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## Brooklyn's First Minimally Invasive Procedure to Control Blood Pressure

Hypertension affects nearly half of all U.S. adults.\* In Brooklyn, there are more than 900,000 individuals living with hypertension, or 29% of the population. Though common, it comes with heightened risk for serious health conditions, like heart attack, heart failure, and stroke; hypertension was a primary or contributing factor in more than 685,000 deaths in the U.S. in 2022.

Despite the wide availability of antihypertensive medications, primary care physicians know how challenging it can be for some patients to gain lasting control over hypertension. They're not alone. According to the CDC, about three-quarters of people with high blood pressure do not have their condition under control. In Brooklyn, roughly 45% of individuals with diagnosed hypertension are not being treated to control their blood pressure and/or actively managing it.

"High blood pressure is a significant health problem, and for many of our patients with this condition, medication and lifestyle changes don't provide enough control," said Dr. Sergey Ayzenberg, Associate Director of Interventional Cardiology, Maimonides Health.

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### For Resistant Hypertension, a Cutting-Edge Treatment

Maimonides Heart & Vascular Institute is bringing a new option to patients in Brooklyn. We are now the first hospital in Brooklyn to offer a groundbreaking renal denervation (RDN) procedure to treat high blood pressure. Renal denervation targets the sympathetic nervous system, which plays a significant role in blood pressure regulation. The procedure involves the disruption of the renal nerves, which are part of the autonomic nervous system, reducing sympathetic nervous system activity and ultimately lowering blood pressure, especially for those with resistant hypertension.



In tandem with medications and lifestyle modifications, this helps achieve more optimal blood pressure levels.

There are currently three approaches

to renal denervation: radiofrequency ablation, ultrasound, or neurotoxin injection.\*\* The Symplicity Spyral™ renal denervation (RDN) system, approved by the FDA in 2023, is the first catheter-based approach using radiofrequency energy. The minimally invasive procedure is approved for use as a complementary treatment in patients with hypertension when lifestyle changes and antihypertensive medications do not adequately control blood pressure.

“The renal denervation procedure can provide patients with a blood pressure reduction benefit that is ‘always on’ and doesn’t require a permanent implant,” said Dr. Ayzenberg. “The effect on the patient is similar to the blood pressure reduction of a single medication.”

This reduction can have significant health benefits. A 10mmHg drop in blood pressure can significantly reduce the risk for conditions associated with hypertension, including a 20% reduction in risk of major cardiovascular events, a 27% reduction in risk of stroke, and a 28% reduction in risk of heart failure, among other effects.\*\*\*

Renal denervation can be especially effective in patients with resistant hypertension, patients on multiple medications, or patients who cannot tolerate any or multiple medications. Lack of adherence to medication and lifestyle changes can be a significant hurdle on the path to hypertension control, highlighting the need for alternative treatment strategies like RDN.

### An Experienced Cardiac Team with a Record of Excellence

Maimonides is one of a select few hospitals in the region offering the Symplicity Spyral™ RDN system, and our track record of excellence in both interventional cardiology and minimally invasive surgery is translating to success in this new, cutting-edge procedure. We have consistently achieved top outcomes in percutaneous coronary interventions (PCI) — the only hospital in New York State to achieve better PCI outcomes than the statewide average for 11 years in a row (2006–2018) — which speaks to our expertise in handling complex cardiovascular cases.

“Our interventional cardiology team is second to none,” said Dr. Ayzenberg. “We’ve built a program that not only leads the region in outcomes, but also sets a standard for patient care. Renal denervation is just one of the many advanced procedures we offer, and we’re committed to providing our patients with the best possible treatment options.”

In addition to our procedural expertise, Maimonides offers comprehensive care for hypertensive patients. From initial diagnosis to long-term management, we ensure that each patient receives individualized care tailored to their specific needs. This multidisciplinary approach, combined with our state-of-the-art facilities, makes us the ideal choice for patients considering renal denervation or other advanced cardiac services.

“We are looking forward to the future of hypertension care and are proud to be at the forefront, offering innovative solutions and peace of mind to the people of Brooklyn,” said Dr. Ayzenberg.

**For more information on Maimonides Heart & Vascular Institute, visit <https://maimo.org/treatments-care/heart-vascular-institute/>. To refer a patient, call (718) HRT-BEAT (718-478-2328).**

\*\* [https://www.ajkd.org/article/S0272-6386\(22\)00647-3/fulltext](https://www.ajkd.org/article/S0272-6386(22)00647-3/fulltext)

\*\*\* [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(15\)01225-8/fulltext#:~:text=Every%2010%20mm%20Hg%20reduction%20in%20systolic%20blood,significant%2013%25%20reduction%20in%20all-cause%20mortality%20%280%C2%B787%2C%200%C2%B784%E2%80%930%20%280%C2%B791%29.](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(15)01225-8/fulltext#:~:text=Every%2010%20mm%20Hg%20reduction%20in%20systolic%20blood,significant%2013%25%20reduction%20in%20all-cause%20mortality%20%280%C2%B787%2C%200%C2%B784%E2%80%930%20%280%C2%B791%29.)

### Brooklyn's Only Center of Excellence for Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgery

Millions of female patients need some type of gynecologic surgery every year. It may be a hysterectomy or removal of a uterine fibroid or ovarian cyst. Whatever the case, most of these procedures are being performed minimally invasively. Completing these techniques effectively requires surgical expertise.

[Maimonides OB/GYN Specialty Services & Women's Health Institute](#) offers the sophisticated care that women need to treat these issues comprehensively. In addition to receiving our ninth consecutive recognition earlier this year as a [Five-Star Recipient for Vaginal Delivery](#), we were recently named Brooklyn's only Center of Excellence in Minimally Invasive Gynecology (COEMIG) by the Surgical Review Corporation. It's a recognition that spotlights our dedication to patient safety and surgical outcomes, says [Lindsey Michel, MD](#), Associate Fellowship Director, Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgery (MIGS).

"Being named a Center of Excellence highlights our commitment to delivering the highest quality care for our patients," she says. "Patients may be able to get a MIGS procedure at a different institution, but as a Center of Excellence, we have demonstrated that we maintain the highest standard of care and that our patients experience extremely positive results with few complications."

Maimonides is the largest MIGS program in the borough and has the only fellowship in MIGS in Brooklyn.

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#### Exceeding Expectations

To be acknowledged as a Center of Excellence in MIGS, our OB/GYN and Women's Health group fulfilled strict criteria, including staffing mandates and technology access. Two of the most significant additional requirements centered on surgical experience and patient volume, areas in which our physicians surpassed expectations.

Currently, Maimonides has nine gynecologic surgeons who each carry high-volume surgical caseloads. Each performs well over 50 MIGS procedures each year. With this patient volume, they are all accredited as either surgeons of excellence or master surgeons.



"As a result of our consistent surgical volume, gynecology performs the highest volume of robotic surgeries at Maimonides," she says. "With robotic surgeries alone, we complete over 400 procedures for our female patients who need gynecologic care."

#### Offering Leading-Edge MIGS Procedures

Although some female patients may need open surgery, most can receive the surgical care they need with a MIGS procedure. In fact, most hysterectomies—for benign and malignant disease—are now completed minimally invasively.

In addition to hysterectomies, Maimonides surgeons are trained to perform a full spectrum of MIGS procedures. They have extensive experience with laparoscopic and vaginal surgical techniques needed to treat cancer, pelvic floor disorders and common benign gynecologic conditions including endometriosis, fibroids, and adnexal pathology. Maimonides providers also have expertise in newer procedural techniques including vaginal natural orifice transluminal endoscopic surgery (vNOTES) and transcervical radio-frequency ablation of fibroids.

Dr. Michel says there are multiple benefits for patients who undergo a MIGS procedure. Minimally invasive techniques can reduce pain and scarring. Patients also experience less blood loss, a shorter recovery time, and a lower risk of infections and complications.

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### A Multidisciplinary Approach to Care

In some cases, patients may have other surgical or medical needs that appear alongside their gynecological condition. They can access the coordinated care they need in [Maimonides Doctors Multispecialty Pavilion](#). With a wide variety of providers in one location, patients can schedule routine visits, diagnostic tests, and non-surgical treatments without traveling between multiple buildings.

“We’re thinking about the patient from the holistic level with this strategy,” Dr. Michel says. “A lot of times, patients need more than surgery. They may need other treatments, like pelvic floor physical therapy, which can benefit their condition. At Maimonides, it’s all available in the same building as a one-stop-shop.”

This approach also streamlines a patient’s surgical care and reduces the risks associated with multiple procedures.

“We bring together different providers across multiple fields. Whenever we can, we work collaboratively to perform procedures at the same time,” she says. “For example, if a patient needs a hysterectomy for fibroids and they also have a pelvic floor issue, we will work alongside their urologic surgeon to complete those two procedures together.”

### Expanding Access to Innovative Treatment

Although gynecological disease can affect any female patient, health disparities do exist. Individuals in racial and ethnic minority groups frequently face a higher risk of delayed diagnosis and more advanced disease. Traditional, open surgery is the more common treatment in those cases. But at Maimonides, our providers work with patients to offer an alternative whenever possible.

“Ultimately, we’re trying to decrease some of these disparities by providing patients with access to high volume surgeons who are able to perform these complex procedures minimally invasively instead via traditional laparotomy,” Dr. Michel says.

Overall, Maimonides is positioned to provide these innovative, patient-friendly services to a broader patient population.

“Maimonides is unique in its location, and the population we serve is diverse and vast. Many don’t have access to this kind of care,” she says. “We are increasing that reach and providing excellent quality care that people thought they could only receive in Manhattan. Instead, we’re offering access right here in our community.”

**To learn more about Maimonides OB/GYN Specialty Services & Women’s Health Institute at <https://maimo.org/treatments-care/obstetrics-and-gynecology/>.**

**To refer a patient, call (718) 283-9044. 📞**

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### Dr. Charlene Chao Brings Deep Connections with Chinese and AAPI Communities

Maimonides has a long history of serving the community and building relationships that help us to reach patients in ways that are most effective for them. This is a priority for the [Department of Surgery](#), and recent initiatives show our commitment to ensuring all patients in Brooklyn have access to cutting-edge, expert care in a comfortable, welcoming setting.

#### Promoting Health Care Access

We have made significant strides in recent years to reach Asian American patients — particularly those closest to us in Sunset Park’s Chinese American community, the largest, fastest growing Chinatown in the United States. In Brooklyn, the population who identified as Asian increased from 10.5% in 2010 to 12.1% by 2021 while the borough population grew by 5.3% during that time.\* In New York City as a whole, the

Chinese population makes up the city’s largest Asian ethnic group.\*\*

At Maimonides, increasing health care access for the growing AAPI and Chinese American communities is a priority. Nineteen percent of patients at Maimonides are from the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Of our patients who speak a primary language other than English, those speaking Chinese languages make up 34%.



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We have several programs designed to engage these communities and help our patients get the most out of their treatment and experience, including:

- Multilingual patient representatives, including five representatives from the Coalition of Asian-American Independent Practices Association (CAIPA) in our Emergency Department
- Mandarin-speaking interpreters on site daily, in addition to 24/7 video and telephone interpreters available in more than 100 languages
- Health education sessions at community locations, including Chinese language health sessions
- Free cancer screenings and follow-up for uninsured or underinsured patients
- Regular community health needs assessments and community participatory research

### **Strengthening Expertise, Community Connections to Reach More Patients**

This year, [Charlene Chao, MD](#), an accomplished surgeon with a passion for using the most advanced surgical techniques to help alleviate pain and suffering for patients, joined Maimonides' Department of Surgery. Dr. Chao is fellowship-trained in general surgery and minimally invasive surgery, also specializing in [bariatric surgery](#), and comes to Maimonides with deep connections to Brooklyn's Chinese American community, as well as other Chinese community enclaves around the city, such as Manhattan's Chinatown and Flushing, Queens. Dr. Chao's roots in Brooklyn are influential to her clinical practice.

"I was born in China and came to this country at age 16," she says. "Brooklyn was my first stop. It's the place I consider my hometown in the United States, and the place I first was introduced to surgery during my education at SUNY Downstate."

Early in her career, Dr. Chao began working with CAIPA leaders, primary care providers (PCPs), and other leaders in medical care throughout Brooklyn's Chinese community who share her passion for expanding expert care for these patients. She saw the need for a general surgeon familiar with the culture and needs of Chinese Americans. Partnering with these PCPs, she built up her surgical practice, increasing volume and activity over the years. She now draws patients from across Brooklyn, Chinatown, and Flushing, to her surgical practice, in addition to patients from many diverse communities in Brooklyn, like Sunset Park's Hispanic and Latino community.

### **Extensive Experience in Robotic and Minimally Invasive Techniques**

During her training, Dr. Chao embraced robotic and minimally invasive surgical techniques at an early stage, well ahead of when these began to be more widely available to patients. She values these techniques for their capacity to reduce patients' pain, scarring, blood loss, risk of infection, recovery time, and need for pain management medications, all markers that set her apart to patients as she built her practice.

"Patients come to my practice because they know that for many procedures, minimally invasive surgery is the best option," she says. "No one wants to get cut open if they don't have to, and patients are often well informed now that they don't have to. Maimonides recognizes this and has these tools readily available and nurses trained with them, making what might elsewhere be a complex surgery much easier and more effective for patients."

### **Maimonides' Expert Team is Here for the Needs of Brooklyn's AAPI Community**

As a multispecialty surgeon, Dr. Chao is a go-to choice for referrals for many PCPs with patients needing surgery, especially general and bariatric. For patients she can't accommodate for any reason, like volume or expertise, being part of Maimonides helps her connect these patients to the timely, expert care they need.

For instance, Asian Americans have increased risk for hepatopancreatobiliary diseases and cancers. For these conditions, Dr. Chao can help patients and PCPs connect to [Maimonides' Liver, Bile Duct, and Pancreatic Surgery Program](#), launched in April, which brings together a highly trained team of hepatobiliary and gastrointestinal surgeons capable of treating hundreds of patients annually.

For diabetes and other conditions related to bariatric care, patients may present differently in ways related to ethnicity. While Asian patients are less likely to be affected by obesity, according to Dr. Chao, they may be candidates for bariatric care at a lower BMI than patients of other ethnicities, because they often develop comorbid conditions like diabetes at a lower BMI. It's critical not only for surgical teams to have this knowledge about diverse patient groups, but also for patients' entire bariatric care teams. Cardiologists, pulmonologists, nutritionists and endocrine specialists are all critical to bariatric surgery success, both

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pre- and post-operation, and Maimonides has the backing of these dedicated multidisciplinary experts to support patients in attaining the best outcomes.

### Positioned for Success

For Dr. Chao, the transition to Maimonides is a natural next step to better reach existing and new patients, while continuing her passion for caring for her community in Brooklyn.

“Maimonides has always been the best institution to care for my patients, because it’s right in the middle of this Chinese

community,” she said. “Finally, the time is right, and I think we’re in the perfect setting. My patients have a dedicated surgeon, and now they have a dedicated hospital, too.”

**For more information on General Surgery at Maimonides, visit <https://maimo.org/treatments-care/general-surgery/>. For more information on Bariatric Surgery at Maimonides, visit <https://maimo.org/treatments-care/general-surgery/bariatric-surgery/>. To refer a patient, call (718)-283-7952.**

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### Specialized Pediatric Kidney Care

When you think of kidney disease, children may not pop into your mind first. Pediatric kidney disease isn’t common as in adults, but it still impacts thousands of kids and teens in the United States every year.

Symptoms can be subtle, making diagnosis difficult. That’s why expert care from the [Division of Pediatric Nephrology and Hypertension at Maimonides Children’s Hospital](#) is critical. Our specialists are trained to recognize these complex conditions and deliver high-quality, comprehensive care to the youngest patients in Brooklyn and the surrounding area.

“Brooklyn is a large, diverse borough with more than 600,000 children, yet 25 years ago, a pediatric nephrology program didn’t exist in our local community. We needed a program to deliver the specialized kidney services that primary care providers couldn’t,” says [Juan Kupferman, MD, MPH](#), Director of Pediatric Nephrology and Hypertension at Maimonides. “Overall, general pediatricians often are able to identify a child with a potential kidney problem but don’t have the specialized training in nephrology that may be needed to diagnose and/or manage these children. Our program significantly helps practitioners who need either support or confirmation of their suspicions. With our expertise, we can provide consultation and management for a full array of clinical diagnoses.”

### Diagnosing and Treating a Wide Range of Conditions

Maimonides’ pediatric nephrology program offers a comprehensive suite of services, including advanced diagnostics, that can identify the most common—and complex—kidney conditions. “Our program is designed to be the first stop for children with kidney disease. We can

diagnose and treat the vast majority of kidney pathologies,” Dr. Kupferman says. “Few children move on to needing dialysis or a transplant. We’re here to provide the primary care they need for kidney disease.”

Pediatric nephrologists collaborate closely with Maimonides radiologists, urologists, and pathologists to identify these conditions:



- Congenital renal and urinary tract abnormalities
- Fluid, electrolyte, and acid-base disorders
- Glomerulonephritis (kidney inflammation)
- Hematuria
- Hydronephrosis (urinary tract dilation that leads to urine collection inside the kidneys)
- Kidney injury
- Kidney involvement in diabetes
- Kidney stones
- Pediatric hypertension
- Proteinuria
- Urinary tract infections

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The division works with radiologists who perform specialized renal ultrasounds to detect many of these conditions. This partnership is among the few advanced nephrology imaging collaborations in the Brooklyn area.

Maimonides recently expanded its diagnostic capabilities with genetic testing, Dr. Kupferman says.

“Existing research shows that genetics may be responsible for a significant number of kidney diseases in children. With this new, available genetic testing technology, we can make many new diagnoses,” he says. “With a simple cheek swab and lab analysis, we can see which inherited conditions are in a child’s genes.”

So far, Maimonides has used these tests effectively to detect genetic causes for multiple kidney diseases, including kidney tubular diseases, cystic kidney diseases, and inherited glomerular diseases, such as Alport syndrome.

### Leading-Edge Treatment Options

Dr. Kupferman says the division is outfitted to treat primary kidney care concerns. Specialists offer a full range of treatments, including:

- Lifestyle modifications, including diet, weight management, and stress reduction
- Antihypertensive therapy
- Reduction of proteinuria
- Anti-inflammatory management
- Renal replacement therapy to remove excess fluids, waste products, and electrolytes from the bloodstream

In many conditions, targeted medications are the best treatment option, he says.

“We recommend anti-inflammatory agents for specific kidney diseases as well as antibiotic therapy for infections of the kidney and urinary tract. In addition, we can prescribe anti-hypertensive medications for our pediatric patients with hypertension.”

Providers obtain frequent blood tests to monitor electrolytes and kidney function to ensure the treatment is working and the patient’s condition is under control.

While Maimonides focuses on primary kidney concerns, they also assist patients who need more in-depth care. Dr. Kupferman says the division refers patients who require surgical intervention to Maimonides’ urology providers.

### A Focus on Pediatric Hypertension

Treatment for pediatric hypertension is one of the factors that makes Maimonides’ pediatric nephrology program unique. Hypertension affects up to 5% of children and teens, potentially leading to long-term damage in multiple organs. When a secondary cause of hypertension is identified, it is often due to kidney-related issues. In children and adolescents, approximately 70 to 75% of cases of secondary hypertension are associated with kidney diseases or abnormalities, according to Dr. Kupferman. The kidneys play a crucial role in regulating blood pressure, so any impairment in kidney function can significantly impact blood pressure levels.

But many providers don’t know that pediatric hypertension is an existing problem, says Dr. Kupferman, who is also a trained pediatric hypertension expert.

To diagnose hypertension in children, Maimonides offers 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring. This state-of-the-art specialized service makes detection of hypertension more accurate.

“With a blood pressure cuff connected directly to a monitor, we get automatic blood pressure readings three times an hour over 24 hours,” he says. “This way, we capture blood pressure when the child is calm—not just when they’re nervous at the doctor’s office.”

Maimonides pediatric nephrologists and the child’s pediatrician use these findings to design treatment plans to control hypertension. In many cases, these plans focus on weight loss through diet, exercise, and sodium restriction.

Ultimately, Maimonides’ Pediatric Nephrology Division provides personalized care. Providers collaborate closely with the patient’s pediatrician to make sure they address the child’s individual needs.

“We take a comprehensive approach to ensure our patients feel seen and heard,” he says. “We are well positioned to deliver the care they need, even for the most complex nephrology cases.”

**Learn more about pediatric nephrology and hypertension at Maimonides Children’s Hospital at <https://maimo.org/treatments-care/childrens-hospital/pediatric-nephrology-and-hypertension/> or call 718-283-7500 to make an appointment or refer a patient.**

## New Accreditations at Maimonides Cancer Center

At Maimonides, patient safety and quality of care are top of mind for our providers. Achieving accreditations in our programs is one way we help our patients to have peace of mind, knowing they are in the best hands for the care they need. Our clinicians take pride in knowing they are voluntarily upholding and remaining accountable to the standards of care set by the nation's most authoritative clinical groups across the wide variety of disciplines offered here.



In Brooklyn, all accreditation roads for oncology lead to [Maimonides Cancer Center](#). We are Brooklyn's first fully accredited cancer center, and our recent accreditations expand our decade-long reputation as an oncology leader.

"Our accreditations demonstrate that at the Cancer Center, we're providing the utmost level of care at the highest standard," says [David Berlach, MD](#), Chair of Radiation Oncology at Maimonides Medical Center. "It shows our patients and referring providers that we're doing things right, and it also shows that we're constantly learning and improving."

### Latest Accreditations

In the past several months, Maimonides' expertise and development of our cancer programs has earned us several new and renewed accreditations.

"If you're a physician looking to refer your patients for oncology care, our numerous accreditations will definitely make you feel more comfortable," Dr. Berlach says. "You can feel confident that you're sending your patients to a place that has been thoroughly checked and approved."

Our recent accolades highlight our leading-edge oncology services and our high level of multidisciplinary collaboration:

**Overall Cancer Care:** In January, we earned re-accreditation from the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer. This designation highlights our patient-centered approach to care and the variety of available patient services, including clinical trials, genetic counseling, rehabilitation, screenings, and survivorship programs.

**Breast Cancer:** Maimonides is Brooklyn's only full-service breast care facility. In June, we were recognized as one of the only centers in the nation to earn full accreditation from the American College of Surgeons National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC). Our [Erminia Rivera Breast Imaging Center of Excellence](#) is a trailblazer for breast screening, diagnostic imaging, and advanced image-guided biopsy.

**Lung Cancer:** In May 2024, we earned our designation as a Lung Cancer Screening Center from the American College of Radiology. This recognition acknowledges our state-of-the-art CT scanners and our staff's expertise with these screenings.

**Patient Safety and Quality:** In October, Maimonides earned its sixth re-certification from The Joint Commission, confirming we have fulfilled all requirements to protect the safety of our patients and providers while delivering the highest quality care.

**Colorectal Cancer:** Maimonides is embarking on the accreditation process for colorectal cancer care. We expect to receive this recognition from the American College of Surgeons National Accreditation Program for Rectal Cancer by the end of 2024.

### Increasing Access to High-Quality Care

Accreditations are a testament that Maimonides invests in delivering the highest quality care, fulfilling a lengthy list of requirements for each program's validation. We spend several years gathering performance and outcomes data before completing in-person or virtual evaluations that can last up to a week.

But these accolades do more than announce our current capabilities. They also push us to work harder and continue to expand the services we provide, Dr. Berlach says.

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“Earning these awards reveals our strengths and what we already do well. But it also identifies our blind spots,” he says. “It shows us where we need to focus our energies in terms of improving. We discover how other institutions provide cancer care and determine how we can do things better. It keeps us vigilant.”

In many ways, the accreditation process is like continuing medical education for providers, he adds. Preparing for each accreditation review takes years, and it gives us the opportunity to learn and incorporate leading-edge policies and protocols.

### Care That’s Ahead of the Curve

Our Cancer Center leaders work hard to ensure we fulfill the ever-changing qualification requirements for each accreditation. In some ways, though, we’re a trailblazer. Dr. Berlach says we have launched several initiatives that make us the leader of the pack in improving healthcare quality.

“We’re way ahead of the curve in many ways,” he says. “For new accreditation requirements and those that currently aren’t considered in these evaluations, we’re definitely out ahead.”

These efforts include:

**Breast Cancer Survivorship:** Several years ago, the NAPBC announced breast cancer survivorship programs would be a new accreditation requirement. Maimonides led the way — our leaders already had designs for a program and plans to hire a nurse to lead the initiative.

**Radiation and Surgical Technology:** Our radiation oncologists are at the forefront of using new technologies. To enhance our accreditation efforts around patient care, they routinely use intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) and brachytherapy. Our surgeons utilize wireless technology to locate breast tumor, making removal more efficient and simplified.

**Tumor Board Software:** Although it’s not an accreditation requirement, our oncologists use NAVIFY Tumor Board Solution, a tumor board-specific software, to streamline multidisciplinary collaborations and conversations. This tool integrates with the electronic health record and makes accessing previous discussions and recommendations for individual patient cases easier.

Dr. Berlach says that Maimonides pursues and earns accreditations to inspire greater confidence in our wide range of oncology services.

“We strive to achieve these accreditations. And it’s something we do easily because everyone works hard and cares about our patients. We want to achieve these accreditations to prove to the patients and ourselves that we’re as good as we can be,” he says. “We consistently hit it out of the park in the Cancer Center.”

**To learn more about Maimonides Cancer Center or to refer a patient, call 718-765-2500 or visit <https://maimo.org/treatments-care/cancer-center/>.**

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### Nerve Transfer Surgery to Restore Function, Reduce Pain

Upper extremity nerve injuries are common. According to the National Institutes of Health, patients report nearly 8 million cases every year.\* These injuries frequently impact both quality of life and daily functioning. So, there’s a need to deliver innovative, advanced therapies that can restore muscle capabilities and relieve pain.

Maimonides is fulfilling this need through its [Bone and Joint Center](#). As New York’s [No. 2 center for orthopedic surgery](#) and the city’s only center to receive the Healthgrades’ Orthopedic Surgery Excellence Award for three years in a row (2022-2024), Maimonides is one of the few local institutions that provides a multidisciplinary approach to delivering leading-edge nerve injury treatments for hand



and wrist injuries. Nerve transfer surgery—a procedure that replaces a nonfunctioning or damaged nerve with a healthy one—is one of its most unique surgical offerings.

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“Nerve transfer surgery remains a specialized and relatively rare practice across the country — it’s a niche practice,” says [Issac Gammal, MD](#), orthopedic hand surgeon at Maimonides Bone & Joint Center. “Few centers nationwide offer this advanced procedure, and we are proud to make it available right here in Brooklyn.”

### Delivering Complex Nerve Injury Treatment

Upper extremity nerve injuries are complex. They can result from congenital disorders or trauma. Treating these conditions requires a high level of precision and expertise. Maimonides providers are highly skilled in performing these procedures, aiming to restore muscle control and reduce pain for patients.

With extensive training in microsurgical orthopedic procedures for the hand, as well as peripheral nerve surgery, Dr. Gammal leads Maimonides’ nerve transfer surgery program. He performs these complicated procedures for many patients every year.

To help patients with nerve injuries, he completes:

- **Nerve transfers to restore muscle function:** These procedures redirect expendable nerves linked to a different muscle to bypass the patient’s existing nerve injury and restore their function.
- **Supercharged end-to-side transfer:** This technique treats chronic nerve compression. Surgeons connect the injured nerve to a healthy donor nerve to trigger nerve regeneration.

Patients who have exposed nerve endings after an amputation need a nerve transfer procedure called targeted muscle reinnervation. This surgery connects a patient’s nerves to myoelectric prosthetic devices that move in response to nerve signals. It can also reduce phantom limb pain. Although Maimonides doesn’t offer this procedure, Dr. Gammal refers patients to dedicated amputation centers through existing relationships with these specialists.

### A Multidisciplinary Approach to Nerve Injury Therapy

Nerve transfer surgery is a complex procedure that requires multidisciplinary partnership, Dr. Gammal says. While surgeons may perform the procedures, delivering the high level of care these patients need involves partnerships across various specialties.

At Maimonides, the collaborative care process begins with a comprehensive evaluation of each person’s condition.

“We start with a full, in-office evaluation to assess the patient’s functional deficits and determine what can be restored with nerve transfer,” Dr. Gammal explains. “Then, our electrophysiology partners conduct electrodiagnostic testing to measure the extent of the patient’s nerve injury and potential for recovery.”

Diagnostic radiologists capture CT and MRI scans, providing essential guidance for the neurologists and orthopedic and trauma surgeons who perform these intricate procedures either at Maimonides Medical Center or the Bone & Joint Center’s Brooklyn Surgery Center practice. To ensure precision, Maimonides surgeons use several advanced microsurgical tools and protocols, including:

- **Checkpoint devices** to stimulate nerves during surgery.
- **Nerve conduits** (wraps) to repair peripheral nerve injuries and create a protective microenvironment that fosters nerve regeneration.
- **Nerve grafting** to use healthy nerves to reconstruct injured or damaged ones.
- **Surgical microscopes and micro-sutures** to enhance visualization of the patient’s nerves.

After surgery, patients benefit from a holistic approach to recovery, with access to physical and occupational therapists who help them rebuild their strength. Psychiatrists can address any mental health concerns as needed.

### Improving Patients’ Quality of Life

At its core, nerve transfer surgery is a transformative procedure that significantly enhances a patient’s quality of life, Dr. Gammal says.

“This surgery can improve lives in many ways. If a patient has lost certain motor functions, the procedure can potentially restore them to near pre-injury levels,” he explains. “Additionally, it combats issues related to chronic nerve pain — a condition for which effective treatments are limited. For those suffering from chronic pain, nerve transfer surgery offers a potential pathway to relieve that discomfort.”

Patients also benefit from convenient access to this complex procedure and Maimonides’ comprehensive approach to care. Since every nerve injury or nerve condition is unique, the Maimonides team takes an individualized approach to care. In many cases, this personalized care results in pain relief that patients didn’t think was possible, Dr. Gammal says.

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## FEATURED STORIES

“Many patients with traumatic injuries or long-standing nerve pain feel like they’ve exhausted all options — that there’s nothing more that can be done,” he says. “This treatment, now available to them, offers the potential to alleviate their pain and improve their function.”

**For more information on hand and wrist orthopedic surgery at Maimonides, visit <https://maimo.org/treatments-care/bone-and-joint-center/orthopedic-services-and-procedures/hand-wrist-orthopedic-surgery/>. To refer a patient, call (718) 283-7400.**

\* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK553109/>

## FEATURED STORIES

### A Partner for Comprehensive Epilepsy Care

Epilepsy can appear in patients at any age, even if they don’t have other neurological conditions. One in 26 people develop epilepsy during their lifetime.\* Epilepsy affects everyone differently, which can make getting the appropriate treatment complicated. Fortunately, [Maimonides Medical Center](#) is at the leading edge of comprehensive epilepsy care.



[Maimonides Division of Neurology Services](#) takes a multidisciplinary and multi-institutional approach to delivering medical and surgical treatments for this intricate disease. They provide the highest level of individualized care using the most advanced diagnostics, says [Benjamin Cunningham, MD](#), Director of Epilepsy at Maimonides Medical Center.

“Epilepsy is a complex condition that requires personalized and nuanced care for everyone. Providing this care across an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse community like Brooklyn is a unique challenge,” he says. “The experienced,

expert-trained physicians we have here at Maimonides, along with our ancillary staff, serve as the connectors for all aspects of care. We’re dedicated to tackling this challenge.”

#### The Only Comprehensive Epilepsy Center in Brooklyn

Maimonides is the only comprehensive epilepsy center in Brooklyn. To deliver this high level of service, our epileptologists partner with other epilepsy specialists at SUNY Downstate and Kings County Hospital Center. Together, these facilities earned designation as a Level 3 epilepsy center through the National Association of Epilepsy Centers.

Maimonides clinicians collaborate closely across specialties to provide a full range of medical, neuropsychology, and surgical services to patients with various types of epilepsy. Through weekly conferences, providers discuss diagnostic approaches, possible surgical options (when appropriate), and long-term treatment plans for complex or otherwise challenging cases.

“Weekly multidisciplinary conferences are usually done at Level 4 centers that perform surgical procedures, so as a Level 3 center we are unique,” says [Susanna O’Kula, MD](#), a Maimonides epileptologist. “First, we reach a group consensus internally, which means eight epileptologists are thinking critically about a patient’s case. That level of coordination is invaluable.”

Maimonides and its Level 3 partners don’t perform surgical interventions for epilepsy. But they still help coordinate this care, Dr. Cunningham says. Through existing agreements, they refer patients to larger Level 4 centers in the surrounding area. The Maimonides team also provides all pre-surgical and post-surgical care and therapy.

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## FEATURED STORIES

“Epilepsy is a chronic condition that requires management over the course of years — and for some people, the course of their lives,” says Dr. Cunningham. “Many of them, at some point, may require a surgical intervention that we can coordinate through our relationships in Manhattan. But, otherwise, from start to finish, our patients receive continuous, top-notch epilepsy care from us right here in Brooklyn.”

### Thorough Diagnostic Testing

Because epilepsy can appear at any time and affect patients in multiple ways, diagnosis can be difficult. But accurately identifying the source of a patient’s seizures is critical, Dr. O’Kula says. Consequently, Maimonides’ epileptologists rely on a wide range of diagnostic tools to determine if patients need medication or surgical intervention.

Depending on a patient’s symptoms, providers can record inpatient electroencephalogram (EEG) videos to characterize seizures, perform routine EEG studies in an outpatient lab, or refer individuals for ambulatory EEGs. Maimonides neurologists collaborate with a neuropsychologist to lateralize and localize language and memory function and perform epilepsy-protocol brain MRIs that can identify any brain damage or lesions that could generate seizures.

In conjunction with neurointerventionalists and a neuropsychologist, epileptologists conduct Wada testing to characterize critical language and memory functions. By using live X-ray imaging, contrast dye, and anesthesia, they can determine which parts of the patient’s brain are most involved in those activities. The results are essential to pre-surgical planning because they provide vital information about the strengths and deficits of both sides of the brain.

Genetic testing is available for patients with nonlesional or unusual cases of epilepsy, Dr. Cunningham says. With a simple cheek swab, Maimonides’ epileptologists test individuals for 300 of the most common epilepsy-linked genes.

“In many instances, these pathologically identified genes have helped us educate our patients and guide our conversations around their prognosis and clinical source,” he says. “In some instances, it helps us better tailor their therapy.”

### A Wide Range of Treatment Options

Anti-seizure medication is the first line of epilepsy treatment. At Maimonides, patients have access to traditional prescriptions and newer ones that show promise as maintenance and rescue medications.

“We want to ensure our patients have options for emergency treatment of seizures either by themselves or by a family member,” Dr. Cunningham says. “We are advocates and feel comfortable using these newer, valuable therapies.”

However, up to one-third of patients won’t respond to medication. For them, Maimonides offers a path towards therapeutic surgical intervention, including implantation of therapeutic neuromodulation devices such as vagal nerve stimulation. For other interventions including surgical resection, laser ablation, or implantation of a deep brain stimulator or responsive neurostimulation device, Maimonides epileptologists handle all pre-surgical planning and post-operative follow-up.

“What’s appealing to other physicians is the ability to refer patients to us so patients don’t have to travel into Manhattan,” Dr. Cunningham says. “We have the expertise in managing all these therapeutic devices and any coordination needed around procedures.”

### An Open Door for Patients

Maimonides epileptologists routinely provide evaluation and EEG monitoring services for patients in the hospital’s various intensive care units. However, patients in the community also have easy access to the providers’ expertise.

“We’re here to help with both diagnosis and management for patients who have recurrent unexplained loss of consciousness and recurrent confusional or funny spells that may or may not be seizures,” Dr. Cunningham says. “Whether patients have an established diagnosis of epilepsy or are experiencing epilepsy-like symptoms with an unconfirmed cause, it’s appropriate to send them to us for further evaluation. That’s a reasonable starting point.”

**Learn more about epilepsy care at Maimonides Medical Center at <https://maimo.org/treatments-care/stroke-and-neurosciences/neurology/> or call 718-283-7470 to make an appointment or referral.**

\* <https://www.epilepsy.com/what-is-epilepsy/statistics>

## Dedicated Center to Treat Gastrointestinal Disease

For patients who have gastrointestinal or digestive problems, daily activities can be difficult. And these conditions are a concern for a vast number of people. According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, between 60 million and 70 million Americans have some type of digestive disease.\* Treating these conditions is vital to improving their health and enhancing their quality of life.

To address these critical needs, Maimonides Medical Center established Brooklyn’s only [Neurogastroenterology and Gastrointestinal \(GI\) Motility Center](#) — a center of excellence that brings together specialized expertise, advanced diagnostics, leading-edge equipment, and innovative treatments for GI disorders in one convenient location.

This comprehensive approach ensures patients receive exceptional care tailored to their needs.

“We provide a wide range of services to treat the full spectrum of motility issues all under one roof,” says

[Aaron Tokayer, MD](#), Director of the GI Motility Center. “From swallowing and esophageal disorders to gastric, colonic and defecatory motility issues, we handle everything — testing, diagnosis, and treatment — at our center, streamlining the process and enhancing the patient experience by eliminating the need for multiple visits to different locations.”

### Advanced Diagnostics for Complex GI Disorders

For patients who struggle with GI disorders, obtaining an accurate diagnosis can often be a challenging and prolonged process. Some patients have complex diseases that mimic more common conditions like acid reflux, making it difficult to pinpoint the actual problem. Others may not respond well to first-line, go-to treatments.

At the GI Motility Center, a multidisciplinary team of specialists collaborate to get the answers patients need.



This team includes board-certified experts in GI motility, cardiothoracic surgery, nutrition, [speech and swallowing pathology](#), and [pelvic floor care](#). Together, they take a systematic approach to identifying the underlying cause behind each patient’s symptoms.

“Many patients arrive with a misdiagnosis or they haven’t responded well to the usual treatments,” explains Dr. Tokayer. “We pay attention to details in our office visits and conduct a thorough evaluation. Assessing our patients

based on the complete description of their symptoms helps us identify their specific disorder and deliver targeted treatments.”

Alongside these assessments, Maimonides experts leverage leading-edge diagnostic tools to measure a patient’s GI muscle strength and pinpoint structural abnormalities.

These tools can include:

- Barium X-rays
- Bravo testing (wireless capsule pH reflux testing)
- EndoFLIP: In 2022, Maimonides was the first hospital in Brooklyn to perform an EndoFLIP examination.
- Endoscopy
- Gastric, nuclear or whole-gut emptying scans
- Manometry (anorectal and high resolution)

Even though GI disorders can be uncomfortable and distressing, this kind of specialty care isn’t for everyone. Dr. Tokayer recommends that referring providers consider patients for the GI Motility Center if they need confirmation of a suspected diagnosis or if patients:

- Do not respond to standard treatments
- Exhibit atypical or unusual symptoms

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### **Comprehensive Motility Care, Tailored to Patients' Needs**

Patients who come to Maimonides for GI motility care can benefit from a full spectrum of treatment options that range from conservative approaches to advanced and innovative interventions.

"We excel in treating everything from simple reflux to more complex, involved conditions like a gastric junction outlet obstruction," Dr. Tokayer says. "With every patient, we start with the most conservative treatment options available and intensify their therapy as they need more aggressive interventions."

As a first step, Maimonides specialists prioritize conservative options, including:

- Behavior modification
- Dietary changes
- Eating pattern changes (methods and timing of eating)
- Neural modulators (medications that impact coordination of GI muscles)

However, some patients need more advanced interventions. The GI Motility Center offers a full spectrum of minimally invasive surgical procedures to address their needs, including several that are unique to Maimonides in the area. Through multidisciplinary partnerships, Maimonides provides cutting-edge interventions such as:

**Gastric stimulators:** Surgeons place this implantable gastric pacemaker in the patient's abdomen. It sends electrical impulses that trigger the stomach to function correctly.

**G-POEMS:** This procedure treats gastroparesis, a condition where the patient's stomach doesn't empty completely. It involves making a permanent cut to relax the muscle between the stomach and small intestines.

**Transoral incisionless fundoplication (TIFF):** This endoscopic procedure treats both gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and a hiatal hernia. Surgeons rebuild the valve at the top of the patient's stomach to prevent heartburn and regurgitation.

### **Partnering with referring physicians for continuity of care**

As Brooklyn's only GI motility center, Maimonides offers access to the most advanced, innovative treatment options, which benefits community-based providers and their patients.

"Having access to GI motility care at Maimonides is beneficial for referring physicians because they can connect their patients to specialized services right here in Brooklyn," Dr. Tokayer says. "Not only do they ensure their patients receive specialized, high-quality care but through open channels of communication, the referring physicians also remain actively involved in the treatment process maintaining continuity of care."

And for patients who struggle with GI conditions daily, having this level of care close to home can substantially improve their quality of life.

"Many patients come to us in extreme distress and frustration. They've often seen multiple physicians, have been through many evaluations and treatments, but they still don't feel well," Dr. Tokayer says. "We can often help these patients, those who failed to respond to more routine therapies. You can imagine the relief and satisfaction when we accurately diagnose and deliver targeted therapy that may be more effective than previous treatments."

Chronic constipation, defecatory disorders, physical incontinence, IBS, and chronic abdominal pain syndrome can also be treated with multimodal and interdisciplinary approaches that include dietary and behavior modifications, appropriate testing, physical therapy, pharmacologic and neuromodulation, and occasionally more aggressive or surgical interventions. At Maimonides Center for Neurogastroenterology and GI Motility, we incorporate a multi-dimensional approach for patient care and satisfaction for patients suffering from these disorders, as well as their referring providers.

**Learn more about Maimonides' Neurogastroenterology and Gastrointestinal (GI) Motility Center at <https://maimo.org/treatments-care/gastroenterology/gi-motility-center/>. To refer a patient, call 718-283-5900.**

\* <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-statistics/digestive-diseases>

### One-Year Anniversary of Bay Ridge Emergency Department



Maimonides Health has marked a successful first year of operations at Maimonides Bay Ridge Emergency Department (ED), serving Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, and Southern Brooklyn communities with 24/7 emergency care, with an average patient wait time of just five minutes. Maimonides Bay Ridge ED team has achieved several indicators of high-quality care, including an 83% patient satisfaction rate, far surpassing the NRC Health New York state average benchmark for emergency services of 63% and making the ED's patient satisfaction rate among the highest in New York City. [Read more.](#)

### Dr. Matthew Weissman Joins Maimonides as Chair of Medicine

Maimonides Health is proud to announce that Matthew A. Weissman, MD, has joined as our new Chair of Medicine. In this role, he will be responsible for more than 70 faculty and 250 staff physicians in 13 divisions and interdisciplinary centers, as well as 103 residents and 39 fellows. Dr. Weissman will also continue our focus on developing the physician staff; expanding and improving clinical programs and services; enhancing education for residents and fellows; growing research capabilities; and driving value for patients. Previously, he served as Site Chair of the Department of Medicine at Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital. [Read more.](#)

### Dr. Eitan Dickman Appointed Chair of Emergency Medicine

Eitan Dickman, MD, has been named Chair of Emergency Medicine. Dr. Dickman will oversee all emergency medicine programs and initiatives, in which 60 clinicians serve more than 150,000 patients annually through Maimonides' three emergency departments across Brooklyn. Since joining Maimonides in 2007, he has been essential to the health system's provision of emergency services, and has held various leadership positions including Vice Chair for Academics, Executive Vice Chair, and Medical Director for Emergency Medicine. [Read more.](#)

### Nov. 14: First Annual Maimonides Neurology Symposium

Registration is now open for the 1st Annual Maimonides Neurology Symposium on Thursday, November 14 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Don't miss this free, in-person and virtual symposium featuring top neurology experts. Physicians and other healthcare professionals are invited to attend, especially those involved in neurology care, who can earn up to 7.25 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)*.™ Register today at [maimo.org/neurosymposium2024](https://maimo.org/neurosymposium2024).

### Fabienne Gaillard Ulysse, DNP, Named American Academy of Nursing Fellow


Fabienne Gaillard Ulysse, DNP, AOCNP, MSN, ANP-BC, Assistant Vice President of Nursing at Maimonides, was selected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing. She is among a distinguished cohort of nurse leaders from 15 countries, recognized for their substantial and sustained impact on health and health care. Dr. Ulysse was inducted for her commitment to serving the community, advocacy for those underserved in healthcare, and her influential record, spanning over two decades, promoting health and advancing health equity. [Read more.](#)

### Joshua Schiller, MD, Named Outstanding Educator of the Year

Dr. Joshua Schiller received the Outstanding Educator of the Year award from a Clinical Affiliate Faculty at SUNY Downstate's 2024 Awards Day. An attending physician in Emergency Medicine at Maimonides Medical Center, he is celebrated for his dynamic teaching style and compassionate clinical care. His global impact includes educational sessions for Ukrainian medical students and initiatives in global health and social emergency medicine.


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### **Scott Chudnoff, MD, Earns Best Doctor Women’s Choice Award**

Dr. Scott Chudnoff, Chair of Obstetrics & Gynecology at Maimonides Health, was selected as a Women's Choice Award 2024 Best Doctor, recognized for his commitment to delivering exceptional care in diverse medical settings and meeting the highest standards set by women when selecting a healthcare provider. As a Fellow of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and an active member of numerous professional organizations, Dr. Chudnoff continues to contribute to the field of women's health. [Read the full Best Doctors list.](#) 


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### **Maimonides Named Best Regional Hospital for 4th Consecutive Year**

Maimonides Medical Center was recognized as a Best Regional Hospital by U.S. News & World Report for the fourth consecutive year, and named Best Regional Hospital for Equitable Access, a new award this year. Maimonides is among the elite 11% of U.S. hospitals that earned a numerical ranking in this year's U.S. News Best Hospitals list. [Read more.](#) 


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### **Maimonides Recognized as an Age-Friendly Health System**

Maimonides Medical Center has been recognized as an Age-Friendly Health System – Committed to Care Excellence by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and John. A Hartford Foundation. Being an Age-Friendly Health System entails reliably providing a set of four evidence-based elements of high-quality care, known as the “4Ms,” to all older adults accessing care: What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility. 


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### **Bariatric Program Reaccredited for Ninth Year**

Maimonides Health recently announced it has earned reaccreditation as a Comprehensive Center by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP®), a joint Quality Program of the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS). Maimonides' Bariatric Program has been recognized as a Comprehensive Center for the past nine years. The ACS also recognized Maimonides outcomes for laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy as exemplary in its National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP) Semiannual Report. 


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### **Maimonides Health Receives Nearly \$1.5 Million in City’s FY25 Budget to Improve Cardiac Care, Emergency Response**

Maimonides Health announced that New York City's FY25 budget will provide nearly \$1.5 million to the hospital to support the development of state-of-the-art cardiac electrophysiology laboratories, which will allow faster diagnosis and treatment of heart rhythm problems through advanced imaging, along with the acquisition of a new ambulance for the Bay Ridge Emergency Department. Both investments will improve Maimonides' ability to respond and treat patients facing a health crisis. [Read more.](#) 

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### **New Activity Program for Geriatric Patients and Elderly Community Members**

Maimonides Geriatrics Resource Program is launching the 'Let's Get Social' program to help your geriatric patients and elderly community members connect with others and participate in activities that help them maintain cognitive function, physical strength, and emotional balance. Participation is free. Activities take place on Fridays starting October 4, 2024, and include music appreciation, art appreciation, cognitively impaired activity group, caregiver support group, tai chi, pet support, life stories, and tech support. Details at [maimo.org/geriatrics](https://maimo.org/geriatrics). 

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### September 2024

**Haitham Ahmed, MD,**  
Psychiatry: (718) 283-7864

**Roe Ber, MD,**  
Neurosurgery: (718) 283-7219

**Leah Croll, MD,**  
Stroke Center: (718) 283-7670

**Catherine Chappuis, MD,**  
Breast Surgery: (718) 765-2785

**Antony Delliturri, DO,**  
Thoracic Surgery: (718) 283-7686

**Yesul Kim, MD,**  
Psychiatry: (718) 283-7864

**Nicholas Mahan, MD,**  
Psychiatry: (718) 283-7845

**Ali Imran Mallick, MD,**  
Psychiatry: (718) 283-7864

**Melinda Mann, MD,**  
OB/GYN: (718) 283-9044

**Jad Bou Monsef, MD,**  
Orthopedic Surgery: (718) 283-7400

**Philip Montana, MD,**  
Sports Medicine: (718) 283-7400

**Alejandra Ramirez, MD,**  
Pediatric Hematology/Oncology:  
(718) 283-7500

**Barbara Trejo Ortega, MD,**  
Psychiatry: (718) 283-7864

**Xiaoyang Wang, MD,**  
Hematology/Oncology:  
(718) 765-2600

**Matthew Weissman, MD,**  
Internal Medicine: (718) 283-9055