

Commitment to Care The Quest for Clinical Gold



You've come to the desert to take advantage of the lifestyle offered here, or simply for some fun in the sun. Unexpectedly you feel sick – really sick. Your fever is spiking to 105 degrees or you feel as if a golf cart is crushing the left side of your chest. You realize you need a hospital, but where are you going to get good care? Fortunately, Eisenhower Medical Center is nestled right in the heart of the Coachella Valley, and it has recently been named one of the country's 100 Top Hospitals® by Solucient®, the leading source of health care business intelligence.

Terrific, you say, but what does that mean in terms of my getting well? Solucient, which maintains the nation's largest health care database, studies public information that is available from Medicare records.

"That way, as many hospitals as possible can be included," Jean Chenoweth, senior vice president of Solucient's Center for Healthcare Improvement, explains. "No one applies. It's a purely objective study."

Solucient looks at several factors concerning a hospital, but let's focus on the clinical aspects – those that mean the most to you, the consumer.

Key clinical findings were that the 100 Top Hospitals treated sicker patients with fewer staff yet had better patient outcomes. The mortality rate was nearly 18 percent lower than in hospitals comparable in size and outreach. They also averaged 18 percent fewer complications than peer hospitals, and released their patients nearly half a day earlier. The Top Hospitals in the Large Community Hospital category (Eisenhower's) had an 18 percent better safety record than similar hospitals. Patient safety includes such items as accidental puncture during a procedure, failure to resuscitate, postoperative pulmonary embolism or infection, hemorrhaging, or a foreign object left in the body after surgery. ...18 percent better safety record than similar hospitals.

So, there are the statistics. But what does it mean to you?

"Eisenhower is a hospital that has been focused on performance improvement and it has achieved benchmark levels in its class," Solucient's Chenoweth says.

Bottom line: The patient – who receives better care and whose chances of recovery are significantly increased. Patient safety, of course, is also a major concern to each of us who step through the doors of a hospital.

"I am pleased that Solucient emphasizes patient safety in their study, as we have distinguished ourselves in this area and will continue to place patient safety first," says G. Aubrey Serfling, President and Chief Executive Officer of Eisenhower Medical Center.

An example of this commitment is the recent appointment of a Patient Safety Officer (PSO), Beverley Ingelson, RN, BSN, to the staff.

"The PSO will give the overall direction necessary to ensure that health care clinical services are provided in accordance with standards established through state and federal regulations and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations accreditation standards," Louise White, Vice President, Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer, notes in the April, Five Star Outlook, Eisenhower's internal staff newsletter.

Our valley has undergone a tremendous change from a small, seasonal resort community to a large year around population. Marvin Brooks, MD, has been a physician on the staff of the Eisenhower Hospital since the day it opened in December 1971. He has seen the expansion of the hospital physical plant, and the growth of the medical staff from 18 to more than 300 physicians. "Also, the technological advances," notes Dr. Brooks, "...which we could not even have imagined." "Eisenhower is a hospital that has been focused on performance improvement and it has achieved benchmark levels in its class." — Jean Chenoweth, Solucient

Along with the growth, the needs of the residents have changed. These conditions, plus Eisenhower's Performance Excellence program instituted in 2001, have attracted to Eisenhower even more Board-certified doctors with top professional training in their internships and residencies, fellowships and affiliations. The quality of the nursing staff is also top notch. These men and women are experts in their fields and receive additional training, as well. There has also been a recent recruitment effort, which has resulted in the hiring of 200 registered nurses.

As for technology? You don't need to travel out of the area to find innovative diagnostic imaging and the trained technicians to perform the examinations. From the get-go, the quality of care from all aspects of the clinical professional spectrum is of the highest standard.

"A Medical Executive Committee sets the medical standards, which are ratified by the Board," Brooks explains.

"Our President and Chief Executive Officer has made Eisenhower an all inclusive organization – Eisenhower's medical staff and the Board work hand-in-hand to create excellence."

It's this sense of collaboration – not to maintain standards, but raising the bar on patient care to reach new benchmarks of performance – that is creating the high level of achievement at Eisenhower Medical Center. Once the patient enters the hospital or Emergency Room, highly trained doctors, nurses and technicians begin to work as a team to get him or her well.

"The patient is the focus," says Louise White. "One person oversees a team working together on a very collaborative venture."

This is what creates "Clinical Gold." From the moment they are admitted to the moment they are discharged, patients can count on treatment by knowledgeable doctors and nurses, working in conjunction with trained technical staff, who have access to the most modern of diagnostic tools.

"You don't get good outcomes without teamwork. It's a combined effort of everyone involved," explains White. In today's world of higher patient costs and lower insurance protection, it's easy to get the idea that the state of health care in our country is at a low ebb.

But Solucient's findings show a different trend. "The recognition of Eisenhower as one of the 100 Top Hospitals provides tangible evidence that our commitment to Performance Excellence, a focus we have had since 2001, is creating a passion for excellence in health care throughout our organization," Serfling says.

Now that is a prescription for a better night's sleep.