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A Tribute to Henry Ford Hospital

Jan Rival, MD*

I am not using editorial space to honor a building—a mass of bricks and mortar, hospital beds, and medical equipment. To pay tribute to Henry Ford Hospital is to pay tribute to all those people—staff physicians, residents, researchers, nurses, support staff, and patients—who have passed through its doors over the past 75 years. It is the people, we who are here now as well as all who have been here, who have brought Henry Ford Hospital from a small urban hospital to a tertiary care center, nationally recognized for its specialized patient care, its cutting-edge research, and its education programs.

We have all witnessed this growth. I joined the medical staff in 1969, before we had Centers of Excellence, before there were Education and Research Departments, and before many of the specialty and subspecialty programs and procedures, now considered to be standard fare, even existed.

When I think about what it is that made Henry Ford Hospital a leader in providing health care in southeast Michigan, I am reminded of a story told to me by Dr. Joseph L. Ponka, long our distinguished surgical colleague. When Dr. Ponka was hired in 1942, he was told, "This is a job; what you do with it is up to you." To Dr. Ponka that terse remark meant the freedom to create and innovate, to play a role in the growth of our institution.

The philosophy that encourages creativity, innovation, and personal growth has set Henry Ford Hospital apart in providing quality patient care and participating in nationally recognized research. Over the past 75 years the institution has grown from a single hospital to a system which includes three hospitals, more than 30 outpatient centers, a health maintenance organization, and numerous special programs, services, and technology to benefit patients both in quality of life and in affordability.

One wonders if our founder, auto pioneer Henry Ford, or any of our early leaders, Frank J. Sladen, MD, or Roy D. McClure, MD, could have imagined the Henry Ford Health System of today.

While we have seen this institution, as well as the practice of medicine, grow and change, the basic characteristics instilled by these men and other early leaders remain a part of Henry Ford Health System. These include a professional atmosphere that encourages creativity and innovation, dedication that makes patient care and comfort the first priority, and commitment to employees with the motto "our employees are our best resource."

Although the days are gone when you could walk the hospital halls and know nearly everyone you pass, the sense of community, camaraderie, and friendship remain.

Over the past 75 years, Henry Ford Hospital built a reputation as a leader in providing quality health care in the most appropriate and cost-effective setting. Under the leadership of cardiac surgeon Conrad Lam, MD,† we were one of the first institutions to use the anticoagulant heparin and we developed state-of-the-art instrumentation used in cardiac surgery. In that tradition, the first heart transplant in southeast Michigan was performed here in 1985. Five years and more than 100 transplants later, the program claims one of the best survival rates in the country.

In 1978, Henry Ford Hospital pioneered in providing outpatient care by developing the network of 25 Henry Ford Medical Centers in 17 communities throughout southeast Michigan. We are nationally recognized for patient care and research in the areas of Bone and Joint disorders, Heart and Vascular disease, Neurosciences, Transplantation, Cancer care, Kidney disease, Sleep disorders, and Genetics and birth defects. Our major research center receives more than \$18 million in annual funding, supporting research in stroke, diabetes, the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), osteoporosis, and cancer.

We maintain a strong commitment to the Southeast Michigan community, providing health care and outreach services to our residents. These include participation in the Virginia Park/Henry Ford Hospital Non-Profit Housing Authority which resulted in building residences for senior citizens and low-income families in the neighborhood. Our urban health program provides access to quality health care for many citizens: the Community Health and Social Services Center serves the Hispanic community in the West Fort Street neighborhood; the Bruce Douglas Health Center on McGraw; the AIDS Consortium of southeast Michigan, Inc, a community-wide coalition aimed at meeting the physical, psychological, social, and economic needs of AIDS patients.

A community outreach effort, of which I am most proud, was born out of the caring and commitment of a few people who took the initiative to make a difference. A group of Lakeside Medical Center physicians and nurses provides free physical examina-

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tions several times a year for children in the Macomb County Head Start program, a preschool program for underprivileged children.

On the occasion of our 75th year we proudly recall the events that have made us what we are today. However, we cannot rely on our past successes to carry us through the tumultuous times facing health care. Reductions in state and federal reimbursement through initiatives such as diagnosis-related groups, cuts in payment for Medicare and Medicaid services, reduced federal

spending for research, the possibility of a national health insurance program, the more than \$20 million we devote each year to care for the underinsured and uninsured, and the pressures for mergers among health care institutions all present serious challenges to our ability and resolution.

On October 18th, the reunion of the Henry Ford Hospital Medical Association will convene. We can all take advantage of this opportunity to rejoice in our past, appreciate our present, and plan for our future.