

Newman Memorial Hospital: Bridging the Gap between Rural Living and Specialty Care

Modern medicine and patient care are constantly evolving. Federal guidelines and mandates often dictate costly changes that hospitals and other providers must execute in order to continue providing care to patients. Rural hospitals often walk a fine line in order to maintain revenue to support their facilities. Some hospitals have chosen to downsize the number of services that they provide, narrowing their focus and zeroing in on a specific target demographic. While that may work in a highly populated area, it is not necessarily a good fit for a rural hospital with a large primary service area. One answer that several facilities, including Newman Memorial, have chosen to pursue is initiating and expanding a Specialty Clinic.

Having a Specialty Clinic is a great way to bridge the gap between rural living and access to specialty physicians and services. NMH has long offered services such as Physical Therapy, Radiological Services, Laboratory Services, Emergency Care and the fairly recent addition of the Urgent Care Clinic. But a Specialty Clinic allows patients to make appointments with specialty physicians at their community hospital without the community having the burden of supporting the specialty physician full-time. The concept allows Newman to offer a much broader range of services to the community and patient population. In addition, it allows patients the option of obtaining highly specialized care close to home when they would otherwise have to drive anywhere from 30 minutes to 3 hours.

Newman Memorial Hospital's Specialty Clinic currently hosts regularly scheduled appointments for Cardiology, Dermatology, Nutrition and Diabetic Counseling, Colonoscopy/Endoscopy and Urology. With the recent re-opening of the Surgical Department, they have added General Surgery and are actively pursuing other specialty physicians and surgeons such as Ear, Nose & Throat physicians and Orthopedists. NMH currently offers pediatric and family services via the Immunizations program and WIC program with plans to expand into Primary Care as well. One great thing about having a robust Specialty Clinic is that it avoids the limitations of employing specialists full time which means that, moving forward, NMH can continue to recruit and expand the number of specialty physicians available to the community.