



St. Francis Hospital Expands to Care for More Than Hearts

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- ✓ Cancer Treatments, Orthopaedic Surgery Now Offered
- ✓ Flower Hill Facility Has Spent \$250M To Grow Specialty Services



Excerpts from Newsday - March 19, 2016, By Ridgely Ochs

Dr. Richard D'Agostino, chief of orthopaedic surgery, demonstrates use of a new Mako robot for partial knee replacement on March 8, 2016. St. Francis Hospital is transforming itself from a heart hospital to one that also treats cancer and orthopaedic patients.

St. Francis Hospital, The Heart Center®, has outgrown its registered trademark. The Flower Hill hospital, well known for its cardiac care, has over the past decade spent close to \$250 million expanding its specialty services to include cancer treatments, more orthopaedic surgery and even neurosurgery.

Several years ago it began the largest clinical expansion in its 94-year history with a 189,000-square-foot cancer institute at the former headquarters of the Pall Corp. on Northern Boulevard in Roslyn. Since the institute began operating in 2012, the hospital said, the number of cancer treatments delivered has grown more than 400 percent. It also

has built a new pavilion at the hospital with 14 state-of-the-art operating rooms for noncardiac procedures. That's in part to accommodate the growth in orthopaedic surgeries, which the hospital says have more than tripled in the past five years and has made St. Francis' program one of the busiest hospital-based programs on Long Island. In fact, noncardiac revenue is more than 40 percent of the hospital's total patient revenue, and oncology and orthopaedic surgery make up half of that, said hospital spokesman Paul Barry.

St. Francis is not trying to become a full-service community hospital, said **Dr. Alan Guerci**, named chief executive of Catholic Health Services in 2013 after having served as head of St. Francis, which is part of CHS, for 14 years. It does not offer care in obstetrics-gynecology, trauma, burns or psychiatry, although it has had long-term programs in areas other than cardiac care, including vascular surgery, urology, ear, nose and throat, and orthopaedics. Instead, Dr. Guerci said, the 305-bed hospital strives for excellence in certain specialties.

It appears to be succeeding. Not only did **U.S. News & World Report** name St. Francis 13th nationwide last year in cardiology and cardiac surgery, it also named it 16th nationwide in gastroenterology and gastrointestinal surgery, including cancer surgeries. It was ranked 36th in geriatrics — based on the fact that its patients tend to be older — and 43rd nationwide in orthopaedics. It was the only hospital on Long Island to make the top 50 nationally in any of these specialties. And along with John T. Mather Memorial Hospital in Port Jefferson, St. Francis consistently scores highest among Long Island hospitals in patient satisfaction surveys. "My goal is that if you live on Long Island and you're sick with anything complex you choose St. Francis Hospital," Dr. Guerci said. He said the shift was in response to other hospitals on Long Island doing open-heart surgeries and catheterizations. "That had eaten into our volumes a little and I felt we had to diversify," he said. "It turns out that doctors at St. Francis [who were treating heart patients] were making an initial diagnosis of a 1,000 cancers a year and we were just giving the business away."

HEALTHFIND TOP DOCTORS ON LI

Dr. Richard D'Agostino, chief of orthopaedic surgery, said many of his patients had first come to St. Francis because of heart problems and wanted the same level of care for their bone-related issues.

Dr. Gary Gecelter, chairman of the department of surgery, who joined St. Francis in 2008, said he was attracted to the hospital because he felt he could practice top-flight medicine within a "culture of caring."

Dr. Bhoomi Mehrotra, chief of oncology, said he came in 2012 for the same reasons. "I ask myself, What do patients want?" he said. "They want clinical excellence and, on this journey with this diagnosis, to be treated with dignity and caring." He said about half of cancer referrals came from St. Francis cardiologists and that he and heart doctors at the hospital were studying the effects of cancer treatments on heart function in those with and without heart disease.

Sam Pulgrano, 55, of Bay Shore, said the mixture of medical expertise and compassion was what drew him to St. Francis and Mehrotra for treatment of his pancreatic cancer, diagnosed in November 2014. Pulgrano said his cancer was initially misdiagnosed elsewhere. "But we're in the right place now," he said. "As soon as I met Dr. Mehrotra, I had an overwhelming sense of security and comfort."

- ✓ Founded in 1922 by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary
- ✓ New York State's only specialty designated cardiac center
- ✓ Has 305 beds
- ✓ Opened cancer institute in 2012
- ✓ Consistently scores high in patient satisfaction surveys

IN 2015, St. FRANCIS PERFORMED:

1,190 Open-Heart Surgeries
4,086 Cardiac Arrhythmia Procedures
10,837 Cardiac Catheterizations & Peripheral Vascular Procedures