

Supreme Court ruling won't change patient care

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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GMH moving forward with health care law

Gothenburg Memorial Hospital started positioning itself to adapt to changes in health care a couple of years ago.

For that reason, interim chief executive officer Kayleen Dudley said she doesn't see any changes in the way hospital employees care for patients under the Affordable Care Act.

On June 28, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the act which was spearheaded by President Obama and his administration.

Dudley, who is operations director for Physician Network in Lincoln, is on retainer as GMH's administrator until a new one is found.

She said the hospital continually strives to be proactive in its efforts to help Gothenburg citizens be ready to adapt to the new changes in health care.

When Congress passed the law in 2010, she said GMH had already started positioning itself for potential changes in the law.

"We started moving towards an electronic health record, we started to focus on prevention of patient readmissions and more," Dudley said.

The most challenging part for GMH so far with the legislation, she said, is electronic record keeping and its price tag.

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The GMH board has chosen a vendor, at an estimated cost of \$750,000, but has not yet signed a contract, Dudley said.

"We're going to spend a lot of money and won't necessarily see efficiency the first year," she explained. "There's a big learning curve and it will be difficult for physicians and staff at first.

"But change is always hard."

She noted that quality and risk manager Jeanine Kline and education coordinator and interim director of nursing Joyce Clark are working with staff and physicians to educate them about the act and developing strategic patient care ideas to help prevent patient readmissions into the hospital.

Both are parts of the multi-faceted health care act.

Dudley said there are many people in a town the size of Gothenburg who are unable to afford health care.

And the more people who can't afford health care and are unable to pay the cost of health care potentially jeopardizes the longevity of the small town hospital, she said.

"There are many fearful issues in this law but health care changes need to start somewhere," Dudley said. "It's human nature to be fearful of the unknown."

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