

When Valley Regional Hospital envisioned its \$22.5 million expansion and renovation, paramount to its planning were the recommendations by patients and their families.



Private Rooms at VRH

"In both our intensive care and medical/surgical units, private rooms and private bathrooms were cited by patients as very important," VRH CEO Claire Bowen said in January 2008.

The newly renovated inpatient wing now boasts 21 spacious private rooms with full bathrooms and more space for family members. The warm colors create a soothing, homey feeling; and larger windows let in more natural light for a brighter, more cheerful environment.

"Overall the patients are extremely happy," said Elaine Binder, the Assistant Nurse Manager for the Medical/Surgical and Critical Care units. "They feel like they are in a hotel."

"'You thought of my family' is something I hear frequently," added Deb Tribou, Nurse Manager for Medical/Surgical and Critical Care units.

"All the rooms have been purposefully and thoughtfully designed by the architects," added Kelly Murphy, Director of Community Relations. "They considered the line of sight by a patient laying in the bed, the immediate needs of a nurse when caring for the patient, the housekeeping staff who maintain infection control standards, and the family who is essential to the recovery process."

Prior to renovations, the inpatient wing had two beds in each room with nothing more than a curtain separating patients and conversations with doctors or family members. The need to move patients to accommodate new admissions was a

frequent occurrence. It may have been moving two males into one room to allow for a female admission or moving someone to eliminate the risk of infection.

"Because of the new room size, it's easier for nurses and patients to move around in the room," said Binder. "And there is more confidentiality for physicians and patients."

"Also, having private rooms cuts down on the spread of infections from patient to patient," adds Heather Rousseau, Director of Infection Prevention. "We expect to see a drop in our already very low infection rate."

Nurses can also attend to the needs of a room faster because small closets and drawers have been built into the walls in the hallway between the rooms. Nurses can find linens and basic medical supplies including tape and gauze for changing bandages, alcohol wipes, and Band Aids.

"In the past, they had to go down the hall to a linen cart," Binder said while opening a new storage area. "These give nurses more time with the patient. When they tell a patient they will be right back, now they are right back."



Additional improvements include new offices in both patient units for the on-site physician, a consultation room where doctors can speak privately with family members when necessary, and two family lounge areas with pull-out recliners for overnight stays, televisions, wireless Internet capabilities, and one with a kitchenette.

"Many hospitals don't have what we have, especially being a small community hospital," Binder said. "I'm glad we can serve our friends, neighbors and family members with so many levels of care."

Same Day's Superior Service

When the most traumatic thing about surgery is overhearing the doctor-patient conversation going on in the curtained area next to you, something must change.

At Valley Regional Hospital, the entire Same Day Surgery department was redesigned for patient privacy and comfort.

"We are always looking to improve the patient experience in an environment that promotes healing and lowers stress levels," said Steve Clayman, chief architect with Lavallee Breninger Architects of Manchester, NH.

The same day surgery unit is one of several areas where the achievement of that primary goal is evident. In the simplest terms, curtain dividers are out and private surgical suites are in. But there is much more.

"Privacy and confidentiality are what have changed the most here," said Doug Hanson, RN, Nurse Manager of Surgical Services and The Birthing Center. "Before, you had to change in a separate room then walk with a hospital gown to another room that had only a stretcher and a curtain. It was not private."

The renovated space has five private rooms with large sliding glass doors and a privacy curtain on the inside. Patients and loved ones settle into a room upon arrival and the patient returns to their room for recovery.

"For family members there is no more picking up belongings and trying to find another room where their loved one will be brought after surgery," said Kelly Murphy, director of community relations. Surgeons, nurses, anesthesia providers, and other care providers come to the patient.

"The patient doesn't move. We go to them," said Hanson. "It was done for the patient's privacy and comfort."

With an emphasis on improving family as well as patient services, there is also a new and larger family lounge with a small kitchenette, television, computer with Internet access, and a phone that rings directly to the nurse's station.

Hanson also said the new layout allows the same nurses to care for the same patients from morning assessment to post-operative care. Previously, nurses were assigned to either pre-surgery or post-surgery.

"Over 90 percent of our patients awake from anesthesia and be cared for by the same nurse who assisted and cared for them earlier in the day," he said.

Also new is the location of the mobile magnetic resonance imaging unit, better known as the MRI, which comes to the hospital several days a week. Prior to construction, it was stationed outside the emergency room off Dunning Street. MRI patients would either walk or be wheeled outside and into the unit, regardless of the weather. Now, when the large mobile unit arrives, it's positioned against the new addition. Patients step inside without having left the building.

"All these improvements are wonderful. Patients share that they're more comfortable since our renovations," said Lisa Decker, surgical services registered nurse. "When they arrive, we welcome them and their loved ones, show them their room and places to put clothing, glasses, and all their personal items. When they return from surgery, it is to the same quiet space they've become familiar with. It's a seamless process during an often stressful time in their lives."

Your Emergency is our Mission

Few things in life can be more unsettling and worrisome for both patients and families than a trip to a hospital's emergency center. It is unexpected, usually rushed, and depending on the circumstances, could mean life or death.

Hospitals can't control what happens before life becomes an emergency; however, Valley Regional's new and expanded emergency department does redefine comfort, privacy, and efficiency of services for when the unexpected becomes reality.

"By relocating the ED in close proximity to our cardiology, laboratory, and surgery units, we can better serve our patients," said Dr. Charles Sawyer, emergency department medical director at VRH. "From the minute a patient enters the door, we will have improved and efficient access to all the resources we need to correctly diagnose and treat his or her illness or injury."





Chief Architect Steve Clayman said one goal in designing the addition was to bring departments, such as emergency, outpatient services, and surgery closer together.

“The challenge was to take pieces of the hospital and tie them together so they function well,” Clayman said.

The new emergency room is purposefully designed so that once patients enter they will not be moved into the public area of the hospital for x-rays, surgery, or other needs. At the previous emergency room, located on Dunning Street, a trip to Radiology meant going down a public hallway to an elevator.

“We wanted to separate public traffic from patient traffic with private corridors,” said Clayman, explaining one of the basic concepts considered in designing the addition and renovations.

The new emergency department entrance is adjacent to the new main entrance off Elm Street in the hospital’s 22,000 square foot addition. There are two triage rooms, six treatment rooms, two trauma rooms, dedicated pediatric and psyche rooms, and a private consultation room. All the rooms feature noise buffering sliding glass doors, privacy curtains, flat screen televisions, and seating for patients’ family members.

Also new to the hospital is a dedicated decontamination area with a large storage area nearby filled with supplies to

handle emergency responses to hazardous contaminations within the community.

The hospital’s helicopter pad has been relocated to just outside the ambulance entrance of the facility, with a specially installed lighting system for nighttime flights, thanks to a generous donation from the Ladies Union Aid Society.

Like the other changes at Valley Regional, the new emergency area has been well received by patients.

“The ED is more roomy, lots of space; the privacy is really good and the care excellent,” confirmed John Honulik, a recent patient from Charlestown.

