

## **Why Another Article on the ‘Missing Hospital’ in Valencia County?**

“Never going to happen. I’m tired of hearing about it. The lawsuit is never going to end.”

We have heard many versions of why people think we will never see a resolution to the issue of building a hospital in Valencia County. So why would we consider writing still another article about it?

I guess we are optimists who believe it can happen and that it should happen. Our biggest concern is that it is done in a way that provides the best quality service for the county. So our personal goal is to inform the public on what some of the issues are so they can give their Commissioners direction.

Many aspects of healthcare have changed since the mill levy passed so even saying Valencia County needs a “hospital” raises many questions. In our prior article in the Dec. 8, 2016 issue of the News-Bulletin, we talked about some of the financial challenges facing rural hospitals and regulations put into place for quality that are hard for rural hospitals to meet to name a few. Here are some more of our thoughts.

***“I want to go to the hospital here in town to visit my grandma when she is sick and not drive into Albuquerque.”***

It sounds logical. But in today’s healthcare market, if grandma doesn’t need a specialist, chances are she will be in a local Skilled Nursing Facility or at home with Home Care assistants.

***“So why can’t we have a hospital with all those specialists?”***

Hospitals are a business. Specialists and their support services cost a lot, especially if there isn’t enough for them to do. And specialists need to keep up their skills. If I needed heart surgery, I would much rather know that the physician working on me had done this procedure many times a year and not just every now and then. And as a small community, Valencia can’t compete with the specialists in Albuquerque.

***“We have an issue with teen mothers and premature births so do we need an OB department in the hospital?”***

There will be many services people would like to see added to our hospital, but it won’t be possible to provide all of them initially. At least not in the beginning. However, as the population grows and the needs change, it can be a future addition.

***“Well then, what can we have?”***

We would like to see the county start with an Emergency Micro-hospital with an Emergency Room, 24-hour Urgent Care and a small 4-8 bed short-stay nursing unit. Emergencies like a stroke or heart attack could be stabilized before heading into Albuquerque giving them both a better chance to save their life and to minimize long term complications from not getting initial treatment quickly enough. Also someone waiting for definitive test results to rule out a potential heart attack can wait more comfortably in the nursing unit, out of the ER. If the results are negative they could go home without ever going into Albuquerque.

***“Why an Urgent Care? Don’t we already have them in Valencia County?”***

Yes, we do, but none of them are open 24/7. What if you had a bad sprain on Sunday afternoon? You could wait until Monday morning to be seen. You could spend the afternoon in an Albuquerque ER. Or, you could go to our proposed facility with both an emergency room and an urgent care where a triage nurse would determine which was appropriate and send you into the Urgent Care. No trip into Albuquerque!

***“Mental health is another badly needed service.”***

Our micro-hospital proposal would include an Emergency Behavioral Health department staffed with mental health specialists trained to deal with people in crisis.

There are many other services that we could use, but for now, let’s get started with the basics! So, we will continue our fight to bring appropriate 24-hour emergency healthcare to Valencia County as members of the Medical Care Advocates of Valencia County.

*(Michael Jones, PharmD and Anne Jones, BSN, residents of Los Lunas, spent their careers in the health care field. Both are members of the Medical Care Advocates of Valencia County, a group of concerned citizens who “Advocate for 24-hour, 7 days a week healthcare in Valencia County.”) Clara, note that we changed this slightly.*