Bellevue Historical Milestones

From its origin as a six-bed infirmary in 1736 to the large academic medical center of today, Bellevue’s history mirrors the growth of the city and the development of medical science. Hundreds of thousands of patients have passed through our doors, and Bellevue has trained tens of thousands of physicians, nurses and care providers.

Here are some of our medical and service “firsts”: 

1736: Bellevue, America’s first Public Hospital begins as a six-bed infirmary at the New York Almshouse (the current site of NY City Hall)

1736 - 1787: Bellevue Becomes the First U.S. Teaching Hospital

1799: First Hospital Maternity Ward

1808: First Femoral Artery Ligation

1818: First Innominate Artery Ligation

1819: First Hospital requiring an M.D. to pronounce death

1850: First bladder stone surgery

1856: First use of hypodermic syringe

1857: First systemized series of clinical lectures

1857: First museum of pathological specimens

1861: First hospital linked to a medical school

1861: Ladies Central Relief Committee organized. It later becomes the Red Cross

1863: First Chair of Orthopedic Surgery in U.S.

1867: First outpatient department with direct link to a hospital

1867: First cesarean section in U.S.

1868: First NYC Health Commissioner

1869: First ambulance service

1870: First NY State Health Commissioner

1871: First Physician appointed by a President to recommend healthcare reform

1872: Bellevue Ladies Visiting Committee is nucleus of the United Hospital Fund

1872: First President and Founder of the American Public Health Association

1873: Bellevue opens the first U.S. Nursing School based on Nightingale Principles of Organization

1874: First Children’s Clinic

1875: First Systematic Autopsy

1876: First Emergency Pavilion

1878: First Pathological histology course taught in the U.S.

1884: Carnegie’s first public gift for first US Medical Research Lab

1888: Bellevue opens the first Nursing School for Men

1894: Worlds first successful abdominal operation for a gunshot wound is performed at Bellevue

1911: Causes & cure of Pellagra discovered at Bellevue

1911: First ambulatory care cardiac clinic for working adults

1918: First NYC Chief Medical Examiner

1918: First WWI Hospital involvement designated “Base Hospital Unit #1”

1918: Dr. Ubert Conrad Vincent becomes the first African American physician to practice medicine at Bellevue

1920: First Center to study autistic children and to train child psychiatrists

1926: Largest social services department in the U.S.

1926: Dr. May Edward Chin becomes the first African American Woman to graduate from the Bellevue Medical School

1939: First hospital “catastrophe unit”

1940: First cardio-pulmonary lab in the world

1942: First medical response in WWII

1947: First non-military rehabilitation services in a general hospital

1950: Initiated national test for lead poisoning

1956: Nobel Prize for cardiac catheterization

1960: First Stille Rotating Chair

1962: First Intensive Care Unit in NYC public hospital

1964: Designated hospital for visiting US Presidents, Diplomates, and U.N. Diplomats

1971: First active immunization for serum hepatitis B

1972: First psychiatric methadone maintenance unit

1979: First extensive use of Microsurgery for Reimplantations

1983: First 24/7 on-site Social Work in U.S.

1985: First AIDS program in NYC public hospital

1986: U.S. stamp for public hospitals honors Bellevue

1996: Largest U.S. Emergency Department on a single floor

1998: First MRI in Municipal Hospital System

1998: First Birthing Center in Municipal Hospital System

1999: Research revolutionizes NICU Care

2000: First Child Protection and Development Center in a U.S. public hospital

2005: First WTC 9/11 Treatment Center in U.S.

2007: First NYC public hospital with two MRIs

2011: Bellevue opens the first Children’s Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program in a public hospital