



spotlight/healthcare

Cheshire Medical Center completes 8-year \$35 million expansion and renovation project

ss **Scott Simpson**



The
**Stubbins
Associates**

Cheshire Medical Center (CMC), the largest full-service healthcare institution in southwestern New Hampshire, has just completed a comprehensive 8-year expansion and renovation project that creates a single new integrated campus incorporating the operations of the main hospital with Dartmouth Hitchcock Keene (DHK), a multi-specialty group practice. For the first time ever, CMC and DHK are delivering healthcare in a seamless, integrated fashion, serving patients in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Vermont.

The keystone of the project was the creation of the new "link" building that physically connects the existing hospital and clinic buildings by establishing a new main entry, lobby, single point of regis-



Cheshire Medical Center main entrance

tration, and clear, convenient circulation to all major departments.

The new link building is a large, airy space framed by a sweeping arched entry canopy, and has beautiful views through the lobby to the New Hampshire hills beyond. Designed to feel more like a "living

room" than an institutional setting, it is the major circulation node for the entire complex.

To the right of the link are the spaces for clinical and outpatient services, and to the left are hospital-related functions such as day surgery, radiology, gastroenterology and oncology. The second level of the link contains conveniently-accessible new space for womens' health as well as the executive administration areas.

The DHK clinic building has been entirely reconfigured from top to bottom, providing space for family medicine, general practice, ophthalmology, orthopedics, pediatrics and medical records. These clinical spaces were arranged around a central spine with centrally located nodes of waiting space to facilitate wayfinding. A new west wing to the rear of the clinic houses new meeting rooms and conference space. The clinic spaces can be reached either from the main entry of the complex or from a convenient drop-off entry at the rear.

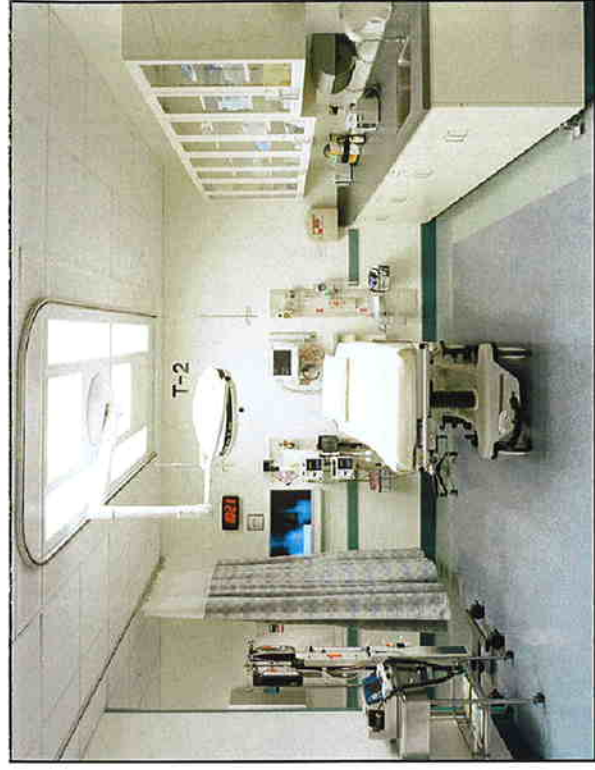
The existing hospital building was also significantly improved. The emergency department was relocated and expanded to include the latest technology and equipment for emergency medicine, including new trauma rooms and exam/treatment areas. The design includes a new lobby with convenient adjacent parking as well as a special dedicated ambulance ramp to separate emergency traffic from patient traffic. The clinical laboratory has also been relocated and expanded, with modern new equipment added. It was placed close to the main lobby and registration areas in order to provide ease of access for patients and drop-off of samples. A new GI (gastro-intestinal) suite was created using part of the old lobby and administrative area of the main floor, next to a



Cheshire Medical Center main lobby

greatly expanded and modernized day surgery department. One of the keys to this design was "reversing" the existing elevator bank—the cabs were rotated 180 degrees to face the main corridor and oncoming pedestrian traffic. As a result, wayfinding has been significantly improved—circulation is quick, efficient, and safe for patients and staff alike.

In addition, the rehabilitation medicine departments for both the hospital and clinic were combined



Cheshire Medical Center emergency care trauma bay

to form a single integrated service, which was moved to a new space

on the ground floor of the link building. These new facilities include special therapeutic pools as well as exercise and therapy areas for rehab services. There is also a brand new food service area, with sun-filled views to the rear of the site—more like a restaurant than a hospital cafeteria. New space for oncology was placed nearby, easily accessible by a dedicated entry with adjacent parking. It includes shell

space for a new accelerator as well as treatment rooms for chemotherapy with pleasant exterior views. Finally, the MEP systems throughout the complex were substantially rebuilt, with new capacity added.

All in all, this complex project required eight years to design and construct and was made especially complicated because medical services and patient safety had to be maintained at all times. The major corridor systems (which include service tunnel access connecting the clinic and hospital) were realigned and made simpler, more efficient, and less confusing. The overall site plan includes a new traffic rotary at the main entry plus additional parking and site landscaping, giving the entire complex a new look.

The planning and design were done by The Stubbins Associates of Cambridge, Mass., with myself serving as principal-in-charge and Paul Bui, RA as project manager. Construction was handled by the MacMillin Company of Keene, N.H. Frank Werbinski, vice president of support services for the Cheshire Medical Center, masterminded the project on behalf of the hospital, with key leadership support from Art Nichols, president and CEO.

The planning, design and con-

struction effort cost approximately \$35 million.

"This new project is fantastic," said Werbinski. "It gives Cheshire Medical Center and DHK the capacity to deliver 21st century medicine in a truly integrated way. Our medical staff and patients love the bright, airy spaces. The entire community is proud of this facility."

Scott Simpson, FAIA, is principal/CEO/president of The Stubbins Associates, Cambridge, Mass.