

Lakewood Regional Unveils Expanded Heart & Vascular Center



Kevin Brown, registered nurse and cardiovascular administrator (left), and Mark Korth, CEO of Lakewood Regional Medical Center, spearheaded the effort to expand the cardiac catheterization lab at Lakewood Regional Medical Center. (Photograph by the Long Beach Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

■ By **ASHLEIGH OLDLAND**
Staff Writer

Keeping Southern California hearts pumping, Lakewood Regional Medical Center recently expanded its Heart & Vascular Center to include state-of-the-art equipment and an extensive renovation for a catheterization laboratory on the third floor of its hospital at 3700 E. South St. in Lakewood.

In celebration of the new \$10 million, 7,000-square-foot expansion, more than 100 physicians, hospital

administrators, city officials and media professionals attended a red-carpet ribbon-cutting ceremony in October.

The cardiac catheterization laboratory, also known as a cath lab, is used for a variety of cardiac-related procedures to diagnose and restore blood flow to blocked arteries.

Though Lakewood Regional already offered quality vascular care before the renovation, cardiac administrator Kevin Brown said that the hospital needed to expand and

improve its cardiac facilities and technology to meet rising demands. The hospital hired Brown specifically to finalize the plans and the design for the expansion, grow the program and manage the new facility after completion.

“We knew that we needed to expand our capabilities several years ago,” Brown said. “We are responding to baby boomers coming of age, longer life expectancy, as well as an increase in obesity and diabetes. All of these things tell us that we need to

position ourselves to better care for more patients in the future.”

Medical Center officials don’t hide their enthusiasm about the new laboratory.

“Lakewood Regional Medical Center is thrilled to be able to expand our heart and vascular services,” said Mark Korth, CEO of Lakewood Regional. “We are excited to be able to provide needed services to our community and to be able to offer the very, very best to our patients and their families.”

After 18 months of construction, the new cardiac cath lab began admitting patients two weeks before the ribbon-cutting ceremony. The new lab enables the hospital to increase the number of patients seen and treated, but it also enhances the types of cardiac services provided to patients.

“We have the latest-and-greatest technology and best facility around right now,” Brown said.

Technology at the renovated laboratory allows physicians to take a full range of peripheral vascular images to better treat and diagnose advanced heart disease; the expansion also makes patients and their families more comfortable during treatment. Included in the redesign is a dedicated waiting area for family and friends, express admitting and reception area, a pre- and post-procedure recovery room, consultation room for patients, a conference room and a completely remodeled locker room for physicians and staff.

Hospital officials say they expect to see about 1,000 patients pass through the cath lab annually. About 200 of those cases will necessitate open-heart surgery, which can also be performed at Lakewood Regional Medical Center.

Typically, a patient can be in and out of the cath lab in less than 90 minutes – opening up blockages and

reversing heart attacks, said Dr. George Panagiotides, cardiac surgeon at Lakewood Regional.

The physician said every second counts when an artery is “plugged up” or closed off; the amount of time oxygen is cut off from the heart determines how much damage is caused. He said that in three to four hours, complete cell death occurs.

The same heart attack that would have killed a patient or caused permanent damage to the heart in the 1960s can be reversed with the modern technology available at Lakewood Regional, Panagiotides explained.

Lakewood Regional is a certified ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction (STEMI) Receiving Center for Los Angeles County. The hospital received this certification in February 2009, making it a specialty center for the treatment of heart attacks.

For more information, visit www.lakewoodregional.com. ■