

**The Reporters:****Barbara Benson:** (718) 855-3304**Gale Scott:** (212) 210-0746*Crain's Health Pulse* is available Monday through Friday by 6 a.m.**Reproduction, forwarding or reuse in any form is prohibited.**

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**Today's News Thursday, January 29, 2009****LICH Info Jammed**

The executive committee of the medical staff at Long Island College Hospital says that Continuum Health Partners has refused its request to inform the local community that the hospital has not shut obstetrics or pediatrics. Continuum, LICH's parent, wants to shut the departments to help the finances of the ailing hospital, but the Department of Health has ordered they remain open because the community needs them. Dr. Arnold Licht, president of the medical staff, says that Continuum would not give the doctors its database of patients and residents so the doctors could send a letter at their own expense. "They refused to send a letter, saying it's not a closed issue yet," he says. Continuum says it is promoting the hospitals' services through local media.

**Didgeridoo Therapy**

Inspired by Swiss researchers who found that people with sleep apnea improved after learning to play the Australian Aboriginal instrument called the didgeridoo, an NYU research team has launched a 10-patient study. Getting a melody out of the 6-foot-long eucalyptus-wood pipe requires sustained heavy breathing, which could strengthen the muscles in the airway. But Montefiore Medical Center's Dr. Michael Thorpy, the New Zealand-born head of that system's sleep disorders clinic, is reserving judgment. He has tried to play the instrument himself. "It's hard to blow it right. But I don't know why it would work for apnea. There are lots of athletes who are very fit and muscular, and they have sleep apnea." Still, he says, the usual therapy of using a pressurized breathing device at night "isn't fun. I'm all for anything new that would help."

**Medical Appointment Roundup**

Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers named Dr. Akram Boutros interim chief medical officer. He was formerly executive vice president and chief administrative officer for St. Francis Heart Center in Roslyn, L.I., and chief operating officer of South Nassau Communities Hospital in Oceanside. He will serve on a consultancy basis. ... NYU Langone Medical Center named Dr. Michele Pagano deputy director of the NYU Cancer Institute. A professor of oncology and a biotech researcher with a focus on enzymes' role in cell growth, he will help shape the center's efforts to get new therapies to patients quickly. ... New York Hospital Queens has a new chairman of its heart surgery program. Dr. Samuel Lang, chairman of the Cardiothoracic Surgery Department, rejoined NYHQ after serving for 10 years as section chief of cardiothoracic surgery at Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers.

**Caritas closure could leave med students hanging**

The prospect that Caritas Healthcare will shutter Mary Immaculate and St. John's Queens hospitals is sending medical students training there into a panic. In a blog for students at Caribbean-based medical schools, the posts reflect the students' frustration.

"Wow, that's not good news. ... While I agree MIH or St. John's aren't the best rotations, it is always better to have more options and slots than none at all," writes one blogger.

Another posts: "I am doing rotations at St. John's currently. A St. John's resident told me that family medicine [students were] just informed that they are going to have to find another hospital to finish their residency because the family medicine program is being shut down in Caritas in two weeks! This is freaking me out because I have just a family practice rotation left to do before I graduate ... and family is a tough rotation to get in NY."

Another blogger posts a communication from the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine, which says it "is working to arrange alternative schedules for all students who have been scheduled for core rotations. ... Students will receive credit for any weeks completed in a rotation, including clerkships that are terminated in mid-rotation. For students who have secured electives at Caritas for later dates in the spring, summer and fall, we would suggest that elective requests be made at other rotation sites."

**At a Glance**

**CONFERENCE:** The Association for Healthcare Risk Management of New York, the local chapter of the American Society for Healthcare Risk Management, is holding a conference on Feb. 10, from 8 a.m. to noon, at Mount Sinai Medical Center. The topic is "mental health and the law." For information and fees, see [www.ahrmny.com](http://www.ahrmny.com).

**SMALL BUSINESS:** Insurers are taking notice of the small business market with relatively low-cost, robust plans. See the story at [crainnewyork.com/smallbiz](http://crainnewyork.com/smallbiz).

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