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PMC adds geriatric psychiatry program

Inpatient unit intended to help people 65 and up

POCATELLO — Patient rooms devoid of televisions may seem like a lack of hospital amenities, but when treatment requires a dose socialization one might understand the situation a little bit better.

Portneuf Medical Center's Inpatient Geriatric Psychiatry program opened its doors last week. Steve Proctor, a PMC Behavioral Health Services clinical supervisor, said the unit began preparing when the hospital made the big move last year.

He said the unit aims to help those 65 years old and older regain or maintain quality of life.

“With the aging process there is some expectation that there is some cognitive decline related to atrophy of the brain,” Proctor said. “When that becomes severe, we can diagnose a dementia process.”

After a diagnoses is made, depending upon the type of dementia, psychiatric illness or an acute mental status change, it can be treated medically and slowed down. He said older people tend to get depressed. Causes can be life circumstance, transitional issues, decline in physical abilities and even physiological things that affect mood.

The fifth-floor unit has a view of south Pocatello and the mountains, a kitchenette, activity room, patient rooms and a family room.

Proctor said patients may typically stay between 10 days to two weeks, depending upon patient needs and financial constrains. He said patients participate in activities, group therapy, psychiatric education and families are involved in the treatment process.

“Family members usually are the patient's biggest advocate, they want what's best for their family,” Proctor said. “They do not want to see their loved one relegated to a nursing home unless they absolutely have to or if they are in a nursing home they don't want to forever be getting reports of ‘your mother or father did this or did that’, that they know is out of character.”

Proctor said the unit can accommodate up to seven patients. It is located on Portneuf Medical Center's Behavioral Health Services floor.