READERS’ CHOICE
Nurses Name
The Fab Five

MENTAL ILLNESS
Overcoming Stigma in Minority Communities

BEST-KEPT SECRET
A look inside the medical and psychiatric EDs at Bergen Regional Medical Center, Paramus, NJ
NEW & IMPROVED: In May, Bergen Regional Medical Center opened its new expanded ED with more private rooms, fast-track service, trauma room, an acute suite and an ob/gyn private room. Mary Grace Jaramillo, RN, CEN, cares for patient Charles Pell, who is also an employee of the hospital.

Cover story by
Kathleen A. Waton
Photos by Jeffrey Leeser

Best-Kept secret

New Jersey’s largest hospital renovates to separate medical and psychiatric ED patients and to promote its full-service capabilities in long-term care, acute care and behavioral healthcare

Bergen Regional Medical Center (BRMC) in Paramus, NJ, renovated its emergency department to separate medical and behavioral health patients and provide more safety, security and privacy for all.

Previously, medical and psychiatric patients did not have separate sections in the former BRMC, "which was not the optimal environment for either type of patient," said Joanne Velardi, BSN, RN, clinical nursing director of the ED and the forensic unit of the acute care division.

Separate Suites
In May, the ED was expanded to 18 beds, eight of which are in a separate behavioral health suite. All eight rooms are private and the entire behavioral health suite is "designed with safety features for psychiatric patients including suicide precautions," Velardi said, so it is conducive to providing the best care possible for patients.

The 6,600-square-foot ED also includes a three-bed fast-track room, a two-bed trauma room, an acute suite with four private medical rooms and an ob/gyn private room.

Of the 12,000 annual ED visits to Bergen Regional Medical Center, 90 to 95 percent have been for behavioral health, but that's changing.

"We are the screening center [for psychiatric patients] in Bergen County so we receive a very large number of patients in ED who are in an acute phase of their mental illness," Velardi said. "Many of these patients have not been compliant with their treatment regimen. They may be a psychotic or schizophrenic patient or in severe depression. We see a whole gamut of psych illnesses in our ED."

Patients receive care immediately by nurses, residents and attending psychiatrists. Referrals are made to either intensive outpatient programs or they are admitted to one of the hospital's 14 behavioral health inpatient units.

Bergen Regional
At-a-Glance
- 1,070 acute care beds
- 574 long-term care beds
- 323 behavioral health beds
- 12,000 annual emergency department visits
- 21 ambulatory specialty services
- 65-acre campus

A teaching hospital, BRMC is home to one of the largest psychiatric residency programs in the country. It is Bergen County's only safety net provider for low-income, uninsured and vulnerable populations and provides the
highest percentage of charity care in New Jersey based upon the medical center's population.

Bergen Regional serves a wide range of patients — from pediatric to geriatric, and a diverse ethnic population, including a burgeoning Korean community.

**More Medical Patients**

Since the renovation in the ED and spreading the word in the community, including among members of the Pascack Valley Volunteer Ambulance Association, Velardi said the facility is receiving a larger number of medical patients in the emergency department.

“Our facility provides long-term care and behavioral health, but we also are a community hospital that provides medical care to people in Bergen County,” said Mary Anne Marra, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, chief nurse executive.

To care for its diverse patients, all registered nurses in the ED have a behavioral health background and emergency department credentials, including Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) and Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) certifications.

“Staff is 100 percent interchangeable in both areas,” said Velardi, who is recruiting additional nurses with behavioral health backgrounds to staff her ED.

**At the Design Table**

Registered nurses helped design and choose equipment for the enhanced ED, in which the “nursing station circles the entire department,” Velardi said, “so we can view the patients in ED.”

RN recommended and reviewed equipment purchased, including “cardiac monitors for every patient room on the medical side, and they made the decision among themselves how they wanted the room set up,” Velardi said. “Every medical room in the ED is capable of handling any kind of care for patients.”

Staff members “have the ability to do diagnostic ECGs at the patient’s bedside,” Velardi said, and all monitors “can come off the walls and go on stands to follow patients wherever they may go.”

An online ED management system, including clinical documentation, soon will be implemented to match the rest of the acute care division, including the operating room, and behavioral health units.

ED staff pride themselves on providing prompt, courteous service. Their fast-track room is equipped and staffed to triage and have non-urgent medical patients see an ED physician within 15 minutes and be treated and discharged within an hour or less.

“The orthopedic equipment and suture carts are located right in the fast track [area],” Velardi said, “so all treatment can take place without delays. The nurses do the triage, but if the ED physician is not in with a patient, he often will go into triage with the RN and see the patient immediately.”

A medical physician sees all behavioral health patients immediately upon arrival, and medically clears them before a psychiatrist sees them.

“So their process takes a little longer,” Velardi said. “Their treatment is right away, but we do diagnostic and lab exams and then they are evaluated either simultaneously by the psychiatrist or after the diagnostic test comes back. If a patient is on a substance or alcohol, the psychiatrist will wait until [the patient] is sober before he is thoroughly evaluated.”

To help steer patients, there are volunteers in the ED and leadership is considering greeters, even though wait times are usually not a problem in this ED.

Regular rounding keeps nurses in touch with patients’ needs and concerns and everything moving. Collaborative daily rounds at 9:45 a.m. and 5:45 p.m., include Velardi and a o——

**KISS THOSE 12-HR SHIFTS GOODBYE!**

**Become a Certified Legal Nurse Consultant**

Learn from:

Vickie L. Milazzo, RN, MSN, JD
the Pioneer of Legal Nurse Consulting

- Live 6-Day Seminar OR
- 40-hr Home-Study (DVDs or CDs)

FREE Information Packet ($450 value)

- DVD on legal nurse consulting
- 280-page success book
- 30-minute consultation
- PLUS more ($450 value)

Vickie L. Milazzo, RN, MSN, JD
The Pioneer of Legal Nurse Consulting

800.880.0944
LegalNurse.com
Temporal Artery Thermometry

Proven Accuracy* with a Gentle Forehead Scan
- More accurate than ear thermometer
- Interchangeable with PA catheter
- Interchangeable with esophageal probe

NEW!
Silver Ion Anti-Microbial Head
A silver bullet against microbes, including MRSA and VRE

Accurate, Gentle, Cost-Effective
- Reduce thermometer costs by 90%

For your local Rep. call EXERGEN or email medical@exergen.com
*Contact Exergen for studies

EXERGEN Corporation
400 Pleasant Street, Watertown, MA 02472
Tel: 800-222-3006 • Fax: 617-923-1911
www.exergen.com

COVER STORY

multidisciplinary team involved in the care of ED patients. A representative from the access department is also part of the group "to report on all open beds so we can plan any admissions," Velardi said.

Positive Feedback
Feedback from staff and patients about the renovation and expansion is very positive.

"I had the opportunity to be in the ED during a very busy time," Marra said, "and one of our assistant directors of nursing on the evening shift pulled me aside and said 'I just want to tell you what a difference this ED makes to everyone who works here.'"

The previous ED — expanded approximately 2,000-square-feet — "was a very small, antiquated space," the CNE said, "where all the patients — whether for a medical or behavioral health issue — were in one section.

"We had a lot of patients sitting in chairs outside of bays in a busy ED and the nurses were trying to care for the behavioral health patients acting out, along with patients here for medical needs."

The new space helps accommodate "all the needs of a very acute behavioral health patient, as well as accommodate patients who need very acute medical attention," said Mary Lyon, MS, RN, FACHE, vice president of acute and ambulatory services.

According to Marra, the medical director of the ED also reported "how satisfied patients are with the treatment in the newly renovated ED because of the ambiance, as well as our ability to deliver services in a timely manner."

The upgrade in the ED is just one aspect of a general renovation at Bergen Regional. The lobby, chapel and auditorium also are being renovated, with support from the Bergen County Improvement Authority and the hospital's foundation.

New Future
Today's county-owned and privately managed hospital has come a long way from its origins in 1916 when it was once a polio and tuberculosis isolation hospital and since 1998 when it was called the Bergen "Pines" and known primarily for behavioral healthcare.

Bergen Regional Medical Center continues to evolve to meet the healthcare needs of its community. It still remains a mystery, however, to many residents in Bergen County and surrounding areas, according to Donna Corrieri, vice president of marketing and public relations, who is spearheading an "aggressive" marketing and branding campaign.

"We're not turning our backs on our rich history in this county, which dates back to 1916," Corrieri said. "We are envisioning a different future now. We call this facility 'New Jersey's Best-Kept Secret' because people really don't know if they fall down and break their leg, they can come to the emergency department at Bergen Regional Medical Center. This is also the place to come if they need behavioral health services or long-term care."

"People may not realize all we offer today."

The new ED is helping "enhance our image to the community we serve," Marra said. "We want the community and nurses who might want to work here to know while we are a facility providing long-term care and behavioral healthcare, we also are a community hospital that provides medical care to people who live in Bergen County."

"We want them to see us differently than the county hospital that was here years ago."

Kathleen A. Watson is a frequent contributor to ADVANCE.