

New Sutter Center aims to offer state-of-the-art birthing services

SUTTER

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have a facility and a staff we'll soon be hiring that will help us do that."

That's why the dozen-strong birthing suites in the center — called the "health care hotel" by insiders — have wooden floors, while several have large Jacuzzi spas, an additional feature that often lessens labor pain.

The majority of rooms have state-of-the-art birthing beds, which allow mothers to utilize gravity during the birthing process. Two rooms have double beds for patients who want a cozier, close-to-home environment for their child's birth.

Each room is cozy enough, with soothing, welcoming decor and French doors opening onto an outdoor balcony. Meals cooked to order offered around the clock are available for patients and their partners. Most have folding sofa beds for family members who stay with their loved ones.

"It gives the safety of a hospital and the comfort and the ambiance of a home birth," Frank said.

Information about the center welcomes families to bring music and video tapes to help in labor, saying that: "We encourage you to take the lead role in your care. Only you know what feels best."

To use the medical jargon, Frank said Sutter's maternity concept is "LDRP," which symbolizes labor, delivery, recovery and postpartum. A new mother's entire stay at the hospital will usually be in the same room, a comfortable setting including family members and health professionals.

"She's admitted right to this room," she said, standing in one of the birthing rooms. "She labors in here, she delivers in here... she goes through postpartum in here."

About 120 doctors have requested to use the facility, Frank said, and a staff of about 80 will soon be hired.

Sutter, a company operating health care facilities in Northern California since 1923, plans an inpatient capacity of 30, including 12 in maternity; however, an ambulatory surgery unit will be able to be used by more patients.

Frank added that because the center has no emergency or critical care units, it can offer "nice, patient-focused care" for the same amount as care in a regular hospital.

By DOUGLAS E. JESSMER

STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — Ever see a birthing room with a double bed, well-stocked refrigerator, color TV and VCR, and bed for two?

"It looks like a hotel room," Sutter Maternity and Surgery Center Administrator Iris Frank said, describing her new facility.

The bed may not quite be the kind you'd find at a hotel, since it converts for medical needs. But at the center, opening Thursday on Soquel Drive at Chanticleer Avenue, new parents will find that and more.

Only one other similar operation exists, a successful hospital in Midwest City, Okla. Because of the Oklahoma center's reception, six others are being built, one of which will be in San Luis Obispo. The difference between those and Santa Cruz's hospital is that Sutter will offer more than birthing.

Once open, the facility will offer a full range of surgical services. Prospective patients must be referred by their doctor.

The hospital has six operating rooms with technologically advanced equipment for surgery and labor procedures, including ceiling oxygen outlets and special surgical lights. Five of the ORs are downstairs, with a sixth on the second floor for maternity operations, like Caesarean sections.

The Sutter center includes a pharmacy, laboratory and radiology service.

"People think that this is pretty near the 21st century," Frank said. "This is the first hospital configured



Michael McCollum

New Administrator Iris Frank in front of the Sutter Maternity and Surgery Center.

this way in the United States."

"It's a new concept that everybody is looking at," she added, "a way to deliver good, safe health care in the most economical manner possible."

The business of bringing babies into the world, she said, is an industry of memories: "We want to make some wonderful memories, and we

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