

Featured in the Chicago Tribune, October 2, 2007
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NEW PRENTICE HOSPITAL TO CONVERGE WOMEN'S CARE

Medical care for women is not just about delivering babies but providing medical care at one location for all stages of their lives -- at least that's the concept behind Northwestern Memorial HealthCare's \$500 million Prentice Women's Hospital, which opens Oct. 20.

Prentice will continue to provide maternity care for more than 10,000 women and their newborns each year, but the new facility will also provide gynecologic and breast oncology and plastic surgery medical services that are unique to women.

The new Prentice hospital is illustrative of efforts by the medical industry to reduce confusion and to speed up specialized care as medical-care service costs are on the rise.

In addition, medical facilities in Chicago and nationwide are either expanding or planning to address space needs. Among local examples: Rush University Medical Center and University of Chicago Hospitals, which are working on replacement adult hospitals, and Children's Memorial Hospital, which is relocating from its Lincoln Park neighborhood to near Prentice and Northwestern Memorial Hospital in 2012.

In Prentice's case, medical services that were available to women at at least four places on the Northwestern Memorial campus will be consolidated at the new hospital at 250 E. Superior St., just down the street from its current location at 333 E. Superior in the Streeterville neighborhood. The new hospital will be nearly three times the size of the current facility.

"The care at the [new] Prentice will be all coordinated so the experts will come to the patients' bedside," said Dr. Steven Rosen, director of the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. "Historically, there are institutions where women see one of their doctors on one day and one another day and it can be in a different place."

From all-private rooms to specialized services specific for women, more hospitals are marketing

efforts to keep women closer to home. Take Edward Hospital in west suburban Naperville, where genetic counseling, "uro-gynecological care," and prenatal care for high-risk mothers have been added in recent years.

"To hospitals, women's health used to just be about delivering babies, but today it's that plus much, much more," said Pam Davis, president and CEO of Edward.

Davis said regional suburban providers such as Edward rival the university-based hospitals in most offerings for women.

"We deliver about 4,000 babies a year and have also attracted some of the best specialists anywhere to care for women in all stages of their life. Women have become sophisticated health-care advocates for themselves and their loved ones," Davis said.

The input of Prentice patients and families was taken into consideration when designing and building the 17-story facility. As one example, neonatal units are equipped with sliding doors so parents of premature twins can move easily between adjoining spaces.

The new facility has 86 neonatal intensive care beds compared with 46 beds in the existing Prentice.

"It's been built for the families," said Dr. Ruth Deddish, a specialist in neonatology. The new hospital also was designed to accommodate would-be moms.

At the existing Prentice, for example, patients are admitted on the first floor, and triage is on the fourth floor. In the new hospital, admission and triage are all on the first floor, which also includes a 124-foot triage walking track that women who may be experiencing false labor can use.

Railings, couches and a plasma screen television that broadcasts educational programs about maternity care are along the triage track.

Forty percent of patients think they are in labor and they are not," said Dr. Sherman Elias, chairman of obstetrics and gynecology at Northwestern

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Memorial. “This way we don’t have to admit them but they can walk and be comfortable knowing that they are here.”

But not everybody affiliated with Northwestern Memorial’s new Prentice is happy about the space arrangements.

Administrators have heard complaints from its medical staff about decisions to move the Prentice Ambulatory Care Clinic, which trains residents and provides services for indigent patients, from Prentice and that there will be no doctors’ offices in the new hospital like some that exist in the current hospital.

The Prentice Ambulatory Care Clinic will be relocated to offices at 680 N. Lake Shore Drive, where executives say about 30 percent of Prentice’s 140-doctor medical staff already has its offices.

“It’s very expensive to put outpatient space into a building coded for inpatient care,” said Dennis Murphy, Northwestern Memorial executive vice president and chief operating officer.