

HealthSouth Breaks Ground for New Medical Center; First Digital Hospital Focuses on Physician and Patient Needs

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HealthSouth Corporation, the nation's largest healthcare services provider, with more than 1,900 facilities in all 50 states and abroad, broke ground today on HealthSouth Medical Center, the first digital hospital to be built by the healthcare leader. It will replace the current HealthSouth Medical Center in Birmingham.

The project, which was announced last spring, is a strategic partnership among HealthSouth, 15 medical equipment manufacturers, system designers and other healthcare specialty firms and Oracle Corp., the leading provider of e-business software. HealthSouth's goal in designing the facility is to improve patient care by bringing together many significant technological advances in healthcare that, due to incompatible computer systems, lack of integration among equipment manufacturers and other obstacles, have had limited impact to date in the hospital industry.

"This will be the hospital model for the future of healthcare," said HealthSouth Chairman and CEO Richard M. Scrushy. "By bringing together healthcare's leading equipment manufacturers and Oracle's integrated business systems, we will be able to bring the best medical technology to our patients in a seamless, efficient manner. Our goal is to provide each patient with an even higher level of quality healthcare through the integration of the latest technology."

The 10-story, 219-bed facility will have more than 500,000 square feet of floor space and include a hotel, retail shops, media center and visitors area. From the nursing areas to the operating rooms, key elements of the facility are being designed with input from numerous clinicians across the country.

The advice of clinicians has altered the traditional hospital design in many ways, including the layout of operating rooms and patient rooms, providing better opportunity for interaction between clinicians and patients. Full-scale demonstration models of these rooms have been built and equipped so the clinicians can actually "visit" the rooms and make sure the new designs work. This allows for changes in equipment or building design before construction.

"The attention HealthSouth is giving to designing this hospital for the physicians and the patients will ensure a better experience for my patients in the future," said Swaid N. Swaid, MD, a Birmingham-based neurosurgeon who is consulting with designers on the project. "If this is the future of healthcare, patients can look forward to being more informed, more comfortable and to spending more face-to-face time with their physician."

Scrushy says that the project is a major step toward overcoming the biggest obstacles in healthcare -- communication gaps created by incompatible computer systems, the overdependency on paper systems for documentation, and inefficiencies in daily communications. The hospital is scheduled to open in 2003.

HealthSouth can be found on the Web at <http://www.healthsouth.com/>.

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