

Hurricane Sandy: Stories of Heroism

Tribute to Kings County Hospital Center & HHC Staff



November 30, 2012
Special 4-page newsletter

Published by Kings County Hospital Center
NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation

HHC President Alan Aviles: Message to All HHC Staff

In the years that I have been President of HHC, I have witnessed with pride the accomplishments we have made. In those years, we have deepened our dedication to the mission of caring for all who come to us. We have touched the lives of millions of patients who needed us. We have made healthcare safer. We have helped our city to become healthier. And in those years, every employee has played a role in helping HHC to become a great and important organization.

But I have never been more proud than I have been in the past few weeks. With our skills, with our ingenuity, with our shared sense of purpose, and with our strength, we have risen to every challenge.

Most of all, in every way, we have shown the world that HHC is the caring, compassionate, and vibrant heart of New York City.

I thank everyone who works at an HHC acute care hospital, diagnostic and treatment center, long-term care facility, clinic, MetroPlus, HHC Health and Home Care, IT, or any central office department. Each of you has helped to lift us, to help us stand a bit taller. You are all heroes.

Sandy was a powerful storm and for many of us, a personal challenge. But, united and strong, we are HHC. We shall rise.

From the Desk of

Ernest J. Baptiste

Executive Director

Kings County Hospital Center



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
OUTSTANDING &
CONTINUING EFFORTS**

The impact of Hurricane Sandy is by no means over, but we have a small window of perspective to reflect on how we responded and what we can do better. I commend the KCHC family and our HHC colleagues, for the outstanding teamwork during and after the storm. This special newsletter is a small testament to the courage, commitment and sacrifice which you exhibited. We have also mounted a photo display in the B-building first floor titled, "Hurricane Heroism: Stories of Dedication, Compassion and Professionalism."

Whether it was dialysis patients who had no where else to turn or cancer patients from Coney Island Hospital, KCHC stepped up to the challenge. More than 900 staff from our HHC family passed through our doors during the storm, and you reached out to give them a second home to assist with patient care and various support services. It's important for every staff member to realize that, no matter what your job is, we are all part of the first responder system in New York City. We count on you to care for the most vulnerable citizens in times of crisis. I urge you to share your own insights with your supervisor so we can learn and do even better the next time we face a major disaster. Finally, if you know a co-worker who needs assistance, please refer them to the HHC Hurricane Relief Fund for Employees. Thank you all!



Photo (L): Coney Island Hospital cancer patient being treated at KCHC Cancer Center, surrounded by CIH-KCHC staff. (RT): Ambulatory Care staff working at the Park Slope Armory, l-r: Eva Cooper, RN; Dr. Dawn Mellish; Hyacinth Charles, RN; and Dr. Joseph Williams.

**HHC Relief
Fund for
Employees**
Information to
donate, or apply
for a grant, is on
page 4.

**December 7
application
deadline!**

KCHC, Coney Island & Bellevue: Working Together for Displaced Cancer Patients



KCHC & CIH staff in Cancer Care Center



Pharmacy team: KCHC, CIH & Bellevue

In order to ensure continuity of care for Coney Island Hospital's cancer patients after the hospital was closed, staff from the KCHC Cancer Care Center (CCC) teamed up with CIH and Bellevue staff to offer chemotherapy treatment every day to displaced patients. Having the comfort of Coney Island staff around them has eased the distress of CIH patients in this very difficult situation. Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory and other disciplines have joined together -- showing our common goal as an HHC family. Many thanks are due to the CCC leadership: **Theophilus Lewis, MD**; **Varina Deonarinesingh**, administrator; and **Joan McKenzie**.



L-R: Dr. Koyfman, Dr. Owen and Dr. Adebisi.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

When KCHC BHS was asked to assist in staffing the Park Slope Armory shelter, to provide mental health services on-site, **Akinola Adebisi, MD** stepped up and provided the critical behavioral health support in an integrated manner that was lauded by the KCHC and HHC on-site team. **Sander Koyfman, MD** and **Elizabeth Owen, PhD**, along with many other dedicated behavioral health staff, also contributed greatly to this round-the-clock effort.

Led by *Network Chief Information Officer* **Dino Civan** and **Mohinder Singh**, the **Information Technology** staff undertook an enormous mission to provide zylocks and computer access to more than **900 staff** who were re-deployed from Coney Island, Bellevue, MetroPlus and other HHC units. Special recognition is due to: **Monica Casey**, **Barbara Sindab**, **Ingrid Morgan**, **Jose Torres**, **Andre Boucaud** and **Colvin Carryl** for their exceptional performance, personal sacrifice and ingenuity - great teamwork!

KCHC LIFELINE FOR DIALYSIS PATIENTS



The Dialysis team, especially the nurses under the leadership of **Gary Briefel, MD** (rt) and **Sharon Shorter, RN** (left) worked extensive overtime to make sure that dialysis would be accessible to all in need. They designed staffing strategies to provide dialysis for patients who could not get to their dialysis center or whose dialysis centers were closed. No one was turned away.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



Information Technology staff with Dino Civan (standing far left, front)

Amb. Care at Armory & Brooklyn Tech.

Special recognition for working at the **Park Slope Armory** goes out to **Dawn Mellish, MD**, Chief Ambul. Care; **Joseph Williams, MD**, Director of Adult Primary Care; **Hyacinth Charles, RN**, AED Amb Care Nursing; and **Eva Cooper, ADN** of Amb Care Nursing for going above and beyond, working in the most challenging conditions. Our ENYDTC colleagues staffed the medical shelter at **Brooklyn Tech H.S.:** **Herold Simon, MD**, Medical Director, **Rosalee Richburg, RN**, **Charmaine Valentine**, and **Roy DeCosta**. These leaders and their respective teams provided staffing, equipment, supplies, and medical care to more than 565 nursing and adult home evacuees at the Armory and 400-plus patients at Brooklyn Tech. They worked for more than 24 hours straight, despite personal losses, to provide intake and medical stabilization for our most vulnerable citizens during the height of the storm, and afterwards.



Dr. Mellish (far rt) led medical team at Park Slope Armory

PATIENT/GUEST RELATIONS

The small, but close-knit, Patient/Guest Relations department of nine staff is vital to resolving the concerns of patients and hospital guests. Without them, these concerns can sometimes escalate to conflict, especially when family members are in distress over their loved one. Led by Director **Inel Phillip**,



Patient/Guest Relations staff braved the storm to report to work daily, even though their own household and families were affected. Just as many New Yorkers faced devastation, our staff faced loss of

electricity, downed power lines, fallen trees, and little access to gasoline. Some staff stayed beyond their assigned tour to assist the hospital, despite destructive conditions in their own home.

NURSING & PATIENT CARE SERVICES



CNO Opal Sinclair-Chung, RN and Marie Higgs, RN statement:
*It's impossible to single out any one nurse, ancillary staff, social worker, respiratory therapist or infection control practitioner at KCHC for their heroic efforts because the entire department came together once again at a time of critical need. Some of our staff were flooded out of their homes, had no electricity, heat or running water but they still came in to care for our patients. They car-pooled, walked and did whatever was necessary to get to work. During this difficult time, the staff maintained their professionalism and dedication at all times. **Photo:** Nurses from Coney Island Hospital working on A-4 unit, caring for evacuated patients. KCHC nurses have provided outstanding collaboration and support to their HHC colleagues.*

THANK YOU to Medical Staff & Medicine Department

Ghassan Jamaledine, MD
 Chief, Medicine Dept. & Interim Medical Director



I would like to thank all medical staff for the hard work and selfless dedication that you have shown during and after Hurricane Sandy. Many of you came to work despite all the challenges and despite the threats to your own safety and the safety of your families. Many worked long hours and stayed overnight in the hospital and some went back to find your cars and/or homes flooded and without electricity. Despite all the challenges, our teamwork and mutual support has paid off and ensured the utmost safety and best care to our patients. My words cannot express my thanks and my pride in leading the medical team and being a member of the Medicine Service at Kings County Hospital.

RELIEF FUND FOR HHC EMPLOYEES DECEMBER 7th DEADLINE TO APPLY!

The Fund for HHC is managing a special **Hurricane Relief Fund** that is providing one-time monetary grants to assist HHC staff who suffered losses due to the storm. Financial contributions should be sent electronically to The Fund at: www.thefundforhhc.org. Checks should be made payable to "The Fund for HHC, Hurricane Relief" and mailed to The Fund for HHC, 346 Broadway, Suite 715, New York, New York, 10013. To date, more than \$100,000 has been donated ... please keep the funds coming in!

If you are an HHC employee who has suffered losses from the storm and would like to request assistance, we will be accepting applications until the close of business on **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7**. To apply, please send the following information either by email to fund@nychhc.org, or regular mail to The Fund for HHC - Hurricane Relief Fund, 346 Broadway Suite 715W, New York, NY 10013. If you plan to apply for a grant, here's what we need:

- Title, first and last name
- Permanent address
- Current phone number and Cell phone number
- HHC Facility and department where you are employed
- Address where you are presently living
- Number of family members in your household
- If awarded, where money should be sent
- Current need or particular hardship that you are enduring due to the hurricane --100 words or less

KCHC Chief of Staff **Natasha Burke** will be contacting employees who receive an award from this fund. So far, 30 of our applicants have been approved for a grant and 34 more are under review.

HOSPITAL POLICE: LIFE-SAVING TRIP TO CONEY ISLAND HOSPITAL, OCTOBER 29



Hospital Police Dir. **Patrick Murphy** (far left, row 2) and Deputy ED **Anthony Rajkumar** (far right, row 2), with Hospital Police Staff.

While Hurricane Sandy was peaking on Monday, October 29th, three Kings County Hospital staff got into a vehicle around midnight to make the long trip to Coney Island Hospital. Deputy ED **Anthony Rajkumar**, Hospital Police Director **Patrick Murphy** and **Officer Borden** decided to see what was going on, when they tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to reach anyone at Coney Island by phone or walkie-talkie. Just as they were on their mission, KCHC Executive Director Ernest Baptiste called them to say that Coney Island Hospital needed special batteries in order to support life-saving equipment for their patients. They went back to KCHC, retrieved the batteries and started out again on the dark and dangerous roads to Coney Island Hospital, which was quickly being engulfed by water. They reached the hospital safely and handed over the batteries to nursing. A few hours later, Deputy ED Rajkumar was back at the KCHC Command Center. In fact, he remained at the hospital for several days without returning to his own home. With the help of nursing and many other staff, Mr. Rajkumar assisted with the safe, orderly transfer of patients to KCHC from Coney Island Hospital. Many Hospital Police went five to six tours without a break during this critical time.

FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES/OPERATIONS

When response to Superstorm Sandy began to affect the stomachs of staff who were working long hours during the crisis, KCHC Operations and Food & Nutrition Services both stepped all the way up to meet the challenge. On the Operations side, **Glensford Brooks** should be commended for his acts of heroism in regard to Sandy. Prior to the storm, he painstakingly checked all the available rooms in the T-Building to make sure they were habitable. He also ensured that employees from KCHC, Coney Island and two off-site locations received breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Of course this meant that he had to sleep at The County, so that he would be ready at a moment's notice to provide whatever service was requested of him. Indeed, Mr. Brooks demonstrated the caring and compassion that we expect from our employees.



Glen Brooks



Donna Hanson (2nd row, far rt) with Food & Nutrition team

Led by Director **Donna Hanson**, Food & Nutrition staff were extraordinary because they had to be on-site 24/7, feeding patients and staff. Those able to come to work traveled by any means necessary, including walking through the elements, to arrive on time. Some stayed overnight, while several managers worked non-stop for multiple shifts. They man-

aged to feed each patient, including the additional evacuees without exception, while also providing 1200 meals a day for staff at the hospital, plus another 70 staff at the two medical shelters. While they lack the capacity to provide hot meals for staff, they did all they could to make sure that everyone was nourished as they faced Sandy's challenges.