Combined Neuroscience Units Open

Specialized nurses, technicians and physicians who’ve cared for patients on six different units will become a team to provide world-class neuroscience care when Units 61 and 62 open Monday, Dec. 8.

Stretching across the south side of the hospital’s top floor, the $3.5 million project covers 24,600 square feet. Unit 61, Neuroscience Intensive Care (NSICU), includes 14 beds. Unit 62, Neuroscience Progressive Care (NSPCU), is a 22-bed telemetry unit. These units will be home to the hospital’s Stroke Program. They were designed to provide the optimum environment for patients with neurological conditions, including stroke, seizure disorders and brain tumors.

Working as a Team

“The new space is designed differently in that it has a central nurses’ station between 61 and 62,” said Thu Janes, RN, nurse manager, Unit 62. “The whole idea behind the design is that our units have a connection to each other. Our patients will move between units as their conditions improve or need additional care.”

Staff members are cross-training in Neuromedicine and Neurosurgery. “We have a robust multidisciplinary rounds program, and we are mentoring each other in everything from fall prevention to neuropathic pain treatment,” said Stacy Smith, RN, nurse manager, Unit 61.

State-of-the-Art Monitoring

Patient rooms feature state-of-the-art monitoring to allow staff in both units to track a patient’s blood pressure, heart rhythm and intracranial pressure. To target seizure monitoring, beds on both units are wired for continuous video EEG monitoring by technicians in the EEG workroom. Nurses and physicians can also monitor patients remotely across the hospital network. “This represents a major technology boost for us,” Smith noted.

Extra monitoring is crucial, because neurological changes can be subtle, Janes explained. “The early signs of stroke are easily overlooked,” she said. “We need to immediately recognize these changes, so we can expedite treatment.”

“We’re confident being together in one location will better serve our patients and the hospital. This will have a positive effect on practically everything we do – communication, clinical education, discharge planning and throughput,” Janes said. “We are thrilled to be gifted with such a wonderful environment.”
A Touch of Home

Families and loved ones of a former Neuro ICU patient helped design the public waiting area and a private consultation room for Units 61 and 62: The Jake Clough Family Room. The family of the late Jake Clough, organizers of the Headstrong for Jake Bike Rodeo to promote bike safety, made donations in his memory to furnish the areas. Fourteen-year-old Jake was successfully treated at The University of Kansas Hospital in 2005 for a brain injury he received in a bicycle accident. He recovered, but later died of other complications in another facility.

“Jake’s family suggested our waiting room feel less institutional and more homey,” said Stacy Smith, RN, nurse manager, Unit 61. “They advised us to purchase furniture like a recliner and loveseat, rather than lining up chairs along the walls.”