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RUSH TRANSFORMATION

With a history spanning nearly 170 years, Rush has been part of the Chicago landscape longer than any other health care institution in the city. In fact, Rush Medical College received its charter on March 2, 1837, two days before the city of Chicago was incorporated. Its founder, Dr. Daniel Brainard, named the school in honor of Dr. Benjamin Rush, the only physician with medical school training to sign the Declaration of Independence.

Rush Medical College was the first institution of higher learning chartered in Illinois and one of the first medical schools to open west of the Alleghenies. The early Rush faculty - well known across the American frontier for its expertise - engaged in patient care, research and teaching, and was associated with a number of scientific developments and new clinical procedures.

In the early 1940s, Rush discontinued undergraduate education, but its library was maintained and its faculty continued to teach at the University of Illinois School of Medicine. In 1969, Rush Medical College reactivated its charter and merged with Presbyterian-St. Luke's Hospital, which itself had been formed through merger in 1956, to form Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center. Rush University, which now includes colleges of medicine, nursing, health sciences and research training, was established in 1972. The Medical Center officially changed its name in September 2003 to Rush University Medical Center to reflect the important role education and research play in its patient care mission.

A History of Firsts

The history of Rush University Medical Center is rich with innovation, change and growth. Here are just a few examples of how Rush alumni and faculty have advanced medicine over a history spanning nearly 170 years.

1837: Rush Medical College receives its charter, two days before the city of Chicago is incorporated.

1923-25: George Dick, MD, and Gladys Rowena Henry Dick, MD, contribute greatly to determining the cause and treatment of scarlet fever, a disease then endemic to North America and Europe.

1948: James A. Campbell, MD, joins Presbyterian Hospital as a specialist in cardiology. He establishes Chicago's first cardiac catheterization laboratory and performs the first heart catheterization in Chicago.

1962: Rush surgeon William Shorey, MD, becomes the first physician in the United States to reattach a severed hand.

1965: Cardiologist John Graettinger, MD, working with Rush engineer Robert Sessions and other collaborators, develops one of the first implantable cardiac pacemakers in the world. It was also the first used in a patient in Illinois.

1966: George M. Hass, MD, a professor of pathology at Rush, is the first to demonstrate the role of nicotine in the hardening of arteries and the thickening of blood that can lead to heart attack and stroke.

1968: Hassan Najafi, MD, performs the first successful heart transplant in Chicago at Presbyterian-St. Luke's Hospital, which required a team of 30 medical professionals working in two rooms.

1985: Rush opens the region's first comprehensive breast cancer center.

1991: Rush neurologist Frank Morrell, MD, develops Multiple Subpial Transection, an innovative surgical procedure for the treatment of epilepsy.

1998: The Core Center, the nation's first freestanding, specialized outpatient health care facility for HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, is completed. It combines the resources of Cook County Bureau of Health Services and Rush to prevent, treat and conduct research on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other related diseases that affect men, women and children throughout the metropolitan area.

2001: Richard Berger, MD, an orthopedic surgeon on the medical staff at Rush, pioneers a new minimally invasive surgical approach to hip replacement that helps patients recover more quickly and with less pain.

2004: Rush is the only U.S. center participating in a study exploring the safety and tolerability of a new gene transfer agent delivered directly to the basal forebrain, an area of the brain almost universally affected by Alzheimer's disease.

2005: Rush physicians find that mild cognitive impairment is an indicator of Alzheimer's disease or cerebral vascular disease, and should not be considered part of the normal aging process.

Most photos courtesy of Rush University Medical Center Archives