

Big Hospital Rooms for Bariatric Patients Growing Trend



Parkland Hospital in Dallas has recently revamped its facilities and has redesigned its 862 single-patient rooms in the 17-story tower to accommodate obese patients.

100 rooms (approximately four per floor) are equipped with a motorised lift that can accommodate patients up to 1000 pounds. There is also a portable bariatric lift on every floor for patients who need transport and those who have had spine surgery or joint replacement. The easy accessibility of lifts also benefits nurses and other caregivers as they are at lower risk of strains, muscle pulls and other work-related injuries related to moving and transporting heavier patients.

"We designed with this idea of the universal patient in mind," said Jim Henry, an associate vice president of the architectural consulting firm HDR, which worked on the new building. "Any patient can go into any room. At this hospital, a patient doesn't feel, 'I'm going into a bariatric room.'"

Kathy Harper, vice president of clinical coordination, new campus construction, at Parkland explains that bariatric patients were not considered as an afterthought but instead, special care was taken to consider their needs and the best way to accommodate them. Other hospitals have also followed suit although it may not be on as large a scale as Parkland.

Nancy Connolly, a senior executive at Hammes Company, a hospital consulting group also points out that most hospitals that are being built are designing rooms that can accommodate larger patients. Five to ten years ago, only a room or two could accommodate larger patients but now 15 to 20 percent of rooms are designed to accommodate them.

Being obese can be fairly challenging for an individual and it can be especially difficult for patients. They face unique challenges such as the need for larger and sturdier beds and wheelchairs, as well as other heavy-duty equipment. In many cases, larger patients have to be bathed in their rooms since larger wheelchairs cannot fit through the doors of a standard-size bathroom. This is not only an inconvenience but also requires more than one caregiver. Obese people also often have serious, simultaneous medical conditions that require special care.

"Standard-size rooms don't have enough room for appropriate equipment to treat these patients," said Geri Johnston, a nurse and the bariatric surgery program coordinator at the teaching hospital at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. "You have to have enough room to have the right equipment. That may not fit in a normal hospital-size room, and certainly not in a shared room, let alone a shared bathroom."

Dr. David Provost, a surgeon who performs bariatric surgery in the Dallas area says that most hospitals are not built for larger people. He is also of the opinion that obese patients are better off in a clinical area that is based on their surgical procedures or disease process.

Source: [Parkland Hospital](#), [New York Times](#)

Image Credit: Parkland Hospital

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