A few years ago, St. Francis Hospital decided that focusing resources on their orthopedic division was an imperative. Since then, the department has experienced steady, and sometimes explosive growth.

“We’ve expanded a tremendous amount; just since last year the number of cases has jumped by 20 percent, mainly in total joint replacement surgery and orthopedic spine surgery,” said Richard J. D’Agostino, M.D., Director of Orthopedic Surgery.

Hospital leaders recognized that the St. Francis patient population would benefit from a robust orthopedic surgery program. “We wanted to leverage our excellence in cardiac care – both the culture and processes – and provide the same quality of care for our orthopedic patients,” said Jack Soterakis, M.D., Senior Vice President, Medical Affairs and Medical Director.

In the last two years, St. Francis’ orthopedic division achieved national ranking for orthopedic surgery, a distinction shared by no other Long Island Hospital. With a primary focus on sports medicine, St. Francis is the go-to center for orthopedic care among the community’s athletes at all levels.

“We do a significant amount of sports surgery here,” said Dr. D’Agostino, who is the team physician for Nassau Community College and Long Island University Post, as well as several local high schools.

All of the division’s orthopedic surgeons are skilled in treating the types of injuries that plague athletes. Some of their most commonly performed procedures include meniscus surgery, ACL reconstruction, rotator cuff repair, shoulder labrum surgery, and articular cartilage repair.

The Hospital’s spine service has also seen notable growth. With the addition of fellowship-trained spine surgeon Matthew J. Goldstein to the orthopedic team, the division has been able to offer the very latest in spine surgery.

“Dr. Goldstein brought with him a number of techniques that had never been done before at St. Francis,” said Dr. D’Agostino, rattling off the list of procedures now offered: anterior lumbar interbody fusion, lateral lumbar interbody fusion, occipitocervical fusion, and minimally invasive percutaneous screw fixation.

“It’s exciting for patients when they learn that their local hospital can provide them with leading edge spine surgery – and the community loves this hospital,” Dr. D’Agostino said. “So we’re very excited to offer these procedures.”

Another new development that will help the orthopedic program remain a favorite with patients is a procedure called ambulatory hip replacement. William Long, M.D., FRCS, recently performed St. Francis Hospital’s first same-day hip replacement operation on a young patient.

(Continued on page 2)
St. Francis Hospital Receives Another ‘A’ in Nationwide Safety Test

For the sixth time, St. Francis Hospital has received an ‘A’ on a national safety score that rates hospitals on the quality of their care. The letter-based rating system was devised by The Leapfrog Group, a nonprofit organization that ranks hospitals nationwide. St. Francis was one of only five hospitals on Long Island to get an “A” and was joined by fellow CHS member, St. Charles Hospital.

The rankings, which come out every six months, rely on data from Leapfrog’s own ratings as well as outside sources including the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Joint Commission. Grades range from “A” to “F” based on 28 safety indicators. More than 2,500 hospitals were surveyed on how well they prevented errors, infections, injuries, and drug mix-ups and about 31 percent achieved an “A.”

Orthopedic Division

(Continued from page 1)

“It starts with patient education,” Dr. Long said. “This protocol is for people who are keen on early and quick recovery. This patient would rather be home with family than in the hospital.”

Success with outpatient joint replacement depends on a minimally invasive approach, modern instruments and implants, skilled anesthesia, as well as tightly calibrated pain control. “Also, good peri-operative nursing and immediate physical therapy to get patients up and walking within hours of surgery,” Dr. Long said.

According to Dr. D’Agostino, it takes more than quality specialists and the latest procedures; the division’s support staff are a critical component of patient satisfaction. “The nursing staff and physician assistants are truly amazing,” Dr. D’Agostino said, noting that the division now includes 11 orthopedic-dedicated physician assistants and an orthopedic floor of nurses. “Our nurses are rivaled by none, and by that, I mean they are the best,” Dr. D’Agostino said.

U.S. News & World Report Ranks St. Francis One of the Top Hospitals in the Nation in Five Adult Specialties

For the eighth year in a row, St. Francis Hospital, The Heart Center® has been recognized by U.S. News & World Report as one of the best hospitals in the nation. St. Francis ranked among the top 10 hospitals in the country for cardiology & heart surgery, rating #9 nationwide. It also rated among the best in the U.S. in four other adult specialties: gastroenterology & GI surgery; geriatrics; neurology & neurosurgery; and orthopedics – more than any other Long Island hospital. St. Francis was also the top-ranked hospital on Long Island once again and rated #6 in the New York Metro Area.

In addition, St. Francis was recognized by U.S. News as high performing regionally in four specialties: cancer, nephrology, pulmonology, and urology.

Only 3 percent of the nearly 5,000 hospitals that were analyzed for Best Hospitals 2014-15 earned national ranking in even one specialty. U.S. News publishes Best Hospitals to help guide patients who need a high level of care because they face particularly difficult surgery, a challenging condition, or extra risk because of age or multiple health problems. Objective measures such as patient survival and safety data, adequacy of nurse staffing levels, and other data largely determined the rankings in most specialties.

St. Francis Hospital Named One of Top 100 Hospitals in Nation for Neurosurgery and Spine Programs

Above: Richard Johnson, M.D., (front center), Director of Neurosurgery, surrounded by members of the Hospital’s top notch team. Inset: David Q. Chen, D.O., is the newest addition.

St. Francis Hospital has been recognized by Becker’s Hospital Review for having one of the best neurosurgery and spine programs in the country. The Hospital was one of only seven in the New York Metro area to make the 2014 list of “100 hospitals with great neurosurgery and spine programs.”

The national, monthly healthcare publication cited St. Francis for offering remarkable spine and neurosurgical care based on clinical accolades and recognition from various healthcare groups and agencies. The hospitals featured on the list have been recognized for excellence in these specialties by U.S. News & World Report, Healthgrades, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, CareChex, and the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

The Becker’s editorial team has also ranked St. Francis as one of the top 100 hospitals in the nation for orthopedics and one of the “100 great hospitals in America.”
Cancer Institute at SFH Expands Clinical Team and Services

By the time the Cancer Institute at St. Francis Hospital observed its two-year anniversary in December 2014, it was already preparing to relocate to a new building capable of accommodating the multi-disciplinary team and equipment necessary to provide the highest quality of cancer care. “We have experienced tremendous support from the community and from our colleagues at St. Francis Hospital, which has allowed us to fill an unmet need that existed here,” said Bhoomi Mehrotra, M.D., Director of the Cancer Institute. “But we soon realized we had to expand our infrastructure to support all the services we want to provide for those who seek care here.”

The new center will be home to an expanded clinical team including surgical, medical and radiation oncologists, imaging, pain medicine, orthopedic services, and an infusion unit. In addition, the center will feature state-of-the-art technology, such as the latest in surgical techniques and medical oncology, biological therapies with monoclonal antibodies, leading-edge imaging technology in the form of a new PET scanner and 3T MRI, and electronic health records to support the timely and accurate transmission of patient health information between health care providers and their team.

The $30 million project was made possible in part by private philanthropy. “We have been very fortunate to have garnered the support of the community that has trusted us with their care,” Dr. Mehrotra said. “They are literally our neighbors, our friends, our relatives and our colleagues.”

Most patients treated at St. Francis Hospital’s Cancer Institute are residents of the community, but the center has attracted patients from the tri-state area and various outlying counties. “People recognize the excellence of St. Francis Hospital – the phenomenal work ethic of the nurses, top level practitioners, pharmacists, social workers, patient advocates – everybody involved in multi-disciplinary care,” Dr. Mehrotra said.

Although he can’t say for certain what draws such professional excellence, Dr. Mehrotra suspects it has to do with the hospital’s characteristic calmness. “They tell me they feel this in every individual they come into contact with, from the security guard to the volunteer at the front desk, and the patient care assistant who helps patients get to the office. There is always a smile and a willingness to help.”

Maintaining the ambiance of the original cancer center in a larger edifice was a challenge but an important consideration in the plan and design of the new center. “The new building is quite big, but we didn’t want to lose the St. Francis touch. Everyone involved in the project has been extra careful to make sure the warmth of St. Francis is replicated in the new facility,” Dr. Mehrotra said.

“But it is more than bricks and mortar. It is the people who make the difference, our colleagues who will relocate, and new colleagues who will join us.”

New Developments in the SFH Bronchoscopy Program

In the coming months, St. Francis Hospital’s Department of Pulmonary Medicine will acquire two pieces of advanced technology that will further advance the heart center along its path toward becoming a cancer center of excellence.

“Any hospital that wants to become a cancer center of excellence needs to be able to offer the most up-to-date services, so we will be installing two technologies that will allow us to perform the most modern techniques in care of our lung patients,” said Alan Schecter, M.D., Director, Division of Pulmonary Medicine, and Associate Director of Critical Care.

The first is navigational bronchoscopy, which combines advanced imaging with electromagnetic navigation to provide a minimally invasive alternative to percutaneous lung biopsy.

“It works somewhat like a GPS. We do a CT scan of the patient, load the image into the navigational bronchoscopy machine, and the machine then guides the bronchoscope exactly where we need it. This significantly increases our ability to pick up smaller and peripheral lesions without the risks associated with invasive procedures,” Dr. Schecter said.

The second piece of new technology, CT endobronchial ultrasound (EBUS), will be used to obtain histologic samples of mediastinal nodes, which is critical both for primary staging and in looking for recurrences.

“With EBUS, the ultrasound probe shows us where the enlarged lymph nodes are. We put a needle through the probe, right into the lymph gland of interest, and get a biopsy,” Dr. Schecter said.

“This technology really is what’s needed for a cancer center of excellence.”
**St. Francis Hospital Appoints Mitchell I. Chorost, M.D., Director of Surgical Oncology**

St. Francis Hospital is pleased to announce that Mitchell I. Chorost, M.D., FACS, has been appointed Director of Surgical Oncology. Dr. Chorost, who has extensive experience in treating gastrointestinal and liver cancers, will also serve as Co-Chair of the Hospital's Institutional Review Board (IRB). He was previously Director of Surgical Oncology and Associate Director of the Cancer Center at New York Hospital Queens. Prior to that, he was the Associate Program Director of the Department of Surgery and Chief of Gastrointestinal Surgery as Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn.

“It is a pleasure to welcome Dr. Chorost to our department,” says Gary R. Gecelter, M.D., Chairman of Surgery at St. Francis. “He is highly respected for his surgical expertise and will enhance the Hospital’s initiatives to provide the latest and most effective cancer treatments to our patients.”

Dr. Chorost received his medical degree from University of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey and completed his residency in general surgery at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He then completed his fellowship in surgical oncology at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo. Dr. Chorost is a board-certified surgeon as well as a fellow of the American College of Clinical Oncology.

He has authored more than 20 peer-reviewed articles in various medical journals including *Surgery*, the *Journal of the Pancreas*, and *American Journal of Surgery*. Dr. Chorost currently serves as the State Chair of the Commission on Cancer for the American College of Surgeons. He is a member of the Society of Surgical Oncology and a reviewer for the Journal of Surgical Oncology.

**Hospitalist Program Continues to Grow**

Among the various initiatives at St. Francis Hospital that continue to excel and grow, the hospitalist program is especially noteworthy.

Since the program launched in 2011, the number of hospitalists on staff has grown from six to nine, and the number of patients jumped from fewer than 20 to at least 60 a day currently, reflecting an increase in referrals from primary care physicians and specialists. Even in the last two months of 2014, the program witnessed a spike of 25 to 50 percent in its patient census.

“That is partly due to the trust we have built between our doctors and our consultants,” said Mhoos Peters, M.D., Director of the Division of Hospital Medicine. “We strive for good communication between our hospitalist team and the primary care doctors as well as the consultants. We are always available and willing to take on added responsibilities to serve the hospital’s overarching goals and initiatives.”

Dr. Peters credits the support staff of St. Francis for helping the hospitalists to deliver exceptional care. “The nurses here are the best I’ve ever worked with, and we have a very strong mid-level provider service in our nurse practitioners and physician assistants. I also have to give credit to our outstanding and supportive Care Management team,” he said. “With people like that, it’s hard not to excel.”

Hospitalists are physicians who focus on the care of hospitalized patients. Each member of the hospitalist team has several years’ experience as a hospitalist, and some specialize in other areas such as Nephrology, Geriatric Medicine, and Hospice and Palliative Medicine. Dr. Peters intends to keep the program’s momentum in full swing.

“I’m looking forward to growing the program further,” Dr. Peters said. “Being satisfied with the status quo is not on our agenda.”