

Hospitalists Caring for Patients



Remember when doctors made house calls? If so, then you know how much the practice of medicine has changed over the years. Nowadays, patients usually go to the physician, not the other way around.

Of course, hospitalized patients do get bedside visits. Doctors make their rounds once, maybe twice, a day to provide all-important personal attention.

But what if a patient has a pressing need when his or her physician is out of the hospital? Complications can arise at any time. Private practitioners have appointments to keep and patients to see in their offices and clinics, so they aren't always available at a moment's notice.

Patients at Oroville Hospital needn't worry. Every day, at all hours of the day or night, physicians stand ready to rush to any unit of the medical center.

They're called hospitalists. Oroville Hospital began employing these inpatient specialists in 2003, and they've since become a fixture.

"Hospitalists admit patients to the hospital, take care of them while they're here and then discharge them back to their primary-care doctor," explains Dr. Laurence Seaman, chief of staff at Oroville Hospital, who also oversees the Intensive Care Unit and the Hospitalist Program.

"It's better in the long run because there's a hospitalist available 24/7 to see a patient, whereas an outpatient doctor can only come in when he's available. It's more efficient. You can get tests done a lot quicker and get results back a lot faster. There's always someone right there to take care of the problem—if a patient has a critical change, somebody is there within minutes."

"That wasn't always true in the old days," Dr. Seaman notes. "Somebody would have to come in from his or her office, or come in from home, to take care of a critically ill patient. Now the patient actually gets better care in

totality and has a shorter length of stay."

Hospitalists, in turn, do not face some of the challenges associated with outpatient care.

"You don't have that constant pull of having to go back to the office," Dr. Seaman says. "You don't get patient calls and don't have to deal with medication renewals all the time. You're just focused on the needs and wants and the medical care of the patient while they're in the hospital."

"We take care of patients effectively, quickly, and efficiently"

Patients benefit from all this attention. Oroville Hospital has been able to streamline procedures as well as improve its safety ratings to among the highest in the nation since establishing the Hospitalist Program.

Hospitalists at Oroville Hospital come from a variety of backgrounds. Many received training in internal medicine. Others are family medicine doctors who decided to close private practices. Dr. Seaman is a former emergency room physician.

The common denominator is a commitment to caring for seriously ill people.

"Many large hospitals now have programs that are similar to what we've started and instituted several years ago. We've been a forerunner." Dr. Seaman says, with justified pride. "We take care of patients effectively, quickly, and efficiently at Oroville Hospital."



Oroville Hospital