

## **Howard Lipton, DO** **Associate Medical Director**

“When I practiced medicine, I threw away the clock,” said Dr. Howard Lipton. “I said to myself, I’m going to treat these patients as long as they need to be treated. If it takes an hour, I’m going to take an hour.”

Dr. Lipton personifies the “Culture of Caring” at BVMI as he retires a second time, this time from his work as associate medical director of BVMI. He started to volunteer at the health center as a physician in 2009, driven by an urge to “stay sharp” after 40 years as a general practitioner in private practice.

He stayed because he loved the patients and the friendships he developed with the doctors and nurses at BVMI.

“It’s been the people, the friendships, and the satisfaction I see with patients getting better, being treated well, and receiving care so they understand what their diagnosis is,” he said. “They come in here, and we educate them. It’s a pleasure to see how they thrive.”

As the associate medical director, Dr. Lipton worked closely with Dr. Art De Simone, BVMI’s medical director, to review reports that arrived each day from patients’ blood tests, imaging and consultations with outside specialists. He notified their BVMI doctors – who usually spent one day every two weeks at the center – about urgent matters and followed up when necessary.

He filled in as medical director when Dr. De Simone was away. He recruited doctors he knew to come work at BVMI, he said, noting especially the contributions made by his colleague at Holy Name Medical Center, Dr. George Ajjan, a gynecologist.

And he treated his own patients at appointments on one afternoon every two weeks. In fact, even though his administrative duties are now handled by others, he continues to see some of those patients, and follow their progress from his home computer..

“He’s been a doctor for a long time, and he cares,” said Michelle Kaye, BVMI’s director of nursing and clinical services. “He’s devoted to his patients. He wants to make sure they’re getting the care they need. If not, he will be on the phone with me.”

He is also thorough and detail-oriented, she noted. “His charts are long; he puts in a lot of detail.”

Dr. Lipton’s first degree was in pharmacy. Like his father, he is a graduate of the Fordham College of Pharmacy. (One of his sons is also a pharmacist.) After obtaining a second degree, in medicine, from the Des Moines University College of Osteopathic Medicine, he settled in Harrington Park and became a house physician at Riverdell Hospital, an 80-bed facility in Oradell that no longer exists.

Once settled there, he mapped out the best place to open a private practice in general medicine – and decided it would be in a small new office on Washington Avenue in Bergenfield.

By purchasing the practices of two doctors who planned to retire, he quickly established himself with a practice of more than 5,000 patients.

The practice was affiliated with Holy Name and Englewood Hospitals. It had everything: an X-ray suite, ultrasound equipment, a hydrocollator, physical therapy facilities, cryosurgery capacity, and five exam rooms. "I was a real GP," he said.

Dr. Lipton looked forward to seeing his patients. "They became friends, like family." He loved to joke and "kibbitz" on non-medical topics to lighten the mood, he said, a practice somewhat hampered at BVMI by his need for a medical interpreter with Spanish-speaking patients.

But he's not always thinking about medicine.

One of his passions is the New York Philharmonic, whose concerts he has attended as a season ticketholder since the mid-1970s. He and his wife Carol usually could be found in the first tier, first row, center at Lincoln Center's concert hall.

He's seen the Phil's great conductors, including Leonard Bernstein and even Arturo Toscanini, who led a backyard orchestra rehearsal at his home in the Riverdale section of The Bronx that was witnessed by Dr. Lipton from the neighboring property, owned by his wife's family.

For years, the Lipton family sailed their large yacht – it slept seven – up and down the Hudson and out to Block Island. After he sold the yacht, he and his wife enjoyed Atlantic City's casinos while staying at their condo in that city.

What's next? He's looking forward to a cruise with friends this January on a megaship in the Caribbean – a vacation well deserved.