A look at ambulatory care centers: The new trend in hospitalization care

February 12, 2013 - Design / Build

Many hospital institutions are looking for ways to counter the shrinking reimbursements and higher healthcare costs of today. A hospital by nature is a critical care facility that is accessible to anyone, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To sustain this level of care and operation is a severe capital burden forcing many hospitals to close their doors. Recent data shows fewer ailments require hospitalization and the typical length of hospital stay has declined from six days to four days. As a result many healthcare institutions have developed ambulatory care centers accessible only to those patients directed to the facility. Patients admitted are treated and discharged more quickly and the facility as a whole runs more efficiently.

Closely managing the construction process is often a driving factor in successfully completing a project. However, equally as important is determining what type of services and procedures will be offered and how they will be supported and staffed.

Ambulatory care centers may run more efficiently and increase throughput however they no longer benefit from the services that are common within larger hospitals or critical care centers. Physical therapy, radiology, rheumatology, and surgery departments require distinct and complex infrastructure & operational parameters.

Will sterilization of medical instruments be required? How are hazardous materials disposed of? How will clean and dirty linen and supplies be stored and discarded? What are the hours of operation? Anticipated patient load and registration process? Is emergency power required for refrigeration of specimens and samples? How will medication be stored and dispensed? All of these questions will have a profound effect on the design and what building or space is selected. The project team must be cognizant of these issues and what type of ancillary support space is required in order for the ambulatory care center to be correctly designed and function properly.

The role of a project manager is to provide the technical, supervisory and managerial support necessary to realize the final product, a space that is functional, beautiful, and operationally sound. Having completed over 350,000 s/f of ambulatory care space within the past year makes VVA, LLC Project Managers & Consultants fit for the challenge.

Craig Senior, R.A., LEED AP, is a senior associate at VVA Project Managers & Consultants, New York, N.Y.