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Hospital San Francisco concentrates on what it does best

By : B.G. DOYLE
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When a company sets out to be a leader in its field, it focuses on its strong points and works to fine-tune and specialize in those areas. Hospital San Francisco in Río Piedras, which has been serving the local community since 1968, recently took that route, and has succeeded in making a name for itself as one of the island's top providers of pediatric, surgical, and internal medicine services.

"Specialization has been the key to our success and rapid growth," said Milton Cruz, president of Hospital San Francisco. "By taking a cost-effective approach and focusing on what we do best, we are able to provide top-quality services in these areas, using the most sophisticated technology available."

The facility started out as a small community hospital in the late 1960s as a locally run operation whose goal was to offer the best possible care to children and adults alike. Cruz was appointed president of San Francisco Hospital in 1991. In 1998, a U.S.-based firm took over for a brief interval. Soon after, it once again became a locally owned company, when Cruz and his firm, **MedHoldings Hospital Management Corp.**, purchased the hospital in July 2004. Cruz, a lawyer and graduate of Boston University Law School, with significant experience in corporate real estate, also had been president of Bayamón's San Pablo Hospital for a decade.

This new management, along with Cruz's passionate dedication to the 160-bed hospital and the community it serves, Hospital San Francisco now boasts two centers of excellence: pediatrics and surgery. It has some 400 employees, and serves an estimated 38,000 patients a year.

Hospital San Francisco is currently No. 305 on the CARIBBEAN BUSINESS list of Top 400 Locally Owned Companies. "The decision to specialize has contributed to our significant growth in a very short time," Cruz said. "We believe warmth and compassion are essential components to a [patient's] full recovery. Our new strategy has enabled us to give more personalized attention to each individual as well."

In the field of pediatrics, the hospital operates two units with a total of 60 beds; its Caribbean Pediatric Institute features a 24-hour, fast-track emergency room, pediatric hospital, and intensive care unit (ICU). It has a doctor on duty 24 hours and specialists in orthopedics, pneumology, cardiology, gastroenterology, surgery, neurology, infectology, and radiology. Rooms are designed to be appealing and comforting to children. "Children are



very special to us, and we have saved the lives of many who have been in intensive care for a long time," said Cruz, who added this has included babies less than a year old.

Hospital San Francisco's Surgery division currently has 36 beds and is divided into three distinct institutes, each a specialized area: orthopedics, general surgery, and ear, nose & throat (ENT). In its Orthopedic Institute, specialists and surgeons use the most advanced technology and specialized equipment to meet the diverse orthopedic needs of patients with acute trauma, dislocations, and fractures. In the Surgery Institute, specialists in general surgery, ophthalmology, gynecology, urology, and several subspecialties, perform surgeries using the latest in laparoscopic techniques and other high-end technology used in modern operating rooms. In the ENT Institute, specialists rely on the unique state-of-the-art Navigator NT Image Guidance system to ensure precision and minimal risk of complications when performing surgical procedures to alleviate chronic sinus conditions, remove polyps, or correct deviated septums.

The 27-bed Internal Medicine unit is Hospital San Francisco's third area of specialization. It features a telemetry division that allows nurses to monitor a patient's cardiac rhythms from the nurse's station, with an alarm that goes off in the event of unusual rhythmic changes. The unit's team of specialists in more than nine areas—cardiology, pneumology, neurology, endocrinology, infectology, nephrology, rheumatology, gastroenterology, oncology, and more—is backed by a highly trained group of assistants.

Hospital San Francisco has a 24-hour emergency room and other divisions, including a multidisciplinary ICU with specialists and top-of-the-line technology and equipment: monitors for pulse rate, breathing, blood pressure, and temperature, as well as oxygen chambers, mechanical ventilators, and intravenous medicating. It also has incubators and warmers for infants; feeding mechanisms; suction devices for removing secretions from the throat, mouth, and stomach; and nebulizers.

The hospital also features an Imaging Center, where physicians and technicians do mammograms, fluoroscope exams, such as barium swallows; upper gastrointestinal and small bowel series, barium enemas, gall bladder series, hysterosalpingograms, intravenous pyelograms; also voiding cystourethregrams, myelograms, arthrograms, and biopsies; sonograms for detecting abnormalities in internal organs, for monitoring blood flow and fetus development. It is also where patients can have spiral computer tomographies of the neck, thorax, abdomen, pelvis, and various extremities, as well as other conventional radiology procedures.

The hospital's laboratory, which is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, provides same-day results in the majority of cases; and its anesthesiology department is well-respected and rated first class by the medical community. Those visiting the hospital also have the convenience of a multilevel parking garage with a 500-vehicle capacity. "Our specialized services and the way our facility is structured has attracted many people, and doctors and healthcare specialists consider it a privilege to use our facilities," Cruz said.

Regarding the institution's future, Cruz said he and the administration have several projects in the works for this year aimed at ensuring the hospital's further growth and enhancing the high-quality specialized care its patients now receive. Plans include creating a special section of luxury suites for high-end patients with hotel-like surroundings, specially prepared meals, fresh flowers, and daily newspaper delivery. Upgrades will include new Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) services, major renovations in the lobby and cafeteria, adding assisted living quarters, as well as installing an information technology system.

"We also are forming alliances with local supermarket chains to get the message out to the community about disease prevention," Cruz said. "To stay productive, people have to take care of themselves and maintain their health."

As part of the hospital's commitment to the community, Hospital San Francisco sponsors the *Federacion Puertorriqueña de Voleibol* (Puerto Rico Volleyball Federation) and the *Liga de Baloncesto Superior Nacional* (Puerto Rico Basketball League). "Not only have we succeeded in establishing an excellent institutional culture that provides excellent working conditions for our employees, we also continue to meet our goals in providing the kind of quality care the Puerto Rico community deserves," Cruz said.

Hospital San Francisco

Type of business: Hospital

Headquarters: Río Piedras

President: Milton Cruz

Employees: 350

Year founded: 1968

2003 Revenue: \$17.52 million

Rank on Top 400 List: 305

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