America's Most Luxurious Hospitals

Call it Wealth Care: For patients willing to pay, hospitals now offer amenities from chefs to concierges. But is it fair to the rest of us? Rhonda L. Rundle and Christina Binkley look at perks you won't find at an HMO.

WHEN ROY SILVERMAN visits New York City, he stays in a $475-a-night suite overlooking Manhattan's Central Park. It has Queen Anne furniture, mahogany paneling and a meticulous manager trained at one of the top hotel schools in the country. The staff even knows to stock the refrigerator with his favorite brand of lemonade.

Oh, and one other thing: It's in a hospital.

"They know my habits," says Mr. Silverman, 42 years old, a longtime cancer patient at Mount Sinai Medical Center. "It's like being at the Ritz-Carlton."

These days, just because you're a patient doesn't mean you have to suffer. More patients are leaving hospitals in a dance of their own choosing, and many are choosing the most luxurious of accommodations.

Donors and attract patients who can afford to pay out of their own pockets. A growing number of hospitals are rolling out white-glove accommodations: "It's a catalyst for gifts," says Pat Hogan, spokeswoman for the Society for Premier Patient Services, an industry group. At least 10 medical centers have built entire luxury floors or corridors with everything from chefs and concierges to high-end beauty products in the bathroom. Methodist Hospital in Houston even supplies limousine service to and from the airport at no extra charge.

The push to coddle the wealthy is infuriating to patients' advocates who say hospitals should be spending their money instead on improving service for everybody. But hospitals say they...
But many of the facilities concede their luxury suites generate red ink. Indeed, Mount Sinai's VIP floor is one of the few turning a profit: about $1 million a year, officials there say. By contrast, Memorial Sloan-Kettering says it significantly overestimated the demand for luxury and is currently converting three suites into single rooms. I'd like the census to be a little higher, let's put it that way, says manager Joan Deming-Murphy.

Still, in the places we visited, no one is too fainthearted and no request too outré to be seriously considered. Whatever the hospital rules, they don't necessarily apply to these VIPs and their guests. 'I don't like to say no, says Cristi Lapas-Knee, director of the Mt. Sinai suites. 'If you want it, you'll get it.'

That appears to apply especially to food. All these facilities tout the imaginative menus of their chefs, Marvin Foxxwell, who recently spent 60 days at Johns Hopkins, was on a restricted diet during most of his visit. But his wife, Patricia, stayed with him and feasted on lobster, beef Wellington and filet mignon. 'She gained some weight, and she isn't too happy about that,' says Mr. Foxxwell, a uniform company executive from North Carolina.

For all the effort, the food in these suites often falls far short of its gourmet billing. That's partly because hospital standards require heat in the temperature-sensitive kitchen that liquefies even the tinest filet.

True to form for health care, prices often seemed bizarrely out of whack with the service provided. At $626 a night, Cedars-Sinai's disappointing accommodations were among the most expensive we saw. By contrast, the $175 rooms at Johns Hopkins were a relative bargain. At those rates, you don't have to be a rock star. All prices are over and above the cost of ordinary medical care and are generally not covered by insurance.

Mr. Foxxwell's stay for pancreatic surgery cost him $11,000 out of his own pocket. But he says it was worth it. When he was discharged, nurses threw a surprise party and gave him a white terry-cloth robe embroidered with a big "M" (for Marburg). "I'm not rich," says Mr. Foxxwell. "But I'd do it again, even if I had to go into debt."

Below, the results of Weekend Journal's foray into the world of health care. Our ratings are based on comments from patients, administrators and competitors, plus reporter visits to the hospitals to view the decor and other extras:

**OVER THE TOP**

**POSH**

**COMPLETE COMFORT**

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Your Money Matters

and doctors and visited each facility. Because all the places we examined are top-ranked medical centers, we evaluated only amenities, not the quality of medical care. But we did look at nursing levels to see if patients in deluxe rooms get special attention to their medical needs.

The diagnosis: While of course no healthy person would choose to stay at any hospital, several of these are so plush and dispense their medical equipment so well we were half-tempted to book a room. The most opulent were the luxury suites at New York's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Touring rooms with mahogany wainscoting, antique armoires and expansive views of the East River, we hardly knew we were in a hospital until a nurse walked by.

Almost as plush: the Marburg Pavilion at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Sure, the windows look out into housing projects, but the suites themselves are stunning, with equipment cleverly hidden behind cherry-wood panels. Not long ago, when a patient complained about a chair in his room, a Marburg manager rented a different one, strapped it to the roof of her car and personally delivered it to the hospital.

"This is like a hotel and hospital rolled into one," says William Rice, 74, a recent Marburg patient.

The biggest surprise was the relatively shabby condition of the place known as the hospital of the stars: Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. Even in the premium rooms, it was hard to imagine an Elizabeth Taylor feeling at home—not unless she has a secret penchant for vinyl chairs and Rubbermaid wastebaskets.

And while all the hospitals said the nursing care is the same throughout their facilities, patients report far more attentive care in deluxe rooms. Even so, some doctors bar their patients from luxury wings, insisting on sending them to floors dedicated to specific ailments.

How do hospitals justify lavishing so much luxury on some patients while millions of Americans go without basic health care? People who want upscale facilities and more security "will just go up the street if we don't," says John McDaniels, chief executive of MedStar Health, Columbia, Md., which owns Washington Hospital Center. The luxury pavilion brings in extra revenue that helps defray overhead throughout the rest of the hospital, he says. Some hospit-
Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York
LUXURY FACILITY: Yes
DAILY PREMIUM: $357-$3,999
RATING: 4

The walls scarce areusher. The coverlets are Ralph Lauren. The coffee is Starbucks.

Open just a year, this was the most
over-the-top facility we visited. Among
other references: Fornasetti; guêtres
and Reed & Barton silverware. The
nurses' station is paneled with ribbon
mahogany from a single distressed tree. The
furnishings are English and Italian
mahogany antiques and reproductions.

Most any whim can be fulfilled here, if
not by the concierge—who arranges for
manicures, deliveries and dry cleaning—
then by the 7 a.m. shopping person who
purchases newspapers and other items
that patients request.

If the specially prepared food doesn't
appeal, there is all of New York from which
to order. "If we need it, we can charge it,"
says administrator Joan Demone-Murphy.

As for security, a Doorman buzzes patients
and visitors onto the floor and staff are
restricted to those who need to be there. If
that fails, there is a bulletproof wall.

The Methodist Hospital, Houston
LUXURY FACILITY: Sue Fonda
Tammeil Garnett
DAILY PREMIUM: $995-$7,750
RATING: 4

MEDICARE DOESN'T COVER THE EXTRA COST of
the 25 suites here, out-of-pocket. Rex
Houston studiously pays out of his own pocket.

Whenever I want a bowl of ice cream,
someone will bring it to me," he says.

Shiny golden doors open onto a stately
lobby and sitting room, furnished with
glass and mahogany curio cabinets dis-
playing oriental porcelain. An unusual
feature: a business center complete with
dominoes, and a paper shredder. Patients
who don't need a hospital bed can have it replaced with a
queen-size, and meals are made to order in a
commercial kitchen right on the floor.

Still, as in many hotels, "suite" can be a
bit of a misnomer; some rooms, while
spacious, simply have sitting areas that can be
sealed off with shutter doors. The largest
unit, recently occupied by former first lady
Barbara Bush, is a true suite boasting 12-
foot ceilings, an adjoining bedroom, two
bathrooms and a walk-in closet.

Mr. Houston especially raves about the
nurses. "They get their pick of the cream of
the crop of the nurses," he says, adding
that the unit's head nurse, Rita Parry, is
"a real crackerjack." Mr. Parry says she
takes special care to hire nurses who have
a good rapport with patients.

Gerald Goldstein of Houston recently
spent four days at Methodist, including
three here and two in another wing. "It was
like a different planet," he says. On the
luxury floor, the nurses would tiptoe into
the room with a flashlight at night "so I
didn't even know they were there," he says. In

Mount Sinai Medical Center, New York
LUXURY FACILITY: Eleven West
DAILY PREMIUM: $375-$1,100
RATING: 4

This 19-ROOM VIP FLOOR is paneled with
mahogany, sports rich cloth wallpaper and
budgets $10,000 a year just to remove dings
from the Queen Anne furniture. Upon ar-
ival, patients receive a kit of Clairol
hair-and skin-care products donated to
the hospital by cosmetics queen Estee Lauder.

A former patient. Meals are served on
tablecloths by a uniformed wait staff.

Current director Cristi Lapus-Knee
holds a degree in hotel-and-restaurant
management and once oversaw room
service for the Rupip Royal Hotel in New York
City. The most-eager-to-please of any hos-
pital professional we encountered, she has
been known to do patients' laundry herself
to meet special requests. (She keeps a box
of Tide in her office just in case.)

Despite such frills, patients sometimes
complain. "People ask why isn't it a king-
size bed," says Ms. Lapus-Knee, "and I'm
like, hello, it's still a hospital.

Mount Sinai says regular patients get
the same medical attention as those in the
premium quarters, although some patients
say they notice a difference. "If I have to go
for tests, they make sure there's not a long
wait," says Mr. Silverman of Rhinebeck.

Washington Hospital Center,
Washington
LUXURY FACILITY: The Pavilion
DAILY PREMIUM: $650
RATING: 4

LEAVING BEHIND THE LAND OF linoleum
floors and glaring lights, visitors to this
pavilion enter a richly carpeted reception
area lighted by a huge chandelier. Soft
music floats through the hall. Hospital design-
ers have tried to create the ambience of a
swank hotel, right down to the embossed
stationery in the rooms.

With doctored plants and crown moldings,
the central nursing station is camouflaged
to look like a hotel reception desk. Clerks
wear uniform teal-green business suits.
Each of the 12 rooms has a kitchenette, and
the bathrooms feature marble vanities,
decorative tile and cosmetic mirrors.

"They absolutely, unequivocally pro-
vide the 'Wow Factor' from the food to the
personal attention," says Dennis Ratner,
chief executive officer of a chain of hair
salons based in Maryfield, Va., who checked in
after a serious bike injury.

Mr. Ratner, 55, who works out regularly
and calls himself a "finicky eater," was
able to stick to the diet that he routinely
follows. The broccoli with his grilled salmon
came "perfectly steamed," he says. And
although he didn't indulge in the chutney of
fancy pastries served every afternoon, he
says his visitors gobbled them up.

Special requests? No problem. For an
Asian patient who normally sleeps on the
floor, the staff asked hospital workmen
to cut a board to lay atop the bed. Later,
the joint was added so that the board would
slide under the patient's cot. He growled
The study described the adherence of students to health promotion activities. The results showed that only a few students actively participated in such activities, despite the efforts of the health promotion team. The study highlighted the need for more effective strategies to enhance student engagement in health promotion. Future research should focus on developing innovative methods to increase student participation.

In conclusion, adherence to health promotion activities is crucial for maintaining good health. However, there is a need for more effective strategies to encourage student participation. Further research is necessary to identify effective strategies that can be implemented to improve health promotion activities in educational institutions.
America's Most Luxurious Hospitals

(Clockwise from top left) - The sweeping views at Columbia Presbyterian, McKeen Pavilion; a Marburg suite at Johns Hopkins Hospital; feature in a private room at Washington Hospital Center; and numerous appointments at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.
# The Suite Life

The luxury amenities at many of these medical facilities make it hard to tell if they’re hospitals or hotels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Amenities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
<td>Grilled rack of lamb with rosemary speckled jus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Sloan-Kettering</td>
<td>Butternut squash caviar. Stone with personal safe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Presbyterian</td>
<td>Toasted bread with jam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts General</td>
<td>Leather, simple upholstery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Hospital Center</td>
<td>Garlic and rosemary leg of lamb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins</td>
<td>Polished brass and hardwood floors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland Clinic</td>
<td>Arabic and Turkish enameled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke University</td>
<td>Olive wood and silver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist Hospital</td>
<td>Queen Anne mahogany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedars-Sinai</td>
<td>No upgrade, roadside motel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
<td>Bidet in one room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Sloan-Kettering</td>
<td>Guarded entry, personal safe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Presbyterian</td>
<td>Marble walls, personal safe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts General</td>
<td>Closed circuit TV, exposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Hospital Center</td>
<td>Locked with remote buzzer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins</td>
<td>Concourse, personal safe, 36-in. doors, 2 heads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland Clinic</td>
<td>Old-fashioned table, available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke University</td>
<td>University police.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist Hospital</td>
<td>Behind sliding picture frames.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedars-Sinai</td>
<td>Behind sliding wood panels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
<td>Behind receptionist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Sloan-Kettering</td>
<td>An attendant, personal safe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Presbyterian</td>
<td>Fax and printer in room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts General</td>
<td>Exposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Hospital Center</td>
<td>Must pass concierge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins</td>
<td>At concierge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
<td>$100 to take home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Sloan-Kettering</td>
<td>And slippers, free to take home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Presbyterian</td>
<td>Aveda, Crabtree &amp; Evelyn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts General</td>
<td>Patient services associatess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Hospital Center</td>
<td>Free international phone calls, bone marrow donors, stay free, family sitting room.</td>
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<td>Mount Sinai</td>
<td>kosher kitchen, library stacked with bestsellers, 24 hour receptionist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memorial Sloan-Kettering</td>
<td>Antique armatures, Reed &amp; Barion silver, Pima cotton patient gowns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Presbyterian</td>
<td>Tea time, piano, eight adjoining guest rooms, complimentary parking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts General</td>
<td>Rooms and two floor coordinators.</td>
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<td>Kitchenette in each room, curtain controls at bedside, notary public service.</td>
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<td>Johns Hopkins</td>
<td>Three guest services coordinators.</td>
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<td>Cleveland Clinic</td>
<td>Secret entrances, Omni International hotel room service, movie theater to create suite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke University</td>
<td>White terry cloth with Duke logo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist Hospital</td>
<td>In-room laundry, B&amp;B, Patient relations coordinators.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cedars-Sinai</td>
<td>Kosher kitchen, pet therapy available.</td>
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