

[WOUND CARE]



# BIGGER & BETTER

A revamped and expanded Western States Burn Center is further enhancing patient care

By Lauren Himiak

**T**he third floor of the North Colorado Medical Center (NCMC) has become one of strength, surprises, heartache and healing. The Western States Burn Center is located here. It's one of only three burn units in the state, and of 125 specialized burn centers in the United States. Here you'll find a staff that prides itself on a total healing environment for all, and patients with enough determination to accomplish the impossible.

In April 2009, the center spent \$4.9 million to expand by 10,000 square feet and add state-of-the-art technology to improve care to patients as well as their families. From the initial acute setting to the outpatient rehabilitation process, Western States Burn Center strives to provide nothing short of perfection.

## Years of Service

In 1981, James R. Wheeler, MD, founded what is now known as the Western States Burn Center. For years, it has prided itself on providing the most sophisticated treatment and technology available for the treatment of burn injuries. Under the direction of medical director Cleon Goodwin, MD, the center serves an eight-state region of northern Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, North and South Dakota, Idaho, Kansas and Nebraska. Much of its success is due to a stellar staff.

The professionals of Western States Burn Center provide patient care through a multidisciplinary team approach. This team includes the physician, physician assistant, physiatrist, nurse practitioner,

nurses, physical, occupational and respiratory therapists, social workers, dietitians, pharmacists and psychologists.

It's a long list, but the coordination of these services provides excellent patient care in all aspects. When patients arrive here, they can feel that they are in the best possible hands. Xavier Lucio, OTR, Nadine Mossman, PT, and Brea Rosenquist, OTR, comprise the rehabilitation team supporting Western States Burn Center.

## Expanding Needs

As the needs of burn victims increase and technology advances, Western States Burn Center focused on expansion. With funding from golf and charity events, as well as the Northern Colorado Medical Center Foundation, the center increased from 2,000 to 12,000 square feet. The expansion included rooms for multidisciplinary team meetings as well as quiet areas for the families of patients. With 14 beds and a surge capacity of 21 beds, the center is ready should the demand arise.

"Now that patient rooms, treatment space, administration and visiting areas are located together on the third floor of NCMC, patients also benefit from improved continuity of care from each member of their care team," stated Dr. Goodwin. The center provides all types of care to its patients. Services include inpatient management of complex thermal, chemical and electrical burn injuries; outpatient consultation of complex wounds; outpatient and inpatient rehabilitation, and emergent tele-burn consultations with referral facilities/physicians and advanced burn life support services.

The work is challenging, emotional and trying at times. The more serious a burn, the longer it can take to heal. Some serious burn victims may stay in a burn unit for as long as a year to heal. And the newly expanded center is focused on making healing as comfort-

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able as possible with modern amenities and a compassionate staff.

### All About the Patients

Burn recovery is one of the most trying experiences a person can go through. Since burn victims must undergo constant treatments to clean and remove dead tissue from their wounds, pain management is imperative.

"Pain management for our patients is the most difficult part of the job," said Nadine Mossman, physical therapist, who has worked as a primary PT assigned to the burn center for the past two years. "We consistently work with nursing to achieve the best pain control possible and work to move our patients slowly."

To help keep patients comfortable, the burn center has made improvements to the surrounding environment. Since many burn victims can't control their body temperature, controlling room temperatures is vital. At the center, room temperature can increase 10 degrees in 10 seconds or less and humidity is

strictly controlled.

The staff works in all areas of burn care. Hydrotherapy is used to treat and remove dead tissue, and wound care is performed not only to provide healing, but also to decrease the chances of infection. One of the most important focuses of the center is improving a patient's range of motion (ROM).

"Patients with significant scar tissue development need prolonged stretch techniques to regain and maintain good ROM and function," noted Mossman. "We work with patients in their rooms as well as in the shower." The shower happens to be the best place for therapy as it not only allows therapists to see the burn injury, but also helps patients improve their ROM without interference from dressings.

Along with ROM, therapists and nurses work to improve general mobility, independence and strength. Recovery can be a long and difficult road. "Staff members get to know our patients over weeks and months, and care takes on a very personal relation-

ship," said Dr. Goodwin.

"It can be difficult," admitted Mossman. "At the end of the day, when patients are finally strong enough to be able to go home, it makes it all worthwhile. I remember when a teenage burn patient came back and stopped by the inpatient unit with his parents. He wanted to show off what he was able to do and how well he could move his injured extremities. He thanked me for never giving up on him."

### Advancing Care

The expanded burn center has made some big changes to adapt to ever-evolving technology. New rooms and better equipment have been installed to improve quality of care and help patients get back to the life they enjoy. Along with custom splints, burn hammocks, walkers and hand weights, the center prides itself on the latest advancements.

A bariatric room has been equipped to accommodate patients with a larger bed, adapted bathroom features and a dual lift

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system. Liko Lifts are actually used in every patient room as well as two hydrotherapy rooms, and can lift up to 880 pounds.

At the head of each bed, patients will find Hill Rom Latitude Arms. This state-of-the-art equipment is used to monitor and treat the patient, and includes house monitors, oxygen, feeding pumps, suction and outlets for medication.

But equipment isn't the only thing state-of-the-art about the Western States Burn Center. Adaptable rooms have been added to protect patients from airborne infectious diseases, and a rehabilitation gym has been built for physical and occupational therapy. In fact, the gym is one of the most exciting features of the expanded center.


"We hope to begin implementing some group sessions in our gym," said Mossman. "We are developing positioning programs that can be followed by all WSBC clinical staff." The gym has been filled with therapy equipment solely dedicated for burn patients, including a Lite Gait treadmill

system, NuStep, upper-body ergometers, pulley-weight system, mat table and an upper-extremity cart.

Western States Burn Center will always strive to be the best at patient care. The needs of burn victims and their families come first to the staff, and the center's expansion is the latest in advancing patient care. "It takes time and dedication to do a good job in a burn unit," said Mossman. "But trust me, the rewards are more than worth the effort required." ■

**Learn more about the Western States Burn Center at [www.bannerhealth.com](http://www.bannerhealth.com), keyword: NCMC Burn.**

*Lauren Himiak is a freelance writer for ADVANCE.*

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