

PHOTOS BY JOHN CUPPA



RECORD RETRIEVAL: The archiving system at Rockdale Medical Center allows clinicians like Santa Studer, MD, and Nepea Horton, MD, to look up patient data in seconds.



The new system also integrates the electrocardiogram department with cardiac nuclear medicine studies, so those images or reports are available to clinicians at any time during a procedure, Upchurch said.

"It is a tremendously streamlined system," Upchurch said. "The doctor can be in the cath lab saying, 'I wonder what the electrocardiogram looks like,' and pull it right up to view next to the cardiac cath images."

Closer, Faster Care

Located 30 minutes east of metro Atlanta, Rockdale is in one of the fastest-growing areas of the state. Before the hospital opened its new heart and vascular center, patients had to travel into the city for care.

That meant navigating congested urban traffic and the risk of being hospitalized away from home if clinicians found a medical condition requiring immediate attention, said Michael P. Cecil, MD, chief of cardiology.

Rockdale opened the new \$2.5 million unit on Dec. 3, 2007. In the first 4 weeks, clinicians treated 14 patients, Upchurch noted. She estimated the hospital would double the number of cardiac cath procedures this year because there is more room for patients and the new technology yields faster results.

Replacing Outdated Technology

The new system replaces a system that had 3- to 10-year-old technology, Upchurch estimated. There was no archiving on the older system, so patient data often would have to be

"When I started, a cardiac patient would spend 10 days in the cardiac care unit. You kept things real quiet and hoped they survived. Now we are at the total opposite of the spectrum."

— Becky Upchurch, MBA, BS, RN