

Daytona Beach News-Journal (FL)  
Title: Hospitals' growth should create 'gradual' jobs  
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More than 1.3 million square feet in new hospital space - half that of the Empire State Building - is opening this summer in Daytona Beach. Whether the gargantuan expansions of Florida Hospital and Halifax Health will mean proportionate growth in the local labor market, however, remains to be seen.

Some new personnel have been added in anticipation of the move to Florida Hospital Memorial Medical Center alongside Interstate 95 from Florida Hospital's aging facility in Ormond Beach. But increasing the number of licensed beds by 21 percent at the new location and adding 33 percent more beds at Halifax Health's Daytona Beach campus doesn't mean that many more workers are needed.

First, more patients have to start showing up.

"It's going to be a gradual ramp up," predicted Carol Doucette, a registered nurse who is the recruitment manager for Florida Hospital Ormond Memorial and Oceanside and charged with staffing the new facility. "It's not like we're going to have this huge influx of new needs."

Similarly, at Halifax Health, Spokeswoman Salina Wang said any new hiring after its new, 10-story North Tower opens will be driven by patient census. "It's about the census and if the census isn't that great, they aren't going to be hiring people for the sake of hiring people," Wang said.

Although health care is commonly considered a "recession-proof" sector of the economy - given how disease and aging never take a holiday - the official numbers of the area's largest health care provider show that the down times have been having an impact on health care revenues. After years of growth, admissions and inpatient surgeries at both of Halifax Health's facilities have taken a tumble below budget.

"It's not like we're losing our market share, the pie is just not growing like it was," Wang said.

And, it looks like building - as was done last year at Florida Hospital Flagler - does not necessarily bring in more patients. Hospital statistics show that even though the region's most northern hospital added 11,000 square feet and doubled the size of the emergency room over the last two years, patient discharges have grown negligibly: about 18 more patients per month - a 4 percent increase - according to numbers from the Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida from September 2006 to September 2008.

Even with that stagnant patient outlook, however, college administrators say that nurses and other allied health professionals are being hired just as quickly as colleges and universities can get diplomas in their hands. In fact, administrators at Daytona State College, Bethune-Cookman University and **Keiser University** say even as they've increased their numbers of nursing students, most nurses get hired at the place they train for their clinical requirements - so a job search post-graduation is not even necessary.

"The minute they walk across the stage, 100 percent of our graduates are employed," said Alma Dixon, dean of the School of Nursing at Bethune-Cookman University

Glyn Johnston, head of marketing at Daytona State College, said that the college's nursing program is at maximum capacity - despite increases that have expanded the nursing program by 40 percent in the last five years.

At Keiser University, which started out 32 years ago as a tiny program dedicated to training health care workers, the student population has increased to 12,000 students in 13 Florida locations including Daytona Beach. All of the college's medical programs have waiting lists, according to Arthur Keiser, chancellor of the university

Keiser University was named the nationwide leader in production of associate of science graduates in health professions and related sciences for the third straight year, according to a Community College Week analysis of U. S. Department of Education data released last June.

The only thing keeping the institution from expanding its nursing program further is the lack of capacity at hospitals where student nurses must complete their clinical training, Keiser said.

"There just aren't enough places for students to get the patient care training necessary," Keiser said.

#### Your Health Care Forecast

**NO MORE HOSPITAL ROOMIES:** Both hospital expansions will mean that getting some time alone will be the rule, rather than the exception. Halifax Health's 10-story patient tower will be all private rooms and the current patient tower's conversion into all private rooms is expected to commence at some point in the future.

**MORE EMERGENCY SPACE:** Halifax Health's emergency room square footage will be quadrupling and the new Florida Hospital Memorial Medical Center's also will have double the number of rooms than the emergency room at Florida Hospital Ormond Memorial.

**MORE TO CHOOSE FROM:** In the future, Florida Hospital has stated its intention to turn its new facility into a destination for cancer treatment on the scale of the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa and compete with Halifax Health with a higher level of treatment. For example, long-term plans there are to upgrade its baby nursery to a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

#### By The Numbers

Total expense of additions to area hospitals opening this year: more than \$470 million.

Total hospital square footage opening: about 1.3 million square feet.

Air conditioning power of the new hospitals: Could chill about 14,000 houses.