

# *Health Matters*

at Aspen Valley Hospital

## **INSIDE:**

- State-of-the-art emergency care
- When heart attack strikes
- Hypothermia prevention
- Master Facilities Plan
- After-Hours Medical Care

*John "Bud" Glismann, MD, and Sean Nevin, PA, provide emergency care at AVH.*

# Emergency medicine — Always here when you need it

Emergency medicine specialists at Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) are tasked with caring for a broad range of conditions in people of all ages — from life-threatening traumatic injuries to urgent care for less serious conditions. And, when patients come to the emergency room, there's often the added element of anxiety and fear because it's an unplanned visit, an interruption to the day's activities, and a response to an accident or sudden illness.

But our emergency physicians, who complete a three-year residency following medical school, are masters at not only diagnosis and treatment, but also calming the nerves of patients and their loved ones. With a wide field of medical knowledge and advanced people skills, they have the talent of many specialists. They are emergency specialists, clinical generalists, and well-rounded diagnosticians.

Emergency medicine as a medical specialty is relatively young, with AVH bringing emergency physicians on board in the early 1980s. Since then, specialists such as orthopedists, pediatricians, and internists are on call to support the emergency doctor who is readily available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## Emergency medicine specialists on staff at AVH include:

J. Stevens Ayers, DO	Scott Gallagher, MD	Chris Martinez, MD	*Dawn Kopf, PA-C
Gregory Balko, MD	John Glismann, MD	*Amy Covington, PA-C	*Sean Nevin, PA-C
Catherine Bernard, MD	Kimberly Levin, MD	*Nancee Dodge, FNP	*Lisa Olsen, FNP

*\*Physician assistants and nurse practitioners are not physicians, but they perform many of the diagnostic and treatment functions of a physician. They work closely with our physicians to enhance the care provided to all of our ER patients.*



## ER care and service wows patients

Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) measures the **technical** quality of its medical care in a variety of ways, but just as important is how patients rate the quality of their medical **experience**.

Avatar International is a third-party surveyor and reports that AVH's emergency services are at the 94th percentile for patient satisfaction. In the graph to the right, you'll see that AVH scores are consistently in the top 10 percent (90th percentile or above) of hospitals in the nation.

A drill-down of items in the survey shows that patients appreciate high quality physicians and nurses, up-to-date medical equipment, outstanding teamwork and efficiency, and the respect and compassion extended to them during an ER visit. Almost all patients state they would return if care was needed, and they would recommend AVH to their family and friends.

Particularly noteworthy are our wait time scores. At the 98th percentile, patients are consistently impressed with how quickly they receive care. Bedside registration, quick triage, and efficient assessment, diagnosis, and treatment contribute to this accomplishment.

"In an emergency situation, patients want to be seen quickly. They want their pain to be managed, and they want to feel better fast," says ER manager Amy Covington, PA-C. "We understand that and have made prompt care and attention a priority."

We appreciate our patients' input; but more importantly, we appreciate all the talented and caring professionals at AVH who provide extraordinary emergency care.

### 2008 ER Patient Satisfaction Scores By Percentile

General care	97
General reputation	94
Key results	90
Wait times	98
Problem resolution	95
Nursing care	96
Physician care	93
Patient safety	90
Pain management	95

# With heart attack symptoms, fast action saves lives

When someone suffers a heart attack, a blockage in blood flow deprives the heart muscle of vital oxygen and tissue begins to die. Reducing the time between the onset of heart attack symptoms and treatment can help preserve heart muscle or even save a life.

Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) follows national protocols for heart attack treatment based on studies showing that most heart attack sufferers have better outcomes when they receive clot-busting medication within 30 minutes after arriving at the emergency room. "That is why it's critical to call 911 and get emergency treatment immediately if you or someone else has symptoms of a heart attack," emphasizes Catherine Bernard, MD, emergency physician at AVH.

## Know the signs to act in time

When a television or movie character clutches his chest and falls to the floor in excruciating pain, everyone knows he or she is having a heart attack. In real life, symptoms are not always so easily recognizable.

Some heart attack victims may have only mild chest pain or discomfort, sometimes confusing these heart attack symptoms with heartburn. Symptoms can also be different for women than for men. Here's how to recognize both the typical symptoms of a heart attack as well as those that are less familiar.

## Typical symptoms of a heart attack

- Chest pain or discomfort that lasts more than a few minutes or comes and goes
- Pain that spreads from the chest to the shoulders, arms, or other parts of the upper body
- Upper body pain with no chest discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Abdominal pain
- Lightheadedness, dizziness, or feeling faint
- Cold sweats
- Nausea or vomiting

## Common symptoms in women

Chest pain, pressure, and discomfort are common heart attack symptoms for women. However, they are more likely than men to have other symptoms, such as:

- Unusual or unexplained fatigue
- Sleep disturbances
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Abdominal pain resembling heartburn
- Lightheadedness or dizziness

Therefore, it is vital that all women be in tune with their bodies and their symptoms so as not to confuse these potential signs of a heart attack with other health ailments.

## Advice for everyone: Act in time

According to Dr. Bernard, "Despite the possible difference in symptoms, one piece of advice applies to both men and women who may be having a heart attack: Don't try to tough it out or dismiss possible symptoms."

Getting treatment quickly improves your chance of survival and minimizes damage to your heart. If symptoms don't subside immediately, call 911 for an ambulance. To facilitate faster diagnosis and treatment, our hospital-based ambulance service can transmit information to our emergency room physicians and provide pre-hospital care before the patient arrives at AVH. And, with two cardiologists on staff, patients receive a timely and thorough evaluation and follow-up care by a specialist as needed.

By learning to recognize the symptoms of a heart attack and acting in time, you can help AVH save hearts and lives.



*Catherine Bernard, MD, listens to a patient's heart.*

# State-of-the-art emergency care is available in your community hospital

At Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH), our Emergency Department is far more sophisticated than one might expect from a small community hospital. AVH has always been committed to providing the same state-of-the-art care usually found only at big-city hospitals.

We were one of Colorado's first level III trauma centers utilizing the latest in technology. Our hospital-based ambulance service provides pre-hospital care, and board-certified emergency physicians are available in the hospital 24 hours a day. In addition, our registered nursing staff is certified in advanced cardiac life support (ACLS), pediatric advanced life support (PALS), and pediatric and adult trauma nursing.

Emergency patients also benefit from advanced diagnostic imaging capabilities and a unique relationship with Swedish Medical Center and Radiology Imaging Associates in Denver. A digital network allows immediate access to radiology subspecialists. The care of stroke patients, for example, is enhanced due to this relationship as Swedish Medical Center is the only comprehensive stroke center in the state.

## Our latest investment — body temperature management

Rapid correction of body temperature has long been recognized as vital to caring for the hypothermia patient. Recent studies also suggest that rapid cooling of the cardiac arrest patient leads to improved post cardiac arrest neurologic survivability.

That is why AVH recently purchased the Alsius Intravascular Temperature Management™ (IVTM) system, which allows doctors to rapidly, safely, and effectively manage the core

body temperature of patients from the inside out. In fact, we are the only hospital on the western slope to offer this device.

According to emergency specialist Greg Balko, MD, the IVTM is the safest and most efficient way to re-warm

the patient. "As the temperature drops, the heart gets more irritable and is more likely to go into a lethal arrhythmia," explains Dr. Balko. "Most re-warming methods warm the periphery more than the core and that actually **increases** the risk for arrhythmia." The Alsius IVTM goes to the "core of the matter," making it more effective than other methods.

The IVTM system is also used for cooling patients suffering from sudden cardiac arrest. This cooling technique slows patients' metabolism to help improve the chance of survival and reduce the risk of brain damage after the heart stops supplying oxygenated blood to the brain.

While AVH will continue to invest in the latest state-of-the-art ER technology, we will also maintain our reputation for outstanding patient care. We achieve this by reducing wait times and keeping our patients as comfortable as possible. So while we hope you never need to use our emergency services, you can feel confident you will be well taken care of at AVH.



Greg Balko, MD, emergency physician

## Think **COLD** to prevent hypothermia

The weather may be starting to warm up, but the danger of hypothermia isn't over. Even in summer, it can get pretty cold at night at our altitudes, not to mention the risk from activities such as rafting and fishing.

A simple acronym, COLD, can help you remember how to protect yourself from hypothermia:

**Cover.** Wear a hat and scarf to prevent heat loss from your head. Mittens keep hands warmer than gloves.

**Overexertion.** Avoid activities that cause excessive sweating. Wet clothing and cold air can be deadly.

**Layers.** Dress in loose-fitting, lightweight layers. Inner layers should be wool, silk or polypropylene. Outer layers should be tightly woven and water repellent.

**Dry.** If clothing becomes wet, change to dry clothes if possible. Pay close attention to mittens and socks.



# Aspen Valley Hospital Master Facilities Plan

## *Myth vs. fact*

Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) is currently seeking conceptual approval of its Master Facilities Plan from the Aspen City Council. The plan provides for an upgraded and expanded hospital reflecting changes in healthcare delivery and the current and future needs of the community. As a result of this very public process, you may have opinions or concerns, and they may be based on fact or myth. To help you better understand the hospital's plan, here are some pertinent facts.

**Myth:** The hospital will be investing millions of dollars into this project at a time when there is great economic uncertainty.

**Fact:** While AVH is actively pursuing conceptual approval for the plan from the City of Aspen, we will not begin any construction until the funding strategy is in place. This requires a financial recovery on the national level, positive bond markets, and a sustainable capital formation plan.

**Myth:** AVH is planning to expand its services based on a “build it and they will come” philosophy.

**Fact:** A full complement of services at AVH currently meets the majority of the medical needs of residents and visitors. Therefore, the conceptual plan is essentially based on the same scope of services. Our goal is to provide existing services — services that we do frequently and do well — in a modern facility. That means single-occupancy inpatient rooms, separation of inpatients from outpatients, patient privacy in all areas of the hospital, and on-site medical office space.

**Myth:** AVH is planning a “luxury” hospital, one with appeal for the super-rich, but not for local workers.

**Fact:** Plans have been designed to meet contemporary healthcare standards. The finished hospital will be equivalent to newer facilities throughout the nation. While it will be modern and reflective of our resort community, it will not be excessive in design or size.

**Myth:** Physicians will receive subsidized office space on the hospital campus at the taxpayer's expense.

**Fact:** Physicians who choose to relocate their offices to the hospital will pay fair market lease rates. Proximity to the hospital will benefit patients through more efficient care and convenient access to an array of services.

**Myth:** Most of AVH's patients are from out of the area.

**Fact:** The majority of AVH's patients are from the Roaring Fork Valley, and of those, most are from Aspen, Snowmass Village, Woody Creek, Old Snowmass, and Basalt. It is true that we also serve residents of the lower valley (many of whom work or have a physician in Aspen), as well as visitors to the area who have the misfortune of illness or injury while here.

**Myth:** AVH should accommodate a full spectrum of services on the campus, including care for those with mental illness or substance abuse problems, seniors, and the homeless.

**Fact:** AVH is one agency of many in the community that serves the above categories of people. And while our primary responsibility is the provision of acute medical and surgical care, we are committed to contributing toward solutions and are currently partnering with agencies such as The Right Door, the homeless shelter, and the Senior Advisory Council. We will continue with these and other efforts.

We welcome your questions and comments; please don't hesitate to contact us at **544.1296** or [dycgi@avhaspen.org](mailto:dycgi@avhaspen.org).

If you'd like to review our CEO's message about the plan, please visit our Web site at [www.avhaspen.org/general\\_information/mp\\_overview.cfm](http://www.avhaspen.org/general_information/mp_overview.cfm) to hear about the hospital expansion and renovation.

# After-Hours Medical Care is now open and making a difference

If the first month of operation is any indicator, residents of the valley are very happy to have access to medical care evenings and weekends after their doctors' office is closed.



*The After-Hours Medical Care staff:*

*Margie Slater, RN; Farrell McClain, MD; Cynda Larson, RN;  
Kiernan Smith, MD; Kim Parry, RT; Kelly Kovach, RT.*

Providing an alternative to a run to the emergency room, family medicine physicians Kiernan Smith, MD, and Farrell McClain, MD, have provided care to infants, children, adults, and seniors for a variety of ailments ranging from colds and flu to asthma, sprains, strains, and urinary tract infections. "People really seem to appreciate that we're here," says Dr. Smith.

After-Hours Medical Care is located in Basalt at 234 Cody Lane in the Aspen-Basalt Health Care Center, a project of the Aspen Valley Medical Foundation. The building also houses Hospice of the Valley, Pathfinders, Aspen Counseling Center, and Community Health Services.

## **After-Hours Medical Care hours are:**

5:00 to 10:30 p.m., Monday through Friday

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday

Walk-ins are welcome. Call **544.1250** for more information.

## *Calendar of Events*

### **Blood Drives**

**Tuesday, April 7 &**

**Tuesday, June 2**

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Health & Human Services

### **Community Health Fair**

**Saturday, June 6**

8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

*Blood tests only*

**Sunday, June 7**

8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

*Blood tests and all screening stations*

**Call 544.1296 for more information.**



*Kiernan Smith, MD,  
is the primary physician  
at After-Hours Medical Care.*

**Para solicitar "Health Matters" en español, llame al 544.1543.**



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