

Hands-On, Team-Based Learning for Paramedics

By Betty Olt

When Amir Peleg of New Hyde Park joined his town's volunteer Fire Department at 17, he knew he found his passion — helping people get through some of life's most challenging emergencies. Today, after six years in the field as an emergency medical technician (EMT), Mr. Peleg and 18 of his peers are participating in the new Paramedic Education Program at North Shore-LIJ's Center for Learning and Innovation (CLI).

After a three-year hiatus, the revamped program welcomed its new class last summer. Prior to the opening, the 12-month program was reviewed by paramedics, nurses, doctors and educators to offer the region's highest level of paramedic education. The program is competitive and offers a hands-on, team-based approach to learning, not common to paramedic training programs.

The program "draws upon all assets of the health system," said Vincent Papasodero, the EMS course sponsor administrator at CLI's Emergency Medical Institute. Enrollees have access to such North Shore-LIJ resources as the Center for Bioskills, where students practice techniques on cadaver specimens; the Patient Safety Institute, complete with high-tech, computerized patient simulators; and the Clinical Skills Center, which offers training with standardized patients (specially trained actors). Standardized patient encounters give students practice in

communication skills during emergency scenarios based on real life. Patient simulations and standardized patient encounters are videotaped, evaluated and reviewed with the paramedic interns during debriefings. "These are things you can't learn behind a computer screen or in a lecture hall," said Mr. Papasodero.

"I selected the North Shore-LIJ Paramedic Education Program because it has the backing of the whole health system and its reputation is well-known," said Mr. Peleg.

Robust and State-of-the-Art

The course requires about 1,200 hours of integrated study and is equivalent to earning 30+ college credits in 12 months. The rigorous curriculum covers more than 80 areas of medical specialties plus patient care and clinical competencies, and instructors are all paramedics with more than 20 years of EMS experience.

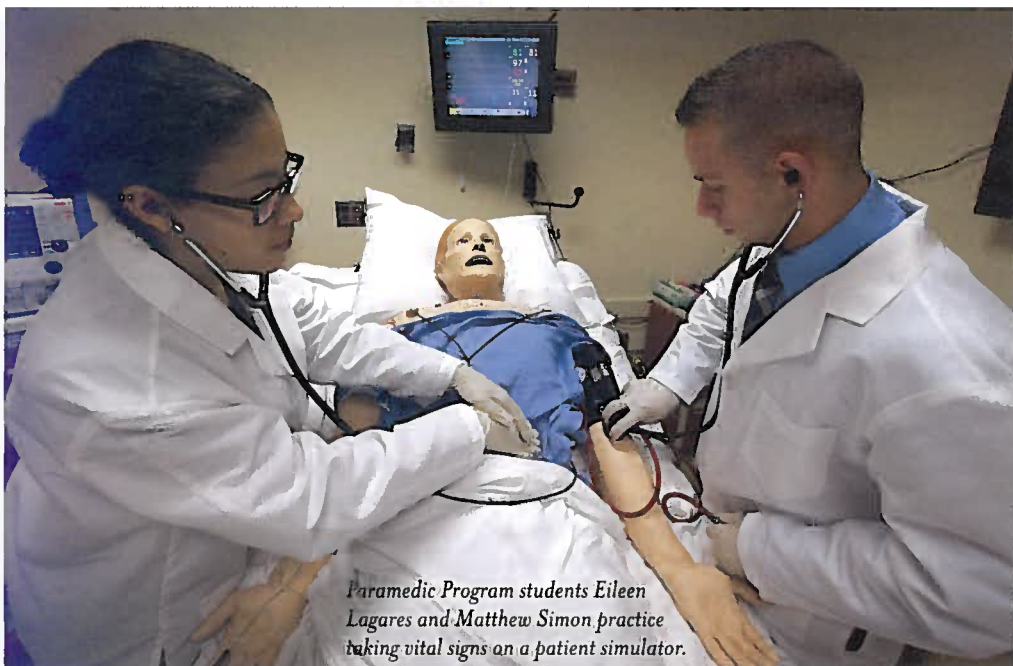
Another paramedic intern, Raymi Smith, EMT, 30, of Bohemia, said, "The training has been very valuable. We interact with standardized patients so it teaches us how to do things properly and we get real-time feedback, which is important because you don't get that in the field."

"The paramedic program is paperless, with every student receiving a Samsung tablet for downloading textbooks," said

Anthony Conrardy, paramedic program director at the Emergency Medical Institute. He added, "Students can use the device during classes for research, keep reference materials at their fingertips during clinical experiences and document performance of skills during patient encounters. Eventually, interns will be able to Skype with program faculty during their clinical experiences."

"There is a high demand for competent paramedics in the downstate region," added Mr. Conrardy. "We are not preparing these interns to be paramedics in just one specific region, but rather anywhere within New York State. This program does an exceptional job in preparing these students and I suspect they will be actively sought by many prospective employers, including the North Shore-LIJ Health System."

Get more information about the Paramedic Program at 516-396-6501.



Paramedic Program students Eileen Lagares and Matthew Simon practice taking vital signs on a patient simulator.