

Texas Patient Centre is Truly Patient-Centred



UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas (Texas, USA) dedicated the new William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital on 30 October, ahead of its expected opening on 6 December. The state-of-the-art facility, designed to enhance patient care and the patient experience, was collaboratively planned over five years with input from physicians, nurses, patients and the community. It replaces the ageing St. Paul University Hospital which has served the rapidly growing northern Texas region for five decades.

“The result is a facility that reflects a rethinking of what a hospital should be, from the ground up,” said John Warner, MD, Vice President and CEO of UT Southwestern University Hospitals. “Every aspect of the hospital’s design is intended to support caregivers in providing exemplary patient care, integrated with research and training.”

Designed for Connection

The W-shape of the hospital was deliberately designed to keep hallways short and nurses closer to their patients. Nurses will spend less time traveling between patient rooms, and will be able to check on recovering patients without disturbing them, simply by opening and closing shades on the windows from the nurse alcoves situated outside of the rooms. The design also allows supply deliveries to bypass patient hallways, reducing both noise and infection risk.

Technological connections abound as well. All patient rooms will be equipped with videoconferencing monitors, allowing consultations among care team members. Informative imaging scans will be easier to share with patients, and the monitors’ high definition cameras will connect patients with friends and family members.

An outdoor garden will provide a connection with nature for patients who are permitted to spend time outdoors, with electronic monitoring of their conditions. Patients will have more control over their indoor surroundings, too, with light and temperature controls accessible via a remote control, meal ordering options and WiFi access in each room. All 460 rooms are single-patient spaces, with large windows allowing in natural light to promote healing.

Prioritising Efficiency and Safety

While 50 years is not necessarily old for a hospital, some features of the new facility would have been difficult to install in an older structure. The advanced air filtration system in the new hospital, for example, is not limited to areas populated by immunocompromised patients. Fresh, clean air will filter in throughout the entire facility. Meanwhile, used linen and trash flows away from patient floors via a chute system specifically designed for infection control.

Training for Physicians, Education for Patients

There is a clear focus on involving patients in their care whenever possible. Each floor of the facility has space dedicated to research and learning activities for physicians and patients alike. Research projects incorporating cutting-edge technology and techniques will be accessible to patients, facilitating the possibility of non-standard therapies for patients in need.

The rapid translation of clinical research to the bedside is just one part of the centre's mission. The Patient and Family Resource Center within the new hospital will be professionally staffed by faculty trained to inform patients, their families and visitors about the causes and treatment options of different diseases.

Consistent with its strong medical training and education tradition, UT Southwestern's newest hospital will feature 10,000 square feet of education and conference space for demonstrations, symposiums and workshops.

Clements and the Community

The new centre is named for a former Texas governor, William P. Clements Jr., who in 2009 bestowed the largest single monetary donation to UT Southwestern in the amount of \$100 million. That gift, together with generous philanthropic donations from the North Texas community, provided more than \$200 million for the "Building the Future of Medicine" campaign.

"Supporters believed in the vision for this new hospital, and they invested in it," said UT Chancellor Francisco Gonzalez Cigarroa, MD. "As a result, a magnificent new facility joins UT System's health institutions, serving not only patients, but developing the best and brightest medical students, residents and fellows, who will become the caregivers of the future."

Clements' contribution was not designated for a specific purpose within the campaign, but the funds had to be used in a "transformational" way. His daughter, Nancy Seay, said, "Our family is pleased that my father's name will be associated with UT Southwestern in a hospital that will foster the spirit of discovery and the pursuit of excellence that he embodied throughout his life. We are very grateful for this honor."

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Image Credit: UT Southwestern Medicine

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