

NYHQ prez touts staff, \$210M wing in Flushing

BY CONNOR ADAMS SHEETS

New York Hospital Queens invited the public to its annual State of the Hospital address last week, during which its leaders spoke of the technologies and techniques that are keeping them at the cutting edge of medicine, from robotic surgery to electronic record-keeping.

The nonprofit private hospital, at 56-45 Main St. in Flushing, faces myriad challenges, but it continues to innovate and expand in order to maintain its stature as one of the most advanced hospitals in Queens.

NYHQ President and CEO Stephen Mills emceed the event, discussing the past year of triumphs and challenges at the hospital, and he trotted out a series of top doctors and specialists, who explained the lifesaving work they do every day.

The hospital's most visible accomplishment over the past 12 months was the opening in June of its new \$210 million "west wing" building, which Mills called "the total package." The construction of the building was a large gamble in the down economy, Mills said, but the higher level of care it enables the hospital to pro-

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vide makes it worthwhile.

"We've had to make some very tough decisions in order to expand at this time," he said. "And we won't stand still. Already we have embarked on a comprehensive facility planning initiative that will keep us on the cutting edge."

The new, eight-story building's entire first floor is dedicated to ambulatory surgery, with 10 new operating rooms. Two new patient units added 80 patient beds, increasing the hospital's bed count to 519; the building has a floor dedicated to interventional

procedures — particularly cardiological ones — with a hybrid operating room; and the top two floors have been left open as "shell space" to be filled with new medical facilities as technology advances. A new parking garage added 372 parking

spaces.

As home to the borough's only hybrid operating room, multidisciplinary liver center and installation site for MRI-proof pacemakers, NYHQ remains a leading force in Queens health care.

In the past year, the hospital also started a formal palliative care program and made great progress on the goal of implementing fully electronic record-keeping. And in order to better serve its diverse clientele, the hospital has employed a team of "patient navigators," who help patients get past obstacles such as language barriers and insurance issues.

"They will help you navigate through your care," said Dr. Mitchell Chorost, director of surgical oncology at NYHQ and associate director of its cancer center. "They're your friends who help you through your course and to get your care, and hopefully to get you on the road to recovery."

But there are still significant challenges facing NYHQ and other hospitals nationwide.

There are shortages of doctors in many special-

ties and even primary care in the borough. And payments from government health-care programs — whose patients make up a large proportion of NYHQ patients — continue to fall even while hospital's costs increase. Over the past four years, NYHQ has suffered a rate reduction of \$50 million at the state level, and it expects to lose \$6 million in this fiscal year's state and federal budgets, according to Mills.

"That's something we're dealing with here, less Medicaid and Medicare dollars coming in, and more expenditures from us here at hospitals," he said. "Where does it end, how do we address this? I wish I had the crystal ball to be able to tell you that answer."





New York Hospital Queens President and CEO Stephen Mills speaks about the state of the Flushing institution during his annual address on its triumphs and tribulations.

Photo by Connor Adams Sheets