Gagnon:
Looking Beyond Bricks and Mortar

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Last year Atlantic Health entered a 12-year naming rights agreement to become the official health care sponsor of the New York Jets. In this column, I hope to provide a better understanding of the strategic thinking that led to this collaboration.

As obesity rates continue to soar, Atlantic Health has seen an increased demand for clinical services for both athletes and residents who want to live healthier lifestyles. The relationship with the Jets and its Training Center comes at the perfect time when Atlantic Health and Morristown Memorial are embarking on a new clinical initiative to improve performance among athletes of all abilities and encourage active lifestyles among community residents. Services will include cardiology, physical medicine and rehabilitation, neurology, orthopedics, nutrition, imaging and pediatric subspecialties. This sports and human performance program will be housed in a new 100,000-square-foot building adjacent to the Atlantic Health Jets Training Center and will be known as the Atlantic Sports Health Institute.

Nationally, sponsorship arrangements are not unusual. Reportedly, half of all U.S. professional sports teams are tied contractually to a medical institution — and that number is only expected to increase. Doctors, hospitals and athletes are natural partners. As long as there are sports — from Little League to the Olympics — injuries requiring the services of a health care provider are inevitable. It often makes sense for hospitals and sports teams to formalize their relationship. Consider the following examples:

- After signing a 12-year provider contract to become the official hospital of the Boston Celtics, New England Baptist Hospital co-developed the Sports Authority Training Center at HealthPoint fitness center in Waltham, Mass., which serves both the community and as the Celtics training camp and practice headquarters.
- New York-Presbyterian Hospital and the New York Yankees have a multiyear sponsorship agreement that includes medical care by the hospital to be provided to the players.
- New York University Hospital for Joint Diseases reportedly pays the New York Mets to treat its players and wear the banner of the team’s “official hospital,” while Methodist Hospital, Houston, treats the Astros and the Texans.
- Florida Hospital in Orlando partnered with RDV Sports, owner of the NBA’s Orlando Magic, to build the RDV Sportsplex in 1998. The complex includes medical offices, a membership-based fitness center, an athletic club, tennis center, ice rinks, swimming pool, spa, day-care facility and training facilities for the Magic.

The Atlantic Health-Jets partnership also reflects the changing health care marketplace in which hospitals are now advertising directly to patients. The naming rights agreement came out of the marketing and advertising budget — money that would otherwise be used on media promotion.

The Jets’ investment in New Jersey is also a tremendous “win” for our economy and for the community. The relocation of the Jets headquarters is expected to generate local jobs and more than $10 million annually in new tax revenue for the state. The agreement with Florham Park also provides for the Jets to create an annual $50,000 fund that the borough will dedicate to athletic and recreational facilities and programs.

There is one more vital point worth mentioning. Given the tremendous medical technology and expertise of Atlantic Health, it is increasingly important to promote our health system on a larger scale so that we can sustain and develop our medical services. This new relationship will complement our Sports Health initiative, reinforce our presence with local media outlets, and help us draw from an ever-widening geographic region.
Three October fundraisers supported the Carol W. and Julius A. Rippel Breast Center at Morristown Memorial in honor of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. In Florham Park, B’Cara Salon and Spa generated $1,414 selling $1 pink ribbons and raffling off baskets of donated beauty tools and products. Owner Cara Camiscioli chose Morristown Memorial as the beneficiary because two of her close relatives are patients at Carol G. Simon Cancer Center.

At Diann’s Gifts & Collectibles in Kenvil, owner Diann Fischer’s bra decorating contest and other promotions generated $580. Customers donating $20 received a pink bra to embellish. The winning garment featured crystals that spelled “love, hope, faith and family.” Diann’s also participated in Brighton Collectibles 6th annual “Power of Pink” promotion. For every Brighton pink ribbon bracelet sold, both the store and Brighton gave $5 to the center. The grand total collected at participating stores, including Apogee of Basking Ridge, was unavailable at press time.

On October 20, the 17th Annual Grand Tasting was held at The Madison Hotel and hosted by Gary and Liz Fisch of Gary’s Wine and Marketplace in Madison and Bernardsville. Over 425 wine lovers sampled wines from around the world, spirits, beer and gourmet delicacies. The $5,000 raised for Atlantic Health will benefit Atlantic Home Care and Hospice and Gagnon Cardiovascular Institute.

When Kaleigh Levoyer, 19, became a patient at Valerie Fund Children’s Center at Goryeb Children’s Hospital two years ago, she noticed that many activities offered were geared to small children. The Parsippany teen addressed this deficit while earning her Girl Scout Gold Award.

A long-time collector of Manga or Japanese comic books, Ms. Levoyer blended her passion with the 65-hour Girl Scout leadership project. She solicited local residents and businesses to donate either funds or books for the center. “I thought that Manga books could easily be brought to kids,” says the first-year student at The College of New Jersey.

After collecting 50 books, some purchased with her own funds, the scout wrote short summaries, gift-wrapped each one and included drawing instructions for the characters. “The older patients enjoy having something different made available to them, and several have drawn characters,” says Megan Calabro, music therapist in the Department of Child Life.
Last March, while Connie Seville was giving birth at Morristown Memorial, her husband, John, was not at her side. Instead, the 41-year-old father was in a hospital bed two floors below, partially paralyzed and breathing through a ventilator. As Mrs. Seville welcomed their second son into the world, she faced the daunting possibility of ending her husband’s life support.

Four days earlier, she had rushed him to a local hospital after complaints of nausea and poor vision. Transported by helicopter to Morristown Memorial the next day, John flat lined and 10 minutes later he was revived. Then surgeon James Slater, MD, treated his rare heart disorder, called aortic dissection, by repairing his upper aorta and a heart valve. Recovery looked grim; he'd suffered a massive stroke and remained unresponsive.

But three days after surgery, when the nursing staff collaborated to have Mrs. Seville bring baby Levi to her husband, he opened his eyes and smiled. “To see my husband and our newborn wake up on the same day was miraculous,” she says. John recovered and left the hospital in 11 weeks to celebrate Father’s Day at their Fredon home.

Mrs. Seville’s gratitude extends to many: the doctors who healed her husband’s heart; the nurses who tended to him; the pastoral staff who comforted with prayer; the social workers who listened; the patient liaisons who shared information and tissues and the countless hospital employees she’d never met who gave encouragement. “Everyone went beyond what their job description dictated,” she says. “No one had to stay after their shift; no one had to sit with me while I cried. But they did. It’s not their job. It’s who they are.”

“Even with our great medical advances, we haven’t lost our touch,” says Dr. Frank Smart, the Dorothy and Lloyd Huck Chair of Cardiovascular Medicine, at the newly opened Gagnon Cardiovascular Institute. “If you go to Texas Heart Institute, you’re a number. Here, you’re near family — your support system — and you’re getting world-class care. That’s the best mix, and that’s one thing we don’t want to lose.”

That patient-friendly approach was paramount when Grant Parr, MD, broke ground in 1988 with the region’s first cardiovascular surgery program. And it will remain so as Dr. Smart sets his goals for Gagnon’s future. “Morristown Memorial has primarily been a community hospital — that’s not bad, but it’s not the future either,” he says. “Our mission is not only to take good care of patients but to advance science and give the community access to care they can’t get anywhere but a high-end facility. New York-Presbyterian, New York University, Texas Heart Institute and Cleveland Clinic — that’s the pack we want to run with. And we’re getting there.”

Yet the path to prominence hinges on bolstering vital areas at Gagnon.

**VASCULAR CENTER**

The new Vascular Center stresses wellness and prevention and treats peripheral arterial disease, what Dr. Smart calls “an under-diagnosed, underappreciated disease.” With this condition, arteries that carry blood to the arms and legs become narrowed or blocked when plaque forms. Vascular disease can lead to heart attack or stroke, and early screening is vital to prevent sickness and mortality. For treatment, physicians perform minimally
invasive endovascular procedures using angioplasty, stents and specialized devices, replacing traditional operations.

“We can create new channels, go outside the vessels and reroute them,” says Dr. Smart. “We can put people back on their feet and not amputate.” Such efforts will help patients with diabetes, as vascular disease is the number one killer of diabetic patients.

Positioning the Vascular Center under the umbrella of Gagnon is a bold move that invites success. “At most other facilities, vascular has nothing to do with cardiovascular, it’s a stand alone in the Department of Surgery,” says Dr. Smart. “We blend traditional niches and put them all under the auspices of one department — cardiovascular medicine — for more integrated care.”

Philanthropic support can energize the Vascular Center’s efforts, Dr. Smart believes, and industry funding will follow, as will research studies to benefit patients.

**VALVE CENTER**

In the next 10 years, as the baby boomer population ages, the incidence of heart disease is expected to double. In response, physicians at the Valve Center will play an essential role in patient care by using minimally invasive procedures to proactively repair the heart valves of those with lower functioning hearts and those who’ve suffered strokes.

“We’re caring for an older, sicker population,” says Dr. Smart. “If we can fix heart valves with a stent, we’ll avoid the risks of surgery, anesthesia and stroke.”

One such non-surgical procedure to repair a mitral valve employs the insertion of a plastic clip that prevents leaking. Patients recover in three hours rather than three weeks as with traditional surgery. Gagnon physicians have access to the clip because the Valve Center is participating in a training program.

By demonstrating excellence in valve repair, Gagnon will continue to be asked to participate in industry trials that benefit patients.

For the Valve Center to advance, Gagnon must also remain current with the latest cardiovascular imaging technology, such as Cardiac MRI, 3-D echo imaging and intravascular ultrasound. “We need to continue on our quest to make the human body like a glass clock so we can see the many interactive components inside,” says Dr. Smart. “Without seeing inside of the body, it’s a guess. We don’t want to guess any more than we have to.”

**RESEARCH**

Above all, the component that controls the destiny of Gagnon is research. “Without research, we are destined to be a good community hospital,” says Dr. Smart. “With it, we are in the company of the big players, and that’s where we must be if patients expect top-of-the-line care. Our research is clinically based and patient-focused. We’re not finding the mechanisms of diseases; that’s for Rutgers and Princeton. We’re looking at drugs and devices to see how they help patients.”

One research trial at Gagnon, for example, improves heart function by blocking non-working heart components with an umbrella-like device. Currently, only seven such devices have been used in the country. “We’re the fourth site in the United States asked to participate in the trial, and if we do a good job, we’ll get other requests and we’ll distinguish ourselves,” he says.

That distinction, Dr. Smart believes, will elevate Gagnon as one of the 100 top heart hospitals nationwide. “Research will put people in beds 10 years from now and help Gagnon obtain our vision of regional and international prominence,” he says. That, in turn, will ensure that Gagnon continues to provide top-tier medical treatment, coupled with its compassionate care, to patients like Mr. Seville.
Kid-Fit, a new program introduced in January at Goryeb Children’s Hospital, is helping children slim down and get in shape.

“This is an individualized program that provides assessment and on-going intervention for children who are overweight or at risk for being overweight,” says Arthur Atlas, MD, medical director of the Kid-Fit program and director of the Pediatric Pulmonary Division.

Using a multidisciplinary team approach, an exercise physiologist provides guidance on fitness, a nutritionist assists with healthy food choices, and a social worker helps families institute healthy changes and overcome barriers that arise. The program is based on pediatrician referrals and accepts 25 new participants each month.

Whole Foods Market in Madison supported the program by donating 5 percent of its September 16 sales — $3,500 — to Kid-Fit. This money was used to purchase 10 Sensewear® devices by BodyMedia, Inc., which monitor children in their own environment and assess metabolic expenditures and caloric intake so an individualized assessment can be developed.

Kid-Fit is currently seeking $50,000 to fund a body composition device called Bod-Pod that accurately measures body fat in children. Kid-Fit would be one of the few programs nationwide to use this most advanced assessment criteria instead of the industry standard, Body Mass Index (BMI). The Bod-Pod system enables physicians to track and measure the exact body fat mass of each child, unlike BMI, which uses a height-to-weight ratio.

It’s not uncommon for children who’ve participated in Morristown Memorial’s H2O program to request foods like tofu, hummus and soy nuggets when grocery shopping with their parents. In fact, many graduates are refusing hot dogs and dipping into broccoli spears instead, evidence that the childhood obesity prevention program is working, says Sibi Sáenz-Williams, MEd, program coordinator.

“Volunteering at the hospital affords me a way to give back to the community by helping others.”

“Health, Happiness and Opportunities,” was started in 2005 by the Family Health Center to promote good nutrition and regular exercise. The 30-week program engages students in kindergarten through second grade at three Morris County schools. The youngsters attend weekly nutrition classes that are filled with age-appropriate activities, such as the Make a Meal game, food tastings and exercise. Quarterly family sessions introduce new recipes to try at home.

“The children are making choices by themselves,” says Ms. Sáenz-Williams. “We give them information and empower them to make good decisions. It helps their self-esteem and transfers to other areas of their lives.”

Recent support for the grant-funded program has been provided by Kraft Foods, the Community Foundation of New Jersey and Novartis. Future plans for H2O include expanding through fifth grade and offering an alumni component.
Football icon Dan Reeves, former NFL player and coach, served as guest speaker at the 16th Annual Wellness Lecture on November 12, 2008. His talk, which detailed his struggle with heart disease, scored points with the 200 attendees. Stressing regular health checkups, diet and exercise, Mr. Reeves cautioned guests to listen to their bodily symptoms, as doing so helped save his life.

Marveling over Sam’s NICU

On Sept. 18, 2008, over 125 donors attended the private preview of Sam’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, named in memory of Samantha Marie Salzberg, the daughter of lead donor Steve Salzberg. The community raised $5.1 million toward the cost of the $15 million project, including $1.5 million from Steve and Doris Salzberg (pictured with Neonatology Co-Directors Drs. Larry Skolnick and Andrew Schenkman). As benefactors toured the relocated and expanded facility, they marveled at the 34 private and semi-private rooms, soft lighting, comfortable convertible couches and high-tech equipment.

The IRA Charitable Rollover has been extended through December 31, 2009. This provision allows individuals 70½ and older to donate up to $100,000 from their IRAs to charities tax-free – a wonderful opportunity to make a gift to Morristown Memorial. For information, contact Cynthia O’Donnell, JD, director of gift planning, at 973-593-2418 or cynthia.odonnell@atlantichealth.org.
about the staff

We extend our sincerest apologies for the following omissions in the Campaign for the Heart Honor Roll: Anesthesia Associates Drs. Matthew S. Chow, Peter Koranyi, Charles A. Lawson, Walter M. Lewis, Stephan M. Linz, Brian Lucas, James C. Sieber, James T. Streicher, Guy A. Taylor, and Steven M. Weiner in the $1,000,000 category; Laennec Publishing Company in the $250,000 to $499,999 category; Claire Lander in the $1,000 to $4,999 category whose gift was made in memory of her husband, Richard Lander, and in honor of the following physicians: Dr. Chris Magovern, Dr. Mark Diamond, and Dr. Robert Mitch; and Kenneth and Joan Kirsten in the $500 to $999 category.

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