

A Publication of  
**ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON  
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL SOMERSET**

Winter 2023

# healthy

*together*

**LUNG SCREENING:  
WHAT TO KNOW NOW**

**BACK IN ACTION  
WITH NEW JOINTS**

**BEATING AN  
EATING DISORDER:  
ONE TEEN'S STORY**

**BETTER WOMEN'S HEALTH  
AT EVERY AGE**



## MESSAGES FROM LEADERSHIP



“As we enter into 2023 with a renewed sense of purpose, accomplishment and optimism, it’s a great time to focus on getting and staying healthy by making preventive care a priority. And we’re making it easier for you to do all of these things at RWJBarnabas Health. We’ve welcomed even more nationally recognized clinicians; expanded telehealth;

built ambulatory and satellite facilities so that our patients can receive healthcare closer to home; and we continue to improve, expand and modernize our facilities with state-of-the-art equipment and technology. We wish you the best of health in the New Year.”

### MARK E. MANIGAN

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, RWJBARNABAS HEALTH



“Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset is committed to helping you achieve your New Year’s resolutions to improve your health. Doctor appointments and annual screenings such as mammograms can be conveniently scheduled online through MyChart. Patient navigators with our Chinese,

Hispanic and Indian Medical Programs can assist with finding doctors and making appointments. Our team also offers free health education events and screenings throughout the year.”

### PATRICK J. DELANEY

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL SOMERSET

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## HEALTH NEWS



### HONORED FOR CARDIOLOGY CARE AND MORE

Healthgrades has named Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset among

the top 10 percent of hospitals in the nation for cardiology services and among the top 10 percent in the nation for coronary interventional procedures in 2023. Honors that Healthgrades has presented to RWJUH Somerset include the Healthgrades 2023 Coronary Intervention Excellence Award, reflecting RWJUH Somerset’s outstanding clinical outcomes.

The hospital also earned 5-star ratings from Healthgrades for heart failure, cranial neurosurgery, stroke, pneumonia, colorectal surgeries, vaginal deliveries, cesarean-section deliveries and treatment of gastrointestinal bleed, bowel obstruction, sepsis and diabetic emergencies.

### AMONG THE BEST HOSPITALS FOR MATERNITY CARE

RWJUH Somerset has been recognized by Money and The Leapfrog Group as one of the nation’s Best Hospitals for Maternity Care. Only 259 hospitals—representing just 5 percent of hospitals nationwide—made the list. Hospitals eligible for the award must have at least a “B” Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade and meet Leapfrog standards for maternity care, including early elective deliveries, cesarean births, episiotomies, DVT prophylaxis and bilirubin screening.



### EXCELLING IN DIGITAL HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES

RWJUH Somerset earned the 2022 College of Healthcare Information Management (CHIME) Digital Health Most Wired recognition as a certified level 9. As the first hospital in the RWJBarnabas Health system to go live with the Epic electronic medical record system in October 2021, we are proud to be a leader in the use of advanced digital health technologies to improve patient safety, promote patient engagement and enhance business functions.

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# ‘WE’RE HELPING PATIENTS BE THEIR AUTHENTIC SELVES’

## RWJUH SOMERSET OFFERS PIONEERING GENDER AFFIRMATION SURGERY.

**B**uilding on its first-in-state program offering specialized primary care services for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA) community, Robert Wood



JONATHAN KEITH, MD



NITIN PATEL, MD

Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset recently performed its first gender affirmation surgery for a transgender woman.

The hospital is one of only two in New Jersey and a handful in the Northeast to perform “bottom surgery.” The six-hour procedure involves an orchiectomy (removal of the scrotum, along with the penis) and feminizing genitoplasty (construction of the vagina and labia).

The surgeries are performed in a unique partnership between Jonathan Keith, MD, a plastic surgeon at RWJUH Somerset, and Nitin Patel,

MD, a urologist and robotic surgeon at RWJUH Somerset and a member of RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group.

In most cases, gender affirmation surgeries are performed by either a plastic surgeon or a urologist, not both, and may require two separate procedures. Dr. Keith and Dr. Patel have collaborated on over 100 procedures since 2018, also performing gender affirmation surgeries at Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston, another RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) hospital.

“Patients benefit from our experience and multidisciplinary





and board-certified plastic surgeon who specializes in microvascular surgery. He is a member of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health and founder of the Rutgers Center for Transgender Health. He founded the first multidisciplinary clinical program for transgender patients in New Jersey and was the first surgeon in the state to perform a female-to-male phalloplasty for gender affirmation.

Dr. Patel has expertise in robotic, reconstructive and transgender surgery. Prior to joining RWJBH, he served as Assistant Professor and Assistant Program Director at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School in the Division of Urology. He also served as chair for the Robotics Committee while pioneering the use of robotic surgery at University Hospital for reconstruction and transgender surgery.

RWJUH Somerset's surgical and inpatient care nurses have been trained in the care of gender affirmation surgery patients. A patient navigator from the Babs Siperstein PROUD Center is with the patient through every step of their hospital experience, meeting them the morning of surgery, checking on them multiple times daily throughout a weeklong hospital stay and following up after discharge.

Candidates for gender affirmation surgery must be at least 18 years old; have undergone one year of hormone therapy; have identified as their gender for at least one year and have a psychiatric evaluation to confirm their gender identity. The surgery is covered by most major medical insurance.

"It's rewarding that we're helping patients be their authentic selves," says Dr. Keith. "When they come to us, many are depressed and in pain, and after surgery, there's just a calmness about them because they are now at peace with themselves."



## PROVIDING HEALTH SUPPORT FOR THE LGBTQIA COMMUNITY

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset has offered specialized primary care services for the LGBTQIA community at the Babs Siperstein PROUD Center since 2017.

PROUD stands for Promoting Respect, Outreach, Understanding and Dignity. The program is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment where members of the LGBTQIA community age 18 and older can get health and medical services at all stages of adult life in an evidence-based, culturally competent manner.

Beginning as a one-night-a-week clinic, the center served over 200 patients in its first year. In 2019, it was renamed the Babs Siperstein PROUD Center in memory of transgender activist Barbra "Babs" Casbar Siperstein and moved into a new space to accommodate a growing patient population.

The Babs Siperstein PROUD Center, located on the RWJUH Somerset campus, now serves more than 1,400 patients and is open five days a week offering a variety of healthcare services including:

- Comprehensive primary care
- Immunization
- HIV care, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)
- Hormone therapy and monitoring
- Annual wellness exams
- Same-day sick visits
- Chronic illness management
- Referrals for specialty services such as behavioral health services
- Health education and counseling
- Support groups
- Comprehensive healthcare services such as laboratory, radiology, cardiology, emergency, oncology and rehabilitation
- An on-site Walgreen's pharmacy
- Telehealth services

approach because gender affirmation surgery is very complex," says Dr. Patel. "Use of the da Vinci robotic surgical system allows us to be more precise and accurate and requires smaller incisions, reducing the risk of complications and resulting in better patient outcomes."

### A SPECIALIZED TEAM

Dr. Keith is a fellowship-trained

To learn more about the Babs Siperstein PROUD Center at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset, call 855.776.8334 or visit [www.rwjbh.org/somersetproud](http://www.rwjbh.org/somersetproud).





# SPECIAL DELIVERIES

ONE DOCTOR HAS HELPED A WOMAN GIVE BIRTH TO ALL SIX OF HER CHILDREN.

**M**irna Juarez first met John Bucek, MD, in 2000 when she was 17. She was just months from being able to vote—and from becoming a mother. “I was very stressed,” she recalls. “At that age, you know absolutely nothing, and you get scared about everything.”

She had come to Dr. Bucek, a board-certified family medicine physician with Somerset Family Practice at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset and a member of the RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group, seeking pregnancy care but found something else as well: compassion.

“He was so good!” she recalls. “I had seen other doctors, and they had all asked why I was a teen mom. They accused me of not having enough

sex education. But Dr. Bucek was so comforting. He just asked questions like if I knew how long I had been pregnant and if this was my first pregnancy. He wasn’t judgmental.”

It was the start of a doctor-patient bond that would last longer—and through more pregnancies—than either of them imagined.

## A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP

Dr. Bucek handled Mirna’s prenatal visits, and seven months later delivered a healthy baby boy, Alexis. Mirna was thrilled that Dr. Bucek provides comprehensive care for all ages, so he could also be primary care doctor for her and her new son.

“My goal is to make sure everything is OK for everybody in the family,” says Dr. Bucek, who is also a senior faculty

member at RWJUH Somerset’s Family Medicine Residency Program.

Over the next four years, Mirna and Alexis saw Dr. Bucek for matters ranging from routine checkups to sick visits. Then, when Mirna was 21 in 2004, she and her future husband were delighted when she became pregnant a second time. “I made sure to take care of Mirna’s prenatal care and let her know I was there for her,” says Dr. Bucek.

As Mirna went into labor, she headed again to the Maternity Pavilion at RWJUH Somerset, where her son Alan made his healthy debut. His proud parents couldn’t have asked for more, except for one thing: “I thought it would also be nice to have a girl,” Mirna remembers.

Almost a decade passed before she





**LEFT:** Mirna Juarez (second from left) holds twin Layla while her son Alan holds twin Luis Jr., with Mirna's daughters (from left) Ainhoa and Alison. **ABOVE:** John Bucek, MD (left), and Mirna's oldest son, Alexis, who is now serving in the U.S. Army, hold the twins shortly after their birth.

## EXCEPTIONAL MATERNITY CARE

The Maternity Pavilion at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset received a 5-star rating from Healthgrades for clinical outcomes in vaginal and cesarean-section births in the organization's 2022 quality ratings. It's the seventh year in a row that the hospital received a 5-star rating—Healthgrades' highest designation of excellence—for C-section deliveries and the second year in a row for a 5-star rating for vaginal deliveries. Expectant women and new mothers benefit from a wide range of services at the pavilion, including:

- Somerset Family Practice, a center on the RWJUH Somerset campus providing obstetrical and family care
- The Diabetes Center, offering comprehensive pregnancy and postpartum counseling
- A Labor and Delivery Unit with seven private rooms, two operating rooms and a recovery room for C-sections
- Obstetrician-gynecologists available 24/7
- Midwife services
- A dedicated anesthesiologist available 24/7
- A postpartum unit with 20 private, modern rooms and sleep-in arrangements for a primary support person
- Maternal-fetal medicine staff and perinatologist
- Lactation consultation for inpatient/outpatient visits
- Postpartum and infant-care classes for inpatients
- A Level II NICU with a 24/7 board-certified neonatologist and highly trained nurses



tried. Mirna divorced and remarried in 2012, and her new husband, Luis, had no offspring of his own but was interested in having a child together. One year later, Mirna got her wish for a girl when Dr. Bucek delivered her daughter Alison. "He joked that I was very brave, since I already had my hands full with Alexis and Alan," she says with a grin.

### GROWING THEIR FAMILY

Mirna and Luis decided to expand their family further five years later. "This time, after I had been in labor for five hours, I was in a lot of pain," Mirna says. She came to appreciate how the Maternity Pavilion has an on-site anesthesiologist dedicated to obstetrics available 24/7. "Dr. Bucek convinced me to have an epidural," Mirna says. "He told me I would suffer less, and labor would be faster."

The injection blocked pain in her lower body, and within a half hour, she gave birth to daughter Ainhoa. "Dr. Bucek said, 'That's a nice family,'" Mirna says. "I think he thought I was done."

In 2021, she and Luis decided to have just one more baby. She paid Dr. Bucek a prenatal visit in October that surprised them both. "He looked at the ultrasound screen and said, 'Oh, you're having twins!'" she says.

Carrying two babies was difficult for Mirna, who works as a stockroom technician. "By six and a half months, my feet had become so swollen, I could hardly walk," she says. Dr. Bucek put her on bed rest and checked her and the babies with frequent ultrasounds.

On June 20, 2022, Amanda Canova, MD, an obstetrician-gynecologist at RWJUH Somerset, assisted by Dr.

Bucek, performed Mirna's only cesarean section delivery, and twins Layla and Luis Jr. came into the world. "Dr. Canova performed the procedure, but I scrubbed in for it," Dr. Bucek says.

He is proud of his long history of caring for Mirna and her family, with Luis Sr. now his patient as well. "It's fun for both Mirna and me that she's had one doctor for five pregnancies and six babies," Dr. Bucek says.

When Alexis, now 20, visited the hospital following the twins' birth, he and Dr. Bucek posed for a picture, each holding one baby. Dr. Bucek treasures the photo. "I feel that it symbolizes the circle of life," he says.



To take a virtual tour of the Maternity Pavilion at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset, use a smartphone to **SCAN THIS QR CODE.**



# NEW SCREENING OPTIONS FOR SMOKERS

## MORE PEOPLE NOW QUALIFY FOR LUNG TESTS THAT CAN DETECT CANCER EARLY.

If you're a smoker who uses cigarettes now or gave them up years ago, you may be at greater risk of health problems, especially lung cancer. Yet many current and former smokers are unaware of a lung cancer screening that can save lives.

"It's a quick screening that can result in early detection," says Eshan Patel, MD, a hematologist/oncologist at the Steeplechase Cancer Center at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset and a member of RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group. Updated screening guidelines may mean you're newly eligible to receive the test. RWJUH Somerset can also help you quit smoking with a program offering comprehensive support. Here, Dr. Patel explains more about these valuable resources.

### How are lung cancer screenings done?

They consist of an annual, low-dose CT scan. You lie on a table while an X-ray machine takes images of your lungs. The scan only takes about five minutes, is very low dose and is very safe. Insurance covers recommended lung cancer screenings in most cases.

### What happens after images are taken?

A radiologist looks for small lumps called nodules. These are not necessarily cancerous, but they can become cancerous over time. Depending on a nodule's size and characteristics, your doctor may recommend having a biopsy; undergoing another CT scan in

three to six months to see if the nodule has grown or changed; or waiting and having it reassessed at next year's screening.

### What if the test finds lung cancer?

Lung cancer is easier to treat or even cure when it's detected early. If part of a lung has to be removed, earlier detection means the excised area will be smaller than if the cancer were found later. Taking out less lung helps preserve lung function. Early detection also means there is less chance the cancer has spread to other areas of the body. When lung cancer spreads, survival rates become much lower.

### Who should undergo lung cancer screening?

Patients should be 50 to 80 years old and currently smoke or have quit within the past 15 years. They also should have a 20 pack-year history or more of smoking. A pack-year is equivalent to smoking an average of one pack of cigarettes a day for a year. So if you smoked a pack a day for 20 years, that's a 20 pack-year history—and so is having smoked two packs a day for 10 years. These guidelines were updated in 2021.

### Why did guidelines change?

To increase screening opportunities for people who are at highest risk of lung cancer and reduce disparities. Broader eligibility should especially enhance early detection at younger ages among women and Black adults, who are

likelier to develop lung cancer after less cumulative tobacco exposure.

### How can RWJUH Somerset help me quit smoking?

Through RWJBarnabas Health's Institute for Prevention and Recovery, we offer a 12-week program in which you'll get a personalized plan, free nicotine patches and behavioral therapy that can help you manage challenges and prevent relapse. Someone will call you regularly to go over your goals and keep you on track. It's a wonderful program.



ESHAN PATEL, MD



## BEAT CANCER


RWJBarnabas Health and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset, together with Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey—the state's only NCI-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center—provide close-to-home access to the latest treatment options. For more information, call **844.CANCERNJ** or visit [www.rwjbh.org/beatcancer](http://www.rwjbh.org/beatcancer).

For more information about Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset's Lung Cancer Screening Program, call **855.RWJ.LUNG (855.795.5864)**.





# HELP AND HOPE FOR THOSE AT RISK FOR SUICIDE



Contact the RWJBarnabas Health Behavioral Health Access Center at 800.300.0628 for information about services or a referral to a mental health specialist.

## SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, signs that a person may be thinking about suicide include:

### Talking about:

- Wanting to die
- Great guilt or shame
- Being a burden to others

### Feeling:

- Empty, hopeless, trapped or having no reason to live
- Extremely sad, anxious, agitated or full of rage
- Unbearable emotional or physical pain

### Changing behavior:

- Making a plan or researching ways to die
- Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items or making a will
- Taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Eating or sleeping more or less
- Using drugs or alcohol more often

## A RETIRED U.S. ARMY MAJOR GENERAL AND HIS STAFF HELP PREVENT SUICIDE—ONE CALL AT A TIME.

**S**uicide. It's a scary word. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), close to 48,000 people in the U.S. died by suicide in 2020—that's one person approximately every 11 minutes. You may have a family member or friend who is contemplating, or who has attempted, suicide—and chances are you don't even realize it.

- There are several reasons for that.
- The warning signs are not always clear—and not every person exhibits them.
- The associated stigma is so widespread that many people in crisis are afraid or ashamed to reach out for help.
- There's often a very brief period



MAJ. GEN. (RETIRED) MARK A. GRAHAM

between thought and action. Studies have shown that nearly half of those who've attempted suicide did so within 10 minutes of first thinking about attempting.

Nobody knows this better than

Mark A. Graham, a retired U.S. Army Major General who serves as Executive Director, Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care (UBHC) and RWJBH Behavioral Health and Addictions Services, National Call Center and Vets4Warriors, which includes the New Jersey Suicide Prevention Hopeline (NJ Hopeline). One of his sons died by suicide in 2003 and since then, Maj. Gen. Graham and his wife, Carol, have been tireless champions of efforts to promote suicide-prevention awareness.

One in five adults in the U.S. (nearly 53 million people) lives with a mental illness. Yet, it still is not widely acknowledged as "real" sickness. "We've made some progress in changing that perception," says Maj. Gen. Graham, "but we're going to have the stigma until we make mental healthcare part of healthcare. Mental health is health."

One of the goals of the NJ Hopeline, which launched a decade ago, is to make it easier for people contemplating suicide to seek help without fear of judgment. All NJ Hopeline employees have extensive training and are well

prepared to help callers. "During a crisis, quick access to support and care can prevent death by suicide," says NJ Hopeline Program Director William Zimmerman. "We listen, support and assess people for needs. There's no time limit for a call, and we're available 24/7. If we can keep that person engaged and supported, the suicidal action may never happen," he says. Maj. Gen. Graham agrees. "The last thing we want to do is make a person regret that they called," he says. "We want people to feel better, to know that there's hope and help and that they're not alone."

If you or someone you know is experiencing warning signs of suicide, get help immediately. Call 988 or NJ Hopeline at 855.654.6735. For more information, visit [rwjbh.org/behavioralhealth](http://rwjbh.org/behavioralhealth).





# THE GREAT DEBATE:

# CARDIO VS. STRENGTH TRAINING

FIND OUT WHICH ONE IS BEST FOR YOUR HEART HEALTH.

Everyone knows that exercise is good for the heart. But what kind of exercise is most beneficial for optimum heart health—cardio or strength training? Anthony Altobelli III, MD, Clinical Chief of Cardiology, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) and RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) Medical Group, sheds some light on this decades-old debate.

## When it comes to cardio vs. strength training for heart health, is one more beneficial than the other?

The scientific evidence is still building around which form of exercise is best to prevent chronic disease. Historically, aerobic (or cardio) exercise was always recommended for heart and lung health with little attention paid to strength (or resistance) training. What's clear now, however, is that strength training is as



ANTHONY ALTABELLI III, MD

important to heart health as aerobic exercise and that a combination of both yields the best heart outcomes with regard to blood pressure, body composition,

fitness, strength and metabolism. In turn, beneficial change in a person's physiology yields a lower risk of diabetes, hyperlipidemia (high cholesterol), heart attack and stroke.

## What's the best way to combine these exercises?

*Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, a 2018 report from the Department of Health and Human Services, recommends that each week, adults aged 18 to 64 do at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity or an equivalent combination of both. Strength training should be performed at least twice a week on nonconsecutive days to allow a period of rest for the muscle groups being stressed.

## How does age affect the type of exercise(s) a person should do?

As we age, safety becomes an issue. The aging adult should do both forms of exercise, but participation should take into account chronic medical conditions,

such as musculoskeletal disorders, that may place the individual at risk for injury. For people at risk for falls or with balance issues, resistance exercises, such as chair squats, heel lifts, rowing, resistance bands, bicep curls and shoulder presses, may be effectively and safely performed. Research continues to support strength/resistance training for older individuals.

## What advice do you have for the average person who wants to start an exercise regimen to improve their heart health?

Recommendations are based on age and whether the individual is new to an exercise program. First, choose exercise that you may find enjoyable. Second, set realistic expectations for how often and how long you'll exercise. Third, choose exercises that you can safely perform. Fourth, consider partnering with others for motivation and socialization. Fifth, communicate with your physicians.

Whoever your heart beats for, our hearts beat for you. To connect with a top cardiovascular specialist at RWJBarnabas Health, call 888.724.7123 or visit [www.rwjbh.org/heart](http://www.rwjbh.org/heart).





# WORLD-CLASS CARE FOR BLOOD CANCERS CLOSE TO HOME

**RENOWNED CANCER DOCTORS ARE HELPING TO ENHANCE AND EXPAND THE HEMATOLOGIC MALIGNANCIES PROGRAM AT RUTGERS CANCER INSTITUTE OF NEW JERSEY AND RWJBARNABAS HEALTH.**

**T**he Hematologic Malignancies Program at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey and RWJBarnabas Health is known in New Jersey and beyond for its world-class multidisciplinary team of cancer experts and for its coveted place at the forefront of cancer research. As the state's only National Cancer Institute-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, it offers patients access to the most advanced treatment options for blood cancers, including blood and marrow transplantation, CAR T-cell therapy, immunotherapies and innovative clinical trials, many not available elsewhere.

Now, the highly regarded program



**MATTHEW MATASAR, MD, MS**



**IRA BRAUNSCHEWIG, MD**

has extended its reach—and its potential—with the addition of two nationally recognized leaders in the field of hematologic malignancies to lead and complement the already outstanding team in place.

As the new Chief of Blood Disorders, Matthew Matasar, MD, MS, brings extensive expertise to the program and is among the nation's most experienced clinicians and researchers in routine, rare and complex hematologic malignancies, with extensive expertise in treating these types of cancers with clinical trials, immunotherapy and other cellular therapies. Dr. Matasar will lead the enhancement of multidisciplinary clinical services, including programmatic growth of the bone marrow transplant and cellular therapy programs across the health system.

“My goal is to grow what already is an amazing program with extraordinary physicians,” says Dr. Matasar. “My vision is to continue to develop the health system's ability to give best-in-class care; to deliver the most promising novel

therapies in the context of ongoing and new clinical trials; to educate our patients, their families and the community; and to train physicians how best to take care of these patients.”

Ira Braunschweig, MD, Chief of Transplant and Cell Therapy, is an expert at treating blood cancers with blood and marrow transplantation as well as with CAR T-cell therapy, in which, he says, “We take the cells of a patient's own immune system and reengineer them to become super-powerful cancer-fighting cells.” Dr. Braunschweig was one of the physician-scientists leading the pivotal study in late 2015 that established CAR T-cell therapy as a standard for relapsed and refractory aggressive lymphoma.

“The Rutgers Cancer Institute/RWJBarnabas Health program has a strong foundation,” he says. “I want to take it to the next level by expanding it and ensuring that more patients have these therapies available to them close to home, and by further enhancing the availability of cutting-edge therapies.”

To learn more about the Hematologic Malignancies Program at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey/RWJBarnabas Health, please visit [www.rwjbh.org/beatcancer](http://www.rwjbh.org/beatcancer).





# BETTER WOMEN'S HEALTH AT EVERY AGE

**WHAT WOMEN NEED TO KNOW TO STAY WELL—  
FROM ADOLESCENCE TO AGELESS.**

**T**hroughout a woman's life, her body and her healthcare needs evolve. From adolescence through menopause and beyond, women experience many changes. Staying healthy through all those changes can be daunting—but it doesn't have to be. We asked doctors at RWJBarnabas Health to share some of their best advice on how women can maintain optimal

health at every age and stage.

## PREVENTIVE AND GENERAL HEALTHCARE

Being proactive about preventing illness and injury should start early in a woman's life. "Adolescent women should be encouraged to establish healthy eating and sleeping habits, exercise regularly and avoid excessive screen time," says

Robert A. Graebe, MD, Chair and Program Director of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Monmouth Medical Center. Preventive care, he says, can include taking seemingly simple but important measures such as consistently using sunblock and always wearing a seat belt.

Dr. Graebe also stresses the importance of caring for mental health and says that adolescent and young women should be encouraged to seek support for feelings of anxiety and depression or other mental health problems. In addition, women should schedule an annual well-woman visit. "During this visit, the care you receive will focus on you, your body and your reproductive health," says Dr. Graebe. "A well-woman visit also provides a time



ROBERT A. GRAEBE, MD



LENA L. MERJANIAN, MD



JULIE MASTER, DO, FACC



NICOLE M. MONTERO LOPEZ, MD



to discuss fertility questions and family planning options and to get screened for sexually transmitted diseases.”

## GYNECOLOGIC AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

### • First OB/GYN Visits

“The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that a girl establish care with a gynecologist between the ages of 13 and 15,” says Lena L. Merjanian, MD, an obstetrician and gynecologist at Rutgers Health. “This visit is an opportunity for her to establish a trusting rapport with her physician. It’s a confidential visit to discuss reproductive health concerns, contraception, relationships, adolescent sexuality and avoiding risky behaviors.”

According to Dr. Graebe, the first OB/GYN visit is also an opportunity to establish the diagnosis of common problems such as polycystic ovarian syndrome, hypothyroidism, eating disorders, etc. “The majority of bone formation occurs during the early years, so discussion concerning proper bone health is vital to prevent future osteoporosis,” says Dr. Graebe. A first gynecologic visit usually doesn’t include a pelvic exam or Pap smear.

### • Reproductive Years

During a woman’s reproductive years, maintaining optimal health can increase her chances of a healthy pregnancy and birth if she chooses to start or grow a family. Folic acid supplementation is important, especially when planning a pregnancy. In addition, women should be proactive with age-appropriate screenings, such as Pap and HPV (human papillomavirus) tests. They should use condoms with new sexual partners to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, such as chlamydia and gonorrhea, which can negatively impact fertility. And, says Dr. Graebe, they should be aware that “a woman’s peak fertile years are from about age 27 to 29, with a steady decline starting in the mid-30s.”

Some women, including those receiving cancer therapies and those wishing to postpone pregnancy until beyond their mid-30s, may want to consider egg freezing and subsequent

## HEALTH EQUITY

The importance of women’s health equity cannot be understated. According to Meika Neblett, MD, MS, Chief Medical Officer at Community Medical Center,



MEIKA NEBLETT, MD, MS

“Women’s health equity requires an integrated approach that recognizes the need for progress in understanding the social determinants of health, diversity and inclusion, and their intersectionality.

“RWJBarnabas Health has made equity a priority in women’s health,” says Dr. Neblett, “and it has taken steps toward removing barriers to preventive screenings that lead to earlier diagnosis and treatment of certain types of cancers as well as improving access to family planning services.”



in-vitro fertilization, says Dr. Graebe.

### • Breast Health

Breast self-awareness should start at about age 20, when women should focus on knowing what’s normal for their breasts. If changes are noticed, women should talk to their primary care provider or OB/GYN. Regular breast screening can help detect cancer at an early and more treatable stage. For women at average risk for breast cancer, a clinical breast exam is recommended every one to three years between the ages of 25 and 39, and a mammogram is recommended every one to two years beginning at age 40. “It’s important for women to be aware of their family history,” says Dr. Graebe. “Women at increased risk, such as those with a family history of breast cancer and other hereditary cancer syndromes, may benefit from seeing a genetic counselor.”

### HEART HEALTH

“It’s important for a woman to know her risk factors for heart disease, including her cholesterol numbers, blood pressure, family history and smoking status,” says Julie Master, DO, FACC, Director of Noninvasive Cardiac Services at Monmouth Medical Center. “There are also novel risk factors such as pregnancy complications that can put a woman at

higher risk of heart disease in the future. A history of cancer treatment may also increase her risk. Having a yearly physical and not ignoring symptoms are of the utmost importance.”

### BONE HEALTH

Most women don’t think about their bones until there’s a problem with them, but bones need care to stay healthy just like the rest of the body.

Bone density testing is one way to measure bone health. This is especially important for women because, according to Nicole M. Montero Lopez, MD, an orthopedist at Clara Maass Medical Center, hormonal changes during menopause can directly affect bone density. Women 65 and older and women under 65 with risk factors, such as a family history of the disease or fracture, should have a bone density test. Frequency of testing depends on age, results of prior tests and individual risk of fracture. The goal in osteoporosis prevention is to slow down the loss of bone mass to reduce the risk of fractures. You can strengthen your bones with certain exercises and lifestyle changes. Weight-bearing exercise is the most important type of exercise for preventing osteoporosis, and a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D is good for bone health.

To learn more about women’s health services at RWJBarnabas Health, visit [www.rwjbh.org/treatment-care/womens-health](http://www.rwjbh.org/treatment-care/womens-health).



# CHILDREN'S CARE CLOSE TO HOME

## WHERE TO TURN FOR SPECIALIZED OUTPATIENT SERVICES THROUGHOUT NEW JERSEY

As a leading provider of inpatient and outpatient care for children who face special health challenges from birth to age 21, Children's Specialized Hospital, part of the RWJBarnabas Health Children's Health Network of hospitals, partners with families to treat a wide range of developmental, physical, mental and behavioral concerns. You'll find outpatient services close to home at these New Jersey locations.



Children's Specialized Hospital®

An RWJBarnabas Health facility



Outpatient services include facilities and equipment specially designed to meet children's needs.

### BAYONNE

- Developmental and behavioral pediatrics
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Speech and language therapy

### CLIFTON

- Developmental and behavioral pediatrics
- Neurology
- Occupational therapy
- Orthopedics
- Physical therapy
- Psychology
- Speech and language therapy

### EAST BRUNSWICK

- Occupational therapy specializing in upper extremity and hand therapy
- Physical therapy specializing in orthopedic and sports medicine

### EATONTOWN

- Audiology
- Developmental and behavioral pediatrics
- Neurology
- Occupational therapy
- Physiatry
- Physical therapy
- Psychology
- Speech and language therapy

### EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP

- Developmental and behavioral pediatrics
- Occupational therapy
- Physiatry
- Physical therapy
- Psychiatry
- Psychology
- Speech and language therapy

### HAMILTON

- Audiology
- Developmental and behavioral pediatrics
- Neurology
- Occupational therapy
- Physiatry
- Physical therapy
- Psychiatry
- Psychology
- Special needs primary care
- Speech and language therapy

### NEWARK

- Developmental and behavioral pediatrics
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Speech and language therapy

### NEW BRUNSWICK—PLUM STREET

- Developmental and behavioral pediatrics
- Neurology
- Neuropsychology
- Occupational therapy
- Physiatry
- Physical therapy
- Psychiatry
- Psychology
- Speech and language therapy

### TOMS RIVER—LAKEHURST ROAD AND STEVENS ROAD

- Audiology
- Developmental and behavioral pediatrics
- Neurology
- Nutrition
- Occupational therapy
- Physiatry
- Physical therapy
- Psychiatry
- Psychology
- Rehabilitation technology
- Speech and language therapy

### UNION

- Audiology
- Developmental and behavioral pediatrics
- Neurology
- Neurorehabilitation
- Occupational therapy
- Orthopedics
- Physiatry
- Physical therapy
- Psychiatry
- Psychology
- Special needs primary care
- Speech and language therapy

### SOMERSET

- CSH RUCARES Severe Behavioral Program
- Intensive Feeding Disorders Program

### WEST ORANGE

- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Speech and language therapy

To learn more about outpatient programs and services or to schedule an appointment, call **888.244.5373** or visit **www.rwjbh.org/cshoutpatient**.

At Children's Specialized Hospital, we provide world-class care for children and young adults who face special health challenges across the state of New Jersey and beyond. We treat everything from chronic illnesses and complex physical disabilities, like brain and spinal cord injuries, to a full scope of developmental, behavioral and mental health concerns. We have convenient locations throughout the state: Bayonne, Clifton, East Brunswick, Eatontown, Egg Harbor Township, Hamilton, Newark, New Brunswick, Somerset, Toms River, Union and West Orange.





# BEYOND BED-WETTING

## A TOP PEDIATRIC UROLOGIST SHARES THE LATEST TREATMENTS FOR URINARY TRACT PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN.

**J**oseph Barone, MD, a nationally recognized expert in the field of pediatric urology, was recently appointed Medical Director of Pediatric Urology for the Children's Health Network of RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH). Dr. Barone is also Chief of the Division of Urology and Professor of Surgery at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Here, Dr. Barone talks about children's urologic conditions as well as what's new in the field.

### How has the RWJBH pediatric urology program changed recently?



JOSEPH BARONE, MD

We're now a system-based program with all pediatric urologists in all RWJBH children's hospitals working as one group. This allows us to take advantage of

synergistic opportunities for clinical access, safety, quality and diversity. With integration, patients will receive the same pediatric urology care no matter where they are in the system.

### How are children's urologic issues different from those of adults?

Children mostly have congenital problems and adults deal with problems that develop during life. Because of this, the practice of pediatric urology now has its own board certification by the American Urological Association.

### What are some common urologic issues in children?

The most common is bed-wetting, affecting 10 million children in the United States each year. Other

common conditions include urinary tract infections (UTIs) and daytime accidents. There are also some common surgical conditions, such as undescended testes and hernia.

### What are some serious pediatric urologic conditions that you treat?

Some children born with neurological diseases, such as spina bifida, lack the nerves that control the bladder. As a result, they're incontinent. To restore continence, we use the small intestine to make a new bladder with a procedure called bladder augmentation. Twisting, or torsion, of the testes—when a boy's testicle twists spontaneously and cuts off its blood supply—is another serious issue that not many people know about. Sudden, severe testis pain is an emergency and parents should take their child to the emergency department if this happens.

### What robotic surgical techniques are used for children?

We offer minimally invasive robotic surgery for nearly all pediatric urology conditions that historically would require an incision. The robot is controlled by the surgeon, and three or four laparoscopic ports are placed into the child's abdomen. Robotic surgery speeds recovery and results in less pain. For older children, we offer single-port robotics. There are only a handful of centers that offer this robotic procedure.

### Are there any exciting new developments in this area?

We're working on developing a new electrical surgical tool designed for pediatric surgery. We currently use similar tools designed for adults and when working in a very tiny space, they can be cumbersome. We've designed the pediatric surgical tool and are in the process of making a 3D model.

To find a pediatric urologist or for more information on children's urologic issues, visit [www.rwjbh.org/childrenshealth](http://www.rwjbh.org/childrenshealth).





# BANKING ON LIFE

## WHERE AND HOW TO DONATE BLOOD THIS WINTER

It's estimated that someone in the United States needs blood every two seconds, and, since January is National Blood Donor Month, there couldn't be a better time to donate. Blood doesn't have a long shelf life—between five and 35 days, depending on the component—so there's rarely, if ever, a surplus. This is especially true in winter, when donations typically slow down because of bad weather, winter holidays and seasonal illnesses like colds and flu.

“Simply put, there's no substitute for blood,” says Sally Wells, Business Development Liaison, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Blood Services. “Blood cannot be manufactured. We always say that ‘it's the blood on the shelf’ that makes it possible to treat traumatic injuries, perform surgeries, support premature babies and treat patients who are going through advanced cancer therapies, to name a few of its uses.”

While all RWJBarnabas Health facilities run blood drives several times

a year, Wells says that multiple blood drives will occur in January, noting that donor centers in New Brunswick and Somerset will be open daily. “Our message for National Blood Donor Month is ‘Donate 3 in 2023,’” she says, referring to three pints of blood.

The ripple effect of the pandemic is still being felt in many areas, including blood donation. “People aren't donating as often as before the pandemic, so we're still experiencing periodic shortages,” says Wells. “We haven't been able to build up a reserve, so certain blood types and products are always in high demand.”

The blood type that is most in demand is type O-negative (O-). “This is the universal blood type because it can be used in an emergency to transfuse anyone until the person's blood type can be verified,” says Wells.

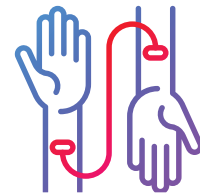
If you don't know your type, don't worry. When you donate, you'll be issued a blood-donor card that will list your blood type.



## HOW TO DONATE

The four basic steps to donating blood are:

1. Registration (to gather demographic information)
2. Medical interview and mini physical (to determine if the donor is suitable)
3. Phlebotomy (the actual donation, drawing blood)
4. Rest and refreshments (after blood is donated)



## REQUIREMENTS FOR DONORS

To donate blood, you must:

- Be in overall good health
- Be at least 17 years old (16 with parental consent)
- Weigh at least 110 pounds (120 pounds if 16 years old)
- Present a valid photo identification with signature

For more information or to schedule an appointment to donate blood, visit [www.rwjbh.org/treatment-care/blood-donation](http://www.rwjbh.org/treatment-care/blood-donation) or [www.rwjhdonorclub.org](http://www.rwjhdonorclub.org), or call 732.235.8100 ext. 221 (New Brunswick) or 908.685.2926 (Somerset).

NATIONAL  
**BLOOD  
DONOR**  
MONTH







From left: Renee Nardoni Flores, Trustee of the Paul R. Nardoni Foundation and Paul's sister; Roseann Nardoni, Chairman of the Paul R. Nardoni Foundation and Paul's mother; Ren Nardoni, Treasurer of the Paul R. Nardoni Foundation and Paul's father; Ellen Nardoni, Trustee of the Paul R. Nardoni Foundation, incoming board member of the Somerset Health Care Foundation and Paul's wife.

# MERGING TO SUPPORT CANCER CARE

## THE PAUL R. NARDONI FOUNDATION COMBINES WITH SOMERSET HEALTH CARE FOUNDATION.

The Paul R. Nardoni Foundation, a nonprofit organization that has been supporting cancer patients and their families for over 20 years, has announced it will merge into Somerset Health Care Foundation, the fundraising arm for Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset.

The Paul R. Nardoni Foundation was founded by Paul's family to honor the Readington Township resident and carry on his legacy and "carpe diem" ("seize the day") spirit. Paul died in 2001 at age 32 after a five-year battle with Hodgkin's disease.

Since 2002, the Paul R. Nardoni Foundation has donated more than \$625,000 to RWJUH Somerset. The foundation's generosity helped fund the Paul R. Nardoni Oncology Pavilion ("Paul's Place"), a 35-bed inpatient unit at the hospital, and the Steeplechase Cancer Center, a state-of-the-art outpatient facility located on the hospital's campus. The foundation's Special Needs Fund has also provided more than \$50,000 in aid

to cancer patients at the Steeplechase Cancer Center.

With the merger of the two foundations, Ellen Nardoni, Paul's wife and a founding trustee of the Paul R. Nardoni Foundation, will join Somerset Health Care Foundation's Board of Trustees in 2023 and continue to champion Paul's legacy. Proceeds from the merger will support "Paul's Place" at RWJUH Somerset.

### A LASTING LEGACY

"For the past 20 years, we have been proud to partner with the Paul R. Nardoni Foundation to enhance the services we provide to cancer patients and their families, from ensuring that patients and their families have comfortable overnight accommodations to helping patients with cancer pay for

## SUPPORTING COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE

Somerset Health Care Foundation is a nonprofit organization created to solicit and administer charitable funding on behalf of Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset. Gifts to Somerset Health Care Foundation help enhance the hospital's facilities, technologies and patient care to improve the health of the community.



medication, utilities, groceries and other household expenses," says Paul Hubert, Chair of the Somerset Health Care Foundation Board of Trustees. "We are excited to welcome them to the Somerset Health Care Foundation and continue to advance cancer care in Central New Jersey."

"We are proud that Somerset Health Care Foundation will continue to support the community by delivering better patient experiences and aid to those who need financial support while dealing with cancer," says Roseann Nardoni, Paul's mother and Paul R. Nardoni Foundation Chairman. "It is a natural next step for us to blend resources to ensure this support moving forward. We are thrilled that Ellen will represent our mission and preserve the 'carpe diem' legacy inspired by Paul."

For more information about Somerset Health Care Foundation, call 908.685.2885 or visit [www.rwjbh.org/somersetgiving](http://www.rwjbh.org/somersetgiving).





Treatment for her eating disorder helped Emma Strom as she prepared to enter college, where—inspired by RWJUH Somerset providers—she now plans to study nursing.

# CONFRONTING AN EATING DISORDER

**AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM GUIDES A TEEN TOWARD HEALTHIER BEHAVIORS.**

**F**or Emma Strom, 18, of Doylestown, PA, the trouble started in 2018 when she was in middle school. “I had a crush on a guy and thought if I wanted to impress him, I should lose weight,” she says. “Then I could look like all the girls who are super pretty.”

Emma, an “A” student, began restricting her food and shedding weight. But the boy didn’t return her interest. It broke her heart—and drove her to become even thinner. “I would only eat a little, and eventually was also bingeing and purging, and that made everything worse,” she says.

Emma’s disordered eating patterns, with symptoms of both anorexia and bulimia (see sidebar), persisted when she entered high school and felt even more pressure to be thin. Food restriction and excessive exercising kept her weight low. But they didn’t make her happy.

“I wish I could say that it felt really good and that I felt confident,” she says. “In reality, I was miserable. It was the middle of winter and I was freezing all the time because I was so thin. I would go home, do my homework, exercise for two hours and eat a small dinner because

I didn’t want my parents to know I was starving myself during the day.”

When Emma had turned 16, she managed to eat just a small piece of birthday cake. “I enjoyed it,” she says, “but then I felt horrible. I spent the evening crying because I just felt so bad.”

## **PANDEMIC PERILS**

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, being confined at home only made her eating behaviors worse. That isn’t unusual, according to Lisa Schade-Button, RN, MSN, MBA, director of the Eating Disorders Program at Robert





The multidisciplinary Eating Disorders Program addresses behavioral issues related to food consumption through measures such as counseling, education, group therapy and creative activities. The program’s new 20-bed inpatient unit includes environmental features shown to promote healing such as lighting changes cued to time of day and serene design elements.

Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset.

“We saw a direct correlation between isolation during the pandemic and aggravated eating disorders,” Schade-Button says. “Some people gained weight and loathed themselves for it. Others excessively lost even more weight.”

Emma’s parents grew increasingly alarmed. At one point, she had lost 30 pounds over a three-month period. A few weeks of telehealth visits with a dietitian and therapist didn’t resolve her issues.

Emma and her mother then met in 2020 with providers at the Eating Disorders Program at RWJUH Somerset hoping to devise a treatment regimen that she could follow at home. “I was already so far into this battle that I think we all probably knew I was going to be hospitalized,” Emma says. “It was hard to accept. I just didn’t know how to stop.”

### A HEALING PROGRAM

The highly structured inpatient program at RWJUH Somerset gradually coaxes patients toward a healthier weight through intensive individual and group counseling and education, music and art therapy, and creative activities and games, with time allotted for young patients to do schoolwork.

Specially trained nurses monitor patients medically and help them navigate challenges such as mealtimes.

“They would call us in for a meal and we’d play a game to take our minds off what we were eating,” says Emma.

The recently renovated 20-bed inpatient unit’s environment promotes healing through features such as lighting that mimics natural shifts in daylight; acoustic buffering to minimize noise; soft, pastel colors; and nature-based artwork. A healing garden is in the works. “Patients tell us it feels like a luxury hotel,” says Schade-Button. “Even staffers comment on how serene the unit is.”

Emma realized she was gaining control over her eating disorder when she and other patients were asked to write positive affirmations for a craft. “I just started writing down all these things I was excited about,” she says—“stuff that was keeping me motivated that was far off but that I knew I would get to one day. I just needed to push through this.”

“When patients come back to life and their laughter and energy come back and they’re finally ready to go home, they’re smiling from ear to ear,” says Schade-Button. “Everybody gives them a round of applause. The feeling of that moment is pretty priceless.”

“The people at RWJUH Somerset helped me realize that there was so much to fight for and that all the things that we did each day were going to add up to something,” says Emma. Now a

## WHAT ARE EATING DISORDERS?

Eating disorders often involve restricting food intake and/or increasing physical activity to keep body weight dangerously low (anorexia nervosa), or bingeing and purging in episodes of excessive eating and vomiting, sometimes accompanied by improper use of laxatives or diuretics (bulimia nervosa). Often stemming from trauma or social problems, eating disorders may be tied to emotional issues like anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, low self-esteem and stress.

Left untreated, eating disorders can lead to serious health issues such as cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, anemia, kidney dysfunction or even death. Treatment takes time, but measures such as counseling, support groups and education can foster coping skills that help resolve physical, biological, psychological and social issues, and restore healthier eating patterns.

thriving college freshman, Emma was so inspired by providers who cared for her at RWJUH Somerset that she plans to study nursing. “I realized I had my whole future waiting for me,” she says. “I don’t think I could have gotten through it without the people who were there for me.”

To learn more about the Eating Disorders Program at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset, call **800.300.0628** or visit **[www.rwjbh.org/somerseteatingdisorders](http://www.rwjbh.org/somerseteatingdisorders)**.



# 3 SURGERIES, 1 ACTIVE WOMAN

## JOINT REPLACEMENTS OF BOTH HIPS AND A KNEE KEEP THIS WOMAN MOBILE.

Cheryl McCollum, 71, of Hillsborough thought she knew what to expect when she returned to Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset for hip replacement surgery in 2022. She'd had surgery to replace her left hip in 2015, and it had gone so well that she became a volunteer at the hospital's Joint Surgery Center.

When Cheryl's right hip began to wear out and she felt the familiar pain of osteoarthritis, she made a new appointment. "She had a lot of pain in her hip and a pretty significant limp," says Stephen Kayiaros, MD, an orthopedic surgeon and Medical Director of the joint surgery program at RWJUH Somerset, who specializes in minimally invasive joint replacement surgery.

This time, a different surgical approach to hip replacement was available, and Dr. Kayiaros thought Cheryl was a candidate for it.

### A MUSCLE-SPARING METHOD

In any hip replacement, the surgeon swaps both the ball of bone at the top of the femur and the socket of the



STEPHEN KAYIAROS, MD

pelvic bone with prosthetic parts to relieve pain and improve movement. But the ways in which surgeons gain access to the hip joint can differ.

Cheryl's first

Cheryl McCollum can volunteer, walk her dog and enjoy other activities pain-free after three joint replacement surgeries.



surgeon had taken a posterior approach to her left hip. With this commonly performed procedure, the surgeon accesses the joint from behind through an incision close to the buttocks. With the more recently developed anterior approach, the surgeon makes the incision toward the anterior, or front, of the hip area.

Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. But with an appropriate patient and a skilled surgeon, the anterior approach entails less disruption of major walking muscles, which tend to heal slowly. As a result, the procedure is associated with less pain and faster recovery than the posterior approach.

“The anterior approach involves going in between muscles and not cutting or detaching them,” says Dr. Kayiaros. “Anytime you can do that, it’s going to make for a smoother patient experience.”

Cheryl could tell the difference right away. “I had much less pain post-op with this hip,” she says about her surgery last March. “And I had no restrictions on my movement. With the posterior approach, I couldn’t cross my legs at first. With the anterior method, I could do whatever I wanted.”

As predicted, her recovery was also easier. Previously, a physical therapist had visited her at home the first week post-op, and Cheryl had followed up with additional therapy sessions at the hospital. “I didn’t need outpatient physical therapy this time, and within three weeks, I was moving all over the house,” says Cheryl.

“Her recovery was really quite seamless,” says Dr. Kayiaros. “The surgery has dramatically improved her quality of life.”

### NEXT UP: A KNEE

Almost as soon as Cheryl’s hip was healed, she realized how much pain she was experiencing in her knee. In what had become a familiar progression, her symptoms led her to seek joint replacement surgery.

“I have to admit, I was more worried about the knee,” Cheryl says. The knee joint is relatively complex compared to the hip, and knee replacement may require more rehabilitation than hip procedures.

But an innovative approach to pain relief eased Cheryl’s recovery after she underwent her total knee replacement. It involved pumping a nonnarcotic medication directly to the surgical site. “When I woke up, I had no pain at all,” she says, “and the benefit lasted three days.” As her recovery progressed, she required little pain management. “I’d take a pill at night, but that was it,” she says. “I never used them during the day.”

Cheryl was soon enjoying pain-free activity for the first time in months. She continues volunteering at RWJUH



## OUR ORTHOPEDIC EXPANSION PROJECT IS UNDERWAY

Construction recently began on a two-story, 76,600-square-foot project that will vertically expand space above the existing Orthopedics Pavilion and Emergency Department (ED) building at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset.

The expansion will house a new Orthopedic Center of Excellence that will provide joint surgery patients the highest-quality preoperative and postoperative care close to home without having to travel for surgery and rehabilitation.

The center will feature 35 private inpatient rooms with amenities such as convertible sleeper sofas, USB ports and work services and a state-of-the-art gym for rehabilitation.

The expansion will also include a 10-room Rapid Decision Unit for ED patients who need additional observation or are waiting for test results. The unit will help reduce wait times in the ED and provide increased comfort for patients and their families.

The project will further allow RWJUH Somerset to convert most of the hospital’s existing patient rooms into fully private rooms. New patient rooms will feature larger windows for staff to observe patients, reducing disruptions and exposure to enhance patients’ healing, safety and overall care experience.

Somerset, is an active member of the Ladies Auxiliary for Hillsborough Fire Company 2 and regularly walks her 75-pound Labrador retriever.

Knowing many of her care providers through her experiences and volunteer work at the hospital also made Cheryl’s surgery a positive experience. “I love the people at the Joint Surgery Center,” she says. “Going there is like coming home.”

For more information about joint surgery services at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset, visit [www.rwjbh.org/ortho](http://www.rwjbh.org/ortho).





# Community Education

## JANUARY

### Chair Yoga for Seniors

This ancient fitness routine builds flexibility and strength and relieves pain associated with arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, migraines, and back and neck strain. A medical release form is required to participate.

*Chanchal Arora, certified yoga instructor*

**8-week course begins:**

**Tuesday, January 3 | 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.**

**Congregational Church of Bound Brook; \$48**

**To register, call 908.685.2814.**

### Online Narcan Training and Kit

Learn the risk factors of an overdose, how to identify someone overdosing, a proper rescue response and tips to prevent an overdose. Participants will receive a free Narcan kit.

• **Wednesday, January 4 | 1 to 2 p.m.**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3EWOa6Q>.**

• **Monday, February 20 | 1 to 2 p.m.**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3SjWpu0>.**

• **Thursday, March 23 | 1 to 2 p.m.**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3yPshAr>.**

Offered in collaboration with the Far Hills Race Meeting Association and RWJUH Somerset Community Partnership

### HealthHike: A "Walk and Talk" on Weight Loss

Walking 30 minutes a day or more is a great way to improve or maintain your health. Join an RWJUH Somerset healthcare professional at the Community Hub for a discussion on how to achieve and maintain weight loss, and take a walk around the mall as a group. HealthHike walkers will be able to log their miles and receive healthy recipes.

*Tia Hagins, RD, community nutritionist*

**Wednesday, January 4**

**10 to 11 a.m. (walk begins at 9:30 a.m.)**

**Bridgewater Commons Mall Community Hub**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3VH9S2y>.**

### Aquacize

This water exercise program soothes arthritis pain, strengthens joints, and improves range of motion and lung capacity.

*Ellen Helman, certified water fitness instructor*

**8-week courses begin:**

**Wednesday, January 4, and Monday,**

**January 9 | 10:30 to 11:15 a.m.**

**Somerville YMCA; \$50**

**To register, call 908.685.2814.**

### Fit Body, Fit Bones

Learn weight-bearing exercises to strengthen muscles and bones, improve balance, and reduce the risk

of fractures from osteoporosis. Peer leaders assist in class instruction. A medical release is required.

*Somerset County YMCA group fitness instructor*

**12 weeks of Friday classes begin January 6 10:15 to 11:15 a.m.**

**RWJUH Somerset Suite at Iron Peak; \$50**

**To register, call 908.685.2814.**

### Virtual Concussion Care Town Hall

With the spring sports season starting, it is important to be aware of the signs of a concussion or suspected concussion, as well as appropriate care. Understand anticipated recovery times and expectations during the recovery phase. Our experienced clinicians will describe scenarios to explain an individualized approach and answer concussion-related questions.

*Geoffrey Stankus, PT, DPT, SFMA, CCCE, physical therapist*

*Spiridoula J. Riley, PT, DPT, LAT, ATC, physical therapist*

**Saturday, January 14 | 9 to 10 a.m.**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3eJ2enT>.**

### Preventing Birth Defects: Empowering Moms-to-Be

According to the CDC, every 4½ minutes, a baby is born with a birth defect in the United States.

That means each year, nearly 120,000 babies are affected by birth defects. Discover health disparities that affect pregnancies, the causes of birth defects, the various types, signs and symptoms, the importance of prenatal care, diagnosis, treatments and prevention strategies.

*Shilpa Clott, MD, obstetrician and gynecologist*

**Thursday, January 19 | 10 to 11 a.m.**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3MMvQNH>.**

### An Open Dialogue on Cervical Health

Learn about various disorders of the cervix (cervicitis, polyps, cancer, etc.), risk factors, signs and symptoms, causes, diagnosis, treatment options and prevention strategies, as well as the importance of routine screenings.

*Ruth Stephenson, MD, gynecologic oncologist*

**Friday, January 20 | Noon to 1 p.m.**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3Tmbz4g>.**

### National Maternal Health Awareness Day: Well Mom, Well Baby

During this webinar, learn the importance of prenatal care, how

to keep mom and baby well, common maternal health issues to avoid, recommended wellness care and the benefits of breastfeeding. Attendees will participate in a virtual tour of Labor and Delivery and the Mother/Baby area, as well as receive information about resources such as support groups and classes.

*Sophia Viamonte, RN-BSN, IBCLC, International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant*

**Monday, January 23 | 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3COjBLR>.**

RWJUH Somerset will conduct a

diaper drive to support underserved families in need.

### Metabolism and Medicine: A Winning Duo in Thyroid and Diabetes Care

Understand the use of bioinformatics in the development of a personalized-scale medicine to improve metabolism and reduce the risk of thyroid disease and diabetes. Learn about types of thyroid disease and its relationship to diabetes, as well as symptoms, causes, diagnostic tools and treatment options.

*Brian Fertig, MD, endocrinologist*

*Amy Walsh, RD, CDE, Manager, Diabetes Center*

**Thursday, January 26 | 10 to 11:30 a.m.**

**Somerville Elks**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3CLO0VK>.**

## FEBRUARY

### HealthHike: A "Walk and Talk" on Coronary Calcium Scoring

Walking 30 minutes a day or more is a great way to improve or maintain your health. Join an RWJUH Somerset healthcare professional at the Community Hub for a discussion on the purpose of a coronary calcium scoring, and take a walk around the mall as a group. HealthHike walkers will be able to log miles and receive health information.

*Katie Edge, RN, director of cardiovascular services*

**Wednesday, February 1**

**10 to 11 a.m. (walk begins at 9:30 a.m.)**

**Bridgewater Commons Mall Community Hub**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3s9ZpiU>.**

### Adult Mental Health First Aid Training

Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders in adults ages 18 and older. This training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial support to someone who may be developing a mental health

or substance use problem and help connect them to the appropriate care. It also offers a five-step action plan for how to help people in both crisis and noncrisis situations. This course includes a 2-hour online course to be completed by February 3 and an instructor-led portion, which will be hosted on Zoom on February 7.

*Gail Schoenbach, Certified Mental Health First Aid instructor*

**Tuesday, February 7 | 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3SndRPI>.**

**Registration closes January 26.**

**Offered in collaboration with EmPOWER Somerset**

### Coronary Artery Disease: A Stumbling Block to Heart Health

Understand coronary artery disease (CAD), risk factors, the causes of plaque buildup, signs and symptoms, diagnosis, stages of CAD, the latest treatments and prevention strategies, such as a low-sodium, low-fat diet.

*Shikha Sheth, MD, cardiologist*

**Wednesday, February 8 | Noon to 1 p.m.**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3Sa7mp>.**

### Go Red Fashion Show at the Commons

In recognition of Heart Month, RWJUH Somerset and Bridgewater Commons join forces this February by presenting an exciting, red-styled fashion show in Center Court. Heart disease survivors and healthcare practitioners will model clothing provided by the shops at Bridgewater Commons on a red runway, and RWJUH Somerset Cardiology Services will educate about the symptoms of heart attacks in women, offer strategies for good heart health and provide free blood pressure measures.

*Rachana Kulkarni, MD, cardiologist*

**Saturday, February 11 | 2 to 3 p.m.**

**Bridgewater Commons, Center Court, Lower Level**

**Details will be available January 6.**

### Cardio-Oncology: At the Heart of Cancer Care

In this webinar, understand cardio-oncology, the correlation between heart disease and cancer, and the impact of cancer on heart health, as well as risk factors, signs and symptoms, causes, diagnostic procedures and treatment options.

*Steven Georgeson, MD, cardiologist*

*Eshan Patel, MD, oncologist*

**Thursday, February 23 | 6 to 7 p.m.**

**To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3MHGK7z>.**



## COMMUNITY HEALTH SCREENINGS

### Running High or Low? The Significance of Hypertension and Hypotension

Discover the implications of high and low blood pressure, the normal blood pressure range, signs and symptoms, underlying causes of both conditions, the difference between cardiac tamponade and pericardial effusion, and diagnostic tools such as echocardiograms, as well as treatments and strategies to regulate blood pressure, including vitamin B12 supplementation.

*Asha Mahajan, MD, cardiologist*

**Tuesday, February 28**

**11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

Somerville Elks

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3CPAmql>.

### Cardiac Athletic Screening

A free cardiac screening is being offered to young athletes ages 14 to 18. This screening can help determine those at risk of sudden cardiac arrest.

**Saturday, February 4**

**8 a.m. to noon**

**Cardiac Diagnostic Testing Department; free**

To schedule an appointment, call 908.685.2414.

### Blood Pressure Screening

**Wednesday, February 8 | 9 a.m. to noon**

**Tarantino Promenade at RWJUH**

**Somerset; free**

Preregistration is required; call 908.685.2814.

### Blood Glucose and Cholesterol Screening

Includes total cholesterol, HDL, ratio and glucose.

**Wednesday, February 8 | 9 a.m. to noon**

**Tarantino Promenade at RWJUH**

**Somerset; \$15**

Preregistration is required; call 908.685.2814.

### Sports and Exercise Injury Assessment

This screening is intended for those dealing with an orthopedic or sports-related injury and those who wish to evaluate their risk of potential injuries. RWJUH Somerset physical therapists will be on hand to assess your symptoms and concerns and, based on your results, provide individualized recommendations for care and prevention.

*RWJUH Somerset physical therapists*

**Tuesday, March 21 | 5 to 7 p.m.**

**Iron Peak Sports & Events, Hillsborough**

To schedule an appointment, call 908.685.2814.

## MARCH

### HealthHike: A "Walk and Talk" on the Study of Sound Sleep

Walking 30 minutes a day or more is a great way to improve or maintain your health. Join an RWJUH Somerset healthcare professional at the Community Hub for a discussion on getting sound sleep and when a sleep study is recommended, and take a walk around the mall as a group. HealthHike walkers will be able to log miles, receive health information and take a sleep assessment.

*Jose Mujica, RRT, BSN, Director of Respiratory Care and the Sleep Center*

**Wednesday, March 1**

**10 to 11 a.m. (walk begins at 9:30 a.m.)**

**Bridgewater Commons Mall Community Hub**

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3SampZr>.

### Aquacize

Practice this water exercise program that soothes arthritis pain, strengthens joints, and improves range of motion and lung capacity.

*Ellen Helman, certified water fitness instructor*

**8-week courses begin:**

**Monday, March 6, and Wednesday,**

**March 8 | 10:30 to 11:15 a.m.**

**Somerville YMCA; \$50**

To register, call 908.685.2814.

### Chair Yoga for Seniors

Learn this ancient fitness routine that builds flexibility and strength and relieves pain associated with arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, migraines, and back and neck strain. A medical release form is required to participate.

*Chanchal Arora, certified yoga instructor*

**8-week course begins:**

**Tuesday, March 7 | 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.**

**Congregational Church, Bound Brook; \$48**

To register, call 908.685.2814.

## SUPPORT GROUPS

To receive a call-in number for a specific support group, call Community Health at 908.685.2814.

### Eating Disorders-Family Support

This is a parent-facilitated discussion.

**First and third Thursdays of each month 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

**Hamilton Conference Room**

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3DaTqjY>.

### Eating Disorders-Patient Support

This is a staff-facilitated discussion open to anyone with an eating disorder.

**Second and fourth Thursdays of each month | 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

**Hamilton Conference Room**

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3DcZnmR>.

### Stroke Support Group

All stroke survivors, their families and caregivers are invited to join our Stroke Support Group. Our multidisciplinary Stroke Center team will provide educational information and answer your questions.

**First Thursday of the month | 2 to 3 p.m.**

• To register for the January 5 support group, visit <https://bit.ly/3sa0Dus>.

• To register for the February 2 support group, visit <https://bit.ly/3Sez65M>.

• To register for the March 2 support group, visit <https://bit.ly/3VG6Wn2>.

### Better Breathers Club

Promotes the management of COPD and other chronic lung disease (e.g., asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung cancer), offers a sense of belonging and hope, and aims to improve quality of life.

**Thursdays: January 12, February 9 and March 9**

**10:30 to 11:30 a.m.**

• To register for the January 12 support group, visit <https://bit.ly/3D7SMDT>.

• To register for the February 9 support group, visit <https://bit.ly/3DbT1xP>.

• To register for the March 9 support group, visit <https://bit.ly/3TyXeRr>.

### Youth Mental Health First Aid Training

Children face many stressors, including bullying and peer pressure to vape or consume other substances. Discover how to help children or youth who are experiencing challenges or addictions by learning about typical adolescent development. This training offers a five-step action plan for helping young people in both crisis and noncrisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including ADHD) and eating disorders. This course includes a 2-hour online course to be completed by March 6 and an instructor-led portion to be hosted on Zoom on March 9.

*Gail Schoenbach, Certified Mental Health First Aid instructor*

**Thursday, March 9 | 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3yRkUJ6>.

Registration closes February 23.

Offered in collaboration with EmPoWER Somerset

### Aerobics for the Mind: Forgetfulness...Is It a Sign of Dementia?

According to the CDC, 1 in 9 adults age 45 or older report confusion or memory loss. Understand the difference between memory loss and dementia, types of dementia, risk factors, signs and symptoms, causes, diagnosis, treatment options and prevention strategies.

Staff will lead memory-strengthening activities.

*Srinivasa Potluri, MD, neurologist*

**Thursday, March 23**

**10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

**Somerville Elks; \$10**

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3yT2ojk>.

### Colorectal Cancer: Preventable, Treatable and Beatable

The American Cancer Society estimated 106,180 new cases of colon cancer and 44,850 new cases of rectal cancer in the United States for 2022. Understand the different types of colorectal cancer, risk factors, causes, the efficacy of screening tools such as FIT tests versus colonoscopy, stages of cancer and advanced treatments like the da Vinci robotic surgical system. Prevention strategies including a high-fiber diet will be discussed. High-fiber lunch provided.

*Brendan Scully, MD, colon and rectal surgeon*

*Karen Connelly, RD, oncologic nutritionist*

**Tuesday, March 28; 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

**Somerville Elks. To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3Tymwi0>.**

## BARIATRIC PROGRAMS

### Virtual Bariatric Support Group

Anyone who is considering bariatric surgery as well as postsurgical patients are welcome to attend. The group will discuss topics such as healthy meal ideas, mindful eating, emotional eating, the importance of exercise, surviving the holidays, smart shopping and how to eat healthy while dining out.

*Tia Hagins, RD, community nutritionist*

**Tuesdays: January 10, February 14 and March 14 | 6 to 7 p.m.**

To register for the bariatric support group, call Tia Hagins at 908.704.3765.

# Whoever your heart beats for, our hearts beat for you.

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset has a passion for heart health. Among our many services is one of the highest volume elective angioplasty programs in New Jersey. Our state-of-the-art facilities include private rooms and newly renovated cardiac treatment and recovery areas. We also offer cardiac rehabilitation, prevention and wellness programs through the RWJBarnabas Health network of heart centers. And a partnership with Rutgers Health guides our research and innovation. It's all part of our dedication to every heart in our community. Learn more at [rwjbh.org/heart](http://rwjbh.org/heart)

**Robert Wood Johnson  
University Hospital  
Somerset**

**RWJBarnabas  
HEALTH**

Let's be healthy together.

