North Shore-LIJ, Yale-New Haven Health Launch New York Area’s First Hospital-Based Medical Helicopter Program

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Michael Dowling, North Shore-LIJ president & CEO and medical helicopter flight team members unveil SkyHealth

MANHASSET, NY – The North Shore-LIJ Health System today announced the launch of the New York area’s first hospital-based Helicopter Emergency Medical Service. The program, called SkyHealth, is a partnership with Yale-New Haven Health in Connecticut. Starting this Friday, patients of both health systems who need lifesaving care for major traumas, heart attack, stroke and other life-threatening brain injuries will receive emergency medical care by helicopter and be quickly flown to the most appropriate hospital.

North Shore-LIJ is investing $7 million toward the helicopter and $6.5 million to build a rooftop helipad at North Shore University Hospital (NSUH), which was verified last week as a Level I trauma center by the American College of Surgeons – the first hospital in the downstate region to receive this designation.

“This helicopter could mean the difference between life and death for critically ill and trauma patients,” said Michael Dowling, North Shore-LIJ’s president and chief executive officer. “The helicopter enables us to avoid congested highways and provide the fastest hospital-to-hospital transfers for our most vulnerable patients.”

This new capability is important because North Shore-LIJ hospitals stretch as far west as Westchester County and as far east as Bay Shore in Suffolk County. Flying at an average speed of 130 miles per hour, the helicopter cuts travel time significantly. For example, a helicopter flight from Southside Hospital in Bay Shore to NSUH in Manhasset is about 10-15 minutes, while an ambulance could take 40 minutes or more depending on traffic.

NSUH’s new rooftop helipad, scheduled to be completed early next month, will allow for quicker and safer landings of patients requiring medevac transport. For more than two years, the Nassau County Police Aviation Bureau has provided key input on the design and safety of the helipad, which will become a trauma center destination for the county’s medevac helicopters. The helipad, perched 23 feet above the hospital’s roof, is also available to Suffolk County and New York City police departments, and other hospitals that want to transport critically ill patients to NSUH.

“The SkyHealth helicopter is outfitted with highly sophisticated critical care technology, including mechanical ventilators, cardiac monitors, infant incubators and other life-saving equipment normally found in a hospital intensive care unit,” said Gene Tangney, North Shore-LIJ’s senior vice president and chief administrative officer.
The medical flight team consists of a paramedic and nurse with the highest level of training in emergency medicine or critical care, who are dual-credentialed in New York and Connecticut. Med-Trans Corporation of Dallas, TX, maintains and operates the helicopter, trains pilots and handles medical billing. The SkyHealth program is managed by the North Shore-LIJ Center for EMS. In the first year of the program, North Shore-LIJ and Yale New Haven Health expect to serve about 350-400 patients.

The helicopter is a key part of North Shore-LIJ’s efforts to expand its trauma capabilities throughout the health system. In addition to NSUH, Southside Hospital recently became the first hospital in the state verified by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) as a Level II trauma center. Cohen Children’s Medical Center in New Hyde Park is seeking Level I pediatric trauma verification from the ACS. Huntington Hospital and Staten Island University Hospital are also seeking trauma designations.

About North Shore-LIJ Health System
One of the nation's largest health systems, North Shore-LIJ delivers world-class clinical care throughout the New York metropolitan area, pioneering research at The Feinstein Institute for Medical Research, a visionary approach to medical education highlighted by the Hofstra North Shore-LIJ School of Medicine, and healthcare coverage to individuals, families and businesses through the CareConnect Insurance Co. Inc. North Shore-LIJ cares for people at every stage of life at 18 hospitals and more than 400 outpatient physician practices throughout the region. North Shore-LIJ’s hospitals and long-term care facilities house more than 6,200 beds, employ nearly 11,000 nurses and have affiliations with about 10,000 physicians. With a workforce of about 50,000, North Shore-LIJ is the largest private employer in New York State. For more information, go to NorthShoreLIJ.com