

Utah Valley Hospital goes back to its roots -- and original name



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A rose by any other name would smell as sweet, Shakespeare once wrote. And a hospital by any other name would still provide the care for sick people.

Utah Valley Regional Medical Center was originally named Utah Valley Hospital and will return to its roots – and that name – this spring.

The change has been influenced as much by modern technology as it has by nostalgia.

And it could actually help get medical help faster, according to Ethan Shumway, communications director with the Intermountain Healthcare South Region. If someone is on the freeway and is unfamiliar with the area, the driver or passenger might need medical assistance and do an Internet search for nearby facilities. More people are likely to search for hospital than medical center. Finding the right help faster could help them get the correct treatment sooner, perhaps even saving a life, Shumway said.

“The term hospital resonated more with the public,” he said. “On Google, the word hospital is searched 10-to-one over medical center.

“It is just a change in name that helps us connect better with our audience,” he continued. “It is what the local community prefers.”

Intermountain actually commissioned a survey about the confidence level of local residents and how they would respond to “hospital” compared to “medical center.” Prospective respondents were given various scenarios and selected from terms, which were presented in random order.

Approximately 10 percent of people would be most likely to seek care at a medical center when they are in labor to deliver a baby, either for themselves or a family member. That’s opposed to 80 percent who would favor a hospital.

For someone in need of an emergency appendectomy, only 25 percent of survey responders chose hospital; the term didn’t rate as high in this scenario. Emergency room came in the highest at 55 percent, but medical center didn’t even get a vote.

Fewer than 5 percent of respondents said they would be extremely comfortable having treatment for appendicitis at a medical center, compared to 60 percent who favored a hospital.

The word “regional” either before hospital or medical center did not evoke a preference from the respondents. Another survey on a national level, produced by Signature MD, showed a preference for the term “hospital.”

“... Consumers associate hospitals with a greater variety of services, better medical care, cutting edge medicine, and expert physicians,” the survey said. It also reported that 53 percent of survey respondents believe hospitals are using more up-to-date technologies and procedures and 61 percent believe hospitals have a wider range of services.

Other Intermountain facilities have already made the switch. They include McKay-Dee in Ogden, Primary Children’s in Salt Lake City, Delta Community and Sevier Valley Hospitals.

The original Utah Valley Hospital opened in 1939 at the same site it currently occupies at 1034 N. 500 West, Provo. In 1953, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints took over ownership of the facility and began planning an expansion. It was renamed Utah Valley Hospital of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In 1975, the LDS Church gifted all its hospitals back to the communities and Intermountain Health Care was created. The hospital name was changed back to Utah Valley Hospital.

In the mid-1980s, many hospitals added the term medical center, with the perception that it would carry more clout.

“The conventional wisdom for years has been that the word ‘hospital’ was tired and old fashioned. As a result, hundreds of hospitals dropped the word and renamed themselves medical centers,” Steve Rivkin of Fierce Healthcare said.

The Utah County facility followed suit and change its name to Utah Valley Regional Medical Center in 1984.

“The hospital’s increased and expanded services powerfully enhanced Utah Valley Hospital’s image as a regional facility which served both the basic and specialized needs of the entire area,” according to the book, “A History of Community Service.”

It is now coming full circle and returning to the original name. It will become official in April, but either name can be considered correct now, Shumway said.

“Some of the reasons we are waiting are for billing and licensure issues,” he said. “We want to make sure all legal components are taken care of.”

“We hope it will be something that will benefit the community and be helpful for those who are searching for services,” he said.