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Sleep medicine lab moves into new space

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Medford residents can rest easier. A new Sleep HealthCenter is here to take care of their sleep needs.

Sleep HealthCenter, the largest provider of sleep-medicine services in Mass., moved from Malden to a new 5,800 square foot clinic and sleep diagnostics lab at 200 Boston Ave. The Medford facility is the company's 11th since the first center opened in Newton nine years ago.

"This new Medford facility is our second largest center, after our Boston location," said Sleep HealthCenter President and CEO Paul Valentine. "The community has been very supportive of our presence and we hope that we have been able to give back to the community through our services and community lectures."

The new center features examination rooms and six bedrooms for studying patients. Each bedroom has a full-size bed, a television and a private bathroom. Other services include counseling, education and providing prescription medication.

"We are trying to provide high quality sleep medicine services where the Medford community works and lives," said Dr. Lawrence Epstein, Sleep HealthCenter's medical director.

Epstein, who has been working in sleep medicine for 15 years and is in charge of medical oversight for all the centers, said there is growing interest in the field.

"As more people realize there are specialists, more people want to check it out," he said. "People now realize [sleep problems] are medical disorders."

Epstein went on to discuss the variety of problems he sees, including insomnia, obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) and restless legs syndrome, among others.

Most examinations at the facilities are overnight stays in order to observe a full sleep cycle. Patients are attached to electrodes that measure brain waves, heart rate and oxygen levels, as technicians monitor data from a control room.

The data is then scored and reviewed by physicians, who make a diagnosis.

While most patients come to the centers with a referral from their primary care physicians, some just walk in looking for treatment. The care is covered by most insurance plans and Sleep HealthCenters are affiliated with a number of regional medical centers.

Epstein said once patients have been diagnosed, their therapy is monitored over time.

"Some patients require ongoing treatment," he said, "but we hope to see them less often [once symptoms improve]."

Epstein added that while most patients are middle-aged, he does see patients of all ages.

Sleep HealthCenter made the move from Malden to Medford because its previous office space was converted and the medical center knocked down. In 2006, the Malden office had 6,000 patient visits and the company is currently experiencing roughly 20 percent growth per year.

With such growth, and with expanded services and more staff members, the business needed a bigger facility. The Medford site is

expected to accommodate this enlargement.

Dr. Kelly Carden, medical director of the Medford location, has been in sleep medicine since 2002 when she began fellowship training with Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. Part of her training called for work at Sleep HealthCenters.

"Our new facility is wonderful," Carden said, "We could not be more pleased that our patients are enjoying the new facility as much as we are."

Valentine agreed.

"Our goals with the new Medford center are to offer our services to an increased number of patients in the area," said Valentine. "[We also want] to continue to expand our services so that patients and referring providers can rely on Sleep HealthCenters to provide a comprehensive sleep medicine program."

— For more information, call 877-SLEEPHC or visit www.sleephealth.com.

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