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ROBOT STRENGTHENS PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN HUMC AND THE BERGEN COUNTY ACADEMIES



*Pictured from left: Robert J. Aloia, superintendent of The Bergen County Technical Schools/Special Services; Annette Wasielewski, RN, BSN, CNOR, of Lodi, administrative director of Minimally Invasive Surgery and Robotics in The Department of Surgery at Hackensack University Medical Center (HUMC); Alex, 14, and Kate, 16, Szigety of Ridgewood, Bergen Academy students; The new “student” robot of The Bergen County Academies of Hackensack; Garth Ballantyne, M.D., director of The Minimally Invasive Surgery Institute of The Department of Surgery at HUMC; Emily Bocker of Hasbrouck Heights, 17, Bergen Academy student, class of 2008; and Michelle Smith of Lyndhurst, 16, Bergen Academy student, class of 2008.*

Hackensack University Medical Center (HUMC) has had many admirers of its remote presence robot, Mr. Rounder. The Bergen County Academies, located in Hackensack were so impressed by Mr. Rounder, they decided to take action and acquire a similar robot, RobIT.

Academy students will use RobIT to mentor the pediatric patients at The Joseph M. Sanzari Children’s Hospital at HUMC. Additionally, Bergen County Academies will hold future projects at HUMC where students will have the opportunity to intern in a clinical laboratory and visit the patients they mentor.

“When the robot first made its debut at the medical center, heads turned everywhere it went,” said John P. Ferguson, president and chief executive officer of HUMC. “Now, the robot and its presence have become accepted as part of the future of medicine and a part of improving patient care, patient satisfaction for patients, family members, and staff.

In the past, HUMC has been a tremendous part of The Bergen County Academies’ Senior Experience Program, a program in which high school students participate in internships

throughout their senior, academic year. With the unveiling of The Academies' new robot, the interaction of the pediatric patients and RobIT will help strengthen ties between The Academies and HUMC.

“Hackensack University Medical Center has made big efforts to bring robotics into surgery and now, the daily, routine jobs of the medical staff. It is a wonderful idea to spread these technological advancements to the school systems like The Bergen County Academies,” said Garth Ballantyne, M.D., director of The Minimally Invasive Surgery Institute of The Department of Surgery at HUMC. “Our forming a partnership with The Bergen County Academies will be a wonderful, yet educational experience for the patients at The Joseph M. Sanzari Children’s Hospital and for all of Hackensack University Medical Center.”

“The Robot will strengthen our already strong program, providing invaluable knowledge to students in the many fields of technologies, and expose them to careers in medicine through our involvement with HUMC,” said Robert J. Aloia, superintendent of The Bergen County Technical Schools/Special Services.

Dr. Yulan Wang, chief executive officer of InTouch Health joined in the unveiling, conducting his role in the demonstration remotely from Santa Barbara, California. He shared, “This program is exciting because it will potentially inspire the students to put robots into previously unknown applications in our future.”