



KershawHealth CEO Column

Terry Gunn, FACHE

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Construction and Changes Benefit Customer Satisfaction

In general, these columns are devoted to broad topics like the changing environment of healthcare or our recent Core Measures success and what that means to patient quality and safety. These are matters that can apply to hospitals in virtually any community, and are certainly excellent choices for discussion. However, this time, I'd like to address something anyone who has visited the Medical Center in Camden recently is certain to have noticed – the renovations taking place, particularly in the emergency room entrance and the main lobby. They're bringing big changes to the hospital, inside and out.

For many years, we have used the ER entrance for both emergency room patients and outpatient services like lab or radiology. The main lobby was primarily used only by visitors and gift shop customers. It has become clear that is not an optimal use either of space or personnel, particularly as we worked with Team Health to improve the efficiency of the emergency room and the patient experience there. Most hospitals reserve the ER entrance for emergency room patients, and direct all other patients and visitors through the main entrance. KershawHealth will now follow suit.

With our current renovations, the ER entrance now will be used only for emergency room patients. A more private, ER-only registration area has been created as you enter under the emergency canopy, and there are now separate ER and Express Care waiting areas. This is one of the most significant changes to the ER area.

Once a patient is registered in the ER, a triage nurse will evaluate their condition and determine if their symptoms are best suited to the new Express Care track, or if the full emergency room is a better option. Those patients that go to the Express Care portion of the ER typically are generally healthy, but have complaints like a sore throat, rash, or minor infection or injury. Most often their complaint can be diagnosed through a history, physical, and/or simple test. Express Care will be in operation from 10:00 am until 10:00 pm – typically the ER's busiest hours.

Those patients directed to the traditional emergency room, on the other hand, often are suffering from potentially life-threatening conditions like heart attack or stroke, may have multiple health challenges, or have symptoms that require more extensive testing to resolve. They are more likely to remain in the ER for several hours, and may even require being admitted to the hospital. This triage, or sorting, process enables us to most efficiently use the emergency room resources, which will enhance patient care and safety. In addition, we expect it will reduce wait times and improve customer satisfaction for many of our patients.

The main entrance of the Medical Center will now serve as the primary access point for the hospital, as it should. It will be the gateway for those using outpatient services, for patient registration, and for visitors. The patient

registration desk is now the focal point of the lobby, making it more convenient for staff and patients. The information/volunteer desk is nearby for those who need help locating a patient room or directions to a particular department. This area now will provide easy access to cardiology, radiology, laboratory, and surgery services, as well as the elevators to patient rooms. In addition, the Wishing Well gift shop is conveniently located for family members and visitors. Vending machines have been moved to the ER entrance, making them more readily accessible.

We've also freshened up hallways with new paint, refurbished the front parking lots and the helicopter landing pad, and updated some aging landscaping. New signage throughout the parking lots will help direct patients and visitors, but we know it will take time for everyone to become accustomed to the new flow. In the end, all of this has been done to enhance the experience for everyone who uses KershawHealth.