

# Technical gear adds dimension to MTMC

**BY GREG POGUE**  
POGUE@DNJ.COM

The new Middle Tennessee Middle Center that opens Saturday is quite the sight. But it's what people can't see that also makes the new hospital unique.

Throughout the building, some 2,000 monitoring devices have been installed approximately every 15 feet apart to not only monitor patients regardless of location, but also track essential medical equipment as well.

It's called Sonitor — one of

several information innovations being introduced at the new MTMC. And this particular ultrasonic resource makes the new MTMC the first of 81 Ascension Health facilities to implement the resource and

SEE MTMC, PAGE A3



WEST



BRATTON

patient locator.

"It is everywhere in the hospital," says Dan West, information technology director for MTMC. "We are tagging patients. We will be able to look at flat panel screens deployed all over the hospital and will see maps of the nursing floors. And based on the Sonitor tag the patient is wearing, always know where the patient is."

The tracking device, which is about the size of a small watch case, will be placed inside the patient's identification badge worn around the wrist. It also tracks new patients and enhances their admissions time, while tracking released patients and room availabilities.

Another key aspect is the tracking of resources essential to the caregiver and patient relationship.

"The Sonitor system allows us to find equipment without having to hunt for it," says Michael Bratton, a MTMC's vice president of Patient Care Services and chief nursing officer.

"If I am the person taking care of a patient and I need one of those items, I can go to a tracking board to find where the closest one is located as opposed to having to travel the entire patient care unit to locate one."

And that translates to better patient care.

"It gives the nurse more time to spend with the patient because they will spend less time hunting and fetching equipment or computers," Bratton says. "That gives them

more time to take care of patients."

Another innovation being introduced at the new MTMC will be bedside ToughBook computer tablets, similar to Apple iPads, that allow caregivers to scan the patient's information for a variety of uses.

"It is decentralized nursing," West says. "Nurses no longer have to go to a room many steps away, write down on a piece of paper the vitals, walk back to a nursing station, find it on the computer and then make the entry into the patient's record. They now can do that at the bedside."

And that translates to better patient care.

"It is like being able to have a clipboard with you at all times," Bratton says. "It's a secure tablet, so not just anybody can use it. But if I am a nurse taking care of five different patients, I can take that tablet with me and look up all the information I need on my five patients from anywhere I am located."

The new MTMC will also be the only hospital in Middle Tennessee to have Ascom, a facility-wide internal phone solution that allows caregivers to provide and/or receive instant communications and secondary alerts. Caregivers will be issued a lightweight phone that runs off a wireless system within the hospital.

"This allows for the nurse to receive immediate notification," Bratton says. "The nurse can get an alert on the phone that helps us be more responsive to the patient. It takes steps out of the communi-

cation process."

Several important features of Ascom include allowing caregivers regardless of location the ability to monitor vital signs, access patient information and use a camera to file clinical photographic needs such as wound care progression.

It also allows for caregivers — nurses, doctors, specialists, etc. — to be monitored for their movements as well.

"Anytime a caregiver enters a patient's room, that is logged into a computer and goes into the patient's medical record," West said. "So, if anybody wants to come back and audit us and ask, 'How many times did you actually visit Ms. Smith in room 304,' we can pull that out of our database and tell you to the hundredth of a second who went into the room, who left the room and how long they were in there."

Another new innovation being utilized at MTMC will be the PAR Excellence System. The weight-based solution uses weight sensors in various configurations to identify supply usage as it occurs and then communicates to management the need for materials replenishment. No longer are caregivers part of the replenishment process.

"I never thought I would be able to do something this cool in my life and in my career," West says of leading the IT implementations at the new MTMC.

"... It feels important because it is important."