

Citizens Medical moving forward

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Citizens Medical Center in Colby made great strides last year to increase the services it offers.

The hospital saw many changes, said Administrator Janice McCart, from equipment upgrades to a new doctor joining the staff.

Last year, the hospital experienced a 10 percent increase in the number of hospital stays. McCart said it wasn't the number of patients that went up, but the number of days patients spent in the hospital.

"The increase in patient days does have to do with physicians," she said. "Keeping people local has helped."

Dr. Darren Matchell joined the staff, she said, and it appears there have been more people with illnesses admitted to the facility.

The addition of more specialty doctors and programs also has added to the increased volume, McCart said.

Doctors added to the specialty clinic include cardiologist Dr. Christine M. Fisher

of Hays; ophthalmologist Dr. William S. Clifford of Garden City; Dr. Abdul A. Haleem of Hays, Dr. John M. Gargaro of Denver and Dr. Sheima M. Baig of Hays, all specializing in orthopedics; rheumatologist Dr. Kathleen R. Srock; Dr. Chris Regier of Hays, ear, nose and throat; surgeons Dr. Charles E. Frankum of Denver and Dr. Ross E. Stadalman of Hays; and Dr. Rajesh Bazaz, orthopedics, Denver.

The hospital increased deliveries 27 percent in 2005, McCart said, which also added to patient days. This year is seeing a baby boom, she said; in March, there were 15 babies born at Citizens.

That kept staff hopping, and the facility's four beds dedicated to maternity filled.



Citizens Medical Center

- Beds — 25 in hospital.
- Budget 2005 — (Revenue) \$23,607,924
- Profit 2005 — \$77,829
- County money 2005 — None. Citizens Medical Center is a not-for-profit private hospital.
- Doctors — Four active staff physicians, six mid levels, 65 consulting physicians.
- Phone — (785) 462-7511.

The hospital is certified as a 25-bed critical access facility, she said, and has to have the birthing area separate.

"I'm excited about the OB program," McCart said, adding that visiting new mothers is one of the best aspects of her job. The hospital gives baby baskets to new mothers, and McCart herself hands them out.

Of the other beds, she said, 19 are dedicated to medical and surgical pa-



READY FOR THE TEST? Duane Robb (standing), a respiratory therapist at Citizens Medical Center in Colby, prepared patient Chris Mayer for an electrocardiogram. Photo by Tisha Cox/Colby Free Press

tients and one to intensive care.

While the hospital has seen an influx of patients, upgrades to the clinic and equipment are complete, or in the works. One example is a plan to bring in digital radiology.

"We're very close to making the decision on the system we're going to go with," the administrator said.

McCart said the equipment will allow doctors in different towns to look at an x-ray at the same time.

And instead of bulky x-ray film to carry to appointments, patients will get a CD-ROM they can put in any computer so someone can look at their scan.

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Citizens moving ahead

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Not only is it faster and more convenient, it will also cut down on film and developing costs, McCart said. She said the cost of the digital equipment will be offset by the savings in film and developing costs.

Another future upgrade will be made to the CT scanner.

Expansion at Family Center for Health Care is complete, and a public open house will be held sometime this month. The bulk of the expansion included the addition of an education room in the basement and additional exam rooms.

"We still have a few more things to do over there," McCart said, including landscaping and a mural in the children's area.

The expansion added 8,200 square feet to the 3,700-square-foot clinic, she said.

"The hospital is going in the right direction

financially and strategically," McCart said.

The increase in volume, addition of new services and equipment upgrades are all evidence of that.

The end of 2005 also saw a change in the medication dispensing system. The upgrade, McCart said, allows a nurse to see on a computer screen a doctor's orders for a patient's medication. When the nurse selects medicine, a small light on the cabinet next to the screen flashes. Inside the cabinet, the compartment with the medicine blinks, showing where it is.

The nurse is allowed only to open that compartment and to take out that medicine or supplies.

She said it allows better quality of care, and ensures better quality and inventory control.

"It saves us time," McCart said.



BOBBIE KOERPERICH, a registered nurse at Citizens Medical Center in Colby, used the hospital's new pharmacy distribution system to get medicine for a patient. The system is one of many upgrades at the hospital over the past year.

Photo by Tisha Cox/Colby Free Press

Plenty of health care service choices in Thomas County

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Thomas County residents have plenty of choices when it comes to health care. The variety covers needs from family practice to acupuncture and from providers like the hospital to the county health department.

The Thomas County Health Department, 350

S. Range Ave., provides lab testing services, blood pressure checks and immunizations.

They also offer programs and classes, including breast feeding classes for new mothers.

Besides the health department, the community of Colby has three clinics to choose from.

They are Colby Medical and Surgical Center, the Family Center for Health Care and

Slavens Family Practice.

Colby Medical and Surgical Center, 175 S. Range Ave., has two physicians — Dr. LaDonna Regier and Dr. Victor Hildyard II. The clinic also has physician assistant Brian Unruh and nurse practitioner Deanna Sulzman.

Family Center for Health Care has two doctors, Dr. Brewster Kellogg and Dr. Darren A.

Matchell, who joined the clinic last year. Administrator Scott Focke said the clinic also has two nurse practitioners, Luetta Flanagan and Jenny Niblock.

The community also has more to offer. Physical therapy, optometry, chiropractic

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Rural hospitals use new technology

By Carolyn Plotts

The Norton Telegram

The recurring theme of rural hospitals in northwest Kansas is computerized technology.

Computers and the level of care they enhance are not considered new technology — but they are considered necessary.

Norton County Hospital

Norton County Hospital is “wired.” The hospital’s computer system is interconnected to allow doctor’s orders and dosage orders to be entered directly into the system. A Pyxis machine dispenses medicine that is directly charged to a patient’s records, which in turn interfaces with the finance department. In fact, all departments are connected to finance so that all information relating to a patient’s treatment flows right to his or her bill.

Doctors Clinic and the hospital are connected, and doctors can review a patient’s chart from their offices.

“We received a grant through KAN-Ed to improve our tele-medicine capabilities,” said Pam Cuthbertson, director of information technology. “With video conferencing equipment, a patient can visit with doctors at KU Med Cen-

ter or Hays or Kearney (Neb.).”

Melissa Wachendorfer, the new director of nursing in Norton, said the facility has a new piece of equipment, but it is definitely low-tech: No battery, no wires, no moving parts. It is a birthing pool used by nurse practitioner and midwife, Kay Garman.

Decatur County Hospital

Lynn Doeden, chief executive officer of Decatur Health Systems in Oberlin, supervises the county hospital; Cedar Living Center, a long-term care unit; Cottonwood Home Care; and Wheat Ridge Terrace Apartments, set up for independent living. Mrs. Doeden said the firm is implementing a computerized patient care documentation system which can be used from anywhere in the building.

Citizen’s Medical Center

Citizen’s Medical Center in Colby is the only hospital in the western third of Kansas that is locally owned and operated and not owned by the county. Tama Unger, director of fund development and community relations, said technology has a high price tag.

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Drug program mired in maze

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Addleman said. “I am all in favor of generics, but that doesn’t cover everybody.

“All but one of the companies have a mail-order house. This cuts out the local pharmacist. The big guys who buy on volume can make money. The little guy doesn’t get the benefits.

“It will be amazing to see the number of rural pharmacies that go under this first year.”

Miller said it is his opinion the choice is not the person’s who is using the prescription program, but rather the insurance company’s.

“I have to protect the business,” Miller said. “If you (the pharmacist) aren’t there, what have you done for the patient.

“I have to do the math. The plans are not always good for the business.”

Miller said he expects the program to even out some after the first year, and believes some of

the insurance companies will bail out in September when they have to notify their customers of any changes for the upcoming year.

He said if any senior is not happy with the plan they have chosen, there is an option in the program to change if they do it before May 15, but after that the person will have to wait until November.

The annual enrollment for Medicare Part D in the future will be Nov. 15 to Dec. 31. The law says the insurance companies have to notify Medicare and all their customers of any changes in the policy or premiums by Sept. 30.

For additional information, call Medicare’s telephone hotline: (800) 633-4227. TTY users should call (877) 486-2048. Medicare’s official website is www.medicare.gov.

The site includes comparisons of drug plans, a cost estimator and fact sheets in several languages.



GETTING A PRESCRIPTION, Kellie Tuxhorn, a registered nurse at the Norton County Hospital, demonstrated how the Pyxis machine dispenses a patient’s medication. The unit automatically sends the charges to the financial department, too.

Photo by Carolyn Plotts/The Norton Telegram

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