Christopher McStay, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine
NYU Emergency Medicine Associates

“It has been a pleasure to serve Project Healthcare over the years and witness firsthand the transformative impact of the program on both the participants and the patients.

To witness a volunteer, who just weeks before might have never set foot in a healthcare setting, hold the hand of a vulnerable patient or perform a simple act of kindness, is to understand the core mission of the program. In this setting all are healers and all contribute to the care and well being of the patient despite their level of medical knowledge or training.

So many who complete the program go on to pursue a career in healthcare, instilled with the core values of compassion and kindness learned from these first formative experiences.”

THIS ISSUE’S HIGHLIGHTS

- Hurricane Sandy’s Impact on Bellevue
- Recent and Past Alumni Reflections
Dr. Daisy Otero (PHC ’83) received her BA from Barnard College before attending Harvard Medical School. She completed her internal medicine residency at Weiler/Einstein and Jacobi Hospitals and currently serves as Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine at Montefiore Medical Group in the Bronx, where she also works as a full time internist. In July she began a fellowship in geriatric medicine at Montefiore to continue her medical education.

“Bellevue holds a lot of fond memories for me, even before the summer program. I was born there, and both my maternal grandmother and mother worked in Bellevue until they retired. Participating in the summer program was like coming full circle. Bellevue is an amazing institution serving such a diverse population and the underserved.”

Shachar Kenan participated in Project Healthcare in 2008 and is currently a medical student at Sackler School of Medicine in Tel Aviv, Israel. Below he reflects on his experience in PHC.

“Embarking on the road to medical school was no easy task, it is a hazy path filled with uncertainty. It’s hard to know what to expect and whether or not you would even be interested in this field without having first experienced it in some way. This is where I believe Project Healthcare has helped me the most. The program has provided me guidance, insight and knowledge to the secret world of medicine.”
In past years, being located along the East River in Manhattan has afforded Bellevue’s patients and employees with gorgeous views of patriotic fireworks and summer boating while inside New York’s largest public hospital. This past fall, however, its proximity along the river caused a hospital-wide evacuation. Although Hurricane Sandy struck New York City in October, severe damage prevented Bellevue’s inpatient services from reopening until February. Dr. Danielle Ofri, an acclaimed narrative medicine author and an attending physician at Bellevue, reflects about the storm’s impact on the hospital and her return to Bellevue after the storm in this piece that was published in the New York Times.

“Coming Home to Bellevue”
By Danielle Ofri, M.D., Published in The New York Times, November 26, 2012

There's no place like home. That's not a phrase people typically utter about their hospitals, but those were the words on everyone's lips when we returned to Bellevue last week, after nearly a month of dislocation since the hurricane-induced evacuation at the end of October.

It was a celebratory atmosphere last Monday, when Bellevue Hospital officially reopened its doors. Colorful balloons and “Welcome Home” T-shirts filled the atrium, as staff and patients streamed in. The relief was palpable as we marked the end of this period, Bellevue’s first sustained closure since 1736.

All was not magically renewed, of course. The damage to the operational innards of the hospital building, caused when Hurricane Sandy flooded the basement with some 10 million gallons of seawater, was such that the inpatient service will not open for months. The medicine, pediatrics and gynecology clinics reopened last week. A handful of the subspecialty clinics opened Monday, but the other clinics and the operating rooms remain scattered in hospitals across the five boroughs, an arrangement that has come to be known affectionately as the Bellevue diaspora.

More than 500 of Bellevue’s doctors and physician assistants, and hundreds of other staff members and medical students, were sent to various local hospitals. Though the evacuation during the hurricane was a dramatic event, the number of inpatients affected (600 evacuated, 275 discharged) was quite small compared with the tens of thousands of outpatients who rely on Bellevue for their medical care.

The doctors of my clinic—internal medicine—had set up camp at Metropolitan Hospital, another New York City public hospital, in a tiny concrete-block annex in a parking lot. The experience was humbling and disorienting for us—perhaps a taste of what life is like for our patients as they navigate the health care system in normal times.

I shared a cubicle with two other doctors and a stretcher overflowing with a dozen winter coats and bags. We three squeezed around an adjustable tray table, the kind bed-bound patients use for meals, where a single laptop for accessing medical records was set up. Ten residents and physician assistants shimmied in and out of the narrow space to discuss cases.

To continue reading, please link to the outside source: http://danielleofri.com/coming-home-to-bellevue/
A storm with numerous frightening impacts...

ONE: the number of times that Bellevue Hospital has been closed since its opening 275 years ago in 1736.

TWO: the number of days that Bellevue operated on backup generators before evacuating, causing staff to bravely stay calm while carrying food, water, and even patients up and down flights of stairs among flickering lights.

THIRTEEN: the number of flights of stairs the Bellevue staff spanned to form a human chain to transport fuel to the generators on the 13th floor when the pumps failed.

EIGHTEEN: the number of flights of stairs that patients had to be carried down by the National Guard during evacuation.

NINETY-NINE: the number of days that passed after the evacuation before all 828 inpatient beds were opened again.

SEVEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE: the number of patients that were in Bellevue when Hurricane Sandy hit Manhattan full force on the night of Monday, October 29th.

SEVENTEEN MILLION: the number of gallons of water that flooded the basement of Bellevue during the storm.

While these numbers attempt to give a glimpse into the devastation that Bellevue suffered, a number cannot be put on the amount of people who were without their primary and reliable source of healthcare for extended periods of time. The people of New York City are relieved that Bellevue is back!

What are the most recent Project Healthcare Alumni up to?

“Currently I am studying for my Spring 2013 MCAT. When I feel down and overwhelmed by my MCAT preparation I motivate myself by thinking about those young ER residents and nurses that have provided me with wonderful experiences in the Bellevue Emergency room. Project Healthcare never left me and ever since the summer of 2012, I have volunteered at the outpatient Pediatric Child Life program at Bellevue, which I love. Like the rest of the Bellevue staff, I am sad to see much of the hospital drained of its usual essence after Hurricane Sandy, but I know that 2013 will mark a year in "rebirth". Fingers crossed that I’ll get a 30 something or maybe 45 (utter impossibility but still got to aim for it)."

Please send us your updates to be included in next edition’s “Class Notes” page!

Project Healthcare 2012 participants were involved in a similar human chain this summer when an electrical fire caused a temporary loss of power during a Friday evening shift. Hospital staff pulled the “red shirts” from AES, PES, Urgent Care, CPEP, and the social worker to join them in the stairwell to run food up and down the floors, and even to assist with patient transport via stairwell!