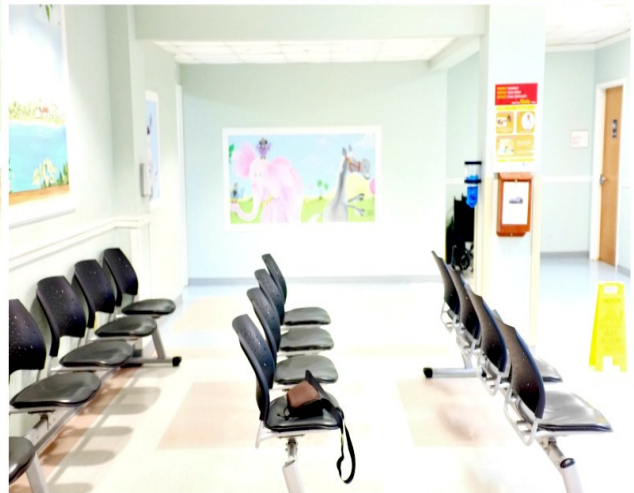


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Improvements Made To JFL's Emergency Room

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Members of the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center (JFL) governing board, during a board meeting on Saturday, said JFL's emergency room initiatives have greatly improved its efficiency and has decreased the "left-without-being-seen" rate.

JFL's emergency room services have long been a point of contention for visitors, with many detailing countless hours waiting to receive care. In fact, some residents have told *VI Consortium* they would rather not go to the hospital's ER for that reason, while some who opt to go leave without being seen.

But things are changing in JFL's emergency department, hospital officials say. Dr. Kendall Griffith, CEO, highlighted the changes, namely the hiring of a nurse manager,

redesigned portal of entry, and an increase in the number of skilled staff.

"There have been several changes in the ED throughout the past several months, including the hiring of a highly qualified ED-trained nurse manager, development of the leadership team with increased supervision on the night shift, redesign of the portal of entry in the ED, and increased number of skilled staff," Griffith said in a prepared



New registration booth at JFL

He added: "Over the past few months, patient wait times are lower with 30 percent improvement on how quickly patients are being seen by nurses and physicians, and fewer patients are leaving without being seen by the nurses and physicians," resulting in an overall reduction of 50 percent in ER wait times, Griffith said.

Chief of Quality Hazel P. Thomas said there has been a "major focus" on the emergency department as her team works to revamp operations. She said the 'left-without-being-seen' rate fell to 4.1 percent in February, down from 20 percent in prior months, and additional efforts are underway to arrive at 3.5 percent by July.

As part of its restructuring, the ER has opened three additional treatment rooms, enabling the movement of patients from the front end to the back end of the emergency department more frequently.

VI Consortium visited the ER to witness the improvements first-hand, speaking with Nurse Manager Francis Clouden, who provided a tour of the area and explained the new way business is being conducted.

Clouden said when patients enter the emergency room, the first person they see is the triage nurse for preregistration. Patients who come in with chest pain are administered an electrocardiogram (EKG) test. Once patients leave the EKG, they are brought back to the inside lobby for registration; however, Clouden said if the patient's situation is acute, a JFL employee will accompany the patient to registration.



One of three additional treatment rooms in

JFL's ER

VI Consortium was taken to the location of the additional treatment rooms and witnessed nurses tending to patients who, if the additional rooms were not available, would be at the front end of the ER awaiting their turn.

"What we've done is we're moving the patients inside, so now we're going to see the patients in here," she pointed out, which explained the reason for the front end of the emergency room being vacant for most of the half hour *VI Consortium* visited the department.

As for changes deeper within the ER where care is administered, operations remain the same, Clouden said.

Even so, Thomas said, work still needs to be done, one of which is the hospital getting the word out to the public about its improvements.

Feature Image: Emergency Room workers at JFL.