

HUNTSVILLE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL KEEPS AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

“Working in the community in which you live gives you an entirely different perspective on providing the best and most appropriate healthcare needs for family and friends,” said Sally Nelson, CEO at Huntsville Memorial Hospital (HMH) when asked about the hospital’s future.

With parents, children, aunts and uncles all living in close proximity and thousands of neighbors who take every opportunity to chat in the store, write letters, make phone calls or visit after church, Nelson admits that she and the staff at Huntsville Memorial are perfectly content to take the time to answer questions and concerns.

“When you come to Huntsville Memorial Hospital for your care, I want everyone to have the experience that I would like to have. My needs must be met, my concerns answered, and someone needs to be there with me assuring me that everything will be all right,” Nelson said.

Indeed, that has been the focus of the hospital in the two years since Sally Nelson took over the lead role.

BIG CHANGES IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

The HMH Emergency Department has taken on an entirely different atmosphere.

“Not only do we want you to come here for your emergencies, but we are doing everything possible to assure that you are seen in a timely fashion so that you think of us for all of your healthcare needs,” Sally said.

“When we dug deep into the process of patients coming in through our Emergency Department, we discovered – much to our dismay – that it took 52 steps (answering questions, filling out forms, making copies, etc.) to get a patient to the back to begin receiving care. Today, that process has been shortened to just five steps. And, as of December, we’ve had a 42% improvement in decreasing the time it takes to move patients to the back for their care,” said Will Stewart, interim director of the ED. As a result, patients are more satisfied with their care as well.

In a consulting role, Stewart has spent the past 16 weeks deeply involved in a strategy to revise the triage system, patient placement and patient registration process, as well as improve the overall patient experience. His company, BlueJay Consulting, has given its final recommendations to HMH and many are already fully implemented.

“These changes have not only created a better process that allows the staff and physicians to attend to the patients’ needs in a much more timely fashion but have also created significant positive impact on the patient satisfaction scores,” Stewart said.

One of the biggest challenges for Emergency Departments today is to get the public to understand the changing role of this department.

“We really want to have our community come to the ED when there is a critical issue – a matter of life and death. It is our hope that those who have flu, colds, undetermined minor ailments

and pain, would go to the HMH Medical Clinic which is just one driveway past the hospital entrance,” said Susan White, Chief Nursing Officer at HMH.

With a Level I Trauma designation, the Emergency Department at HMH is equipped with the latest technology and a dedicated staff to ensure that trauma cases can be treated locally. With all of the processes in place Huntsville Memorial can treat the patient on site or if necessary, stabilize and transport the patient to another facility if a higher level of care is needed.

“One year ago we were a totally different Emergency Department,” said Stewart. “The EMS professionals, patients and families who have witnessed the changes have been greatly encouraged by the welcoming atmosphere and the other staff changes we have made to accommodate the expedited care of every patient.”

HUNTSVILLE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL MEDICAL CLINIC

Turning right on the feeder road into the professional buildings just south of Huntsville Memorial Hospital, patients can easily access the Huntsville Memorial Hospital Medical Clinic for their non-emergency mishaps and developing illnesses. This Clinic is designed to give every patient the opportunity to have a “hospital home.”

“This is the place you want to go if you have an ear ache, stomach ache, flu-like symptoms, cough, cold, and other injury that is not life threatening. We can treat you and have you on your way, with the peace of mind that should you have complications, all you need to do it call us back,” said Marilyn Scheffe, director of the HMH Medical Clinic.

With physicians, physician assistants, nurses and other professionals to help, the HMH Clinic offers a setting for patients who may not yet have an established relationship with a Primary Care Physician.

Scheffe is new to the HMH team, and is meeting with community members and staff to assure that the needed services are available at the HMH Medical Clinic.

“I don’t think that the people in the community realize that we accept Medicare, Medicaid, and a variety of insurances. Our goal is to see that everyone who needs care gets the appropriate level of care. Should we need to refer them to the main hospital for other testing, lab work, or even to the Emergency Department for true emergency care, it is a very simple procedure. We are so grateful to have the advantage of having the hospital sitting right in our own backyard,” Scheffe said.

HMH OFFERS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR OUTPATIENT SURGERY

“Of course, the hospital will always be here to serve the needs of the community, but one thing that has helped us provide more convenient scheduling of outpatient services is our acquisition of the Outpatient Surgery Center just south of the hospital on the I-45 feeder road,” said Susan White, Chief Nursing Officer for HMH.

With three surgical suites, the Outpatient Surgery Center has nine beds for pre- and post-operative care and can accommodate cases such as orthopedic, general surgery, gynecological procedures, foot and ankle surgery and some procedures that involve the eyes, nose and/or throat. There is a private room for endoscopic procedures and the center has its own pharmacy to assure that medications are on hand for any and all necessities.

“Many cancer patients come to our center to have their port-a-caths put in prior to treatment. This offers a huge benefit as a patient is not exposed to the variety of illnesses in the hospital community which may pose a threat to their immune system,” said Tammy Stanfield, clinical manager of the Outpatient Surgery Center.

As the hospital continues to grow, the Outpatient Surgery Center is freeing-up space in the hospital operating rooms for the more in-depth, major surgeries where a stay in the hospital will be necessary.

“More and more physicians are becoming involved in not only the management of Huntsville Memorial Hospital via the co-management model, but in building their business around the services we provide and the healthcare needs of the Huntsville area,” Nelson said.

HMH OUTPATIENT IMAGING CENTER

Huntsville Memorial Hospital delivers some of the most sophisticated and advanced imaging techniques to the residents of Walker County. The hospital hosts a team of radiology experts and modern equipment to provide you with the most accurate imaging results.

For patients in need of special MRI scans of the head or spine, and for more convenient radiology service, the HMH Outpatient Imaging Center provides quality imaging service in a comfortable and efficient environment.

“This 5,700 square foot facility houses a number of imaging modalities aimed at offering the best to our community,” said Bob Gray, Chief Financial Officer at HMH. “We not only have typical x-rays, bone density scans and ultrasound, but also have an MRI and a CT Scanner to assist our physicians in their diagnoses.”

Physicians from Bryan Radiology read and evaluate each patient's scan.

The HMH Outpatient Imaging Center offers a modern facility with advanced radiology equipment and convenient access for patients to obtain imaging results with less wait time. To schedule an appointment at the HMH Outpatient Imaging Center, you or your physician can call (936) 730-1000.

PHYSICIANS ARE THE KEY TO QUALITY CARE

The majority of physicians at Huntsville Memorial Hospital have more than just an interest in the hospital and a desire to help their patients – they are also involved in the co-management model of operations.

“As the only hospital in the nation that operates in this type of a co-management model, HMH is in a unique position where physicians really do care about the day-to-day operations of the facility in which they work and are engaged in the decisions that can and will affect all members of our community,” said Tripp Montalbo, assistant administrator at HMH.

The physicians’ commitment to providing quality care for the community is demonstrated through their continued search for more and varied specialists to come to the campus. This past year Sudhir Sehgal, MD was among the specialists added to the roster, providing pulmonary care for all those in need.

“We are actively searching for several new specialists and additional primary care physicians to join the HMH team,” Montalbo said. “We believe that as the community grows, so does their interest in having quality healthcare right here at home.”

To find a primary care physician or a specialty physician to care for your needs, please call 936.291.4595 or visit www.huntsvillememorial.com.