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Hospitals face logistical challenge
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Three area hospitals are transplanting themselves, requiring intricate moves of patients and equipment

By Will Shanley Denver Post Staff Writer

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It's moving season for Colorado hospitals.

The University of Colorado Hospital became the first of three prominent Colorado hospitals to relocate when it launched a week-long move earlier this week.

Platte Valley Medical Center in Brighton and Children's Hospital in Denver will soon follow suit, conducting highly orchestrated moves of patients, staff and sensitive medical equipment in the coming months.



Movers pack boxes last week for the University of Colorado Hospital's move from East Ninth Avenue and Colorado Boulevard to its new location on the Anschutz Medical Campus at Fitzsimons in Aurora. (Post / Karl Gehring)

For the CU hospital, today through Sunday will serve as the primary days for transporting patients 6.2 miles from the existing facility in Denver to a newly built hospital on the Anschutz Medical Campus on the Fitzsimons campus in Aurora.

As many as 150 patients will be transported by a fleet of 12 ambulances. Much of the equipment will be moved by vendors, who will then inspect and recalibrate the equipment upon arrival.

"It is like moving your house - multiplied by several thousand," said Bruce Schroffel, the hospital's president and chief executive. "It is very expensive."

Platte Valley on July 10 will move 3.4 miles into a gleaming new facility in Brighton. Children's will use the last two weeks of September to relocate 8 miles from its Denver campus to an Aurora facility valued at more than \$500 million.

Such moves as those and other recent hospital-construction projects in Colorado and nationwide are being made because hospital operators expect aging baby boomers to soon seek additional medical care, said Sandra Hamper, president of Denver-based Health Care Transitions.

"The hospitals are responding to the number of patients that are expected to come down the pike," said Hamper, whose firm advised Platte Valley on its pending move.

Hamper pointed out that several other hospitals have been built along the Front Range within the last few years. She said other hospitals not relocating have instead decided to build new facilities at their existing sites.

Hamper said it is sometimes easier to transport patients a few miles than it is to move them from an old building to a new one, in part because of issues related to clogged entrance and exit doors as patients are transported.

Nonetheless, officials for the three hospitals with pending moves said millions were spent on planning the moves to ensure patient safety.

The CU hospital estimates the price tag for its move at \$7.4 million, while Children's expects to spend \$7.2 million.

The move for Platte Valley tacked on an additional \$3 million to its budget this year, said Harold Dupper, the hospital's chief financial officer.

Those tallies do not include the construction costs to erect the new facilities.



Canes, walkers, crutches and a trampoline are gathered at the University of Colorado Hospital before being moved to the hospital's new building in Aurora. The hospital's move anticipates the aging of baby boomers. (Post / Karl Gehring)

During the days preceding the move, Dupper said, the hospital will limit the number of elective procedures it will perform. He said as few as 25 patients will be transported by ambulance from the old facility to the new one.

"Some of the challenges are eye-opening," said Dupper, who last year visited a hospital in Texas that recently executed a similar-sized move.

Like Platte Valley, Children's is planning to transfer all of its patients in one continuous, uninterrupted move, said Jerrod Milton, a director at Children's who is overseeing the relocation.

That approach, often called "inter sequencing," allows hospitals to move patients based on criteria such as severity of illness. Children's and Platte Valley are using this system.

By comparison, the CU hospital will transport as many as 150 patients, spread evenly over three days. Such a plan is called a "service line" approach, which typically has hospitals moving patients on a unit-by-unit basis.

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Hamper, the hospital moving consultant, said the service-line approach is often used by larger hospitals that have a significant amount of equipment to transport.

"There is no cookie-cutter method that dictates how to move a hospital," said Milton of Children's. "We will be watching CU's hospital move closely."

Staff writer Will Shanley can be reached at 303-954-1260 or wshanley@denverpost.com.

Crosstown traffic

Three major hospitals in the metro area are moving this year.

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

Date: Through Sunday

Cost: \$7.4 million

Patients: up to 150

Distance: 6.2 miles

Time planning: more than 2 years

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Date: Late September

Cost: \$7.2 million

Patients: up to 170

Distance: 8 miles

Planning: 3 years

PLATTE VALLEY

Date: July 10

Cost: \$3 million

Patients: about 25

Distance: 3.4 miles

Planning: more than 18 months

- Will Shanley, Denver Post staff writer

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HAMPERED BY CONSULTANTS
 By bandoliers at 8:22 AM on June 14:
 Perhaps Hamper could consult someone on a more positive name for their firm. Or go into the laundry business!

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