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Huntsville Memorial Hospital Works To Beef Up ER Patient Screenings

(Huntsville, TX) – It’s not the heart attacks or strokes that alarm the ER staff at Huntsville Memorial Hospital. It’s the minor maladies, the daily deluge of coughs, colds, toothaches, and even hangnails that clog their emergency room.

As the provider of last resort, hospital emergency departments across America have for decades accepted thousands of truly non-urgent cases and swallowed the cost. For the most part, the patients have nowhere else to go, no insurance, and a lack of funds.

That is starting to change. Huntsville Memorial Hospital has launched a new screening system for its emergency room. Patients will be screened to determine if they have an emergency medical condition as defined by the federal legislation that requires hospitals to stabilize emergency patients regardless of their ability to pay. If the patient’s condition is not deemed as a medical emergency, the patient will be referred to their primary care physician, the HMH Medical Clinic, or will be given the option to stay and pay up-front for their non-emergency medical care.

“If you are truly an emergency patient, there is no question that you will be treated as such,” said Sally Nelson, Chief Executive Officer of Huntsville Memorial Hospital. “However, this new screening system aims to reduce the number of patient who use the emergency room for services that could be better provided in another setting. We would then expect to see a decrease in wait times and provide better care to those with true medical emergencies,” stated Nelson.

Huntsville Memorial plans on utilizing mid-level practitioners to assess and triage lower acuity patients. “These practitioners can screen patients and actually take care of people or treat some things without even sending them back to the emergency room,” said Donna Stewart, Chief Nursing Officer at Huntsville Memorial Hospital.

The HMH Emergency Department uses a nationally recognized triage system for classifying emergency patients by the severity of their illness, not the time of arrival, ensuring prompt treatment. The convenient bedside registration of patients also decreases treatment time. The Emergency Department has state-of-the-art equipment and specialized rooms to accommodate and treat minor trauma, acute cardiac, pediatric, orthopedic, obstetrics/gynecology, and ear, nose, and throat emergencies with 24-hour access to laboratory, radiology, CT scanning and magnetic resonance imaging services.

Across the state, more and more hospitals are beginning to triage patients as they hit the door to determine if they are emergent or not. “Emergency Departments have become a critical access point for many patients and that trend will continue if hospitals do not make a dramatic change,” said Nelson. “As always, our mission at HMM is to provide the very best care possible to this community and we are willing to make whatever changes are necessary to ensure that this happens”, said Nelson.

About Huntsville Memorial Hospital

Since 1927, Huntsville Memorial Hospital has provided benevolent and charitable health care services, setting the standard for quality, proficient health care for the residents of Walker County and the surrounding communities. At Huntsville Memorial, we have great people who are passionate about your health. We have outstanding physicians, motivated leadership, and compassionate staff. We are your friends and neighbors – dedicated to excellence in everything we do – right here at home.