

# Dominican Opens New Emergency Unit

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Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital's recently-expanded emergency department is a busy place.

In just a few hours last Monday, for example, the physical complaints of 50 patients had to be dealt with by Dr. Don Miller, head nurse Gaye Cornell and their staffs of health care specialists.

The department handles over 30,000 cases yearly. The costly expansion completed in March will enable efficient care of many more thousands.

Miller stresses, however, that in the emergency room the name of the game is effective, high-quality care for those in life-threatening or painful condition, not quantitative care for cases of sunburn, sprains or other minor injuries.

"Some cases are not appropriate," Miller said. "A person comes here with a very minor problem, is treated and then complains if the bill is \$40 or more.

"Sure, that is a lot of money, but the high bill is the patient's fault. We are set up for the true emergencies, with staff and equipment that are highly costly and specialized. The cost of all this must be charged to the user, so we necessarily charge more than they would have to pay if they went to a private doctor. We try to encourage people to get primary care from their own doctors and to use us in life-threatening situations."

The new emergency depart-

ment has 5,400 square feet of vitally needed space to provide in particular the care needed to save lives or to get badly broken or burned bodies on the track toward recovery.

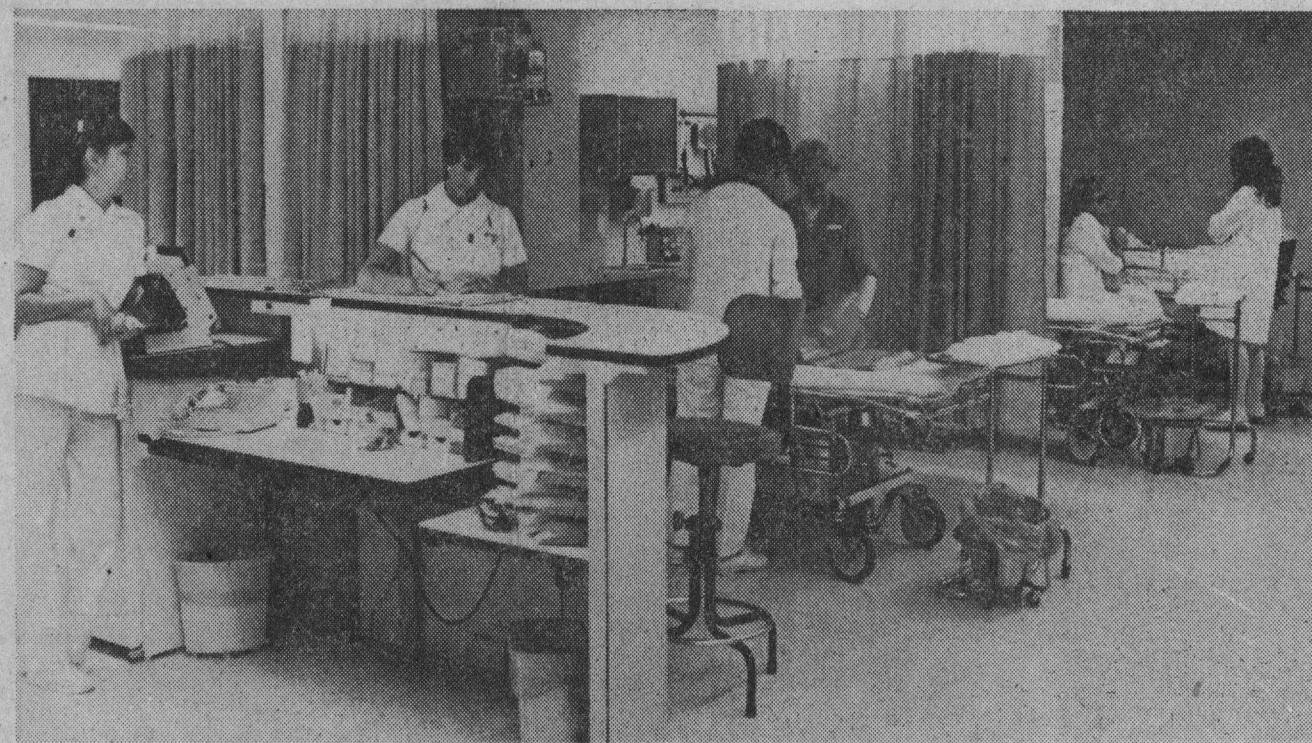
There's a reception-waiting room where private registration of patients is done and even children may sit "and not see some things children ought not to see," as Cornell put it.

Beyond this is the main emergency room, equipped with 13 beds and a central nurses' station where a nurse can coordinate patient placement, monitor critical care beds and handle specialized communications systems, as necessary.

These communications systems can play a major role in saving lives, Cornell said. They are linked by radio, through the county communications medical network, to the ambulance companies and fire departments.

On one system linked to the paramedic service, provided by the Aptos Fire Department, a telemetry unit is used to transmit a patient's electrocardiogram from the scene to Dominican. The paramedics, in contact with the emergency room doctor, can provide the same treatment at the scene of a heart attack as would be available in the hospital's emergency department. A doctor or nurse in the emergency department can monitor the patient's progress by means of the EKG.

If the county someday authorizes extension of the paramedic program to other fire departments or to the am-



Nurses' station is centrally-located in Dominican Hospital's new emergency department

bulance companies, this very special kind of service "in the field" by specialists actually in the hospital can be broadened.

It needs to be stressed, Miller said, that the nurses in his department have special training as mobile intensive care nurses. Their nameplates identify them as R. N., M.I.C.N.. Using stated procedures written down for use under certain conditions, these nurses can give instructions on handling patients in transit to Dominican.

The big central emergency room is equipped with six critical care beds which are wired with cardiac monitors for patients with chest pains, shortness of breath and other cardio-vascular problems. The video display of heart action can be monitored by the nurse at the station or by others moving about the floor. There's a "crash cart" nearby filled

with the special equipment needed to battle for a life in the grimmer situations.

Miller is especially proud of some special units added to the emergency department. There is now a Trauma Room for multiple-injury patients. This is a self-contained unit, with X-ray equipment and all the facilities for surgery.

A patient brought to this room does not need to be transported elsewhere in the hospital for special X-rays or surgery, as was the case before the department was expanded. A special X-ray unit noted by Miller obtains sharp pictures of the head that are invaluable to a neurosurgeon.

Another unusual room is called the E.E.N.T. room (Eye, Ear, Nose, Throat). This is a complete ophthalmologists and otolaryngologists office, the type not found often in an emergency department. An ul-

trasound unit is to be installed here, a device that uses the sonar principle to locate foreign bodies in the eye, retinal detachment, tumors and to look into the anterior chambers.

Other provisions include an obstetrics-gynecology room for examinations and treatment, an orthopedics room for fracture reductions, application of casts and for the treatment of other types of problems when the emergency room is crowded.

Cornell said that the emergency crew is a team of specialists ready and waiting when a patient arrives. She staffs the department 24 hours daily, every day of the year, with licensed vocational nurses and the R.N.-M.I.C.N. nurses mentioned previously.

Cornell is especially pleased with the pediatrics room, where children in trouble may be handled away from other

woes and with the family present.

Miller said a child is never left alone in the pediatrics room, of course.

Miller is medical director of the department and has a physician staff equal to five persons fulltime. Cornell said there is an additional staff of 30 nurses and technicians.

A big advantage of the increased space and equipment, Cornell said, is that the department can handle many more patients simultaneously, that it is easier to plan for large accidents or other disasters.

The emergency department expansion was undertaken by Dominican to meet the ever-increasing needs of an ever-growing community, Sister Josephine Sullivan, hospital administrator, said.

Statistics since March are showing that the expansion came just in time.

