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CRAIN'S HEALTH pulse

A daily newsletter on the business of health care

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Monday, March 27, 2006

TODAY'S NEWS

FROM CHU TO TWO

A replacement for former HHC president Benjamin Chu has turned out to be a two-person job. With board approval, HHC president Alan Aviles has created the post of executive vice president of medical and professional affairs. Dr. Ramanathan Raju has been named to the job. Dr. Chu earned \$292,000. Dr. Raju, a surgeon who was formerly chief medical officer of Coney Island Hospital, will earn \$300,000. Mr. Aviles, a lawyer, is paid \$260,000.

LUNG CANCER RESEARCH

A pledge of \$6 million from the Lehman Brothers Foundation will establish the Lehman Brothers Lung Cancer Research Center, part of the new Lung Cancer Research Institute at Weill Medical College. Those funds and other contributions will help create a 1,900-square-foot cancer research laboratory, as well as recruit and retain experts in genetics and in molecular abnormalities of lung cancer. Weill hopes to raise a total of \$14.5 million to finance the Lung Cancer Research Institute.

BIARIATRIC SURGERY

NYU Medical Center recently received \$2 million from financier and former bariatric surgery patient Ira Harris. The money will go to underwrite the cost of offering gastric banding surgery to 10 morbidly obese and economically disadvan-

Centers divide state health panels

Last week's special joint hearing of the Public Health Council and the State Hospital Review and Planning Council featured a debate on ambulatory surgery centers.

Members representing hospitals defended their turf and spoke against the financial threat the centers represent, while invited speakers for centers and insurers argued that the facilities provide a cheaper, high-quality venue for surgery.

Hospitals argue that the centers steal revenue from hospitals, thereby affecting hospitals' ability to fund charity care. In fact, for-profit centers pay 8.95% of

their gross receipts into the state's bad debt and charity pool, testified Peggy Alteri, CEO of Harrison Center Outpatient Surgery in Syracuse and head of the NYS Association of Ambulatory Surgery Centers.

When the surgical centers were first debated 10 years ago, the state proposed them as a way to enhance competition, lower costs and improve quality. Now, with SHRPC heavy with hospital representatives, that policy is being reconsidered. Another hearing in May was discussed. "It is clear that the PHC and SHRPC are very divided on the issue," Ms. Alteri says.

tagged teens from Harlem, according to weight-loss surgeon Christine Ren. She and her colleagues are in the midst of a \$10 million FDA trial of the gastric banding device, with the aim of proving that it is safe and effective for patients under age 18. Her team has operated on teens, but without an FDA indication it is difficult to get insurers to pay for the procedure.

AT A GLANCE

SEMINAR: The New York Business Group on Health will hold a symposium, "Transforming Provider Behavior: Emerging

Employer Strategies," on April 4, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the CUNY Graduate Center. The event will focus on physician perceptions of health care consumerism, its effects on the physician-patient relationship, and its implications for employers. The moderator will be Dr. Minal Patel, president of Horizon New York; panelists will include Jeffrey Kraut, senior vice president at North Shore-Long Island Jewish; Ken Sperling, senior vice president at Cigna; and Dr. Michael Wolk, clinical professor of medicine at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell. For more information, go to www.nybgh.org, or call (212) 252-7440.

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