

January 22, 2022

To Public Hearings@illinois.gov

My experience at Rockford Memorial Hospital School of Nursing, Rockford Memorial Hospital and Rockford Clinic plus the subsequent merger into Rockford Health System was mostly all positive and a continual striving toward improvements in all areas, best patient care, encouragement of health professionals continuing education, and caring for the patient as the center of the medical care teams' goals and performance. A change in these attributes and the reputation of Rockford Health System has rocked the city of Rockford.

My nursing career started in the nursing school in 1965. When I graduated, I went with my husband to San Antonio, Texas; Omaha, Nebraska; and Tokyo, Japan. I learned from each experience and when I did return to the Rockford Clinic in 1977, it was with a broader view of patient care. I was pleased that the management supported change and growth in the patient care by adding innovative technology and more specialists. When Gary Kaatz was hired as the administrator, he worked with the board to merge the Rockford Clinic and the Rockford Memorial Hospital to help decrease the hospitals' financial deficit. Over the following years, he put in place changes that led to loss of specialty physicians and the loss of identity of the medical outpatient services. He also continually strived to find a buyer or partner for the health system. He finally did when Javon Bea made an offer and purchased the Rockford Health System (RHS). Rumors were he wanted the property near the Interstate 90 on East Riverside owned by the RHS for years.

When there was a change in the name of the hospital and health system, employees and the community felt saddened due to the loss of such a long enduring identity in Rockford (first established as Rockford City Hospital in 1887). This was the first sign of impending doom. The years since has been a struggle between the Javon Bea administration, the city and the RHS employees, including physicians. Many health care workers have left the system or been asked to leave. This has reduced the available staff and the integrity of the medical care.

This year we are shocked to find that the progression of the death march is creating a skeleton of health care at RHS. There are still outpatient services at the campus, but the medical offices are diminished, and the availability of emergency care and inpatient care is a ghost hovering over the past RHS campus. What once was a busy, active, thriving, and powerful presence on Rockford's west side, is a phantom crying to be reborn!

I know the above is very emotional and I did not provide any statistics, but I found an interesting outcome on my search on the internet for historical facts on the RHS-there were hardly any!! I have provided a couple of the last awards the health system received but it does not point out the nationally recognized departments like the Neonatal Intensive Care, Pediatric Intensive Care, Trauma Level 1 Emergency Room, or the Joint Commission Accreditation of Hospital Operations (JCAHO) continual appraisal of the excellent work the health system was doing overall. Has this been repeated since?

We have no close intensive care for babies or children, but families must travel to Madison, Milwaukee, or Chicago to find care for their ill children! A person with life threatening injuries or medical condition must endure another ten to fifteen minutes of transport to a hospital on the east side or downtown. The East Riverside Emergency room is not as large as the former one at Rockford Memorial and people wait hours to be seen. With the recent Covid crisis, the wait times have been a tragedy! I was treated at the former Rockford Memorial emergency room for Covid and fortunately, it was still staffed. The one physician and skeleton crew were able to treat me within minutes and if I had gone to the East Riverside hospital, I was told I may have waited in the waiting room for hours as they had so many patients there. I did get admitted, but transport to a hospital room at Javon Bea on East Riverside took the ambulance transport six hours to have the time to take me and when I arrived, I received excellent care. The unsaid concern is that the "old" hospital has 380 inpatient beds (many converted to offices and outpatient services) compared to Javon Bea Mercy that has only 194 beds! That is almost 200 hospital beds that are now not available when there is a medical crisis occurring!

The following 2 pages are all I could find that signify the excellence of the hospital staff and the care given at Rockford Memorial Hospital and Rockford Health System up to 2016.

Thank you for reading my concerns.

Nancy Todora, RN, BS, Retired Certified Diabetes Educator

## U.S. News and World Report

In 2015-2016, for the fifth straight year, Rockford Memorial Hospital was named to *U.S. News & World Report's* prestigious list of "Best Regional Hospitals." RMH is the only local hospital to repeatedly receive this designation.



After reviewing patient outcomes and patient safety initiatives, the magazine chose RMH physicians and professionals as "high performers" in health care when compared to peers in the region and across the country.

RMH ranked 27th out of more than 200 hospitals in Illinois. The hospital was recognized as "high-performing" in urology.

U.S. News creates the list of hospital rankings to help steer patients to hospitals with strong skills in the procedures and medical conditions that present the biggest challenges.

## About the Rankings

The 25<sup>th</sup> annual edition of Best Hospitals showcases more than 720 of the nation's roughly 5,000 hospitals. Fewer than 150 are nationally ranked in at least one of 16 medical specialties. The rest of the recognized hospitals met a standard of performance nearly as demanding in one or more specialties.

"The hospital rankings," said U.S. News Health Rankings Editor Avery Comarow, are like a GPS-type aid to help steer patients to hospitals with strong skills in the procedures and medical conditions that present the biggest challenges. "All of these hospitals are the kinds of medical centers that should be on your list when you need the best care," said Comarow. "They are where other hospitals send the toughest cases."

# National Committee for Quality Assurance

All nine Rockford Health Physicians primary care facilities were nationally recognized as Level 3 Patient Centered Medical Homes (PCMH) from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). A Patient Centered Medical Home is an approach to health care that develops an ongoing partnership between patients and their primary care provider. Each patient's care is overseen by clinician-led care teams that coordinate treatment across the health care system. Research shows medical homes lead to higher quality and lower costs and can improve patient and provider experiences.

