

## **PRINT-OSF is bringing hospital-level care home to Rockford-area residents**

The success of OSF OnCall's Digital Hospital in Peoria has paved the way for expansion to Rockford, Illinois.

OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center is preparing to launch an [OSF OnCall Digital Hospital](#) – an option to receive hospital-level care at home for some patients such as those suffering from heart failure, COPD, Covid, infections, pneumonia, or other illnesses, and who are admitted through the emergency department or referred for admission directly by their provider.

Courtney Dahnert, MSN, RN, supervisor of Clinical Digital Care for OSF OnCall Digital Hospital in Rockford, says the care team at the OSF OnCall Command Center in Peoria will identify patients who could be enrolled based on criteria, including their diagnosis and condition stability, being 18 or older, living within 30 minutes of OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center, and having an insurer willing to cover hospital care at home. Medicare is among the payers willing to support home-based acute care.

OSF OnCall Digital Care Manager Melissa Meier, MSN, RN, says patients are also screened to make sure their home environment is safe, and they have the ability to be cared for at home. Once enrolled, a tech kit, providing 24/7 instant connection, is set up in the home before a patient arrives.

"A tablet, which is how we do our video visits, as well as Bluetooth enabled biometric equipment for us to be able to do vital signs remotely. We also bring a backup power source as well as a backup internet source and a device which is a personal emergency response system, which functions much like a Life Alert button," says Meier.

For potential candidates worried they're not tech savvy, Pam Anderson, a patient from Morton enrolled in the program through OSF Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria says everything is so easy to use.

"The phone ... you don't dial it. You just pick it up and it rings directly to the (digital health) center. And once you do that, then somebody will appear on the iPad. So, if you do need something, you're actually speaking to someone (you can see). You're not just talking on the phone. And they're extremely prompt in answering. So there really isn't, in my opinion, a lot of technology involved. Thank heavens," Anderson gladly reports.

There is a minimum of two visits from a nurse each day. Patients receive three meals a day and individuals can live alone or with family members. Costs are the same as for a hospital stay.

The OSF OnCall Digital Hospital program helps both the health system and the patient.

"As we bring patients home, we're freeing up beds within the medical center for others to use. But additionally, it's a great for patient experience. So patients love to be at home. They love to be with their pets, their beds, their favorite recliner, and be able to control their own visitor hours."  
-Melissa Meier, OSF OnCall Digital Care Manager

Research also shows patients in digital hospital programs recover faster, fewer are re-admitted to the hospital, and they avoid hospital-acquired infections.

OSF is currently recruiting and training nurses for the digital hospital program in Rockford with special curriculum developed by [OSF Innovation](#). It includes simulation for real-life scenarios, so nurses are prepared for any challenges. Dahnert says most nurses enjoy this new way of caring for patients that harkens back to the days of house calls.

“It takes us back to being able to provide that really good care; getting to know someone even though we're only caring for them for two or three days and making their health relevant to them. And it gives us time to breathe. So it's an amazing opportunity for both the patient and the provider.”

For patients concerned about their care and safety at home, the first-ever digital hospital patient for OSF, Jim Stickelmaier says being at home was the best medicine.

“I would say definitely try it. I think they'll find out that it was a lot easier and a lot nicer to be at home than in the hospital.”

OSF OnCall has cared for nearly 370 patients in the Peoria area since launching its digital hospital program in August of 2022. The first digital hospital patient at Saint Anthony Medical Center could be admitted after the program launches for Rockford area patients on February 27.

For more on the OSF OnCall Digital Hospital [listen to this segment](#) of the OSF Health Accelerated podcast.