Penn Health System teaming up with Mercy Health, St. Mary

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The University of Pennsylvania Health System, after expanding its geographical reach during the past few years, is now looking to do more locally by entering into an alliance with Mercy Health System and St. Mary Medical Center.

The deal is not a merger but rather a partnership that will focus on developing joint clinical care programs and population health initiatives.

Financial terms of the alliance are being kept confidential. Mercy Health of Conshohocken, Montgomery County, and St. Mary in Langhorne, Bucks County, will remain part of Trinity Health, a national Catholic health system based in Livonia, Mich.

Mercy Health is the parent of Mercy Philadelphia Hospital in West Philadelphia, Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital in Darby, Delaware County, and Nazareth Hospital in Northeast Philadelphia. It also operates large home care and senior care programs in the region. St. Mary has two inpatient facilities — St. Mary Medical Center and St. Mary Rehabilitation Hospital, both in Langhorne — along with several outpatient care centers. It also has home care and senior care programs.

Officials from the three health systems said the focus of their alliance will be to improve the health care of the communities served by St. Mary and Mercy Health, while facilitating access to Penn Medicine patients in need of specialized and advanced care. Part of that
effort will involve developing joint clinical care programs, such as cancer care, cardiology, surgical services in Bucks County and the surrounding areas. In West Philadelphia, the partnership will explore similar clinical programs and along with regional population health initiatives to address gaps in preventive care — and provide improved access to care for patients with “high-risk, high-cost” health conditions.

Ralph Muller, CEO of Penn Health System, said the intent of the alliance is to offer Mercy Health and St. Mary patients “innovative public health programs and initiatives that will offer patients continued access to high-quality care close to home, as well as advanced care at Penn Medicine hospitals when needed.”

Susan Croushore, president and CEO of Mercy Health, said the alliance will bring together Mercy’s “deep ties” to its communities and Penn Medicine’s academic medicine expertise. “[The partnership] will allow us to further our mission of serving as a compassionate and transforming healing presence,” Croushore said.

James Woodward, president and CEO of St. Mary, mirrored the comments of others saying the alliance will allow the health systems to expand “access to high-quality care provided at lower cost” in the region.

“The strategic alliance between St. Mary Medical Center and the University of Pennsylvania Health System will bring the best of community-based and academic medicine together for the residents of Bucks County,” Woodward said. He added that among the new programs planned for Bucks County are ones focused on behavioral health and substance abuse treatment.

The Penn Health System — which stretches from central and South Jersey to central Pennsylvania — has added three members over the past five years. Chester County Hospital in West Chester, Pa., joined Penn in 2013. Lancaster General Health joined in 2015. Princeton Healthcare joined in January. The system’s Philadelphia hospitals are Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Penn Presbyterian Medical Center and Pennsylvania Hospital, Penn Medicine also operates a network of outpatient care centers, primary care and specialty physician practices. It also operates rehabilitation and long-teen care provider Good Shepherd Penn Partners in a joint venture with Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network based in the Lehigh Valley.

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