

Snitch Got the Grinch! James H. Quillen VAMC Prepares for Emergencies with Missing Patient Drill

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(From left to right: K9 Officer Snitch, Grinch played by Elizabeth Troutman, Education and Staff Development Registered Nurse, K9 Officer Snitch, and Sergeant Gillenwater.)

In December 2023, the Education and Staff Development (ESD) team at James H. Quillen Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Mountain Home, Tennessee, organized its first-ever mock missing patient drill in collaboration with the Veteran Affairs Police. This drill simulated a scenario where a patient went missing in the hospital, a situation that demands swift action and coordinated efforts among hospital staff and law enforcement.

When patients disappear in a hospital setting, it can pose serious risks to their well-being and safety. Patients who are disoriented, confused, or experiencing mental health issues may wander off, potentially encountering hazards or

becoming vulnerable to harm. Moreover, a missing patient disrupts the continuity of care, leading to delays in treatment and potentially impacting their health outcomes. In such situations, quick and effective response protocols are crucial to locating the patient promptly and ensuring their safety and welfare.

During the drill, Sergeant Gillenwater and K-9 Officer Snitch successfully located a missing patient, who turned out to be none other than the Grinch. Nursing staff and VA Police Services promptly responded according to established protocols, leading to the safe retrieval of the Grinch near a pond on campus and their return to the hospital.

ESD has increased its simulation activities this fiscal year, incorporating enjoyable and lighthearted events such as featuring K-9 Officer Snitch.

While the drill was enjoyable, it also served as a valuable learning experience, reinforcing ESD's commitment to ensuring the safety of Veterans and the importance of preparedness in handling emergency situations within the hospital setting.