

Santa comes through with new hospital equipment

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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GMH Foundation buys lab equipment, chairs.

Despite a sluggish economy, Santa managed to buy about \$30,000 worth of equipment for Gothenburg Memorial Hospital in 2009.

Santa, in this case, is the Gothenburg Memorial Hospital Foundation which raised enough money for an EKG cardiograph, an arterial blood gas machine and two bariatric chairs for patient rooms.

The cardiograph and blood gas machine, which replace older equipment, are in the hospital's laboratory which is supervised by medical technologist Deb Saum.

Saum described the equipment as helping GMH and the laboratory technicians continue the standard of care the hospital has already established.

The blood gas machine, which replaced a machine that quit working, determines blood gas measurements like oxygen and carbon dioxide so a patient's oxygenation and acidity can be evaluated.

An added benefit, she said, is a feature which gives doctors more information about oxygen levels.

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The machine, Saum said, is used by physicians when a patient's respiratory and lung function are in question.



For example, a patient suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or severe diabetes would be likely to have their blood analyzed by the machine.

Blood is obtained through a special syringe from an artery in the wrist instead of through a vein in the arm, she said.

With a \$13,000 price tag, Saum said the machine is easy to use and gives quick, accurate results with minimal maintenance and quality control.

A person with chest pains would benefit from the page writer EKG cardiograph which reads electric currents each time his or her heart beats.

Electrodes are attached at various points to the body and hooked to wires attached to the EKG machine, she explained.

The electrodes then send waves and impulses to the machine that amplifies the results on a monitor and prints them onto graph paper, Saum said.

"Arrhythmia, heart valve disease, coronary artery disease and impending heart attacks can be determined by interpreting EKG rhythm," she explained.

The new EKG machine, which cost about \$9,300, replaced an older model.

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Saum said the cardiograph transmits results to BryanLG East Medical Center in Lincoln for interpretation by a cardiologist.



Attending physicians also read results.

“The new machine provides a longer length of pattern with rhythm strips which give additional information for interpreting EKGs,” she said. “It’s also very user friendly as the nurses often get the EKG started prior to the arrival of lab staff.”

In addition to Saum, the lab staff consists of Danita Paul and part-time employee Leigh Ann Taylor.

When patients who need lab work are admitted after hours, the staff is on call.

Saum first worked at GMH in the 1980s. She was then employed by Dr. Craig Bartruff before returning to the hospital in 2001.

Since then, she said lab equipment has evolved tremendously.

“There’s less maintenance and it’s easier to use,” Saum said.

When the lab staff looks at buying new equipment, she said they have to be able to fix and maintain it as much as possible since it’s expensive to call in a service person.

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PHYSICIAN CLINIC EXPLORED

Gothenburg Memorial Hospital administrators and the board are proceeding with what they call caution in planning a physician specialty clinic on the GMH campus. Hospital administrator John Johnson said they have met with three different contractors about plans to house all the physicians in town in one clinic. "It would be a better, more efficient and higher quality environment," Johnson said. Part of the plan, Johnson said, is also recruiting young family physicians to the clinic. However with health care legislation still taking shape in Washington D.C., Johnson said it's difficult to plan anything.

However if blood analysis is needed when a machine isn't working, Saum said results are sent to Cozad Community Hospital or Great Plains Medical Center in North Platte.

GMH assistant administrator and nursing director Kayleen Dudley said the bariatric chairs, priced at \$3,200 apiece, are designed for larger patients who weigh up to 1,200 pounds.

As the nation grows more obese, both Jensen and hospital administrator John Johnson said new equipment is ordered to accommodate larger patients.

Dudley said the standard in the hospital equipment industry was a maximum of 350 pounds.

Now that standard has increased to 1,200 pounds.

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