most points wins and moves on to battle another opponent.

Sputum Bowl teams are allowed one alternate, and the alternate for the PMC team of Langan, Albertson and Thomas, was Lori Anderson, a registered respiratory therapist who works in the pulmonary function lab at Bismarck's Medcenter One. Anderson, however, did not have to participate in the competition.

This was the first year a team from PMC participated in the aptly named Sputum Bowl. Sputum, a mucus secretion found primarily in the lungs, is something with which respiratory therapists are well acquainted.

After outwitting the other nine

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Kathleen Langan, director of respiratory therapy at Presentation Medical Center in Rolla

teams for the title, who, for the most part, were from larger hospitals located in cities such as Fargo and Bismarck, Langan said she and her team from Rolla were proud of their accomplishment.

"We were elated. I don't think a rural hospital has ever won before," Langan said. "We've gone for the continuing education part of (the conference), but we have never participated in the Sputum Bowl part of it."

Albertson said the range of questions asked during the competition were broad. He explained subjects ranging from anatomy, pediatrics and ventilators were taken from nine different respiratory education books during the event.

Langan explained while working at a smaller hospital like PMC, she and her respiratory staff need to be versatile in order to be able to lend a hand in other departments around the hospital when called upon. She credited a large majority of her team's victory to that fact.

"In rural hospitals everyone has to be well diversified and wear many hats," Langan said. "It's quite an honor to do something like this, coming from a small, rural hospital. We got a lot of compliments. We were pleasantly surprised."

Albertson added, "One guy said it looks like Rolla is the place to go if you get sick."

Langan, Albertson and Thomas explained they wouldn't have been able to bring the Sputum Bowl title

home without Gloria Jolliffe. Jolliffe, a certified respiratory therapist and the fourth PMC respiratory therapy staff member, stayed behind in Rolla to staff the department during the team's absence.

"She stayed back and held down the fort," Langan mused.

With the state title under its belt, PMC's Sputum Bowl champion team is now qualified to take a crack at the national Sputum Bowl championship during this year's American Association of Respiratory Care's (AARC) national convention.

The Sputum Bowl competition has been a part of the AARC national convention since the late 1970s, and this year's convention is scheduled to be held December 1-4, in Orlando, Florida.

Langan said the team will be trying to raise funds to make the trip, and they are hoping they will be able to represent North Dakota and Rolla's PMC at the national convention.

"We are going to try our best to get funds to go," Langan said.

After brushing aside all of the North Dakota Sputum Bowl teams in their first try, a national title may not be out of reach for the team, especially if the teammates retain their positive attitude.

When asked if they even felt they had a shot at winning the state title, Thomas laughed, "Well, we went down there with that mindset."