

## New Ajax emergency room has a pulse

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AJAX -- After years of planning, the Ajax-Pickering hospital's new emergency department will come to life next week.

On Monday, Nov. 30, staff will start treating patients in the new ER at Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering hospital.

"This hopefully will be the only time in the history of this room that it will be so crowded," Dr. Gary Mann, chief of Ajax-Pickering emergency, said to a packed waiting room of volunteers, staff, donors, politicians and media at the grand opening celebration Nov. 20.

In fact, Dr. Mann explained the waiting room was designed to be small on purpose since "the idea is to keep the waiting room empty."

There are family waiting areas in order to accommodate those who are not in line for emergency service.

The new facility, which is three times the size of the current one, was open to the public on Saturday for tours.

"This new facility is 20,000 square feet and will be able to handle 60,000 visits per year," said Dr. Mann.

The former space was only designed for 20,000 and has been treating more than 42,000 patients annually.

"We will have a little more elbow room, we will be able to (treat) patients quickly and effortlessly," he said.

Dr. Mann explained 90 per cent of the time, a patient with less severe medical needs is in and out of the ER in four hours, and people with more severe needs are usually in and out within six.

While the wait times are on target with provincial standards, he said one of the biggest motivators for the expanded facility was the growth in the west Durham area. He said the hospital could use some more beds to improve the flow even more.

The new emergency department is not only bigger, but has state-of-the-art machines and new areas that will help patient flow move quickly.

"This is a room we don't have in our (current) emergency department," said registered nurse Paola O'Hara as she showed hospital tourists around the new three-bed trauma room. "It's very exciting for us."

She explained it could be difficult trying to find tools in a pinch in the current, cramped, emergency department. Also, there



Celia Klemenz / Metroland

AJAX -- After undergoing renovations over the past couple of years, the Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering Hospital opened its doors to a brand new emergency department on Nov. 20. Paola O'Hara, an emergency department nurse, at right, took members of the auxiliary to Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering, from left, Nan Fallon, Judy Mitchell and Yvonne Bosch on a tour of the facility. November 20, 2009

wasn't room for families at patients' bedsides in the current ER but that won't be a problem in the new one.

Hospital volunteer Nancy Maxwell, who sits on the Rouge Valley Foundation Patrons' Council, showed off the new decontamination room to treat anyone who's come into contact with chemicals. She explained those patients would be hosed down, then taken into an isolation room. The water will go into a separate reservoir so "it doesn't go into the water system at all."

Ms. Maxwell said for years there's been a need for a larger ER.

"This addition makes a huge difference to the community," she said.

The department also includes quiet areas, a triage station and new space for future expansion, among many other new features.

Arden Eldridge, emergency department manager, said the move will take place between 2 and 6 a.m. on the morning of Monday, Nov. 30, and extra staff will be working in order to ensure the move, and any emergencies, will go smoothly.

The current ER will be gutted and demolished shortly after the new one is up and running. The space will be used as part of the larger \$94.5-million expansion of the hospital, expected to be completed in about a year.

The other hospital improvements include a new diagnostic imaging and cardiac diagnostic area, an expanded ambulatory care unit and a new complex continuing care unit.