

Addressing a Critical Need: Update on Inpatient Capacity Changes on University Campus and on 8 East



Q: What is happening with the inpatient psychiatry unit on 8 East at the UMass Memorial - University Campus?

The UMass Memorial emergency department at our University Campus serves the sickest patients in Central Massachusetts – those needing acute care or surgery for life or death situations related to conditions such as trauma, stroke, cardiovascular or neurological issues. As the safety-net hospital for the entire Central Massachusetts region, and the only Level 1 Trauma Center, we treat the most critically ill and injured people. Patients in serious condition are often referred to the University Campus from hospitals and health care organizations that do not have the depth of resources available here. As a result, the UMass Memorial - University Campus faces an almost daily shortage of available beds for critically ill patients – resulting in emergency department wait times that can create serious patient safety and quality issues that must be addressed with additional medical-surgical beds.

Each year, the shortage of beds means several dozen critically ill medical-surgical patients must be transferred to hospitals outside of our region. To address this, we must add more medical-surgical beds. To create this urgently needed capacity, UMass Memorial will close 13 beds on the 8 East psychiatry unit on the University Campus, while maintaining 14 beds for the most medically complex psychiatric patients in renovated space. This change will allow for 18 new medical-surgical beds in adjacent space on the 8th floor. This decision was made after careful analysis of new community resources available to serve those in need of inpatient psychiatric services.

Q: Is this change necessary? Won't this put inpatient psychiatry patients at even greater risk?

We see this as a necessary change that will ultimately save lives. Detailed review shows that we have a critical need to provide care for patients who turn to UMass Memorial Medical Center as the region's acute care academic medical center. The need for medical-surgical beds far exceeds the need for psychiatry beds, in part because many new resources for inpatient psychiatric care have come to our region with more are underway. Meanwhile, there has been no increase in acute care tertiary medical beds in Central Massachusetts.

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Q: Why was the inpatient psychiatry unit chosen as the site for the additional medical-surgical beds?

As we reviewed all the space available across the University Campus that would be adequate for the creation of new beds, we needed to design a solution that would balance how to serve all patients and services that would be displaced when new beds are created. We undertook a thorough review of our resources and the community medical landscape to find a medically responsible solution. As part of this extensive review, we looked carefully at the psychiatric patients who are treated on 8 East, a locked, inpatient psychiatry unit located on the University Campus; adjoining spaces; and considered the psychiatric resources being established in our community and supported by UMass Memorial.

We determined that on average about 70% of the patients admitted to the 27-bed 8 East unit **do not** require complex medical care and could be well cared for by a free-standing psychiatry facility without the need for additional medical supports. This year in Central Massachusetts, more than 275 new psychiatry beds are open or are expected to come online. This includes 16 recently opened beds in Webster through Harrington HealthCare, and a new 102-bed facility, TaraVista, opened at Devens in Ayer; where UMass Memorial has reserved 14 beds via a formal affiliation agreement. Another new 150-bed inpatient psychiatry facility is opening soon in Westborough. UMass Memorial Health Care is also working on a plan to expand our system's overall psychiatric services over time.

Q: Is UMass Memorial Health Care committed to providing inpatient psychiatric care?

We remain committed to providing inpatient psychiatric care to the most medically complex behavioral health patients. To that end, we are investing in a major renovation of the unit in line with current design standards.

Q: Will psychiatric patients be turned away if there are no inpatient beds available?

No. We have an operational plan in place to help ensure that these patients receive the most appropriate care needed, whether on the University Campus in the newly-renovated 8 East unit; at the Medical Center Psychiatric Treatment and Recovery Center (PTRC); UMass Memorial Marlborough Hospital; UMass Memorial Clinton Hospital; Community Health Link; or outside of the UMass Memorial Health Care system.

Those who require significant medical or surgical care in addition to psychiatric support are, and will continue to be, treated in the Medical Center emergency department until a transfer to a medical or

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surgical floor is possible. Psychiatric treatment may or may not be involved with these patients while they are in the emergency department based on the severity of their problems. Once admitted to a medical-surgical floor, the psychiatry consultation liaison team is contacted to help manage the patient through the course of their acute illness. When the patient is medically stabilized, an appropriate discharge plan is developed. If inpatient psychiatric care is required, medically complex patients are referred to 8 East.

It's important to note that most psychiatric patients do **not** require specialized medical support and significant new inpatient psychiatry capacity is available in our region to serve these patients. This year in Central Massachusetts, more than 275 new psychiatry beds are open or are expected to come online. This includes 16 recently opened beds in Webster through Harrington HealthCare, and a new 102-bed facility, TaraVista, opened at Devens in Ayer; where UMass Memorial has reserved 14 beds via a formal affiliation agreement. Another new 150-bed inpatient psychiatry facility is opening soon in Westborough. UMass Memorial Health Care is also working on a plan to expand our system's overall psychiatric services over time.

Q: Are psychiatric patients with complex medical issues treated in any other departments besides 8 East?

Yes. They are treated in traditional medical-surgical units. In fiscal year 2016, 634 mental health patients whose medical situations were of a higher complexity were cared for in standard medical-surgical units on the University Campus, in consultation with psychiatric clinicians, and were never transferred to 8 East.

Q: Is this decision motivated by financial reasons? Isn't UMass Memorial compensated more highly for surgical patients vs. psychiatric patients?

While there is a national imperative to manage health care resources in a financially responsible manner, our decision to make changes to 8 East was driven by the need to address the critical shortage of medical-surgical beds. We have an unwavering commitment to inpatient psychiatric treatment and consider it part of our core mission. Although reimbursement rates on medical-surgical procedures are typically higher than for psychiatric care, those procedures and services are costlier to provide. Moreover, we are investing significant capital to renovate our behavioral health facilities as part of the renovation of 8 East to make sure that our inpatient unit – expressly focused on medically complex psychiatric patients – is state-of-the-art. Over time, we also plan to expand our capacity to provide services for inpatient psychiatric treatment in new ways.