

Building a Heart Hospital for the Future

The "Heart Hospital" for the future is a multifaceted facility. The design can be accommodated in several different facility models: several floors within a facility, an individual wing or section, or a freestanding building. Whatever the design option, the Heart Hospital for the future is a customer-oriented care delivery model focused on cardiac care.

When considering facility design, there are many issues to consider. The uppermost concern is being 'user friendly.' The user can be defined as the patient, the patient's family, the physician, and the staff who will all be involved in the operation of the Heart Hospital.

Facility development as a Heart Hospital for the Future incorporates many considerations, which can limit the design options. The entire existing cardiac program may need to be redesigned or relocated. Unlimited space and unconstrained finances are usually not an option. Integrating reasonable budgets and sizing the program within space limitations are issues to be resolved. Involving staff and analyzing all options and associated costs will facilitate a successful design process.

First, a facility should look at how cardiac care delivery is presently managed. Patient flow processes must be examined closely to assess overall efficiency. This method will help to design a more 'user friendly' facility. The next step is to decide on the facility options for expansion. Often constructing within existing space may be the only option. Designing a "Heart Hospital" as a newly-constructed building or wing is an ideal situation, but an expensive venture.

Using the Cardiac Universal Bed as a care delivery model supports a 'user friendly' facility. The fully equipped room is acuity adaptable and minimizes patient transfers through multiple levels of care. The Universal Bed model can sometimes be incorporated into existing space as well as require new construction. Incorporated into the design is the flexibility to add or remove equipment as necessary.

The progression of the patient from the critical post-operative stage to discharge, with the same identifiable staff, in one continuous care environment is very satisfying for all involved. Patients and families have found this model very attractive. The satisfaction in the continuity of care with consistent caregivers has been reflected in higher scores on patient satisfaction surveys. Physicians have expressed a higher level of effectiveness by having patients in one location. The medical staff is confident in the scope and consistency of nursing skill.

The nursing staff is involved in the entire patient care process. Nurses find this model very rewarding as well as efficient. This design model easily facilitates technology changes. Ease of staff training, shortened hospitalizations, and better space utilization are some economies associated with this Cardiac Universal Bed model.

The progression of treatments for cardiac disease requires incorporating adjacencies into facility design as a strategic concern. Cardiac Catheterization Labs designed with full endovascular capabilities placed adjacent to Cardiovascular Operating Rooms is a cutting-edge design. This can allow efficient flow processes for staff, patients, and incorporates sharing of support spaces. Including an adjacent cardiac unit with the Cardiac Universal Bed model adds to the ideal design. Planning for potential growth must also be an integral aspect of the design.

Support space needs in this design should include space designated for patient family conferences and individual patient teaching. Waiting areas should be used efficiently by incorporating a beeper system and encouraging family visitation directly at the patient's bedside.

Whenever possible, all diagnostic services should be designed within the Heart Hospital. Patients and families should be able to move through the facility easily and access all needed tests and therapies in a "one stop shopping" format. Including these services within adjacent space lends well to physician and staff efficiencies.

A designated entrance to access all cardiac services strengthens the perception of a Heart Hospital as being 'user friendly.' Patient convenience and accessibility through all the stages of cardiovascular diagnosis and treatment incorporate how the Heart Hospital of the future design package will be perceived.

By designing a Heart Hospital for the future, an institution can look to incorporating cost cutting efficiencies into a "user friendly" facility. Often this will lend itself to increasing both the size of the institution's cardiac service area as well as the current market share within the service area. Heart Hospital organizational structure differentiates an institution from competitors in the market by focusing resources on operational and clinical excellence.

The market advantages and outstanding customer satisfaction can justify the costs associated with designing and building a Heart Hospital for the future.

Corazon is a national leader in specialized consulting and recruitment services for cardiovascular program development from strategic business planning through clinical implementation. Corazon combines business planning, market and financial analysis, feasibility studies, clinical operations, Heart Hospital design, best practice benchmarking, and staff education for newly established or existing programs. Corazon is a 2003 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Company. Call 412-364-8200 or visit www.corazoninc.com.