New psych intake to relieve pressure on Brookwood ER

Brookwood Medical Center has created a new psychiatric intake unit to help relieve pressure on the ER and better serve patients in crisis. (Amy Yurkanin|ayurkanin@al.com)

[http://connect.al.com/user/AmyYurk/index.html] By **Amy Yurkanin | ayurkanin@al.com [http://connect.al.com/user/**
Email the author | **Follow on Twitter [https://twitter.com/AmyKingsley4]**
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Starting today, patients who arrive at Brookwood Medical Center's emergency department with psychia
separate intake unit designed to better serve them and relieve pressure in the ER.

The psychiatric intake unit has eight patient bays and an isolation room. Psychiatric patients who arrive department will have a medical assessment, and will then be transferred to psychiatric intake.

The unit is separate from the louder, more hectic emergency department, and bays have less medical e can use to harm themselves or others. The isolation room is designed for patients who may be disruptiv

For decades now, hospitals across the country have struggled with increasing numbers of psychiatric pa 2010 **study [http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/29/9/1637.full]** published in the journal Hea emergency departments reported "boarding" psychiatric patients until treatment beds become availabl treatment times for all patients in need of emergency care.

Three state-run psychiatric hospitals in Alabama have closed in the last three years, leaving just one sta who need the services – Bryce Hospital in Tuscaloosa. Regional mental health agencies now receive mo private hospitals such as Brookwood that have behavioral health beds.

Officials at Brookwood hope the new unit will reduce emergency room wait times by creating a space sp patients. Providers in the unit will be well-trained to care for patients in crisis, said Stacey Owens, direct services.

The new unit also has a discharge lounge for patients who are waiting to go home, which will help releas new patients.

Bill Brodie, vice president of behavioral health services, said the hospital has experienced an influx of pa Alabama Psychiatric Services in February.

"We are seeing more patients who are in crisis or haven't been receiving regular treatment," he said.

Brookwood Medical Center has one of the largest behavioral health departments in the state with 136 b arrive at the intake unit will be transferred to inpatient care when beds become available.

Not all patients who arrive in the unit will need to be hospitalized. Patients who can be stabilized might l outpatient care, Owens said.

"Patients will receive the most appropriate type of care as determined by our doctors," she said.

Brodie said he believes the new psychiatric intake unit is the first of its kind for Alabama. Hospital offici other facilities owned by Tenet – its parent company – that have created similar intake units.

Updated at 3:02 to correct the year of the study and add a link.

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