

It says something extraordinary about your hospital when Leslie Wyatt decides to stay.

The nursing shortage. You've probably heard about it, or maybe been affected by it if you've stayed in a hospital in the last few years. Many hospitals are in a panic to hire nursing staff and have a real problem holding on to nurses once they've found them.

The search for nurses from coast to coast.

The nurse vacancy rate nationwide has risen to around 12 percent. With some hospitals occasionally hitting close to 20 percent. That kind of shortfall of nurses impacts everything at a hospital. From longer waits to get a blood test, to surgeries that can't be scheduled, because ~ while there may be doctors and an available operating room ~ there simply aren't enough nurses to handle the surgery, patient flow and aftercare. Everything takes a hit: efficiency, level of care and even hospital profitability.

No shortage here.

At Virginia Hospital Center, we're always looking to recruit good nurses, too, but compared to other hospitals, we don't have a nursing crisis or even a nursing problem. Our nurse vacancy rate is nearly three times lower than the national average. Five times lower than some major hospitals. And the lowest rate in the Washington-Baltimore area.

So many nurses. So many years.

Patient Care Director Leslie Wyatt has been a nurse for 20 years. Even better for us, 16 of those 20 years she's been at Virginia Hospital Center. She's the kind of nurse every hospital wants to hire but we've managed to keep. In fact, 177 of our nurses have been here for 10 years, 61 have been here for

over 20 and almost 300 have been here more than five. Why are we able to keep Leslie and others like her? There are all the usual reasons like salaries, educational benefits (we're paying for her advanced degrees and additional certifications and giving her the time to get them). But if you ask the nurses, the reasons they cite are always about one thing. The practice of medicine.

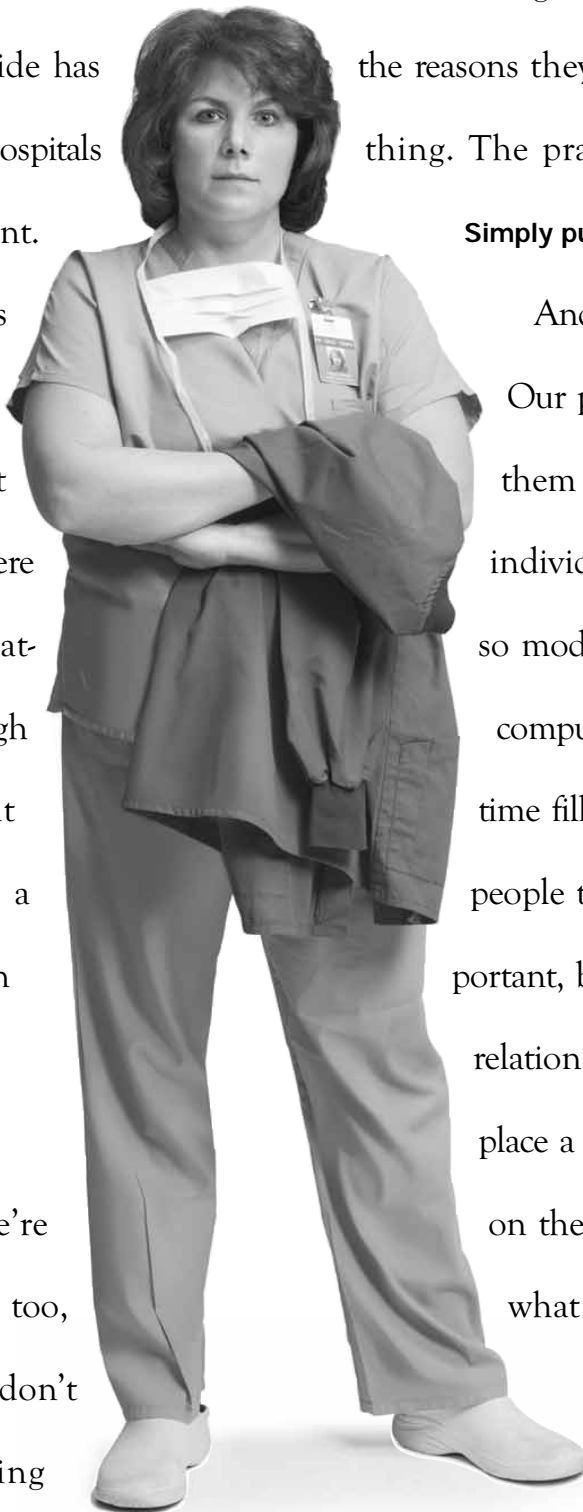
Simply put, they can do more nursing here.

And that's what matters to them most. Our patient-to-nurse ratio is lower, giving them more time to spend with each individual in their care. Our facility is so modern that virtually all paperwork is computerized meaning they spend less time filling in charts and more on the people they're caring for. And most important, because of the strong, collaborative relationship that exists here, our doctors place a higher degree of medical reliance on the nursing staff. Which is exactly what nursing professionals want.

Find the best and keep them.

Of course at Virginia Hospital Center we're equally proud of the rest of our staff. And of our ability to attract and to hold on to remarkable physicians and surgeons from institutions like Johns Hopkins, Harvard, NIH and the Mayo Clinic, just to name a few. But we take special pride in our nurse retention record.

Critical to a hospital's balance sheet and its ability to practice the best medicine is having the nursing staff to do the job. And that means attracting the best nurses and hanging on to them. We can do that. Ask Leslie.



Good business empowers good medicine.


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“Gallstones to the left, hernias to the right, hysterectomies in front of me,” and other things we fixed about same-day surgery.

When you build a new hospital from scratch, you get to make changes that aren't possible any other way. At Virginia Hospital Center ~ our new building just opened ~ we took the opportunity to make major changes that are good for the patients and, frankly, good for the business of the hospital.

A day in the life of a hospital. Not what it used to be.

If you walk into a hospital today, chances are you'll walk out today. That's because less than 7% of people who come to a hospital are "admitted" overnight. Why do 93% come in the door and go right out? Because less invasive procedures and the latest diagnostic technology have replaced older methods that required a hospital stay.

As a result, the whole flow of a hospital has changed and we took two big steps to help all the "same-day" patients.

Same-day surgery. Before.

65% of all surgeries ~ including 178 of the most common ~ are now classified as "same-day". This huge change has forced many hospitals to retrofit their facilities. They end up with uncomfortable spaces not designed for the job, a maze of hallways to navigate and group recovery rooms with strangers milling around in skimpy gowns.

Same-day surgery. After.

Our entire same-day surgery area is designed so it's easy to find and it's easy to find your way around. Our paperless processing and computerized scheduling speed up registration and keep us running on time. We've doubled the number of

pre- and post-operative recovery rooms. And each one is private. No communal recovery like you may have seen somewhere else. Much more appealing for the patient, and the efficiency makes it even more appealing to our balance sheet.

Radiology & Diagnostic Imaging. Revamped.

Nearly everyone who visits a hospital needs some kind of imaging procedure ~ MRIs, CT scans, X-rays ~ which makes Radiology the busiest

department at a hospital. In fact, at Virginia Hospital Center, we expect to handle several hundred thousand procedures next year.

To accommodate so many people, we've taken some extraordinary steps in the new hospital. We doubled the size of the department.

We added systems that completely eliminate film by storing images electronically.

We added voice recognition systems so radiologists can describe what they see and it's transcribed without their having to write it. Reports can now be generated in minutes instead of days and are available to your doctor instantly.

Good for business.

Practicing the best medicine is really our only goal at Virginia Hospital Center. But the best medicine ~ the best staff, the best technology ~ is made possible only by the best business practices. Which means staying aware of all the trends in medicine and changing with them when it makes sense. And if you happen to spot a trend that impacts 93% of your "customers," you do something about it. Stat.



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If you want to run a successful hospital, run it like a hotel.

Changes in our healthcare system have put a lot of hospitals into economize mode. With insurance dollars being doled out more frugally, many are trying to become more “efficient” ~ decrease the ratio of staff to patients, make a floor designed specifically for one purpose, do something different.

But it isn't working. Hospitals ~ hundreds of them ~ are finding themselves short on patients and in worse financial shape than before the cutbacks started. In the last five years, there's been a national net decrease of 257 hospitals and 47,744 beds that patients didn't want to fill.

What really makes sense is to go in the opposite direction.

At Virginia Hospital Center, our \$160 million new hospital is complete. Behind this investment isn't a strategy based on all the new operating suites or the new equipment, but rather on a whole new level of customer service. You may not want to be in the hospital, but if you are, this is the hospital where you'll want to be.

We hired the Ritz-Carlton.

Stay at a hospital and you're staying away from home. No one knows more about that subject than hoteliers. That's why we hired the Ritz-Carlton Learning Institute to show us the basics of service ~ hotel-style. Changes showed up everywhere from phone etiquette, to menus, to the fact that when you walk in, you don't go through an endless admissions process. Instead a personal representative greets you and takes you straight to your room. Imagine that.

You just had surgery. The last thing you want is a new roommate.

Although we added 530,000 square feet to our facility, we didn't add one additional patient room. Instead, we used the space to turn all rooms into

singles with private bathrooms. How wise was that if more patients, more “heads in beds” to use the industry phrase, are needed? Very wise. Research showed overwhelmingly that people hate the lack of privacy. Ultimately our all-private-rooms strategy means more heads in our beds, not fewer.

Same-day surgery. Before.

In the last 12 years, at least 178 of the most common surgical procedures ~ everything from hernia repair to laparoscopic hysterectomies and knee surgeries to rhinoplasty ~ have been reclassified by insurance providers as “same-day surgery.”

In today, out tonight.

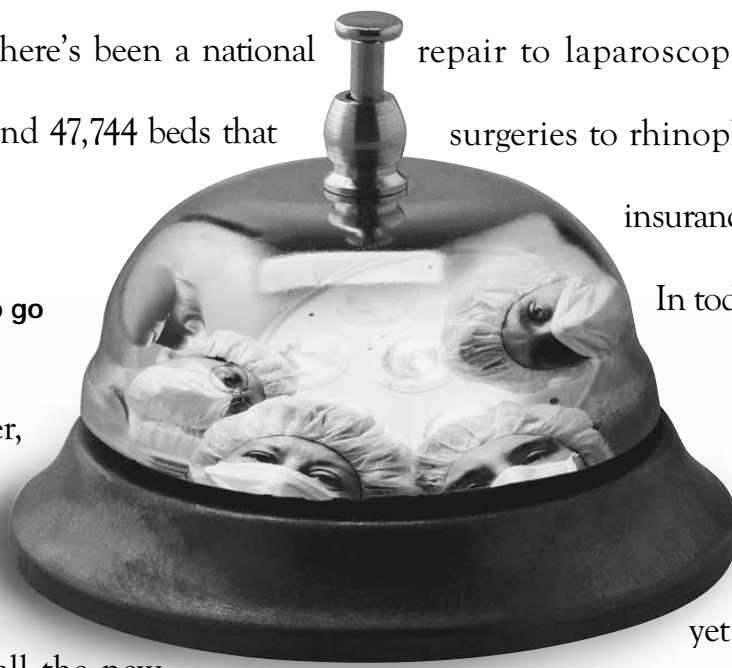
Same-day procedures at a typical hospital now are 65% of all surgical procedures and yet most hospitals retrofitted this

huge change into existing facilities. The result has typically been long morning lines, crowded pre-op rooms with people milling around in skimpy gowns, waiting their turn, usually behind schedule.

Same-day surgery. After.

We've designed an entire “Same-Day Surgery” unit from the ground up. Our completely paperless processing ~ the first hospital in the Baltimore - Washington area to have it, our computerized scheduling, our private pre-op areas create a much better “same-day surgery” experience.

At Virginia Hospital Center, practicing the best medicine is our only goal. But the best medicine ~ the best staff, the best equipment ~ is made possible only by the best business practices. For a hospital, business starts with attracting patients through the doors and that means treating them just like they were guests. Which, if you stop and think about it, is exactly what they are.



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