

Reducing Emergency Room Wait Times

Like most medical centers, the Emergency Room at Oroville Hospital is a hopping place. At any given moment, the doctors and nurses may be treating a patient suffering from chest pains when paramedics rush in with the victim of an auto accident. In the next bed, with anxious parents looking on, rests a child with a high fever and labored breathing.

Oroville Hospital serves around 70,000 residents of the city and neighboring communities, which makes for a lot of busy days and nights.

Fortunately, the members of the Emergency Services Department,

the office name of the ER, have enacted a series of changes that have streamlined the treatment of critical patients. Along with reducing wait times, the Emergency Services Department (or ESD) mobilizes colleagues from throughout the hospital to respond in times of need.

“One thing that I think is distinctive about Oroville Hospital is that, with our administration and our physicians, we have a lot of people who think out of the box” says Debbie Cox, who serves as an ESD

Manager as well as the Trauma Care Coordinator.

One such progressive change is how Oroville Hospital approaches triage — assessing patients’ conditions and prioritizing their treatment accordingly. ESD established a Rapid Medical Exam to, as the name suggests, speed up the triage process.

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Explains Sunday Killgore, an ESD Manager: “We have a 5-level triage system, so that patients who are not as ill or who have minor injuries can be efficiently evaluated and treated by a P.A. (physician assistant). That way, we can still give the seriously ill patients the attention they need without bogging down the system. Patients are happier and being treated better medically. With this system we have decreased the average wait time.”

When it does get busy, ESD has a plan. It’s called decompression. When the ER is overloaded, healthcare practitioners from other units step in to help.

“The team comes in and does an excellent job of taking patients and treating them outside the ER,” Cox says. When that happens, Killgore adds, “the patient can get their treatment quicker and be more comfortable— so it’s a lot safer, more efficient care.”

Lori Hestand, a nurse/E.S.D. manager, who like Killgore has been at Oroville Hospital more than 20 years adds, “I just see our care getting better and the wait times getting shorter.”



Oroville Hospital