

Hospital partnership could speed up diagnosis of infectious diseases

Kettering Medical Center working with Alabama company to improve care, save money.

By [Ben Sutherly](#), Staff Writer

8:33 PM Friday, March 12, 2010

KETTERING — Kettering Medical Center expects a partnership with an infectious disease diagnostic company to improve patient care and save the hospital money through more rapid diagnoses.

Huntsville, Ala.-based Diatherix, Inc., which employs 45 people and had about \$9.4 million in sales in 2009 with projected sales of \$30 million this year, is leasing space and the equivalent of two full-time employees at the hospital to test for infectious diseases such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and *Clostridium difficile* (C-diff) in patients. Test results always are available within 24 hours.

KMC is the first hospital in which the 2-year-old company is testing specimens.

In the first three months of using the new method, November through January, the hospital saved \$17,000 thanks to health-care workers not having to use the gowns, gloves and masks required when a patient is in isolation and awaiting diagnosis, said Dr. Carol Quinter, the hospital's laboratory technical director and clinical studies coordinator.

The hospital expects to save \$225,000 a year just in MRSA-related savings.

"As we implement technology like this and we are able to get a diagnosis (more quickly), we can manage a patient more quickly," Quinter said. "The cost savings are huge" and can make health care more affordable, she said.

She noted, for example, that patients who haven't been diagnosed but are suspected of having infectious diseases such as MRSA or H1N1 influenza can't share a room, resulting in under-utilization of a two-person room. The hospital eventually plans to transition to all private rooms.

Quinter, who heard about the technology from a salesman, looked up Diatherix CEO Dennis Grimaud at the company's Nashville offices while in town.

Grimaud decided Kettering Medical Center was a good fit for clinical testing in a hospital setting.

Diatherix's licensed method, called Target-Enriched Multiplex Polymerase Chain Reaction (TEM-PCR), can identify up to 25 pathogens in a single specimen in a single test, Grimaud said.

“The way things are done now is you usually get one result based on one test,” he said.

The Children’s Medical Center of Dayton expects to upgrade its diagnostic capabilities this summer for 12 to 16 of the most common pediatric pathogens, a hospital spokeswoman said.

Several hospitals with Premier Health Partners, which competes with KMC’s parent, Kettering Health Network, use PCR testing for MRSA and other infectious diseases.

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