

New Hospital

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New construction in the heart of Chinatown? How Chinese Hospital accomplished the impossible

The story of Chinese Hospital in San Francisco's Chinatown dates back over 100 years with the 1899 opening of Tung Wah Dispensary. Conceived by 15 community organizations or associations under the leadership of the original Six Companies, it was born out of necessity when Chinese were denied healthcare by mainstream hospitals. After it was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake, the Dispensary would reinvent itself as a modern Chinese Hospital in 1925, followed by opening of an annex in 1979. Now the original 1925 building has been completely rebuilt as the new Patient Tower which will celebrate a grand opening on April 18, 2016.

The new Patient Tower is a fully-modern primary care, boutique hospital with state-of-the-art medical equipment housed in a facility that incorporates current innovations in patient-centered healthcare. It is a community funded hospital (hospital balance sheet, bond issuance, private donations) with little or no government grants. Chinese Hospital, which began as a mere dispensary born out of necessity, would grow into a model of community healthcare system and emerge with continued relevance in the post-Affordable Care Act world. This is a story of an ethnic community hospital that is succeeding in the complex U.S. healthcare environment today. Now, the hospital and the healthcare system it spawned cares for a diverse San Francisco community. One of a few remaining 'San Francisco Originals', Chinese Hospital has been reinventing itself throughout The City's history starting in California's gold rush of 1849. Like many from around the globe, Chinese immigrants from the southern Canton region came to California in search of gold. After the gold rush, Chinese immigrants were found to be useful as laborers, quietly contributing to the building of the First Transcontinental Railroad that would link United States and other part of North American continent during the railroad boom. The presence and success of increased number of Chinese immigrants led to backlash and discriminatory actions by the mainstream society, political and civic, with the passing of The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The federal law would not be repealed until 1943, over 60 years later. The Act's passage that led to openly discriminating against Chinese people meant that Chinese in America were denied access to many services including healthcare. It was under these circumstances, without access to any healthcare, the Chinatown community would give birth to the Tung Wah Dispensary in 1899, originally located on Sacramento Street. In an era when Chinese relied mostly on herbal and other Eastern medicines, the Dispensary provided both Eastern and Western medicines, side-by-side, to the sick in Chinatown. San Francisco's Great Earthquake of 1906 spared no part of The City including the Tung Wah Dispensary and Chinatown around it. Though the Dispensary was reopened to continue its vital services, the

community realized the need for a fully-modern hospital. To make it happen, the leadership once again went into action. Fundraising activities reaching far and wide, with pledges coming from every major Chinatowns in the United States, Hong Kong and mainland China, would galvanize the larger Chinese community around this important mission. The San Francisco Chinese New Year Parade and modern day Miss Chinatown USA traces its roots to the fundraising activities by the Chinese communities around the country. The new Chinese Hospital in 1925 was an epic event for the community. It celebrated with a weeklong parade throughout Chinatown that included beauty pageants, marching bands, and of course, lion dances and firecrackers booming throughout. The original Chinese Hospital was staffed by both mainstream doctors and western-trained Chinese doctors to give credibility of the hospital.

Early years would prove financially difficult with the hospital going nearly out of business due to the amount of free care given to patients. The healthcare funding mechanisms of today did not exist then. The founding constituent organizations had funded much of the operation until it established holdings in donated real estate and the rents generated by it.

Chinese Hospital celebrates grand opening of new patient tower

One of the more notable events in Chinese Hospital was the birth of famous martial artist and movie star Bruce Lee in 1940. Otherwise, times were relatively quiet until in the early 1970's, when California found itself with hospital overcapacity and deemed Chinese Hospital not necessary. The 50-year old hospital also did not meet new fire and seismic standards. This is when the community once again rose to the challenge to pave the way for the opening of the new hospital in 1979. After the Chinese Exclusion Act was lifted in 1943, Chinatown residents began to move out to other parts of San Francisco. Chinese Hospital followed to care for the community out to the neighborhoods by opening primary care clinics. These efforts, which began in 1996, grew to three primary care clinics, in Sunset district (Sunset Health Services), Excelsior district (Excelsior Health Services), and Daly City (Daly City Health Services @Skyline Blvd) by 2008.

In a continuing effort to expand its services, in February of 2016, Chinese Hospital opened its first full-service, multi-specialty Outpatient Center in Daly City. This meant that for the first time, services like laboratory services, x-ray, mammograms, ultrasound, bone density scanning, integrative medicine, pharmacy, optometry, and primary care can all be found under one roof to serve residents of southern San Francisco and Daly City area. It also houses the fourth primary neighborhood clinic (and second in Daly City) called Gellert Health Services. In 1998 Chinese Hospital launched the capital campaign to raise funds for the new Patient Tower that would replace the original 1925 hospital building. Ground-breaking for the new Patient Tower on December 12, 2012 marked the beginning of the construction. As of 2016, the hospital had raised nearly \$200 million for the building construction. More is needed to furnish the facility with state-of-the art medical equipment for the community so fundraising is on-going. Now, on April 18, 2016, at 11am, nearly 20 years of hard and patient work will culminate in the opening of the 100,000 square feet new Patient Tower. The 8-story building will meet all the latest seismic requirements and provide the highest quality care to patients. Nearly every medical service at the new Level 4 Emergency Center facility will be expanded: 88 beds (an increase from 54), state of the art diagnostic imaging department, Cardio-pulmonary outpatient services, 4-surgical suites, all-private ICU beds, and a telemetry unit. The new building

will also house East West medicine services, pharmacy and Chinese Community Health Plan (CCHP) member services center.

There have also been careful attention and investments in major state of the art utility system to ensure that patient stays are as comfortable as possible. They include highly efficient climate control systems, 100% LED lighting, patient entertainment and educational system via interactive TV's. Last but not least, the patient rooms will have the most spectacular views of San Francisco bay for better healing: Ranging from Alcatraz, Coit Tower, Treasure Island and the Bay Bridge, Financial District with Transamerica Building and Chinatown. With the new Patient Tower and the health system it has built over the 100 years of service, Chinese Hospital is poised to thrive in the new Affordable Care Act world of healthcare in America. The little Tung Wah Dispensary that was born out of necessity has not only survived, it has thrived, to care for not only for its own community, but also care for the broader community at large.

The Chinese Hospital today is positioned to care for the community for the next 100 years. For visual updates on the New Hospital construction, visit our live construction camera.