

## St. Vincent Medical Center Opens 30 Bed Unit for Korean-American Patients

**By Greg Schwarz**

*Vice President of Business Development and Marketing  
St. Vincent Medical Center*



Asian and Pacific Islanders are the fastest growing ethnic minorities in the United States. In the City of Los Angeles, the Korean American population, for example, has grown substantially over the last decade and today some 300,000 Korean Americans comprise what is known as Korea Town, the cultural

centerpiece of a neighborhood that resembles a large city in Korea.

A positive, proactive approach to treating patients from other cultures requires sensitivity in the acute care setting, an openness to their differences, and an understanding of their social, communication and moral needs.

To meet the medical, cultural and communication needs of the Korean American population in Los Angeles, St. Vincent Medical Center (SVMC), -- Los Angeles' oldest hospital -- has opened the Korean Pavilion, a dedicated 30-bed unit for Korean-American patients. It is the first such Asian-specific unit to open in the region.

Staffed with Korean-American physicians and nurses, who speak fluent Korean, the new Korean Pavilion offers Korean cuisine, Korean TV channels and Korean signage throughout the unit. Special designers were brought in to ensure the unit was culturally sensitive to the Korean-American population,

ensuring proper "feng shui."

St. Vincent Medical Center has seen the number of Korean-American patients it treats grow commensurately as the overall Korean population in Los Angeles surged during the last decade.

In developing the Korean Pavilion, we analyzed our patient demographics and found that 30 percent of the total patients we had been treating were Korean-American. At the time, St. Vincent Medical Center was staffed with more than 80 Korean-speaking physicians and nurses, but as a whole, we felt that there was more we could do to better accommodate a large section of patients. We worked intensely with our physicians to develop the Korean Pavilion to give our patients the comfort of home during their time of healing. Mutual communication is the cornerstone to ensure high quality patient care, which is a great challenge of many hospitals which serve multi-ethnic patients.

Central city hospitals like ours are

seeing more patients with different languages, cultural sensitivities and religions that can at times overwhelm caregivers. As a downtown Los Angeles hospital serving a very diverse patient population, we have learned to effectively communicate in our patients' languages and accommodate their cultural needs to make sure we provide the best possible care. The Korean Pavilion underscores how serious we take the cultural needs in caring for our patients.

The new Korean Pavilion allows us to provide integrated inpatient care for our patients with highly sensitized nurses, staff members and caregivers who understand the cultural needs and can communicate with patients in their native language. Our team worked hand in hand to create an environment that provides ease and comfort for our patients and their families.

The Korean Pavilion opened earlier this year and has been well-received by the public. Patients have expressed a new level of comfort and connection with their care providers.

Opening the Korean Pavilion was a natural extension of our focus on providing specific clinical care to this fast-growing community. St. Vincent Medical Center opened the Asian Pacific Liver Center (APLC) as a hospital clinic and research

center in 2007 and has since become the primary hepatitis B research and outreach center in metropolitan Los Angeles. The outreach began when the APLC started reaching out to churches in Asian communities in the Los Angeles area, asking for a few minutes after sermons to discuss hepatitis B risks and screenings.

More than half of the approximately 1.5 million known hepatitis B carriers in the United States are Asian and Pacific Islanders. When left untreated, the virus leads to cirrhosis—scarring of the liver that can result in liver failure (one in four individuals with liver scarring progresses to liver failure); and may also lead to liver cancer.

With three consecutive years of awards for quality healthcare services from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), St. Vincent Medical Center has been ranked fifth among Best Hospitals in the Los Angeles Metropolitan area for 2011-2012, according to U.S. News & World Report.

Providing compassionate healthcare and serving the sick poor has been the mission of St. Vincent Medical Center for more than 157 years. Established in downtown Los Angeles in 1856 by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Vincent is a world-renowned, 366-bed facility, offering comprehensive medi-

cal services, including ear surgery and neurosurgery, general orthopedics, spine care, joint replacement, cancer treatment, cardiovascular services, thoracic surgery, electrophysiology, interventional cardiology, and multi-organ transplantation. St. Vincent Medical Center is part of the Daughters of Charity Health System, a nonprofit Catholic health system spanning the California coast.

St. Vincent Medical Center is located at 2131 West Third Street, Los Angeles, CA 90057. To learn more about the Korean Pavilion, visit [www.stvincentmedicalcenterkorean.org](http://www.stvincentmedicalcenterkorean.org).

*With more than 20 years of healthcare experience, Greg Schwarz serves as the Vice President and Director of Business Development & Marketing for St. Vincent Medical Center. Since joining St. Vincent Medical Center three years ago, Greg has been instrumental in the development of the St. Vincent Spine Institute, the St. Vincent Cardiac Institute, the St. Vincent Orthopedic Institute and the Korean Pavilion. His expertise includes network development, managed care, IPA management, contract negotiations, hospital business development, physician relations, strategic planning, hospital operations and bottom-line management. Greg earned his Master in Business Administration from Pepperdine University.*

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