

Mount Sinai South Nassau

A Hospital with a Heart

By Susan Schwamm

TJH Speaks with Rabbi Dr. Aaron Glatt

Located in Oceanside, NY, on One Healthy Way, Mount Sinai South Nassau, formerly South Nassau Communities Hospital, has been servicing our community for 90 years. Sometimes referred to as Long Island's "best-kept secret," the hospital has been treating patients throughout the South Shore, including the Rockaways and Queens, and further into Long Island for almost a century. With its recent partnership with Mount Sinai, South Nassau has achieved greater status and the ability to offer its patients expanded services and superior treatment – all close to home.

Recently, we sat down with Rabbi Dr. Aaron Glatt, who is known to many of us as assistant rabbi at the Young Israel of Woodmere. But during the day, Rabbi Dr. Glatt dons a white coat in his position as professor and chairman of the Department of Medicine and Chief of Infectious Diseases/hospital epidemiologist at Mount Sinai South Nassau. Rabbi Dr. Glatt spoke of the quality care that Mount Sinai South Nassau offers its patients along with its generous doses of compassion and kindness. Its outstanding care has been noted by national associations. Just this year, the hospital was ranked by U.S. News and World Report in its Best Hospitals issue as a Best Regional Hospital in 2019-2020 – ranking #20 in both New York State and the New York Metro area. Even more than quality care, Mount Sinai South Nassau offers patients the ability to receive expert care only minutes away from their home.



Rabbi Dr. Aaron Glatt

Rabbi Dr. Glatt, the partnership with South Nassau and Mount Sinai has been in the works over the years.

Yes, it's been evolving over the past three years. It's been something that the physicians at the hospital and the board at the hospital had been very much encouraging – partnering with a larger system. We felt unanimously that, by far, the best system for us to affiliate with – the most compatible with our principles, philosophies and goals and from a point of excellence of quality of care – was the Mount Sinai healthcare system. It's been a wonderful "shidduch," as we say.

South Nassau was already an excellent hospital. But now, we're coming into a health network that has a worldwide, world-renowned reputation as a high-class academic center. Everyone can benefit from the additional services and treatments that Mount Sinai can bring to our community.

Speaking about the community, Mount Sinai South Nassau is located right here, in Oceanside.

It's right here – just minutes

away. I even walked to the hospital one Shabbos to visit a patient from my home in Woodmere. You know, there's a sentiment held by some that you must go into the city for great care. But that has always been incorrect. Medical care depends on the doctor, on the specialty, on a particular need. It's true in some cases that there is only expertise offered by certain highly trained subspecialists who are available in the city. But now, with this relationship we have with Mount Sinai, you can get comprehensive total care here just minutes from your home.

The same specialists who work in the city in certain situations will have office hours here in our practices in Long Island. We already have a Mount Sinai practice in Hewlett adjacent to a South Nassau practice, so we can get the referrals back and forth very easily for those who are using Mount Sinai doctors and specialists. There are about 250 Mount Sinai doctors already practicing here on Long Island. All these doctors are now affiliating and using Mount Sinai South Nassau as their main, primary hospital. The goal is not that we should be a waystation to send patients into the city – in-



walking distance from our community, and there's no need to run and forth into the city before and after surgery.

Mount Sinai Heart is arguably the number one cardiac program in the country; it towers over anything on Long Island and even towers over programs across the world. Using those same renowned surgeons and advanced heart specialists, with their programs and procedures, working closely with our own already stellar state-of-the-art advanced cardiac center, as part of the Mount Sinai Heart program, will eventually allow advanced cardiac surgery procedures to be performed right here at Mount Sinai South Nassau. That's phenomenal – that we can offer such exceptional care so close to home.

We have about 40 superb gastrointestinal doctors right now on our medical staff. They are wonderful GI doctors, but they refer to super subspecialists the really complex cases of inflammatory bowel disease, Crohn's, and colitis, as well as advanced endoscopy that a regular, expert GI doctor doesn't do. Now they can refer to physicians within Mount Sinai South Nassau. We have two of the leading interventional endoscopists that do procedures that a handful of doctors in the greater metropolitan region do. The former head of Columbia Presbyterian is now the head of interventional endoscopy at Mount Sinai South Nassau. He's been receiving so many referrals already, that we hired a second person in the hospital as well. That person is only one of two people in the greater region who is capable of doing a procedure, called POEM, that until now required surgery. Now, we can do it endoscopically – he's already done 70 of these and has a waiting list of patients who want the procedure done endoscopically at South Nassau instead of surgically. That's amazing for patients – and a whole other level of care.

You know, not every physician at Mount Sinai in the city practices at Mount Sinai, the main hub. They have seven hospitals. So already, different doctors go to different places. Many of these doctors live on Long

Island and have actually been very anxious to open up a practice closer to their home, closer to where they live. Besides that, many of them are interested in providing world-class care to a select subset of patients, and they know that those patients may not be willing to come to them. For example, Mount Sinai is the expert on multiple myeloma [a cancer that forms in a type of white blood cell]. A cancer patient suffering from multiple myeloma may not be willing or able to run into the city. Now, patients can enroll in such National Cancer Institute studies at South Nassau, allowing these patients to get cutting-edge treatments previously only available in the city.

South Nassau already has a world-class cancer program, our Feil Cancer Center run by Dr. Rajiv Datta, a superb oncology surgeon, with a combined medical, surgical and radiational oncology faculty. Indeed, our Gamma knife is being utilized by the Sinai neurosurgeons, as a new tool for them! But now we're going to the next level by joining forces with Sinai's National Cancer Institute (NCI) Cancer Program, as only a handful of hospitals in the country have that level of expertise. What does that mean to our patients? They're going to get great care, but they will also be able to be enrolled in studies that you can get only in an NCI Cancer Center.

Furthermore, if a person needs to go into the city for one procedure, they can manage. But what if they need constant care, or chronic follow-up, or daily or weekly treatments? It's impossible to constantly be running back and forth. Mount Sinai South Nassau is offering an unbelievable advantage to our community: of having that expertise brought to you rather than you schlepping to the expertise.

South Nassau Community Hospital was always an excellent hospital. It's now becoming a world-class hospital as Mount Sinai South Nassau, the flagship of Mount Sinai on Long Island.

You mentioned the excellent care at South Nassau. I understand you are a nurses' Magnet hospital.

South Nassau has always been known for its wonderful nursing care. I think only three or four percent of hospitals in the country qualify with Magnet care designation from the National Nurses Association, and especially in Long Island, there are very few. We're very proud of our excellent nursing care, run by a former Mount Sinai Chief Nursing Officer Stacey Conklin, a local resident. Patients really appreciate the compassion and care that our nurses provide.

For the past few years you've been renovating your building.

Yes. It's very exciting. We are adding on a new wing, which will have four floors, including two, brand-new intensive care units totaling 40 beds. It will also have a brand-new emergency room. We're the go-to emergency room in this region – the only trauma center in our area. Our current emergency room, under chairman of a great clinician and (Jewish!) former Navy SEAL, Dr. Josh Kugler, is fantastic, but we will be doubling its physical capacity and making it physically state-of-the-art. We're also building 12 new surgical theaters, which will be capable of handling cardiac surgery – which is a major enhancement for the hospital. For now, we refer patients who need cardiac surgery to Mount Sinai in the city. When the renovations will be complete, we'll be able to do the surgery right here.

We're increasing our capacities to make our NICU a tertiary-level NICU instead of just a really good NICU. You can't get better than having senior pediatrician Dr. Warren Rosenfeld, former chairman of Winthrop, as our chairman of pediatrics. We're one of the few hospitals with a pediatric unit in the emergency room. If a child comes in with a laceration, for example, they can be treated right away, right there, which is amazing.

We're also upgrading and modernizing the whole facility. We know that parking can sometimes be a problem, so we're working on building a several-story parking garage, which will blend into the community around us.

stead, patients who would have otherwise gone into the city will now be able to get their care with those same doctors within the Mount Sinai healthcare network and will be able to use South Nassau facilities. It's bringing everything close to home.

Mount Sinai has stated publicly that it's their true, absolute goal that Mount Sinai South Nassau will become a comprehensive tertiary major medical center. They call it the flagship of Mount Sinai on Long Island, which is wonderful news for our community.

Let's talk about certain procedures that are done or certain treatments that are being performed in South Nassau that you weren't doing before the partnership with Mount Sinai.

If we look at liver transplants, for example, we will still not be able to perform liver transplants in Mount Sinai South Nassau – only a handful of hospitals in the country can do that. But now, a person can actually get their pre- and post-liver transplant care from the Mount Sinai transplant surgeon here in our community, which is wonderful. It's

We've been working on the upgraded facility for years. If you come into the building, the whole front of the building, the D Wing, is new – around ten years old. We're also trying to consolidate certain outpatient centers, so if someone needs a referral, they can literally be walked down the hall for a sub-specialty referral and be introduced to the physician who will treat them. From a patient's point-of-view, it's phenomenally convenient for them.

We're all about taking care of the community. If you think about it, our name was South Nassau Communities Hospital, because that was always our goal – to be there for the community. Now, our mission is the same, but we're doing it on a higher level. It truly is something that I, as a resident of the neighborhood, as a person who refers hundreds of people each year to different doctors, knows and understands and sees firsthand.

How does the hospital accommodate the needs of the frum community?

In a way, I would say that the most important amenity we have at the hospital for the frum community is the daily Mincha minyan that we have Monday through Thursday at 1:35 p.m. There are patients who come – some with their IVs – to the minyan every now and then. It gives me such pleasure to see because I know that these patients feel terrible about being in the hospital and not being able to go to minyan. But here, we're allowing them to feel part of the community and be able to participate, which is really important for their wellbeing. If a person is in a state of distress and they can say kaddish or amen with a minyan, that's very powerful. And for family members in the hospital visiting, it is a great comfort.

Achiezer has also set up a Bikur Cholim room sponsored by Gourmet Glatt. It's wonderful. The food there is free, which is a huge help for Orthodox patients or family who are limited by what they can eat. But in the Bikur Cholim room, you can get fresh, hot food, and it's open 24/7. There are meals on Shabbos, too, plus the hospital bought a house ad-



L to R: Adhi Sharma, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Mount Sinai South Nassau; Stephen Silich, JD, Chief Administrative Officer, Mount Sinai Health Network; Rajiv Datta, MD, Chair of the Department of Surgery, Mount Sinai South Nassau; Arthur Klein, MD, President of the Mount Sinai Health Network; Richard J. Murphy, President & CEO, Mount Sinai South Nassau; and Aaron E. Glatt, MD, Chair of the Department of Medicine, Mount Sinai South Nassau celebrated the official launch of the Mount Sinai South Nassau brand at a special luncheon reception held in the hospital's conference center on September 26

acent to the hospital for Shabbos, or any day of the week, for people who need to stay over near the hospital. The frum community in Oceanside is also wonderful, and there are

Oceanside (the hospital is within the eruv) and Rabbi Muskat, *shlita*, who are invaluable resources for the frum community.

Our community should also

“NOW, OUR MISSION IS THE SAME, BUT WE’RE DOING IT ON A HIGHER LEVEL.”

many services that they offer, too, such as the Bikur Cholim Society run by Rebbitzin Gottesman, and *yibadel bein chaim lechaim*, her late husband, Rabbi Gottesman, *zt”l*, along with the Young Israel of

know that they can get kosher food at the hospital, which comes pre-packaged, but they should remember that they need to be cognizant that we're not a fully kosher hospital. For example, you might get

a 100% kosher fleishig packaged lunch, but the person serving the food may put a carton of milk on the tray next to it. So you just have to recognize that you'll eat your fleishig lunch and give back the milk or discard the milk. I have given lectures to the nutritional staff who go out of their way to be responsive, but I always say that an educated consumer is a good consumer.

I have to say that, working in this hospital, I have witnessed and seen that Richard Murphy, our president and CEO who is a true friend, and the administration of South Nassau, are people concerned with chessed, kindness. It's hard to describe, and you don't find it in every hospital. But this administration is one of caring and goodness. May Hashem reward them!

They are also very sensitive to our community's needs. In South Nassau, if there's a question, they defer to what the rabbi or halachic authority says to do, which is very important when it comes to end-of-life matters. They will never demand that a family does something that is against their religion or beliefs. This is extremely important for our community. I know of families in other hospitals that had to switch their family members from one hospital to the next because the hospital declared the patient dead, and the family and their rabbi said otherwise. It's very traumatic. Mount Sinai South Nassau will never say that. They honor all patient's religious convictions.

In this regard, the hospital has a very strong pastoral care department. I give lectures a few times a year (including one this week) to those in the department about Jewish-related issues. This way, everyone knows about our laws and traditions, and all patients' religious concerns will be protected and respected.

No one wants to be at the hospital – except maybe in our beautiful maternity ward where we are on schedule to deliver a record number of babies this year! However, we must all do our *hishtadlus* to make our local hospital the best it can possibly be. Mount Sinai South Nassau is committed to doing just that. 