

# THE Future

## OF Emergency

**NEW TECHNOLOGY DAZZLES  
PATIENTS AT EUCLID HOSPITAL'S ED**

By Anne Gallagher

Imagine entering a room that's like something out of a sci-fi movie. Above your head, high-tech equipment dangles from an instrument panel. Outside the door, someone checks a computer screen to monitor the location of everyone working in the structure.

Are you in the cockpit of a spaceship or on the set of the latest *Mission: Impossible* movie? Neither. You're in a patient room at Euclid Hospital's new emergency department (ED).

### **The Nurse-Call System**

"For our new ED, we installed all the latest equipment to make our jobs as efficient as possible," says Rich Lowery, R.N., emergency department director. "The one technology that has probably made the biggest difference is our new nurse-call system."

The call system has transformed the ED from a loud, chaotic place to a more serene environment. When staff members enter the ED, they sign on to a computer, and the system activates a signal sensor that they wear on their badge.

Working like a homing device or global positioning system, the sensor tracks the location of every staff member—from technicians and secretaries to nurses and doctors. In this way, other members of the staff can know who is in a particular room tending to a patient, and they can easily contact them via an intercom system connected to each room.

"Our new nurse-call system is beautiful," says Marita Volk, M.D., medical director of the emergency department. "It's no longer necessary for patients to call out, 'Nurse!' Plus, patients can simply push a little sad-face button on their remote



The ED's new nurse-call system is efficient for both patients and caregivers. For example, patients can push a specific button to indicate pain, and the nurse knows to take the appropriate medication to them.



to show they're having pain, and we know to take the appropriate pain medication to them. Or they can push a button with a bedpan icon, and we know they need to go to the bathroom."

### **Creature Comforts**

The new technology is part of a \$4.8 million expansion project that opened last fall, doubling the space of the old ED. The area now includes 23 treatment areas, including private examination rooms, a women's treatment room, trauma unit, observation unit, and decontamination and isolation room.

According to Lowery, much thought went into every detail of the expansion. "For example, we realized that physicians always examine patients on the right side of the bed. So everything the doctors need—such as otoscopes, ophthalmoscopes and monitors—is right at their fingertips. We even placed the light switches there instead of by the doorway."

Perhaps the most notable feature in the new rooms is the instrument panel mounted in the wall at the head of the patient beds. It is full of equipment that can be clipped on and off the panel. Even the telephones can be clipped off for easy use by patients. (In most EDs phones are mounted on the wall.)



Rich Lowery, R.N., Emergency Department director, consults with Marita Volk, M.D., medical director of the Emergency Department, and Gloria Lawson, R.N., Emergency Department (seated) at the new nurses station.

"We did not want our rooms to be ugly, sterile environments," Lowery says. "So we placed all the equipment behind the patients' heads or in locked equipment closets. All the patients really see is a flat-screen TV, which has cable. They don't have to look at urinals, IV equipment or anything like that."

Each room lets in natural light and is decorated in earth tones. The staff chose not to install countertops or cabinets that could become collecting spots for clutter and bacteria.

Gloves in all sizes are mounted in handy boxes on the wall. Patients' clothes hang from hooks on the wall

where they are readily seen. In this way, the ED avoids the old problem of finding in cupboards belongings that were left behind by patients.

### Building from Scratch

To design their patient rooms, Euclid's ED staff chose a highly novel approach. They drove to a warehouse and found an empty room that was bare down to the dry-wall. Here they spent hours—and a fair amount of trial and error—working on the space.

"We decided to build a sample room the way we wanted it before we got involved in the work and expense of installing our actual patient rooms," Lowery says. "So, our staff—including nurses and clinical leaders—went to the empty warehouse room, and we designed it the way we thought it should be."

In addition to making the space efficient from a medical standpoint, the staff wanted to make it as patient- and family-friendly as possible. The natural light, earth tones and lack of visible medical equipment help give the ED a healing, soothing effect. The doors to the patient rooms are all glass so that a good amount of light and brightness enters the rooms.

"It's a pleasure to work in our new patient rooms," says Gloria Lawson, R.N. "They're very modernized, and everything's at our fingertips. The morale of the staff is way up. Patients love it, too. The first thing they comment on is the flat-screen TV. They can see daylight. They really like that and their privacy. Repeat patients say that this is so much nicer."

Physicians also appreciate the new area. "We love our new space," says Dr. Volk. "Our designated triage room helps us do a better job of streamlining the flow of patients, and our new monitors enable the staff to follow trends of our patients'

pulse oximetry, heart rate and blood pressure without leaving the nursing station."

A new urgent care area operates independently from the rest of the emergency department. It includes seven treatment beds for sore throats, bumps and bruises. By separating these minor problems from bigger ones, the space prevents patients from being exposed to more serious conditions. The urgent care area has a medication area, so that healthcare professionals do not have to walk to the main nursing area for medications.

Another part of the ED that patients' families enjoy is an internal family waiting area, which is separate from the outer waiting room. The internal room has natural light and comfortable furniture. Families who wait there have free access to a nearby mini-kitchen that features a blanket warming cabinet, coffee and a refrigerator and freezer full of cold drinks, popsicles, ice chips and microwaveable meals.

"We tried to think of everything that could help comfort our patients," Lowery says. "The large fish tank in the main waiting room has a calming effect on people, and the huge ceilings give an atrium effect."

"Patients like the TVs, the flow, the privacy and the soothing colors," says Debbie Rasmussen, R.N. "My favorite thing is the fact that all the equipment we need is right at hand. And the setting is more professional looking." ■



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