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Officials at the Twin Falls hospital say the license will be used sparingly for patient treatment.

St. Luke's Receives Beer and Wine License

Typically, one ends up in a hospital after one too many drinks. Very rarely can a person walk into a hospital and receive a cold beer as medical treatment. While it has no plans to open a bar, St. Luke's Magic Valley Medical Center applied for and received a beer and wine license in late July.

The license will only be exercised in certain cases where a physician believes a patient may benefit from a glass of beer or wine. "It's not something we use very often," said Lisa Burgett, a St. Luke's hospitalist. "This is for somebody who comes to the hospital for say, a broken hip, but they admit they have three or four beers every night."

Giving alcohol-dependent patients one to two beers keeps them from being miserable, Burgett said. It usually shortens their hospital stay by several days, which helps reduce costs for the hospital and patient.

"We'll give them a beer to keep them from withdrawal," she said. "To get the patient out of room in three days instead of a week so they can get to rehab."

Serving alcohol as a means for medical care is not a new idea, but not many hospitals in the area have done the same thing. Doctors at Cassia Regional Medical Center may give a patient a prescription to have one glass of beer, said Keri Perrigot, assistant administrator of human resources and clinical services for the Burley hospital.

CRMChas no plans to apply for a beer and wine license in the near future, she said. Alcohol will not be used to treat alcohol dependency, said Laura Stewart, St. Luke's Magic Valley spokeswoman.