



Landmark unveils ER ‘InstaCare’

By John Larabee, Staff Writer

Novel system designed to treat patients within minutes, not hours

Woonsocket – Imagine walking into a hospital emergency room, and having someone treat your injuries in 30 minutes

Can you imagine 20 minutes? Or five?

It’s now happening at Landmark Medical Center; thanks to a new system the staff has dubbed “InstaCare”. The hospital has been testing the system over the past month, and it has proved so successful they now have lawyers working to get a service trademark.

The hospital could begin advertising the new service in the next few weeks.

It’s a novel, very radical system,” says Dr. Emilio Belaval, who developed the concept that was then refined by other hospital staff. “If people replicate it, we want them to do it right.”

In most emergency rooms, seriously injured patients receive immediate care, while those with more commonplace ailments – colds, sprains, minor cuts – must wait, first in a lobby and then in a bed. The so-called “triage system” makes sense, of course, but it also means some patients must cope with their pain for hours before seeing a doctor or a nurse.

“Our system turns the old routine on its head,” Belaval says. “One of the first persons a patient sees is a care provider. If the patient does not have a significant illness, then the provider takes care of them on the spot and gives them a discharge right from the triage room. There’s no sitting around waiting for bed placement and so forth.”

Here’s how the system works:

Patients arriving at Landmark’s emergency room are met by a greeter, who asks a few basic questions and takes down personal information.

Based on the severity of their ailments, patients are directed to the appropriate caregiver – a nurse practitioner, a physician assistant, or a doctor. Each patient wears a wristband that allows clinicians to make quick identifications; it stays on until the patient is discharged.

Caregivers begin treating patients before registration. Patients are asked to provide that information at bedside, or after treatment. To keep things moving, family members must stay in the waiting area, except when accompanying a child.

The hospital also increased the number of care providers routinely working in the emergency room from two to four, be they nurse practitioners, physician assistants, or doctors.

The non-profit hospital adopted the new system out of necessity, according to Belaval.

Unlike other area hospitals, which turn away ambulances when emergency rooms are full. Landmark never stops accepting patients. The result: Landmark now treats more than 43,000 emergency room patients each year.

To handle the crush, the hospital last year introduced another innovative system it called Fast Track Express Care. Those with less serious injuries and ailments could opt for immediate treatment by a nurse practitioner or physician assistant, rather than a doctor. The move cut emergency room waits from hours to 45 minutes or less, and a doctor would check on every patient's treatment before discharge.

But the Fast Track system proved so successful, it drew even more walk-in patients to the hospital, and soon staff was scurrying to find another way to keep traffic.

Belaval credits Landmark administrators with encouraging innovation.

“If I presented an outside-the-box like this any other hospital, they would have shot it down,” he says. “I’d have to thank Landmark President Gary Gaube and the rest of the administrative staff for their full support. I give them all the kudos.”

The new system would praise from Lt. Gov. Charles Fogarty, US Rep. Patrick Kennedy, and other dignitaries who toured the emergency room Thursday morning.

“I applaud Gary Gaube and his management team for initiating the new InstaCare program,” Fogarty said. “This program clearly demonstrates Landmark’s commitment to improving quality and consumer satisfaction.”

The Call 2005