# Bristol Hospital's chief medical officer is set to retire in January

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STAFF WRITER

BRISTOL — Bristol Hospital will say goodbye to one of its beloved executives soon as Dr. Leonard Banco, MD, plans to retire in January.

Banco, who serves as the chief medical officer, was the first to assume the position at the hospital and established a great name for himself as he was able to help improve multiple aspects of the organization.

"It was a needed position that most hospitals have nowadays and I had three main goals when I started," said Banco, who started as the CMO in Sep. 2008.

His three goals were to recruit the next generation of up-and-coming physicians for the community, create a robust quality and safety program and make the hospital a learning organization.

"He's really done great with these," said Dr. Kenneth Rhee, MD, president of the medical staff who will assume the role of CMO. "He truly did a lot to change the culture here, which is not an easy thing to do."

When Banco began his position he had multiple challenges to face that he said Rhee will fortunately not have to deal with.

"You have to understand, when I started here I had to establish two things," said Banco. "I had to make a name for myself as I was new here and I also had to establish this position."

Some of Bristol Hospital's most recent developments that Banco had a hand in include its sleep center as well as the Beekley Center for Breast Health and Wellness among other things. It also brought in Dr. Ma. Margarita P. Reyes, MD, who is an award-winning geriatric specialist heading up the Geriatric Medical Program at the hospital.

"The reputation of our hospital is constantly getting better," said Rhee. "The caliber of people that we're bringing in is up there and a lot of that is due to Len's work in recruitment."

The other goal of Banco's that he is well-known for is improving the quality and safety of the hospital.

"He has done a lot with that, which will also be a huge part of my agenda because it's incredibly important," said Rhee.

Kurt Barwis, president and CEO of Bristol Hospital and Health Care Group Inc., said it will be bittersweet to see Banco retire. He has complete confidence in Rhee's ability to fill his predecessor's shoes.

"He was really wonderful to have and he did an amazing job," said Barwis, FACHE. "Dr. Rhee is fully qualified to step-up and take on this new challenge. I expect the transition to be incredibly easy."

The timing of Banco's retirement seemed to align itself perfectly with Rhee's schedule as his second and final term as president of the medical staff is coming to an end. Dr. Bala Shanmugam, MD, MRCP, was recently elected to this position.

Rhee, a prominent OB/GYN here in Bristol, will be moving his practice from West Street to the medical office building at the hospital.

"My job consisted of very long days and the need to be available seven by twenty-four," said Banco. "At some point you want to just settle down and take it easier which I'll be doing very soon."

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