

New Clinic Attracts More Patients

Kelsey-Seybold now opens in The Park Shops at Houston Center

By CAROL CHRISTIAN

Eighteen new patients signed up during opening day at Kelsey-Seybold's downtown clinic in The Park Shops.

The clinic, which had done business for 35 years in the One Houston Center office skyscraper moved across the street on March 14 to a more visible retail enclave - The Shops at Houston Center, also known as The Park Shops.

In January, Kelsey-Seybold opened a new pharmacy in The Park Shops, directly across from the clinic site on the fourth floor.

A skybridge connects that level of The Park Shops at 1200 McKinney to One Houston Center at 1221 McKinney.

In the first week at its new site, the clinic served 41 new patients, said Paulette Gemignani, administrator of operations.

"That's a very good number, compared with our typical number of new patients in a week," Gemignani said.

With about 23,000 square feet, the new clinic space is almost twice as large as the previous site. Its staff of 10 physicians covers both primary care and specialties.

Specialty services include obstetrics and gynecology, dermatology, orthopedics and sports medicine, podiatry and pulmonary medicine.

The extra room at the new site allows more equipment such as a new digital mammography machine. Mammography technician Kelly Bulgier said digital is more popular than its forerunner because it's quicker.

"There's much less radiation exposure to the patient, and most ladies find it's a little more comfortable because the picture exposes faster and they aren't under compression as long," Bulgier said.

Dr. Frances Smith, Kelsey-Seybold's chief of obstetrics and gynecology, said the new space is "great."

"There's more room, it's more visible and we have full-service radiology (X-rays, mammograms, bone density screening and ultrasound)," Smith said. "The first words out of everyone's mouths are, 'We can do mammograms now.'"

Another popular service at the clinic, especially among corporate clients, is "travel medicine" for patients who are either planning trips overseas or having just returned, said Dr. Puja Sehgal, who practices family medicine.

The basic idea of travel medicine is to make sure patients are safe and healthy when they visit areas with limited medical resources, Sehgal said. "We also want to make sure they're immunized against the prevalent infectious diseases," she said. "For example, if they're going to West Africa vs. going to Europe, the requirements are different."

The clinic's shopping-mall location may be convenient for patients, but it doesn't send a strong positive message about the retail leasing climate at The Park Shops, said Jason Baker, principal with the Houston commercial retail brokerage firm Baker Katz, for the landlord - in this case, Crescent Real Estate Equities LLC - an established medical tenant like Kelsey-Seybold can help attract similar businesses such as chiropractor or dentist, Baker said, but it won't draw traditional retail outlets such as an Apple electronics store. This type of leasing appears to be a trend, he said.

"I think you've seen non-traditional, more service oriented users filling traditional retail space in the past three years, unlike in the 10 years before it," Baker said.

Crescent representatives say they're happy with the clinic's move and say it will draw more traffic to the mall, which they say is one of downtown's busiest locations with 14,000

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average daily visitors.

“The decision for Kelsey-Seybold, a longstanding Crescent and Houston Center customer, to relocate to The Shops was deemed a win-win-win and in line with the long term goals of both Kelsey and Crescent,” Jim Wilson, Crescent’s managing director of asset management, said last week by e-mail.

Wilson said the clinic gets a bigger, better facility to serve downtown’s approximately 130,000 workers, The Park Shops get more traffic, and Crescent and the Houston Center gets an “improved customer amenity.”