

Infection Control & Clinical Quality

Lucile Packard Children's head of patient experience answers 5 Q's on \$1.1B patient-centered expansion

By Brian Zimmerman
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Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford will open a 521,000-square-foot pediatric and obstetric facility in December, more than doubling the current size of the Palo Alto, Calif.-based hospital.

The five story, \$1.1 billion building will feature 149 patient beds and six state-of-the-art operating suites. The new facility is also poised to transform the patient experience with its family-centered design and innovative technologies, including a neuro-hybrid operating suite where surgeons can view updated images during surgery and re-image patients directly after a procedure.

The hospital raised more than \$260 million for the expansion via a fundraising campaign held between 2007 and 2012. Additional funding will come from hospital income and operating services, public bond money and continued community support.

Christine Cunningham, director of the office of patient experience at Packard Children's, spoke with Becker's in late June about the facility and shared how it will change the patient and provider experience at the hospital.

Note: Responses have been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Question: How will Packard Children's new facility improve the patient experience?

Christine Cunningham: Our new expansion is truly going to be one the most technologically-advanced, family-friendly care environments. In our hospital, we often have patients who require lengthy stays, which means the whole family ends up spending great amounts of time here. That was a major consideration during the design process. To transform their experience, we began by listening closely to our patient families and incorporating their feedback into the design decisions. We sought to make the facility as kid-friendly and unthreatening as possible, while also meeting the entire family's needs for convenience, comfort and well-being.

Q: What sort of kid- and patient-friendly design elements will the facility feature?

CC: We've made patient rooms nearly all private and more spacious. We selected furniture with input from families on what is most comfortable and outfitted every room with a pullout bed with room for two family members to sleep. There will be dedicated family lounges, laundry facilities and kitchens on every patient floor. The convenience of having fresh clothes and preparing meals without leaving the hospital allows parents to focus their time and attention on their child.

Every floor will have an animal identifier attributed to it for identification. We have all sorts of touches like that to make the hospital as comfortable as possible. We want it to be warm and appealing and soothing so both patients and families can be comfortable and forget they're in a hospital.

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Q: How will the new facility benefit frontline providers?

CC: In addition to working closely with patients and families in the planning and design of our new building, we also consulted with staff and physicians on their specific needs. The universal design of our patient rooms will allow medical, surgical and intensive care unit rooms to be interchangeable, should the demand show a need to change the number of beds. From an operational perspective, clinical team rooms will now be located within each unit for interdisciplinary team members to meet and coordinate care. We've ensured untraditional areas of the facility, such as the post-anesthesia care unit, offer more natural light for providers through skylights. The expansion will also create designated relaxation areas for staff members, including outdoor patios with overlooks on each nursing floor and an outdoor garden.

Q: What most excites you about the new hospital campus?

CC: I'm most excited about the fact that when you are in our new hospital, it's not going to feel like a hospital. There are so many sensory experiences inside and out, from the look and feel of the art and wayfinding, to fun tech features like our digital interactive wall, to the broadcast studio, to our incredible gardens for children to explore. There are 3.5 acres of green space and gardens that really bring that Northern California feel. There are just so many touches truly designed with a child and family in mind that you can't even appreciate until you're in the building.

Q: What is a goal you hope to achieve in the next year?

CC: One of our overarching goals is to help as many children as possible with the best technology the medical field has to offer. One important example of this is our new neuro-hybrid surgery suite — the only one of its kind in a California children's hospital. This unique room will feature a state-of-the-art diagnostic MRI, direct access to angiography imaging equipment and a full operating room. Surgeons will be able to not only view rapidly updated images during delicate surgeries, but also re-image patients before closing the surgical incision. Ultimately, this technology will reduce the number of procedures patients need.

Packard Children's staff, patients and their families are counting down the days until the new building opens. It's just an absolute honor to be part of an organization that strives to be truly patient-centered.

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