

# Bigger and Better

New ICU offers *better functionality*, more space and more privacy **BY BETH VINSON**

**A**sk any of our intensive care unit (ICU) nurses what they like most about Salina Regional Health Center's new ICU and they'll tell you it's the space.

"With all the new equipment and technology healthcare offers, space is essential to what we do," says ICU nurse Kay Chapin, RN. "When you get all that equipment necessary to take care of an ICU patient in one room, along with family members, you really need that extra space. The new unit is designed for future technology as well. We'll be able to easily adapt."

The new patient rooms are nearly twice as large as the previous ones, have a private bathroom and are much brighter, with each room having its own window.

Jenni Dunn, director of ICU/3 Southeast, says the new unit offers a much better work flow. The old 12-bed intensive care unit was full much of the time, and at times there were as many as 16 ICU patients, requiring the need to use special rooms in a different area designed to take care of intensive care patients.

"That was not convenient at all as we had our ICU staff spread out in different areas," Dunn says.

## **MORE ACCESS TO PATIENTS**

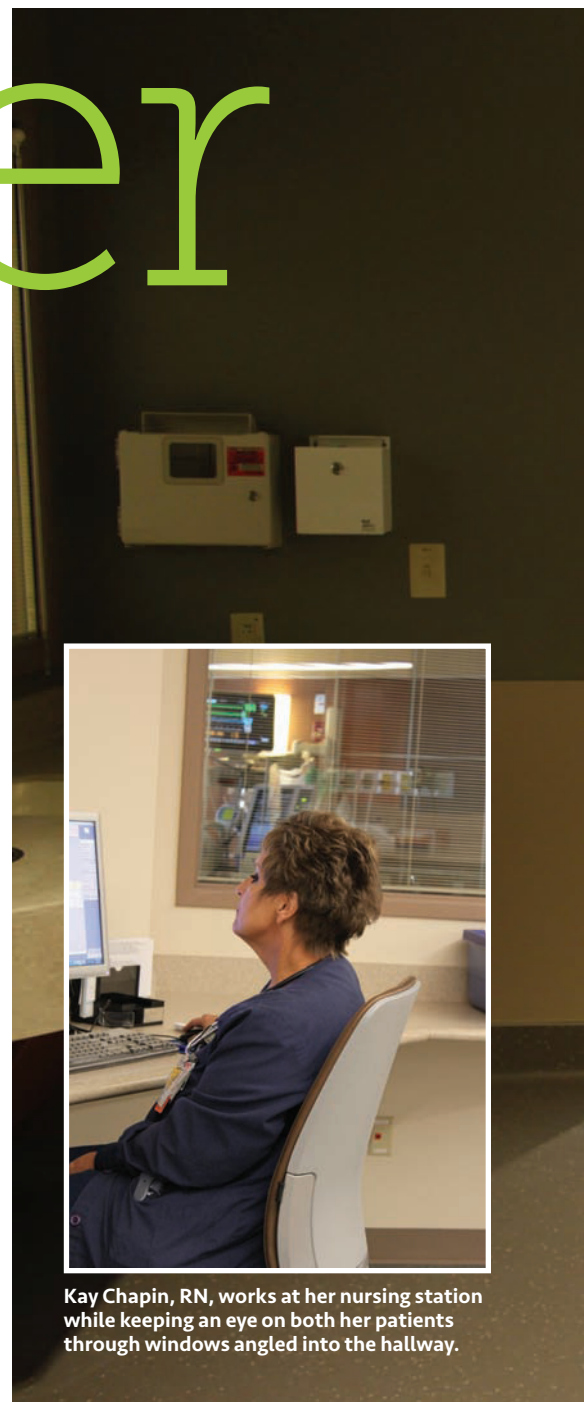
The new unit maintains a ratio of one nurse to two patients. There is a nursing station between each pair of patient rooms, with windows angled into the hallway so a nurse can see both rooms from the nursing station.

"It's really nice now that I can see both my patients at one time through the angled windows. And when a patient needs rest, I can close the door and still monitor him or her," says Christy Rothchild, RN.

In addition, the new unit is equipped with monitors on numerous walls so nurses can see patients' stats such as heart rhythm and blood pressure from wherever they are.

The new ICU also includes a separate room filled with monitor screens, where technicians can track the conditions of patients not only in the ICU, but throughout the entire hospital. It also offers a private work area for doctors and a large open area where doctors, nurses and other staff can meet to discuss a patient's care.

Patient families may notice something else different on the unit. Entry doors to the ICU are now locked. A patient's family calls into the unit to announce themselves and



**Kay Chapin, RN, works at her nursing station while keeping an eye on both her patients through windows angled into the hallway.**

the nurse unlocks the outer doors for them by cellphone.

"This allows us more control over who is coming and going on the unit. We always encourage our patients' families to visit, but there are times when an ICU patient needs rest," Chapin says.

## **EXPANDING STAFF TO MEET DEMANDS**

When plans were made for a new ICU unit, it was known that more ICU nurses would be needed. The hospital started hiring extra staff



a year ago to handle the increased number of patients. According to Dunn, 18 additional nurses and five technicians were hired in anticipation of the new unit.

“Now that we are a Level III trauma center and have three neurosurgeons to cover all shifts, we will be keeping more patients here at Salina Regional rather than sending them to a larger hospital. We’re in the center of a lot of small communities. We’re attracting more specialists and hospitalists to Salina, which makes it easier to keep people closer to home,” Dunn says. ▣



**Specialty Techs Elizabeth Smith (left) and Elizabeth Vaughn are able to track the stats of all patients in the ICU, as well as patients throughout the hospital, in the new central monitoring room.**