ColumbiaDoctors has its midtown debut

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After more than 15 years at 16 E. 60th St., ColumbiaDoctors has moved to a much bigger location that will both significantly expand its capacity and give it easy access to hundreds of workers in midtown offices. ColumbiaDoctors Midtown opened earlier this month at 51 W. 51st St., between Fifth and Sixth avenues and across from Rockefeller Center.

ColumbiaDoctors is the medical practice consisting of faculty of Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons, College of Dental Medicine and School of Nursing. With its 15-year lease on East 60th coming to an end, the practice found a 125,000-square-foot space on a single floor that it could build out to its specifications. The spacious setting accommodates 125 exam rooms and 20% more patients than the old site. The average cost of construction of health care practices, including equipment, is roughly $400 a square foot. The new site has a somewhat rare 25-year lease.

Many hospitals have expanded their geographic reach by acquiring practices or opening sites in their competitors' backyards. ColumbiaDoctors has about 17 sites now, with growth fueled by recruiting new faculty. The 200 people added last year all need space to practice, and ColumbiaDoctors has expanded into far-flung locations in Westchester, Rockland and Orange counties. Clinical revenue is up by more than 5% in each of the last two years.

Driving the expansion is the trend of "more care being delivered in the office and not the hospital," said Dr. Lee Goldman, executive vice president and dean of Columbia University Medical Center. "As a result, ambulatory care facilities are growing."

With a nod to the fact that his competitors also are expanding, Dr. Goldman added, "We're not expanding because we are competing. If other people are expanding as well, that's OK. The demand is there."

Already the midtown practice, which has some 225 physicians, dentists and nurse practitioners, is accommodating 700 patients daily, but it can handle about double that volume.