

Designing, building new ways to a healthy heart

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women, and accounts for every one in four deaths in the U.S. Pretty startling statistics, but there is good news. Heart wellness can be achieved through simple lifestyle choices, such as getting plenty of exercise and sleep, maintaining low blood pressure and a normal weight, and not smoking. Thankfully, the health care industry is helping. By utilizing models that focus on education, prevention and comprehensive care, hopefully many lives will be saved.

Cardiovascular services are dramatically shifting toward outpatient, and increasingly delivered through coordinated care approaches. In some cases, this is being driven by bundled payment, but also to provide quality care and improve outcomes. There



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is also a focus on providing whole-patient care, not just single-point interventions. This is shifting care to a comprehensive service line approach. Cardiovascular programs are dependent upon referrals throughout the health care chain – from physicians to hospitals for testing and intervention, and from hospitals to nursing homes for post-procedure care. In addition, reimbursement penalties for readmissions are forcing hospitals to create partnerships with skilled-nursing providers for post-intervention care.

Comprehensive cardiovascular service lines are emerging that encompass prevention and



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population health through outpatient care and inpatient services to post-intervention rehab and heart-failure support. This model is changing the way facilities will support care. A few models include:

- Comprehensive outpatient centers consolidating the specialties and services to create a cohesive and convenient patient experience, but keeping the service lines separate.
- Cardiovascular centers attached to a hospital that consolidates services and draws upon the hospital for high acuity resources such as cath labs, hybrid ORs, CVORs and CICUs.
- Heart hospitals, which are fully dedicated to advanced cardiac services throughout diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation.

We are working closely to assist our clients in achieving their cardiovascular service line goals. Our projects range from new stand-alone specialty outpatient facilities to campus infill and renovation. Comprehensive approaches to care will increase the services necessary to provide this care and impact facility operations and design. The following are two projects that exemplify a consolidated cardiovascular approach that can offer a model for facilities in Colorado as well as across the country.

■ **WellSpan Heart & Vascular Center.** WellSpan's goal was to create a

specialty heart and vascular center that is community-oriented with convenient access and comprehensive care.

The new two-story, 63,000-square-foot facility is located on 10.6 acres in York, Pennsylvania, adjacent to the WellSpan Surgery and Rehabilitation Hospital. The first floor contains nonhospital licensed programs, including 54 standard, flexible exam rooms, registration, office, lobby, waiting and support spaces. The second floor contains hospital licensed programs, including cardiac rehabilitation and noninvasive testing ultrasound, echo, stress testing and nuclear medicine.

The building also features patient and family amenity spaces with a healthy eating café on the first floor and a multipurpose community learning space, demonstration kitchen and roof garden on the second floor. The center is surrounded by abundant landscaping featuring a walking trail used for recovery and therapy, and a farmer's market on the campus.

Currently under construction, when completed the facility will result in a community-focused center, providing prevention through health and wellness education, and diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation.

■ **MidMichigan Medical Center Cardiovascular Center.** MidMichigan Medical Center located in Midland, Michigan, is affiliated with the University of Michigan Health System. The medical center's goal was to create a new comprehensive Car-

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SNWEB.ORG Photography LLC
The MidMichigan project consolidates clinical departments, including six different cardiovascular clinics, a vascular clinic, a cardiac diagnostic suite, a patient outreach laboratory and radiology, while also providing future expansion to other vital hospital services.



SNWEB.ORG Photography LLC
The exterior of MidMichigan Medical Center Cardiovascular Center



A look at the WellSpan Heart & Vascular Center
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diovascular Center of Excellence. Our team worked with the medical center to review existing clinical workflows and provided recommendations on best practices for each department to develop a comprehensive cardiovascular center that serves both outpatient and inpatient needs.

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outreach laboratory and radiology, while also providing future expansion to other vital hospital services.

The infill addition is a community destination resulting in a welcoming facility that achieves ease of access and superior delivery of care. The abundant surrounding natural environment is embraced by the design which features twin garden areas connected by a public pedestrian “street.” The northern garden is an exterior multilevel healing garden, while the southern garden

is a vaulted, interior winter garden that provides a perennial retreat for patients, visitors and staff. The infill addition has resulted in a true Center of Excellence for MidMichigan Medical Center - Midland.

In summary, as cardiovascular services become more complex and require the intervention of a range of specialists to support whole patient care, it is vital to build facilities that support integrated processes. These national projects offer best practices for cardiovascular service lines and

the way facilities will support care moving forward. By combining services together, we can encourage cross-collaboration between a wide range of specialties. We can also better support the patient by providing an easily navigated, one-stop shop for them to comfortably receive their care. Engaging patients in early interventions and education and supporting them throughout and long after treatment can promote better outcomes and life-long health patterns.▲

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toms alongside mental health issues is no small task. “Mental health, that’s what we have expertise in,” said Boe. “When patients come to us, they are already struggling. The world doesn’t make sense. It’s terrifying when one’s own mental health system is at its height and then asking them to put on a mask. It’s scary.”

For further virus prevention, a separate staff entrance is now doubling as a wellness checkpoint. There, staff must have their temperatures checked along with receiving an alcohol spritz to eradicate contaminants. Locker rooms allow them to change clothing and contain shoes that may be carrying virus particles instead of bringing them home. “Having one, single point of entry for staff has been instrumental in managing the creep of the virus and keeping staff healthy,” said Boe.

However, the fear and stress of the pandemic is taking its toll on them, as well.

“The piece I am seeing is an increase in staff’s anxiety,” said Boe. “They are coming into work and are understandably concerned. They are primarily reassured, because we’ve put so many

stop guards in place. However, we will run out of personal protective equipment. That is the anxiety piece.” At West Springs, Linstrom incorporated colored light therapy that soothes, artwork and respite rooms for “staff to calm down and have few moments,” she said.

And while the hospital was not designed with pandemic preparedness in mind, it was for patients to feel well and be treated well, despite the circumstances. “Often, psychiatric hospitals are sterile and institutional,” said Linstrom. “The whole intent for West Springs was to build a sanctuary. A lot of thought went into how we do that to maintain dignity and a sense of control and environment.”

To inform that design, the Davis team met with previous patients to help identify elements that made them feel safer and heal faster. “Because we took that time, this building works,” said Boe. “We can respond to pandemics and agitated patients, and we can respond to extraordinarily depressed patients and keep suicidal patients safe and make a difference.”

Ultimately, the shift for architects and health care facilities is toward designing for the next pandemic.



An interior look at West Springs Hospital.

Paul Brokering

While that typically hasn’t made the program of requirements, it may soon be as clients aim to close gaps made clear by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It makes us all think more about this,” said Linstrom, who has already received requests for makeshift and temporary spaces, mainly sleeping

areas for physicians and people on the front lines. “The key is putting in flexibility in design, to be able to accommodate things as they come,” she said. “Who knows if we’ll be in the same situation, but we need to be designing buildings that can flex with the times.”▲

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