**NEWS FROM THEDACARE®**

***For Immediate Release***

**December 4, 2019**

**NEW EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT**

**COMING TO THEDACARE MEDICAL CENTER-BERLIN**

***Enhancing Access to Expert, Local Care***

BERLIN, Wis. – To ensure access to increasing demand for emergency care, ThedaCare is proud to announce plans for a new Emergency Center (ED) at ThedaCare Medical Center-Berlin. The new nearly 9,000 sq. ft. ED is expected to open in early 2021, with construction to begin in spring 2020. Total cost is estimated to be between $7.5 and $9.5M.

“We continually look for ways to enhance our services and access to expert, local care across our entire area including in our rural markets, said Mark Thompson, Chief Financial Officer/Chief Operating Officer. “We evaluate all opportunities through the lens of our mission of improving the health of the community.”

The need for emergency services in rural markets is significant. A study in the Journal of American Medical Association demonstrates rural EDs have experienced more than a 50% increase in patient visits during last 10 years, despite a 5% decline in the overall US rural population.

“Investing in a new emergency department will ensure the people of the Berlin area have access to needed services,” said Thompson. “It represents ThedaCare’s continuing commitment to providing much needed emergency care in our rural communities.”

The consumer-focused design of the new ED is centered on the wellbeing and ease of patients and their families in a comfortable, soothing environment, and was created in partnership with physicians, clinicians and staff.

“Our goal is to create a modern facility that will provide the best experience for patients and offer a more efficient work area for our healthcare team,” said Tammy Bending, Vice President of ThedaCare Critical Access Hospital-Berlin. “We will be increasing the number of treatment rooms from seven to nine, increasing the size of those rooms and much more.”

She noted that the larger rooms will allow patients to have family members with them, while still providing plenty of space for healthcare workers to provide treatment.

“The design of the new department will have the healthcare team’s workstation located in the center of the area, with treatment rooms located on the perimeter,” explained Bending. “That will give our team a direct line of sight into each room, which improves patient safety and quality of care.”

The new department also will include a larger trauma room and a room with a bariatric lift to aid care providers in transferring disabled patients or those who have difficulty standing. It will include a gathering room for families.

“We will also have a dedicated decontamination room with a shower,” said Bending. “We are a part of a large farming and agri-business community, so the chances of chemical contamination are real; this specialized room will allow us to be able to care for multiple victims if such a situation should arise.”

The new emergency department will also provide more access to telehealth technology.

“We currently use telehealth to connect with specialists such as neurology and intensivists at ThedaCare facilities in Neenah and Appleton,” she said. “The new facility will enhance those capabilities, allowing us to bring specialists into our ED via computer monitors, so they are essentially in the room. This ensures coordinated patient consultation and care through ThedaCare’s expert network of providers.”

She confirmed that the current ED would be operational throughout the entire construction phase.

“The project will begin with the construction of a new temporary entrance,” Bending said. “That will be followed by the demolition of the current ambulance garage. From there construction will continue incrementally until the new facility is completed.”

ThedaCare expects the increased space and enhanced patient experience of the new ED will lead to serving more patients and enhancing provider recruitment in the coming years.

Thompson explained the team members are looking forward to the ED expansion.

“We will be able to optimize our patients’ experiences,” said Thompson. “This is about putting our patients first. We want to provide the best care for rural communities.”

ThedaCare Medical Center-Berlin is an accredited Critical Access Hospital by The Joint Commission, earning a Gold Seal of Approval® by demonstrating continuous compliance with its performance standards. Rural is defined as a geographic area with low population size and density. It can be a town, a small city or a township.

**About ThedaCare**

For more than 110 years, ThedaCare® has been committed to finding a better way to deliver serious and complex healthcare to patients throughout Northeast and Central Wisconsin. The organization serves a community of more than 600,000 residents and employs more than 7,000 healthcare professionals throughout the regions. ThedaCare has seven hospitals located in Appleton, Neenah, Berlin, Waupaca, Shawano, New London and Wild Rose as well as 31 clinics in nine counties. ThedaCare is the first in Wisconsin to be a Mayo Clinic Care Network Member, giving our specialists the ability to consult with Mayo Clinic experts on a patient’s care. ThedaCare is a non-profit healthcare organization with a level II trauma center, comprehensive cancer treatment, stroke and cardiac programs as well as a foundation dedicated to community service.

For more information, visit [www.thedacare.org](http://www.thedacare.org) or follow ThedaCare on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ThedaCare) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ThedaCareHealth).

Media should call Cassandra Wallace, Public Relations Specialist at 920.442.0328 or the ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah switchboard at 920.729.3100 and ask for the marketing person on call.

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