



Fort Carson-MEDDAC News

Hospital has appointments to sleep through

By Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Troth, MEDDAC PAO

Normally doctors want you to stay awake during your appointments, but a new clinic at Evans Army Community Hospital on Fort Carson wants you to sleep, and even has beds for that purpose.

On July 2, EACH held a ribbon cutting ceremony for its new Neurology Sleep Lab Clinic. The facility will monitor, assess and evaluate patients with sleep-disordered breathing, such as sleep apnea, a condition where a person pauses in breathing or has shallow breaths while sleeping.

“The lab has four beds and will be run six nights a week,” said Dr. Jonathan Olin, chief of the new clinic. “This will give us about 1,000 studies a year.”

That is 1,000 people who will not have to leave Fort Carson for their assessments.

“Having the sleep lab here is going to be great for our patients,” said Col. John McGrath, Fort Carson Medical Department Activity commander. “And, it is going to save us between half a million to a million dollars by doing these studies in house.”

“It is a very technical study and you need good equipment, a good environment where people can sleep and a highly trained staff,” Olin said. “And, we have all three here.”

The sleep lab, which is located on the hospital’s second floor, is set up like a small hotel. There is a front desk where the technicians check patients in. Four private furnished rooms offer a bed and large screen TV. There are even showers within the clinic for patients use before they head to work in the morning.

The rooms have a few extra features that hotel rooms don’t have. A closed circuit camera allows technicians to monitor the patients’ sleep habits. But, that is only one part of the lab’s state of the art monitoring equipment.

Before shutting off the lights for the night, the patient is hooked up to an Alice 6 sleep diagnostic system that monitors heart rate and electroencephalography (EEG) – voltage fluctuations within the neurons of the brain. During the first half of the night, if the technicians determine that the patient has sleep apnea, the patient is connected to a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine that forces air via a face mask until the apnea diminishes and breathing improves.

A one night study, allows doctors to formulate a treatment plan that could include lifestyle changes, mouthpieces, breathing devices or surgery.

The sleep lab does not take reservations; all its patients are referrals from military healthcare providers throughout Colorado Springs. Currently the facility is only seeing active duty



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personnel, but eventually their services will be available for anyone covered by TRICARE Prime.

“The new sleep lab will allow more of our patients to be diagnosed closer to home,” said Olin. “It will also give them a shorter wait time to get into a sleep clinic.”



Fort Carson Medical Department Activity Commander Col. John McGrath (center), Dr. Jonathan Olin, chief of Neurology Sleep Lab Clinic and Capt. Melissa Thomas cut the ribbon to open the Evans Army Community Hospital’s new sleep lab, July 2. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Troth)



After the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Neurology Sleep Lab Clinic, clinic technicians Tom Kulkowski (left) and Dan Trujillo inspect an Alice 6 sleep diagnostic system they will use to monitor patients’ heart rate and electroencephalography (EEG) during sleep studies to determine if they have a sleeping disorder. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Troth)