

Northwestern Medicine Huntley Hospital celebrates fifth anniversary

Physicians, staff recall opening day and look ahead to future growth

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Just before Northwestern Medicine Huntley Hospital opened on Aug. 9, 2016, a car raced into its parking lot and pulled up to the emergency department entrance. Nurses and staff ran away from opening day photos to help the patient, who was close to delivering the first baby born at the hospital. The hospital opened early to care for that patient, the first of thousands who would come to Huntley for exceptional medical care.

Staff and physicians recently celebrated the hospital's fifth anniversary by recalling their accomplishments since they welcomed their first patients. At the time, it was just the third new hospital to open in Illinois in 35 years. Today, its team continues to bring leading-edge medicine close to where patients live and work.

"We have been able to fulfill the promise we made to bring advanced medical care to the Huntley area," said Dr. Kumar Nathan, vice president of Northwestern Memorial HealthCare. "In just five years, we have created a vibrant community hub for inpatient and outpatient medicine. We have added new services and continue to grow to meet the needs of our patients. It's remarkable to look back and see what our team has accomplished in such a short time."

Two years after the hospital opened, it joined Northwestern Medicine, Chicago's premier academic health system. As part of Northwestern Medicine, patients now have access to the world-class care offered at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago and is paving the way for clinical trials and advanced procedures in the far northwest suburbs. The hospital has more than doubled its number of employees to nearly 900 since it opened in 2016.

In 2021, Northwestern Medicine Huntley Hospital achieved Magnet Recognition for nursing excellence. The designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center is the highest honor for professional nursing practice, and only about 8 percent of hospitals across the nation achieve the recognition. The hospital also achieved a five-star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, a recognition given to just 455 hospitals out of the 3,355 eligible in the United States.

The state-of-the-art air filtration system that was touted during the hospital's construction became a central part of daily operations when the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. Engineers reversed the airflow in a wing of the hospital to reduce infections and protect patients and staff from the virus. Thousands of patients visited the campus for COVID testing, outpatient care and inpatient treatment. The teams that formed just a few years prior were forced to rely on each other like they never had before.

"We constructed this hospital to be able to handle a pandemic, and the physicians and staff are the reason we've been able to care for thousands of people and their families in the last 18 months," Nathan said. "This team has tackled COVID-19 and all its challenges with a fighting spirit. We have come together to deliver exceptional patient care, and our patients can feel our commitment to them."

Patient demand has led to other additions at Northwestern Medicine Huntley Hospital. In 2020 the hospital welcomed four physicians who specialize in hematology and medical oncology to its medical staff. The team began to provide outpatient infusion treatments like chemotherapy to bring care closer to patients' homes. The program, which complements the oncology services already available at Northwestern Medicine McHenry Hospital, continues to grow.

Orthopedic surgeons brought robot-assisted knee replacement surgery to Huntley in 2020 to use the most precise surgical methods and provide patients better outcomes. The team recently introduced robotic hip replacement surgery to improve patients' recovery and long-term satisfaction. Since the hospital opened, more than 5,300 joint replacement surgeries have been performed.

A second cardiac catheterization laboratory was added so more patients can receive diagnostic and interventional care for heart disease. Physicians also perform electrophysiology procedures to correct irregular heart rhythms, also known as arrhythmias. The team achieved the American College of Cardiology's NCDR Chest Pain-MI Registry Platinum Performance Achievement Award in 2021, which recognizes its commitment to providing a higher level of care for heart attack patients. To receive this distinction, the hospital demonstrated sustained achievement for eight consecutive quarters.

The Northwestern Medicine Medical and Surgical Weight Loss Center at Huntley Hospital moved to the facility in 2017 and is one of the longest-running bariatric surgery programs in Illinois, recognized for its exceptional patient outcomes. It has become a destination for weight-loss surgeries, with two surgeons and a comprehensive team that helps patients improve their long-term quality of life.

More than 3,500 babies have been born at Northwestern Medicine Huntley Hospital since it opened. In July 2021 the hospital introduced new maternal fetal medicine services, which brought perinatologists to Huntley. Perinatologists are board-certified obstetricians who are specially trained in diagnosing, treating and managing high-risk pregnancies.

The emergency department has had more than 100,000 visits, providing patients care for trauma, heart attack, stroke and other illnesses and injuries. As the hospital continues to grow, Nathan said its physicians and staff remain deeply rooted in the Huntley community.

"We are celebrating five years and all of our accomplishments, but what we remember most are the individual patients we've treated and all of the other people who have come through our doors, Nathan said. "It has been an honor to serve the Huntley area for five years, and our team is poised to meet our community's needs for generations to come."

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