

Parkway East Hospital on growth path

For a start, it plans to double capacity, adding more than 100 beds

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The Straits Times

19 March 2010

EAST Shore Hospital, renamed Parkway East yesterday, is planning to double its capacity by building a new, five-storey annexe that will house more than 100 beds.

The extension will bring the number of beds in the hospital to 220, up from 118 now, and should be ready in a few years' time.

The new beds will be spread equally among maternity, surgical and medical treatment wards.

But even before approval for the extension is given, the hospital is already looking around for space to expand further.

Parkway East's chief executive officer, Dr Michael Tan, has begun a search for space adjoining or near the hospital at Joo Chiat Place for further growth, as he expects the new annexe to hit capacity within four years of its opening.

Parkway East, the oldest of Parkway Holdings' three hospitals here, has long been regarded as the poor cousin to the Gleneagles and Mount Elizabeth hospitals, both of which are located downtown.

But demand for services at the hospital, which has a predominantly local clientele, has been very strong over the past couple of years, possibly fuelled by the severe shortage of beds in public hospitals.

Parkway Holdings expects demand for its hospital beds to remain high even after the 555-bed Khoo Teck Puat Hospital opens its wards in September this year.

Another reason for the surge in demand could be a recent revamp, which transformed the ageing hospital building into a sparkling, modern facility.

As part of the year-long renovation, Parkway East added a new 10-bed day surgery ward.

This has resulted in a 40 per cent to 50 per cent increase in day surgery cases over the past 12 months.

Some rooms have also been revamped to allow husbands to stay with their wives during delivery, or for parents to spend the night with their sick child.

Demand for space from specialists has also been very high, said Dr Tan. As a result, some have resorted to sharing clinic space.

As part of the expansion, therefore, Parkway East will add 20 per cent to 30 per cent more medical suites or private clinics to the 36 it now has.

One of them is Eagle Eye Centre, which Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan visited yesterday, after the renaming ceremony.

His fellow Sembawang GRC MP, Dr Lim Wee Kiak, practises there twice a week.

Since it opened its doors more than 60 years ago, more than 60,000 babies have been born at Parkway East.

Dr Tan said that there are families in the East which have had three generations of babies born at the hospital.

Parkway East is the hospital's sixth name.

It began life as Paglar Clinic and Maternity Hospital in 1942, before morphing into St Mark's Maternity Hospital, St Mark's Hospital, the American Hospital of Singapore and East Shore Hospital before the latest change.

Along the way, ownership changed hands several times before it was acquired by Parkway Holdings in 1995.