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*Rowan College of New Jersey*

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**A PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN FOR A MERGER  
BETWEEN SOUTH JERSEY HOSPITAL SYSTEM AND  
ELMER COMMUNITY HOSPITAL**

**By  
Kristine M. Simoes**

**A Thesis  
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the  
Masters of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division  
of Rowan College  
March 16, 1994**

Approved by

Date Approved

\_\_\_\_\_  
4/15/95  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Professor

## ABSTRACT

Simoes, Kristine M.

A Public Relations Plan for a Merger Between  
South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer  
Community Hospital. 1994

Thesis Advisor dr. steve shapiro

Master of Arts, Public Relations

South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital are merging to consolidate services and staff and help the hospitals to operate more cost effectively.

The two institutions want an informational public relations plan to help present this merger to the residents of Cumberland and Salem counties to increase community awareness and understanding.

A public relations plan was established by the hospitals' administrations. Steering committee members received assistance from the New Jersey Hospital Association and the American Hospital Association for information on previous hospital merger efforts and spent three months in its preparation.

This effort will attempt to keep community, staff and employees abreast of developments and present the facts of the merger in a timely and unified manner.

Surveys will evaluate the effectiveness of this effort.

## MINI-ABSTRACT

Simoes, Kristine M.

A Public Relations Plan for a Merger Between  
South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer  
Community Hospital, 1994

Thesis Advisor dr. steve shapiro

Master of Arts, Public Relations

This study provides a public relations plan for a merger between South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital. Both hospitals are proceeding with a merger between the two facilities which will consolidate services and staff and help the hospitals to operate more cost effectively.

South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital want to package this merger to the residents of Cumberland and Salem counties to increase community awareness and understanding. The administrations of both facilities have requested a public relations program be developed for this reason. This plan will attempt to keep publics abreast of the merger processes and how they affect them.

# **A Public Relations Plan for a Merger Between South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital**

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## **Chapter 1**

### **History:**

South Jersey Hospital System is a two division health care facility with locations in Bridgeton and Millville, New Jersey. The Bridgeton Division of South Jersey Hospital System features 246 beds and services like adult and child/adolescent mental health, renal dialysis, maternity unit and several area clinics. This division was established in 1898 as Bridgeton Hospital. Established in 1915 as Millville Hospital, the Millville Division features 144 beds for patient care and the area's only cancer treatment center. In 1986, Bridgeton Hospital merged with Millville Hospital to form South Jersey Hospital System. Elmer Community Hospital opened in 1950 as a 95 bed facility in Elmer, New Jersey to provide care to the residents of Salem and Gloucester counties.

All three of these hospitals were founded with community interest and support. The Bridgeton Hospital was built with donations from the town's residents from a fund drive in the late 1890's. Additions and renovations to the hospital's growth were made possible through the hospital foundation and auxiliary. The same is true for the Millville Hospital. A Millville resident built the hospital in 1915 through a community fund drive when he pledged \$10,000 towards the hospital's construction if town residents would match the pledge. Elmer farmers displayed similar support when they pledged a portion of their

crop sales towards the construction of a hospital in the late 1940's. The administrations of these hospitals want to preserve this community spirit and support for the current merger. All three hospitals signed with a marketing firm in 1993 to launch a new campaign, "We Know How To Care." This campaign stresses the importance of past community support in shaping the current health care system. South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital plan to utilize this campaign to increase community awareness of the merger.

These hospitals are just two of the nearly 300 hospitals across the country merging facilities and staff. Currently, 35 of New Jersey's 85 acute care hospitals participate in some form of shared service.<sup>1</sup> These agreements vary from pooling dollars to purchasing equipment to consolidating management staffs.<sup>2</sup> In New Jersey alone, nearly 40 hospitals are merging.<sup>3</sup> In anticipation of the Clinton Administration's health care reform plan, hospitals are gearing up for the changes that lie ahead. The reason for these changes is the concept of managed care, the organization of doctors and hospitals into networks to provide people access to cost effective, quality health care. In an effort to adapt to the changing health care environment, hospitals like South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital have entered into various affiliation agreements and partnerships. These agreements will enable hospitals to provide a broader range of services, eliminate duplication, enhance quality and ultimately lower operating costs.

South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital have proposed a merger of the two facilities. This merger will consolidate services and staff and help the hospitals to operate more cost effectively. It will also establish Elmer Hospital as a division of South Jersey Hospital System and produce a three division facility in Cumberland and Salem counties. Elmer Hospital will assume the South Jersey Hospital System name and logo and will be referred to as the Elmer Division. South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital want to package this merger to their internal and external publics to increase awareness and dispel rumors that may develop. The administrations of both hospitals requested an informational public relations plan be developed for this reason.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Statement of Problem**

South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital want to inform their publics of a merger. This thesis presents a public relations plan for a merger between South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital. This work was developed to address key issues in the merger such as hospital services, quality of care and cost.

This effort will attempt to inform internal and external publics about the developments of the merger in a timely and unified manner. It is also intended to help control the development and spread of rumors that may arise. This work is informational and will serve as a groundwork for future study.

### **Methodology:**

Hospital administration formed a steering committee comprised of physicians, board members, nurses and public relations staff. Several committee meetings and brainstorming sessions were held to construct this work and such components as overall goal, objectives and tasks. Interviews with administrative personnel were conducted for insight on health care reform and future hospital projects as well as how this work will affect others. The New Jersey Hospital Association provided information about other hospital affiliations or mergers such as that at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and Montclair Community Hospital or that of Community Medical Center and Kimball Hospital.

These hospitals completed public relations work for their affiliations by using internal staff as key communicators for moving messages to their communities. This action resulted in a smoother transition during merger developments. South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital hope for similar results with their publics. Although utilization of other hospitals' experience is not a groundwork for preparing this plan, it serves as a reference for issues possibly not indicated by this steering committee.

Both primary and secondary forms of research were used to develop this plan. Interviews with administrative personnel provided insight on health care reform, future hospital projects and how this plan will affect others.

Secondary research included articles published in trade magazines like Modern Healthcare and Hospitals Magazine. Local publications like New Jersey Hospital Association Month and the American Hospital Association Marketing and Public Relations Exchange were also used. These articles provide in depth studies on industry trends in mergers across the country and locally. This research is beneficial in helping the committee to understand changes in hospital practices and its public relations role in hospital mergers. This information will give the plan additional clarity for communicating it to its publics.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Plan**

#### **Plan Sources:**

A Public Relations Steering Committee comprised of management staff from South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital.

#### **Background:**

South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital are merging facilities, services and staff which will help the hospitals operate more cost effectively. Collaboration and mergers among health care providers lower operating costs, allow for more accessibility of services, less duplication of services, higher quality care and a better utilization of existing services<sup>4</sup>. The stand-alone hospital is becoming an endangered species.<sup>5</sup> Health care reform legislation indicates mergers, partnerships, and acquisitions are necessary to the survival of America's hospitals.

Both hospitals utilized the efforts of an advertising and public relations firm to develop a "We Know How To Care" marketing campaign. This campaign uses radio, print, and cable television advertising to stress the importance of community support for the hospitals. This plan uses this "We Know How To Care" advertising to help identify its message. This campaign gives the public relations work a signature and its messages recognition.

**Message:**

South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital are merging. The message is designed to inform internal and external publics about the merger developments and how they affect the residents of Cumberland and Salem counties.

**Budget:**

A budget of \$20,000 was established for the implementation of this plan. Each hospital fronted \$10,000 which covered the cost of publications, postage, and other merger related public relations efforts. This figure does not include the cost of man hours or overtime. Steering committee members understand that their time is unpaid. Additional staff is utilized on a volunteer basis only.

**Objectives:****This plan will attempt to accomplish the following:**

- Establish awareness within the community about a merger between South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital.
- Present the facts of the merger in a timely and unified manner.
- Keep community, staff, and employees informed of the developments of the merger.
- Attempt to control the development and spread of rumors.
- Measure effectiveness through surveys.

**Audiences:***Internal Audiences*

Physicians, employees, staffs, and Boards of Directors, Auxiliaries, volunteers.

*External Audiences*

Chamberland and Salem County residents, past patients, past donors, suppliers, media-print, radio, and television, civic groups like Rotary and Kiwanis, seniors groups, clergy, and business owners.

**Channels:**

Various media are to be used to reach internal and external publics. In addition, this work uses the assistance of staff and management for communicating merger developments. Several department meetings will be held to address employee questions.

This effort utilizes both formal and informal channels of communication. Therefore, the steering committee developed agendas for town meetings as well as radio and television script copy. These channels are as follows:

External - Newspaper features, editorials, paid advertising, radio spots and public service announcements. Letters and informational packets to medical clinics, physician offices, and day care centers were also used. Speaking engagements target civic groups and business leaders.

Internal - Employee newsletters, timeclock posters, flyers, payroll stuffers, hospital lobbies, waiting areas, personnel offices, and employee meetings.

**Issues:**

- Communicating effectively with all stated audiences is necessary to eventual acceptance of the merger.
- Preserving community interest and support of both hospitals will ease the merger transition.
- Utilizing the "We Know How To Care" campaign will help give the plan recognition.
- Nearly 300 hospitals across the country are merging.
- Consolidating services and staffs will help the hospitals to operate more cost effectively.
- Establishing Elmer Community Hospital as a division of South Jersey Hospital System will produce a three division health care facility in Cumberland and Salem counties.

**Constraints:**

- Time: a nine month timeline for execution.
- Budget: \$20,000 budget cap for all expenses incurred with the public relations efforts of the plan.
- Steering Committee Meetings: Although meetings were mandatory, committee members had conflicting schedules. Not all members were able to attend every meeting.
- Apathetic Publics: Community members, or internal audiences that cannot be reached.

**Internal Communication: Staff**

Hospital employees and staff were to be informed of the merger first. This was accomplished through a **department management retreat** where senior management was informed and their roles as key communicators were established. During this day long retreat, the steering committee addressed the managers questions and concerns as well as disseminated the public relations plan for their review and assessment. See Attachment A.

After the management retreat, a **payroll stuffer** was inserted into the checks of all South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital employees. See Attachment B. Composed by the Chief Executive Officer, the letter outlines the steps involved in the merger and how it affects them as employees. It also explains the merger's public relations plan and the importance of community support

**A telephone hotline**, 1-800-4-MERGER, features weekly information updates on the merger. This hotline was provided to answer questions or address comments. The CEO reviewed the hotline daily and executed all callbacks as requested. This hotline was available for both internal and external audiences. See Attachment C.

**Employee meetings** were held for all internal staff. Members of the administration at all three hospitals scheduled employee meetings to cover all working shifts. At least two administrative members were present at each meeting

to explain the merger procedure, answer questions or take suggestions about the merger processes. A Spanish speaking interpreter was present to translate all information for those employees who did not speak English. See Attachment D.

#### **Internal Audiences: Medical Staff**

Letters were generated to all members of the medical staff at both South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital. These letters were coordinated through the medical staff offices at both hospitals. The CEO wrote the letters and disseminated them through the medical staff coordinator. These letters were sent to all private practices and were placed in the physicians mailboxes. The letter contained the same information as the employee letter but advises the physicians to contact the President of Medical Affairs for questions or comments. The President of Medical Affairs reported weekly to the CEO on any physician concerns. See Attachment E.

Both the CEO and President of the Medical Staff addressed the physicians at the next three medical staff meetings (one at each division.) An agenda for this meeting was established by the President of the Medical Staff and the CEO. Resistance from the medical staff is common when changes develop within the hospitals. To help alleviate some of this resistance, the President of the Medical Staff addressed the meeting while the CEO remained available for questions. The Medical staff is much more receptive to a fellow physician than a member of the hospitals' administration.



**Bimonthly updates** were developed by the President of the Medical Staff for the Medical Staff Newsletter. The publication is issued bimonthly by the medical staff office and features information about new physicians joining the staff or new medical procedures. Because very few medical staff members read the employee newsletter, the medical staff newsletter is the only publication suited for the physicians.

#### **Internal Audience: Nursing**

The nursing staff are extremely important to the plan because they comprise the largest department. The nursing staff serve as Key Communicators because they have the most contact with both hospital patients and community residents. Nurses are highly regarded in the Cumberland and Salem areas as hospital authorities. Many members of the nursing staff serve as nurses in school systems, clinics, and at health fairs. They are a trusted, valued audience whose understanding of the effort is crucial to its effectiveness. Nursing supervisors at each division were responsible for hosting **round the clock meetings** to handle specific questions, comments, or concerns.

#### **Internal Audience: Volunteers**

There are nearly 700 volunteers at Elmer Community Hospital and South Jersey Hospital System. More than 65 percent of the volunteer force is comprised of the community's senior citizens. Many of these retired citizens held prominent jobs within the community and serve as key communicators. They are an active group who also serve in many other capacities within their townships.

Many volunteers also serve as Rotarians, Lions or are involved in such senior organizations as Golden Age Club and Senior Class.

Because they do not receive a paycheck, this public does not receive the payroll stubber sent to the employees, therefore letters were sent to the homes of hospital volunteers to inform them of the merger. The volunteer directors at South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital scheduled meetings with volunteers to clarify issues about the merger or answer questions.

The volunteer office also issues a **monthly newsletter** which is sent to all volunteer homes. This newsletter was also used by the steering committee to publish information about the merger as stated in the employee newsletter. Volunteer directors heard past complaints from volunteers about their status. (They are not really employees and are sometimes left out of staff functions.) The steering committee regarded volunteers as an important public because of the donation of their time and themselves to making the hospital a success.

**Internal Audience: Auxiliary**

Auxiliary presidents hosted the CEO at their **monthly meetings** to provide information about the merger and answer questions about the developments of the merger. In addition, articles were published in their **monthly newsletters**.

**External Audience: Media**

A press conference was held to announce the merger and to address the print, radio, and television media. The CEO and members of the hospitals' administration were available after the press conference for individual interviews.

Locally, newspaper coverage will include The Bridgeton Evening News, The Millville News, and The Elmer Times. Additional newspapers such as The Gloucester County Times, The Press of Atlantic City, The Courier Post, and The Philadelphia Inquirer were also targeted. Radio coverage included WSNJ in Bridgeton, WVLT in Vineland, WRDR in Egg Harbor City and WBSS in Vineland. Other radio stations included KYW news radio, WOND/WAYV in Atlantic City, and WZXL in Wildwood. WMGM in Pleasantville and WMID in Atlantic City. Television coverage was provided by TV-40, an NBC affiliate in Pleasantville. In addition, KYW, WPVI and WCAU-TV were also invited to the press conference. See Attachment F.

The media is a vital public. It is important to the steering committee that information be presented to the media in a timely manner. Therefore, the press conference was scheduled for one week after the letters to the internal audiences was disseminated. The CEO addressed the media. His prepared statements included the announcement of the merger, the establishment of Elmer Community Hospital as a division of South Jersey Hospital System and the promotion of Elmer staff to new positions. The press conference also discussed the restructuring of the public relations staff to one centralized department. The press were kept abreast of the merger developments as they unfolded. Press kits containing the hospitals' history and administrative structure were distributed.

**External Audience: Media**

**Print** - The public relations staff sent press releases to all media as merger developments arose. In addition to releases, letters to the editor were also written. These letters provided key facts about the merger, its developments and its effects on the community. The Bridgeton Evening News, The Millville News, and The Elmer Times agreed to provide information about the merger in a weekly column.

The public relations staff developed weekly feature stories for the newspapers. The CEO used this column to present information about the merger as well as to answer questions about the merger. Readers could send letters to a predesignated post office box, care of the newspaper to request answers to questions about the merger. The public relations staff reviewed the questions and wrote answers back in the weekly feature. See Attachment G.

**Radio** - Public service announcements were developed for a 60 second spot on local stations. The concept featured 30 seconds of Hillary Clinton talking about the importance of hospital mergers to effective health care reform. The spot was followed by the CEO talking about the merger between South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital. These public service announcements gave credibility to the merger messages by giving them a voice. See Attachment H.

**Television** - Both Elmer Community Hospital and South Jersey Hospital System contracted with local cable networks to carry the "We Know How To Care" campaign. This relationship enabled the steering committee to negotiate additional spots free of charge. The merger plan included three 60 second spots per week of

donated cable air time. The steering committee obtained some video footage of Hillary Clinton's presentation to the American Medical Association. Similar to the radio bites, this presentation also stresses the benefits of hospital mergers in creating health care reform. Several 30 second clips were taken from this footage to develop video spots similar to that of the radio.

**External Audiences: Personal**

The CEO and administrative bodies got on the agenda of every possible civic meeting in Cumberland and Salem counties. These meetings enabled South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital to get in touch with the community's key communicators. Monthly meetings were held for the Chambers of Commerce in all three townships, as well as Rotary meetings each Thursday, Lions Club meetings each Friday and Kiwanis meetings on Tuesday. Administrative personnel split up meeting schedules to give presentations to these civic groups. All three hospitals are located in small, rural towns with closely knit publics. The Chambers of Commerce in Millville and Bridgeton are key because both townships thrive on successful businesses. In Elmer, the farming industry supports the town. The administration attended Grange meetings to reach these publics.

## **Evaluation**

Because evaluation is necessary to determine the plan's effectiveness, the steering committee developed two survey processes. These surveys will be utilized at plan's completion.

At completion, the steering committee will organize volunteers comprised of department management staff and public relations staff to conduct surveys. Both telephone and direct mail surveys will target internal and external audiences and measure the work's effectiveness.

Department managers will survey their employees within the department during staff meetings. Medical staff will conduct evaluation of their fellow physicians during monthly medical staff meetings.

Volunteers and Auxiliary members will measure their audiences during volunteer and auxiliary meetings. External publics like civic groups will receive a mail survey. A telephone survey will be used to target community residents.

This evaluation tool has been designed to provide feedback from the audiences targeted in the plan. It asks questions about a person's demographics (age, sex, residency) and proceeds with additional questions about awareness of the hospital's merger efforts. The steering committee will review and tabulate the results of these surveys before developing additional public relations plans about the merger. See Attachment I.

**Attachment A**  
**Department Head Memo about retreat**

To: All Department Managers, Supervisory Staff

From: Paul S. Cooper, President

Re: Department Management Retreat

All department managers and supervisory staff are requested to attend a management retreat scheduled for Friday, March 15, 1994. This day long retreat will be held at the Vineland Ramada Inn on Landis Avenue. This retreat will begin at 9:00 am in the Regency Room.

Your attendance at this meeting is mandatory and crucial to an upcoming public relations effort concerning the proposed merger between South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital.

Please designate a member of your staff to serve in charge of your department for the day. Telephones will be available for you to contact your department.

Please confirm your attendance with Jean Basa, Public Relations Secretary at extension 2546.

**Attachment B**  
**Employee Payroll Stuffer**

Dear Employee,

As you may have heard, the Boards of Directors at South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital have proposed a merger between the two facilities. This merger was approved unanimously Thursday evening.

This merger will provide more accessible health care for our patients and help reduce costs. This will be accomplished through consolidation of services and purchasing agreements. These purchasing partnerships allow both hospitals to buy more advanced, state-of-the-art equipment to improve on our high quality services.

This merger will also enable us to reduce overhead costs through the establishment of shared services and department services. Service consolidation was already underway in the Business Offices and Patient Registration Departments of both hospitals.

This merger will establish Elmer Community Hospital as a division of South Jersey Hospital System.

There are no plans for staff or personnel reduction.

We will launch a community-wide public relations effort to inform residents about the merger and its effect on them. We will work with radio stations, newspapers, and cable television networks to keep the community informed about the developments of the merger as they unfold.

An informational hotline, 1-800-4-MERGER, has been established for anyone who has questions, comments, or concerns about the merger. A prerecorded message will be changed weekly with merger updates. In addition, employees are encouraged to call the hotline to clear up any misconceptions or rumors you may have heard. I will address each caller personally when requested.

Thank you in advance for your continued support and service to South Jersey Hospital System.

Sincerely,  
Paul S. Cooper



**Attachment C**  
**Employee Meeting Memo**

To: All Employees  
From: Paul S. Cooper, President  
Re: Merger Meetings

Elmer Community Hospital and South Jersey Hospital System are coordinating employee meetings at all three facilities to cover all shifts. All employees are encouraged to attend any of these meetings. These meetings are designed to address employee questions or concerns about the merger and its developments.

The meetings are as follows:

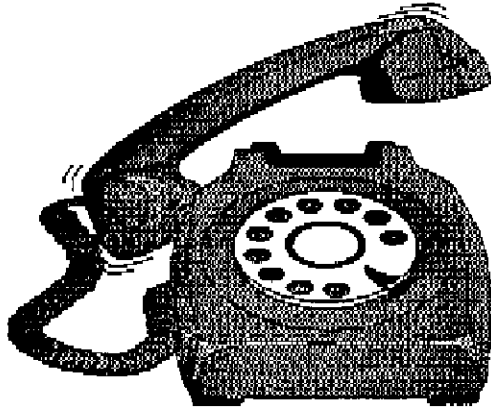
Saturday, February 26th	5:00 am	11:00 am	3:00 pm	9:00 pm
Monday, February 28th	4:00 am	12:00 pm	4:00 pm	10:00 pm
Wednesday, March 2nd	6:00 am	2:00 pm	5:00 pm	11:00 pm

Elmer meetings will be held in the cafeteria.

Bridgeton meetings will be held in the Conference Room.

Millville meetings will be held in the hospital lobby.

Attachment D  
Hotline Flyer



## ***Call the Hotline!*** **1-800-MERGER**

- ◆ Answer questions
- ◆ Voice your comments
- ◆ Make suggestions

Discuss the merger between South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital.

*President Paul S. Cooper will answer all requested calls personally.*

**Call today...**

**Let your voice be heard!**

**Attachment E  
Medical Staff Letter**

Dear Physician:

As you may have heard, Elmer Community Hospital and South Jersey Hospital System voted last Thursday to approve a merger between the two facilities.

As a physician, you serve as an important key communicator for our public relations efforts. In your practice, you come into contact with hundreds of patients and community residents each week.

This merger will provide more accessible health care for our patients by reducing costs. This reduction in costs comes from consolidation of services and purchasing agreements. These purchasing partnerships allow both hospitals to buy more advanced state-of-the-art equipment for your patient treatment.

We will launch a community-wide public relations effort to inform residents about the merger and its affect on them. We will work with local media to keep the community informed about the developments of the merger.

In addition, we established an informational hotline, 1-800-4-MERGER for anyone to call for updates on the merger. This number can be accessed 24 hours a day and is updated weekly. I review all recorded messages left and answer all requested calls personally.

As always, I am available to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about this merger. Please contact me or Keith Bailey for any information you may need to clarify this merger to your office staff or to your patients.

Thank you for your continued support and service to South Jersey Hospital System.

Sincerely,  
Paul S. Cooper

**Attachment F  
Press Conference/Press Release**

Contact: Kris Simoes  
451-7547

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
March 1, 1994

**HOSPITAL BOARDS APPROVE MERGER**

Bridgeton-Millville, Elmer N.J.—The Boards of Directors at South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital voted unanimously to approve a merger of the facilities.

"We are pleased and excited about the merger approval," said Paul S. Cooper, President of the South Jersey Hospital System. "Our Boards are to be commended for their progressiveness and foresight in their agreement. A merger is the most efficient way to meet the needs of the communities we serve," he added.

"As evidence by the proposed Clinton Health Care Plan, the hospital delivery system must change to survive," Cooper said. "We feel this merger will enable us to better meet the needs of our communities," Cooper concluded.

An outline of the merger details will be unveiled at a press conference on Friday, March 8, 1994. The conference will be held in the cafeteria at the Bridgeton Division of South Jersey Hospital System. President and CEO, Paul S. Cooper will discuss merger developments and the time frame for merger completion.

**Attachment G**  
**Editorial**

Dear Friend,

Elmer Community Hospital and South Jersey Hospital System voted unanimously to approve a merger between the two hospitals.

This merger will provide more accessible health care for our patients by reducing costs and eliminating duplication of services. This will be accomplished through consolidation of services and purchasing agreements. These purchasing partnerships allow both hospitals to buy more advanced, state-of-the-art equipment through shared costs.

We will launch a community-wide public relations effort to inform you about the merger and how it affects you. We will work with radio stations, newspapers and television cable networks to keep you informed about the developments of the merger.

In addition, we have established an information hotline for anyone to call for updates on the merger, 1-800-4-MERGER. This number can be accessed 24 hours a day and is updated weekly. I review all recorded messages left and return all calls personally.

Thank you for your continued support of South Jersey Hospital System.

Sincerely,  
Paul S. Cooper

**Attachment H**  
**Public Service Announcement**

30 second sound bite from Hillary Clinton's presentation to the American Medical Association at their September 1993 Conference. A sound bite of Paul Cooper is also included.

**VO:** Hillary Clinton on Health Care Reform:

"The future of quality health care in this country remains the consolidation of health care institutions. We are working with Congress to make it easier for hospitals in America to develop mergers, partnerships, and purchasing agreements. These agreements will make health care more accessible and cost effective."

15

Hi, I'm Paul Cooper, President of South Jersey Hospital System. At South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital, we are talking a leading step towards health care reform by moving ahead with a merger between our facilities.

30

We understand how important your health care is, that's why we've entered into this merger agreement, to continue to provide you with the high quality health care your family deserves.

This merger will provide more cost effective, quality health care for you and your family. By consolidating our services and staff, we are able to make health care more accessible to you. This merger will also allow us to purchase more state-of-the-art equipment for your treatments by pooling our resources.

60

To find out more about the merger and how it affects you as a community resident, call 1-800-4-MERGER.

**Attachment I****Mail Survey to Internal and External Audiences**

A Public relations Plan For A Merger Between South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital. Evaluation Survey

1. Where do you live?
  - Cumberland county
  - Salem county
  
2. How long have you lived in Cumberland/Salem county?
  - less than 5 years
  - 5 to 10 years
  - 10 to 15 years
  - more than 15 years
  
3. What is your age?
  - 20-30 years
  - 31-40 years
  - 41-50 years
  - 51-60 years
  - 61-70 years
  - over 70
  
4. Have you utilized the services of Elmer Community Hospital or South Jersey Hospital System?
  - yes
  - no
  
5. Are you involved (see below) in Elmer Community Hospital?
  - yes
  - no
  
- 5a. If yes, are you:
  - employee
  - physician
  - volunteer
  - outside contracted help
  - donor
  - Board member

6. Are you involved in South Jersey Hospital System?  
 yes  
 no
- 6a. If yes, are you:  
 employee  
 physician  
 volunteer  
 outside contracted help  
 donor  
 Board member
7. Before reading this survey, did you know Elmer Community Hospital and South Jersey Hospital System are merging?  
 yes  
 no
- 7a. If yes, how did you hear of the merger?  
 friend  
 newspaper  
 radio  
 hospital official  
 other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you feel the merger will have a positive or negative impact on the community?  
 positive  
 negative  
 don't know
9. Do you feel the quality of services will suffer/will not suffer as a result of the merger?  
 will suffer  
 will not suffer  
 don't know
10. Why or why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_



11. Did you know the merger means less duplication of services?  
 yes  
 no
12. Did you know the merger means more cost effective services for patients?  
 yes  
 no
13. What is your attitude towards the merger?  
 very positive  
 positive  
 no opinion  
 negative  
 very negative
14. Is there anything you wanted to know about the merger but haven't found out yet?
-

**Attachment I**  
**Telephone Survey to Community Residents**

1. Where do you live?
  - Cumberland county
  - Salem county
  
2. How long have you lived in Cumberland/Salem county?
  - less than 5 years
  - 5 to 10 years
  - 10 to 15 years
  - more than 15 years
  
3. What is your age?
  - 20-30 years
  - 31-40 years
  - 41-50 years
  - 51-60 years
  - 61-70 years
  - over 70
  
4. Have you utilized the services of Elmer Community Hospital or South Jersey Hospital System?
  - yes
  - no
  
5. Are you involved in either hospital in any way (employee, volunteer, donor, board member, contracted help)?
  - yes
  - no
  
- 5a. Which hospital?
  - Elmer Community Hospital
  - South Jersey Hospital System
  
6. Do you know Elmer Community Hospital and South Jersey Hospital System are merging?
  - yes
  - no
  
- 6a. If yes, how did you hear of the merger?
  - friend
  - newspaper
  - radio

hospital official  
 other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you feel this merger is positive or negative for the community?

positive  
 negative  
 don't know

8. Is there anything you wanted to know about merger but haven't found out yet?

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## **Chapter 4**

### **Benefits of this Plan**

This effort is beneficial to South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital because it will help to inform their internal and external publics about the merger developments. Packaging the merger to the residents of Cumberland and Salem counties will help increase awareness and understanding.

This public relations effort is vital to the continued relationship between the hospitals and their publics. Ultimately, this plan will serve as a precursor to additional plans that will help gain acceptance from the communities the hospitals serve.

Media relations and community relations vehicles are presented and surveys are used as a proposed method of evaluation. The plan is thorough and complete. It begins with a grass roots effort to inform management and staff before disseminating information externally and enables hospital management to act as key communicators in presenting the facts accurately.

Both formal and informal channels of communication are used to reach a variety of segmented publics. Town meetings, civic group presentations, and employee forums provide face to face communication while newspaper editorials, radio public service announcements, and letters allowed audiences to review information on their own time. An informational hotline provided both internal and external publics with weekly updates. Internal audiences were segmented by department to reach maximum staff. The plan strived to reach the town's key

communicators and business leaders with letters, speaking engagements and media.

The plan is organized and specific. It was divided into two sections to identify audiences such as employees, staff, and physicians, as well as external audiences like business leaders, civic groups and media. Each communication vehicle is outlined and indicates parties responsible for execution. Hospital managers were responsible for communicating to their employees. This was accomplished by managers hosting weekly department meetings and presenting information to all staff to help control rumors.

The steering committee and public relations staff were responsible for external communication. Speaking engagements were arranged by steering committee and administration to cover all community organizations. These speaking engagements covered such organizations as civic groups, senior groups and business associations. The plan outlined audiences and communications vehicles.

The proactive points of the plan include timeliness. The steering committee was formed two weeks before the merger was approved. Board officers initiated the plan's development immediately. There is a 10-month waiting period for state approval of the merger. This gave the committee time to develop the plan and implement its components before the merger becomes official. Because this work is yet to be carried out, an evaluation remains incomplete.

The plan stuck to its intentions of communicating the hospital merger and its developments to both internal and external audiences. This helped give the plan direction and focus. The plan was informational. It worked to keep community, staff, and employees informed about the processes of the merger, control rumors, and kept audiences abreast of the merger developments. This effort lays the groundwork for future plans that possess persuasive components. Once the merger is completed, an additional plan will be implemented to address the issues of audience acceptance.

## Chapter 5

### Suggestions For Future Study

The public relations plan must be evaluated in order to be conclusive. This effort's effectiveness rests on evaluative results. If the evaluative results show at least 70 percent of those surveyed aware of the merger, a persuasive plan will be developed and implemented immediately.

If the survey results show less than 70 percent awareness, an additional informative campaign will be developed that will be structured similar to the prior public relations effort and its length determined by the steering committee. The steering committee will review the demographics of the respondents to structure the location and target of its future efforts.

Recommendations for future work include the development of additional plans to help "market" the merger between South Jersey Hospital System and Elmer Community Hospital. "Marketing" the merger will help establish a positive public perception of the merger in hopes of gaining its acceptance. Future public relations campaigns will utilize a more aggressive approach for public acceptance.

Some components of the persuasive plan include a listing of some of the benefits of the merger as they affect internal and external audiences. Some benefits include pay increases for staff and more accessible services for patients.

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