



LSU

HEALTH CARE SERVICES DIVISION
LOUISIANA'S HEALTH SYSTEM

LSU and VA collaborate to rebuild N.O. Health Care

For Immediate Release

BATON ROUGE, LA (February 23, 2006) – Louisiana State University and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs today signed an agreement to explore the feasibility of jointly building a teaching hospital and Level One trauma center in downtown New Orleans.

Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco was on hand as Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin, the VA under secretary for health, and LSU System President Dr. William Jenkins signed a Memorandum of Understanding to study the hospital construction during a news conference at the governor's office.

"Today, VA is demonstrating that we are an organization that makes good on its promises," said Dr. Perlin, adding, "We will return to New Orleans stronger than ever."

"This is a very important step in returning Level One trauma service to the New Orleans region along with providing a state-of-the-art medical training facility," said Dr. Jenkins. "This collaborative venture would establish a mutually beneficial relationship with the VA, which we hope will provide for more efficient delivery of medical care as the city recovers from the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina."

"This collaboration between Louisiana and Veterans Affairs is great news for the state and veterans that will be served by the rebuilt VA hospital," said Sen. Mary Landrieu. "I am very supportive of this collaboration and look forward to working with the state and the VA in the coming months to provide the best services for our veterans."

LSU's Health Care Services Division operated both Charity and University hospitals that were badly damaged by the hurricane. Likewise, VA medical centers in New Orleans and Gulfport sustained major damage. Efforts are underway to repair and partially re-open University Hospital to provide emergency and acute care.

“The opportunity to maximize limited dollars through collaboration with the VA is immense, bold, and compelling in our post-Katrina environment,” said Donald R. Smithburg, Executive Vice President of the LSU System and Chief Executive Officer of the LSU Health Care Services Division.

The memorandum of understanding sets up a basic framework for future talks between LSU and the VA. No timeline was established for the discussions. In addition, precise details, including the cost and size of the new hospital complex, will be worked out later along with a site for the new medical center. Funding will draw upon both state and federal sources.

“Our collaboration with our partners at LSU will create long-term savings for taxpayers in Louisiana and throughout the Nation.”

As the agreement outlines, critical to discussions between the VA and LSU will be a determination of the present and future demographics of the seven-parish New Orleans metropolitan area and how the makeup of the population, including its size, will impact the need for health care services, medical research and medical education for both LSU and Tulane University health care professional students.

LSU and VA officials say they will closely study collaborative health care delivery models around the U.S., paying particular attention to the Texas Medical Center model in Houston where the institutions specialize in every conceivable aspect of health care, ranging from care for children to cancer patients, heart care, and organ transplantation.

The memo of understanding notes the VA and LSU were already involved in many “valuable and productive relationships.”

“These relationships existed between the parties to foster cooperation and collaboration in tertiary, specialty and primary care, and especially in medical education and training for the medical professionals employed at the facilities,” the agreement points out.

The New Orleans VA Medical Center served as a referral center providing tertiary care for veterans in the Gulf region prior to Hurricane Katrina. The Medical Center's large Outpatient Clinic program handled 500,000 visits annually treating approximately 40,000 veterans from the 23 parishes in its service area. Following the hurricane, VA mobile clinics were deployed to Hammond, LaPlace and Slidell. These mobile units are being converted to permanent VA Outpatient Clinics providing primary care and mental health services. These are in addition to the two existing VA Outpatient Clinics in Baton Rouge and Houma.

The LSU Health Care Services Division hospital and clinic system is the largest provider of health care in Louisiana, with more than 1.2 million patient visits annually to 350 outpatient clinics, and 46,000 admissions to eight hospitals.

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The LSU System, meanwhile, operates ten public hospitals across Louisiana. The LSU Health Care Services Division is the largest provider of health care in the state, with more than 1.2 million patient visits annually to 350 outpatient clinics and 46,000 admissions to nine hospitals.

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