

Winter 2021

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

1 healthy

together

**HOLISTIC THERAPIES
FOR CANCER PATIENTS**

**OVERCOMING
BACK AND NECK PAIN**

A HEART-HEALTHY DIET

**FINDING
THE BEST
CANCER
CARE**



Stronger Together

The past year has been one of unprecedented challenges for our communities and for our healthcare system. The onset and spread of COVID-19 tested our hearts and minds as never before, all against a backdrop of national social, political and economic turmoil.

Each day, we've learned more about this new virus and how to treat it. We've also learned that the pandemic's impact is falling drastically harder on communities already struggling against economic and social disadvantages.

Throughout this crisis, our medical professionals and staff have been compassionate and expert while caring for patients inside our walls, and innovative in creating ways to provide virtual care. They've risen magnificently to the challenge of keeping our facilities safe and sanitized. And many throughout our system have been working hard in a wide range of programs to help our communities stay healthier and to eliminate healthcare disparities.

At Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Hamilton, our "Farm to Family" program addressed food insecurity in our community, which has worsened during the pandemic. The partnership between RWJUH Hamilton community health educators, Snipes Farm and the CYO/Bromley Center helps children and families experiencing significant financial distress by providing weekly shares of fresh produce. Community Education programming continues in the virtual space with robust offerings of health and wellness programs for all ages, which can be enjoyed online and on the phone. RWJUH Hamilton remains committed to your health and wellness.

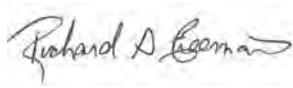
At RWJBarnabas Health, we've learned something else this year: how strong and encouraging the communities we serve are. We can never thank you enough for your ongoing generosity.

While we continue to battle the COVID-19 pandemic together, we want you to be as healthy and strong as you can, and we pledge to do everything possible to help you achieve that goal.

Yours in good health,



BARRY H. OSTROWSKY
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
RWJBARNABAS HEALTH

RICHARD FREEMAN
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL HAMILTON



HEALTH NEWS



TOP-NOTCH JOINT CARE

Renowned orthopedic surgeon and sports medicine specialist Michael R. Duch, MD, has joined Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Hamilton. Dr. Duch, who has more than 20 years of experience, specializes in knee, hip and shoulder replacement surgery as well as surgical and nonsurgical fracture care. He collaborates with physical therapists, occupational therapists and pain management providers to offer nonsurgical treatment options to enhance patients' healing and recovery. He will be seeing patients at Primary Care Express, located at 3100 Quakerbridge Road, and RWJUH Hamilton. To schedule an appointment, call 609.689.7031 or visit www.rwjbh.org/ortho.



AN UNSUNG HERO

Ang Low, Supervisor of Respiratory Care at RWJUH Hamilton, was recently named an "ROI Influencer: Health Care 2020 Unsung Hero" by *ROI-NJ*, a publisher of local business news. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Low, who has been a respiratory therapist for more than two decades, brought stability, clarity and confidence to the team during a time when large numbers of patients required respiratory support and expertise. Respiratory therapists have played a critical role in helping patients combat the virus.



PHYSICAL THERAPY CLOSE TO HOME

In November, a new RWJUH Hamilton physical therapy location opened in East Windsor. RWJBH Rehab, located at 572 Route 130 South, provides comprehensive rehabilitation services, including physical therapy, functional movement screens, balance and neuro rehabilitation, and sports enhancement and injury prevention. Each patient receives a comprehensive evaluation, then experts collaborate to develop a personalized treatment plan. To learn more or to schedule an appointment, call 609.632.2129.

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton | **RWJBarnabas HEALTH**

1 Hamilton Health Pl., Hamilton Township, NJ 08690
609.586.7900

CONNECT WITH US ON

-  @RWJHamilton
-  @RWJHamilton
-  RWJBarnabas Health
-  www.linkedin.com/company/290186/admin

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. For more information, see link on our home page at www.rwjbh.org/hamilton. RWJUH Hamilton cumple con las leyes federales de derechos civiles aplicables y no discrimina por motivos de raza, color, nacionalidad, edad, discapacidad o sexo. ATENCIÓN: Si usted habla español, servicios de asistencia lingüística, de forma gratuita, están disponibles para usted. Llame al 609.586.7900. RWJUH Hamilton konfòm ak lwa sou dwa sivil Federal ki aplikab yo e li pa fè diskriminasyon sou baz ras, koulè, peyi orijin, laj, enfimite oswa sèks. ATANSYON: Si w pale Kreyòl Ayisyen, gen sèvis èd pou lang ki disponib gratis pou ou. Rele 609.586.7900.

healthy *together* contents

WINTER 2021



22



17



8



20



18

2. WELCOME LETTER. A community update from our CEOs.

4. COMMUNITY CALENDAR. A roundup of health education and support programs.

8. A HEART-HEALTHY EATING PLAN. A dietitian explains how simple tweaks can slash your risk of heart disease.



10

9. FAST FACTS ABOUT CARDIAC STRESS TESTS. Monitoring your heart while you exercise gives doctors important information.

10. CANCER SURGERY: PART OF A PLAN. What to consider when you're deciding where to be treated.

12. WHAT A HOSPITALIST CAN DO FOR YOU. This doctor's specialized skills can get you feeling better faster and home sooner.

14. THE TRUTH ABOUT DEPRESSION AND OLDER ADULTS. Symptoms to watch for, and how to get help.

16. ONE STEP AT A TIME. Intensive physical therapy allows a little boy to overcome a rare condition.

17. A NIGHT TO REMEMBER. A family movie night raised funds for the Cancer Center.

18. A TALE OF THREE SPINE SURGERIES. How one couple overcame debilitating back and neck pain.

20. A COMMITMENT TO SAFETY. At RWJUH Hamilton, healthcare providers are focused on reducing the risk of infection.

22. A CALMING WAY TO COPE WITH CANCER. How holistic therapy helped one patient sail through radiation treatment.

We've taken every precaution to keep you safe. So if you've put off care due to COVID-19, please don't delay it any longer.

CLASSES FOR HEALTHY LIVING

All programs will be held virtually. For more information or to register, call the Health Connection at 609.584.5900 or visit us online at www.RWJBH.org/hamilton.



MIND [LIFELONG LEARNING]

Preventive Cardiology in 2021: Five Key Questions Answered

Tue., February 9;
6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Cardiovascular disease remains the No. 1 cause of death and morbidity in the United States. Join Justin Fox, MD, fellowship-trained interventional cardiologist, as he discusses current “hot” topics in cardiovascular prevention, including the role of diet, exercise and medications such as aspirin.

Fireside Chat with the Medical Director of our Ortho Spine program, Dr. Marc J. Levine

Tue., February 16; 6:30 p.m.

Ask your questions in a small, private and safe environment.

HPV is a Very Common Virus that Can Cause Cancer

Tue., February 23; 3 to 3:30 p.m.

The good news is that it's easy to reduce your risk of cancer caused by HPV. Christian Hoffman, MD, will provide frank information regarding HPV and how to protect your teen(s).

Learn How to Spot a Stroke

Wed., February 24; 2 to 3 p.m.

Recognize the signs and symptoms of a stroke by attending a lecture given by Connie Mocerri, NP-C, Director of Disease Management/Stroke Coordinator at RWJUH Hamilton.

Orthopedics Open House: Joint Replacement

Thu., February 25;
6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Discover the latest advances in knee and hip replacement, including robotic-assisted surgery. Learn how the Center for Orthopedic & Spine Health prepares you for a successful joint replacement. John Nolan, MD, fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeon

How to Tame Your COVID Stress Monster

Wed., March 10; 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Have the fears, isolation and uncertainty of the times weighed heavily on you? Carol Rickard, LCSW, will teach you how to feel calmer, sleep better and reduce stress in just 60 seconds.

Colon Cancer Awareness: Get the Facts

Thu., March 11; 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Colon cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related death in the U.S. Colorectal cancer screening saves lives. Regular screening, beginning at age 50, is the key to preventing colorectal cancer. Are you and your loved ones being checked? Herve Boucard, MD

Making Every Day Meaningful: How Hobbies and Activities Can Improve Your Mental Health

Tue., March 16; 11 a.m. to Noon

Mental health is an important part of overall health. During times of stress and change, it can be overlooked. This lecture aims to educate attendees on the meaning of mental health and the impact it has on overall wellness. Learn simple ways to monitor and improve your mental health with meaningful activities. Sarah Masco, MS, OTR/L, CLT

Ask the Plastic Surgeon

Tue., March 23; 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

It's been a long winter—let's spruce up for Spring! Join Matthew Lynch, MD, board-certified plastic surgeon, who will discuss the latest facial rejuvenation products and procedures, which are certain to put a “spring” in our step.

Preventing Drug Use in Youth

Wed., March 24; 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Preventing drug abuse in the early years is crucial in reducing health risks. Learn about the

steps families can take to prevent substance use in youth. EK Lalwani, Pharm.D., Olden Pharmacy

The Impact of Allergies on Sleep

Thu., April 8; 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Allergies can disrupt sleep and cause problems like snoring and sleep apnea. Common CPAP problems will be discussed, as well as a review of devices and masks. Anthony J. Ricketti, MD, board-certified, fellowship-trained allergist, and Peter Ricketti, DO, specialist in Allergy/Immunology/Sleep Medicine

Suicide Prevention

Wed., April 14; 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

The more you know, the greater the likelihood you might be able to help save a life. Learn about the prevalence and warning signs of suicide and the major risk factors. Most importantly, what can you do to help? Professor Jo-Ann Hoffman

Common Hand and Wrist Conditions

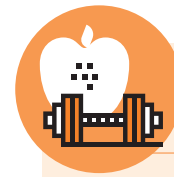
Tue., April 20; 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

It's no secret that for most of us, our hands and wrists are some of the most frequently used parts of our bodies. Learn the causes and latest nonsurgical and surgical treatments for carpal tunnel syndrome, trigger finger, basal joint arthritis, ganglion cysts and other hand conditions. Kimberly Zambito, MD, board-certified and fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeon

Importance of Infection Control in the Time of the Pandemic

Wed., April 28; 11 a.m. to Noon

Infection control during the pandemic is highly important. Join Anne Dikon, Director of Infection Prevention at RWJUH Hamilton, as she explains basic infection prevention.



BODY

Fit Families: Virtual Wellness in the New Year

Mon., January 25, February 1, 8 & 15;

6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Are you looking to make a fresh start with your family's health habits? This dietitian-directed series will help you get back on track or set new goals regarding healthy eating and lower-stress mealtimes. You'll also learn how to incorporate fitness into your routine. Michelle Summerson, MEd, RD, and Shirley Roberts, MA, LPC, NCC

22-Day Healthy Eating Challenge: The End of Heart Disease

Thursday series: February 4, 11, 18 & 25; 6:30 to 7 p.m.

It's 2021! There's no better time to become a “nutritarian.” What's that, you ask? Sign up to learn why and how to follow a nutrient-dense diet. This virtual support session is complete with an introduction, check-in, and follow-up. We will be referencing “The End of Heart Disease: The Eat to Live Plan to Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease” by Joel Fuhrman. The book is available at www.drfuhrman.com, Amazon, eBay, Barnes & Noble and other retailers. Alyssa Luning, RD, CSOWM, a registered dietitian who is board-certified in obesity and weight management

The Lunch Bunch: Virtual Cooking for the Pre-K Crowd

Fri., February 5, 12, & 19; Noon to 12:45 p.m.

Encourage adventurous eating by pairing up with your preschooler in your very own kitchen! Simple recipes and helpful tips on creating positive mealtimes. Michelle Summerson, MEd, RD

Sensational Sweet Solutions

Mon., Feb 8; 11:15 a.m. to Noon

Stressed about making a nutritious but delicious dessert? Create some simple sweets that show love from the outside in. Alyssa Luning, RD, CSOWM, registered dietitian and board-certified specialist in obesity and weight management

Kids in the Kitchen...Virtual!

Dietitian-directed and kid-created...from your own kitchen! Michelle Summerson, MEd, RD

• Created with Love

Wed., February 10; 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Create a Valentine dessert sure to win over your loved ones!

[NUTRITION, FITNESS & WELLNESS]

• **It's National Noodle Month!**

Thu., March 11; 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

A healthy twist on a family favorite.

• **Green and Clean!**

Wed., April 7; 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Fresh ideas packed with nutrients and kid-friendly flavor.

Culinary Nutrition in the Kitchen

Thu., February 18, March 18 & April 15; 11:15 a.m. to Noon

Prevention, reversal and management of chronic disease can start wherever you are, with what you have. Kick off your week with the most up-to-date, evidenced-based nutrition research, recipes and interviews with MDs, allied health professionals and chefs. Alyssa Luning, RD, CSOWM, registered dietitian and board-certified specialist in obesity and weight management

Your Mood & Food

Mon., Feb. 22, 11:15 a.m. to Noon

Do you ever feel like eating but are not actually hungry? Get real with Certified Holistic Health Practitioner and Licensed Massage Therapist Cristin Polizzi to learn more about this phenomenon and leave confidently with a new perspective. Alyssa Luning, RD, CSOWM, registered dietitian and board-certified specialist in obesity and weight management

Family Meal Makeovers: Healthy Eating Lunch & Learn

March is National Nutrition Month! Take charge of your family's health with some fresh approaches to healthy eating. Practical strategies, budget tips, recipes and cooking demo. Michelle Summerson, MEd, RD

• **From Hectic to Homemade & Healthy**

Mon., March 8; Noon to 12:45 p.m.

• **Raising Happy, Healthy Eaters**

Mon., March 22; Noon to 12:45 p.m.

Knife Skills 101

Wed., March 10, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Knowing how to handle knives in the kitchen can significantly boost your cooking confidence. We will discuss the basics so you can slice and dice your way to a healthy lifestyle as you prepare ingredients for dinner. Alyssa Luning, RD, CSOWM, registered dietitian and board-certified specialist in obesity and weight management

Meet your Microbiome & Make Probiotics at Home

Wed., March 24; 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Your gut houses trillions of bacteria. These little guys influence a variety of concerns from head to toe. Come learn simple ways to support your gastric community without purchasing another pill. Alyssa Luning, RD, CSOWM, registered dietitian and board-certified specialist in obesity and weight management

Share Our Strengths: Cooking Matters

Thu., March 25, April 1, 8 and 15; 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

The mission of Cooking Matters is to help end childhood hunger by inspiring families to make healthy, affordable food choices. Healthy eating beginners are welcome to take this four-week online class full of recipes and tips so you can blast off. Alyssa Luning, RD, CSOWM, registered dietitian and board-certified specialist in obesity and weight management

After School Snack Club

Fri., April 16, 23 & 30; 4 to 4:45 p.m.

Who says healthy has to be boring? Work virtually alongside a dietitian to liven up your afternoon snack routine. Three-class series for elementary school-age children and older. Michelle Summerson, MEd, RD

Fit Families: A Virtual Wellness Program

Mon., April 19, 26, May 3 & 10; 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Do you want to make healthy habit changes for your family? This dietitian-directed series will focus on nutrition basics, budget-friendly recipes and incorporating fitness into your daily routine. Michelle Summerson, MEd, RD, and Shirley Roberts, MA, LPC, NCC

Antioxidants, Superfoods & Super Frauds

Wed., April 28; 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Did you know strawberries have more antioxidants than goji berries? In this class, we will discuss a few nutrition myths vs. realities while using simple superfoods to create bowls that nourish. Alyssa Luning, RD, CSOWM, registered dietitian and board-certified specialist in obesity and weight management



SPIRIT

[HOLISTIC HEALTH]

Mindfulness Meditation for Beginners

Wed., February 17, March 17, April 14; 1 to 2 p.m.

Enjoy the relaxation and health benefits of meditation. No experience necessary. Patti McDougall, Integrative Therapies RN

Radical Self Care

Thu., February 18; 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Explore what self-care really is and why you can't truly care for others until you take care of yourself first. Kathi Szabo, Far Cliffs Empowerment Coaching

How to Break Up with Your Cell Phone

Mon., March 8; 6 to 7:30 p.m.

We have become so attached to our phones that we often feel naked without them. Learn tips to unplug—and why we might want to. Patti McDougall, Integrative Therapies RN

Well-Being 101: Unlock Higher Levels of Health, Joy and Abundance!

Thu., April 15; 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Improve your well-being without changing who you are. Discover a simple technique to move beyond what is holding you back. Kathi Szabo of Eclectic Well Being

Breast Health: A Holistic Approach

Tue., April 27; 7 to 8 p.m.

Learn how to naturally care for your breasts. Patti McDougall, Integrative Therapies RN

CLASSES FOR HEALTHY LIVING



YOU

[SUPPORT GROUPS]

Nicotine and Tobacco Dependence Treatment Program

Mon. & Wed., 1 to 5 p.m. & Fri., 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Teleconferencing for individual and group counseling. Prescriptions for smoking cessation medication (gum, patches, etc.) are available upon request. To preregister or for information, contact Michael Kosloski, BA, CTTS, Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist, at 732.837.9416 or email quitcenter@rwjbh.org.

Nicotine and Tobacco Dependence Treatment Program Virtual Group Session Counseling

Thursdays, 6 to 7 p.m. & Tuesdays, 3 to 4 p.m.

Group counseling. To preregister or for information, contact Michael Kosloski, BA, CTTS, Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist, at 732.837.9416 or email quitcenter@rwjbh.org.

Bariatric Weight Loss Support Group

Tue., March 9 & April 13; 6 to 7 p.m.

Call 609.584.5900 to register.

Rediscover your Mind, Body, & Spirit in Retirement

Better Health Program

Complimentary Membership at 65+ years old



INTRODUCING THE BETTER HEALTH PROGRAM AT RWJUH HAMILTON

There's no better time to be 65+ years old, and there's no better place to experience it than at the Better Health Program at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Hamilton. This complimentary program will engage your mind, encourage you to move and help you reflect. Members will meet like-minded people and learn from the doctors and professionals who make your well-being a priority.

The programs listed below and on the next page are exclusively for Better Health members. They will be held virtually. To learn about complimentary membership, attend the "Meet Your Better Health Program" class. For additional information, call Joyce Cantalice, Manager of the Better Health Program, at **609.584.6422**. To register for a program, call the Health Connection at **609.584.5900** or visit us online at www.rwjbh.org/Hamilton.

Discussing Heart Disease

Tue., February 9; 1 to 2 p.m.

Stop heart disease in its tracks! Talk with Connie Mocerri, Director of Disease Management and Stroke Coordinator, about heart disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

For the Love of Music

Wed., February 10; 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Join the musical fun! Help us put our own twist on the song stylings of Sheli Monacchio, songwriter, performer, Senior Vice President of Business Development at Mobility Doctor, and President of CCNJ.

Parkinson's: Updates, Cognition and Exercise

Thu., February 11; 10 to 11 a.m.

Learn the latest on living a full life with Parkinson's disease and other movement

disorders with neurologist Jill M. Giordano Farmer, DO, MPH.

14 Ways to Love Yourself This Valentine's Day

Fri., February 12; 2 to 3 p.m.

Self-care helps us be our best selves. Noelmarie Rossi, owner, Mindful Wellness, shares 14 must-know tips to care for our own mind, body and spirit.

Conversations with David Bossio, Investment Specialist

Tue., February 16; 10 to 11 a.m.

Hear a market update from investment specialist David Bossio. Then he'll lead a Q&A session for insight you can use now!

Connecting with Our Local Youth

Wed., February 17; 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Join an intergenerational conversation

between Better Health members and local teens. Led by Jessica Nitti, Executive Director at Camp Fire New Jersey, this promises to be an inspiring and insightful chat you won't want to miss!

Be Wise about Medications

Tue., February 23; 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Did you know that certain foods and over-the-counter supplements may affect how well our prescribed medications work? Learn about safe use and the side effects of your medications from community health educator Shirley Roberts, MA, LPC, NCC.

Dementia—What You Must Know to Protect Your Loved One

Wed., February 24; 10 to 11 a.m.

Speak with author Justin Scott, Esquire, about protecting the health and finances of a loved one with dementia—as well as those of family members and caregivers.

Seward Johnson: A Glimpse of his Journey

Tue., March 2; 10 to 11 a.m.

Join Lynn DeClemente Losavio, Collection Manager, The Seward Johnson Atelier, Inc., for a close-up and personal look at the life and legacy of artist Seward Johnson.

Falls Free: Improve Balance & Mobility

Wed., March 3; 2 to 3 p.m.

Improve your balance and prevent falls with strategies presented by Huzefa Hussain, MS, OTR/L, Senior Occupational Therapist, RWJUH Hamilton.

Let's Talk Supplements

Thu., March 4; 1 to 2 p.m.

Which dietary supplements are worthwhile? Might they affect how well your prescription medication works? Be part of this frank discussion about dietary supplements with Sara I. Ali, MD, Geriatric and Internal Medicine.

Painting From Life with Leni Paquet-Mortante

Wed., March 10; 1 to 3 p.m.

Please join us for this online workshop to develop your observational skills

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR ALL CLASSES, WHICH WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY.

Visit www.rwjbh.org/Hamilton or call 609.584.5900.

MEDICAL ADVISORY PANEL MEMBERS

The following physicians and experts provide guidance and expertise in developing our community health education programs.

Richard Freeman, CEO

Seth Rosenbaum, MD, MMD, CMO,
Infectious Disease

Javier F. Villota, MD, *Chair, Internal & Occupational Medicine*

Diane Grillo, MS, *VP Health Promotion*

Sara Ali, MD, *Internal Medicine / Geriatrician*

Maqsood Amjad, MD, *Hematology / Oncology*

Leslie Adelman Banks, *Fitness & Wellness Center / Managing Partner*

Hari P. Bezwada, MD, *Orthopedic Surgery*

Anjali Bhandarkar, MD, *Internal Medicine*

Gurvan Blackman, MD, *Interventional Radiology*

Sean Bradley, DMD, *Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery*

Oleg Chebotarev, MD, *Cardiology*

George DiFerdinando, Jr., MD, MPH,
Public Health

Michael Duch, MD, *Orthopedic Surgeon*

David Eingorn, MD, *Orthopedic Surgeon*

Firas Eladoumkdachi, MD, *Oncology / Breast Surgery*

Jill Giordano Farmer, DO, MPH,
Neurology

Jessica Federman, *Director of Marketing*

David Feldstein, MD, *Interventional Radiology*

Jarad Fingerman, DO, *Urology*

Marcella M. Frank, DO, *Internal Medicine, Pulmonary Disease and Sleep Medicine*

Elie Goldenberg, MD, *General Surgery / Bariatric Surgery*

Dorota Gribbin, MD, *Physical Medicine & Rehab / Pain Mgmt.*

Joshua Hornstein, MD, *Orthopedic Surgery*

Kevin F. Law, MD, *Critical Care / Pulmonary / Sleep Medicine*

Marc Levine, MD, *Orthopedic Spine Surgery*

Kenneth M. Liebman, MD, *Neurosurgery*

Matthew Lynch, MD, *Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery*

Biagio Manna, DO, *Thoracic Vascular Surgery*

Shivaprasad Marulendra, MD,
Gastroenterology

Ronnie Nazarian, MD, *Orthopedic Spine Surgery*

Amanda Newsham-Tinsley, *Marketing*

John Nolan, MD, *Orthopedic Surgery*

Earl Noyan, MD, *Bariatric Surgery*

Marguerite O'Donnell, BSN, RN, *Educator, Community Education*

Rao S. Pasupuleti, MD, *Neurology*

Val Prokurat, DO, *Bariatric Surgery*

Pamela Randolph, PT, DPT, *Director, Rehabilitation Services*

Adam Redlich, MD, *Sports Medicine*

Donna Reger, MD, *Internal & Occupational Medicine*

Anthony Ricketti, MD, *Internal Medicine / Allergy & Pulmonology*

Reza Shah, DO, *General / Vascular Surgery*

Robert Silverbrook, DO, *Internal Medicine*

Lauren Stabinsky, MSN, RN, *Director of Community and Corporate Wellness*

Kim Zambito, MD, *Hand Surgery*

Discussions with Sara I. Ali, MD, Geriatric and Internal Medicine
Take the opportunity to connect with a geriatrician, who can answer any questions you might have about your health.

Healthy Heart Tips

Thu., February 4; 1 to 2 p.m.

Love your heart! Dr. Ali shares easy, achievable ways to maintain heart health.

Meet Your Better Health Program for VIPs 65+

Thu., February 11, March 25 & April 22; 1 to 2 p.m.

Explore the benefits of RWJUH Hamilton's no-cost Better Health Program, which is designed to engage the mind, body and spirit of members ages 65 and up.

Get and Keep Healthy Bones

Thu., February 18; 1 to 2 p.m.

Get the details from Dr. Ali! Learn how a healthy diet and physical activity strengthen your bones and help you avoid fractures.

Psychiatric Care Q&A

Thu., February 25; 1 to 2 p.m.

An honest and compassionate

conversation about the prevention, symptoms and evaluation of mental illness.

The Truth about Dietary Supplements

Thu., March 4; 1 to 2 p.m.

Dr. Ali joins Joyce for a frank conversation about dietary supplements—the good, the bad and the truth.

All About Osteoporosis: The Silent Disease

Thu., March 11; 1 to 2 p.m.

Ask Dr. Ali about the causes, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of osteopenia and osteoporosis.

Healthy Snacks with Dr. Ali and Daughters

Thu., March 18; 1 to 2 p.m.

Dr. Ali puts down her stethoscope and puts on her chef's hat to share favorite healthy snack recipes along with her daughters.

Q&A with Dr. Ali

Thu., April 1; 1 to 2 p.m.

Bring your health and wellness questions to this casual conversation. Dr. Ali has answers for you!

MedSmart

Thu., April 8; 1 to 2 p.m.

When you take many medications, it can be hard to keep track of them. Dr. Ali shares strategies to help you safely manage multiple medications for optimal health.

My "Why"

Thu., April 15; 1 to 2 p.m.

Everyone has a "why"—a reason for choosing their professional path. Understand the "why" of Dr. Ali.

Living with Diabetes

Thu., April 29; 1 to 2 p.m.

Live a long and full life with diabetes! Dr. Ali leads this engaging and informative discussion.

and marking-making techniques to approach the natural world as inspiration for both drawing and painting. Individual styles will be developed for a more confident approach to landscapes and still lifes. For all levels of experience. Program includes a guest pass to Grounds For Sculpture.

Senior Shakedown

Wed., March 17; 2 to 3 p.m.

Protect yourself from scammers! Author Justin Scott, Esquire, will explain how to avoid being the target of fraudulent schemes.

Combating Loneliness

Wed., March 24; 10 to 11 a.m.

Cope with feelings of isolation. Sheli Monacchio, songwriter, performer, Senior Vice President of Business Development at Mobility Doctor, and President of CCNJ.

Tai Chi

Tue., March 30; 10 to 11 a.m. &

April 20; 2 to 3 p.m.

Reduce stress and anxiety and increase flexibility and balance with Tai Chi. Presented in partnership with our RWJ Fitness & Wellness Center, this program is designed for participants 65+.

Safe & Strong at Home

Wed, April 21; 10 to 11 a.m.

Learn exercises you can do at home to improve your strength and balance from Huzefa Hussain, MS, OTR/L, Senior Occupational Therapist, RWJUH Hamilton.

Botanical Drawing Workshop with Award-Winning Artist Erin Ellis

Thu., April 22; 10 a.m. to Noon

Erin Ellis, local award-winning lettering artist and illustrator, fell in love with drawing plants while living in New Zealand. Erin's type and illustration work has been commissioned for clients such as Facebook and Chronicle Books,

and she has been leading workshops in typography and botanical art since 2015 (www.erinellis.com). Working from live specimens, participants will learn to understand and render leaf and flower anatomy through guided drawing techniques. Come away with skills to render botanical subject matter on paper and observe the natural world around you. Embracing one's own inherent style of seeing and drawing will be encouraged. Program includes a guest pass to Grounds For Sculpture.

Activity-Based Care vs. Task-Based Care

Tue., April 27; 2 to 3 p.m.

Caring for a loved one at home is not always easy. We will explore some ways to connect to your loved one—even during challenging moments. Sheli Monacchio, songwriter, performer, Senior Vice President of Business Development at Mobility Doctor, and President of CCNJ.



Alyssa Luning, RD, CSOWM, a dietitian, offers advice on how diet can help improve your health and strengthen your immune system.

A HEART-HEALTHY EATING PLAN

A DIETITIAN EXPLAINS HOW SIMPLE TWEAKS CAN SLASH YOUR RISK OF HEART DISEASE.

February is American Heart Month, which is focused on eradicating heart disease and stroke. So, there's no better time to take stock of your own cardiovascular health. One key component of a healthy heart is, of course, your diet. Here, Alyssa Luning, RD, CSOWM, a dietitian who's board-certified in obesity and weight management at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Hamilton, shares her best advice on how to eat for better cardiovascular health.

What are the components of a heart-healthy diet?

It should include a healthy dose of fiber (at least 30 grams for most people), which is found in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, beans and peas. Aim to eat at least five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables daily. (A serving is equivalent to the size of your fist or a closed hand.) Fiber helps to improve blood cholesterol levels.

In addition, the American Heart

Association (AHA) recommends limiting your sodium intake to 1,500 milligrams per day. It's also important to limit your consumption of saturated fat. This can be found in red meat and dairy products; tropical oils (palm and coconut, for instance); and ultra-processed foods, such as cakes, cookies, ice cream, pizza and bacon.

Avoid foods that contain trans fats, which are found in shelf-stable baked goods, crackers and margarine. Look for the words "partially hydrogenated" on food labels.

What are some common misconceptions about heart-healthy foods?

People may think that if they don't add any salt to their food, they're eating a low-sodium diet. The problem is that many foods contain a surprisingly high amount of sodium. The AHA has bundled them together as "the salty six": breads and rolls, pizza, sandwiches, cold cuts/processed meats, soup and burritos/tacos.

What are some examples of heart-healthy snacks?

If you're craving something salty, try making your own microwave popcorn. Combine 1 tsp oil and 1/4 cup popcorn kernels in a brown paper bag. Fold it shut and microwave for about 2 to 6 minutes. Even if you add a pinch of salt, the popcorn will still have less sodium and trans fat than the prepackaged variety. If you're craving sweets, don't hesitate to reach for a piece of fruit. In a study of more than 7,000 people at risk of cardiovascular disease, those who consumed higher amounts of fruit or fiber had a 41 percent lower risk of dying.

Are there any apps that can help people size up the nutritional value of foods?

I like MyFitnessPal and Fooducate. They let you pull up nutrition information and give you alternatives, as needed, to enhance your smart, heart-healthy lifestyle.

Your heart doesn't beat just for you. Get it checked. To reach a Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton cardiac specialist, call **888.724.7123** or visit www.rwjbh.org/heart.



FAST FACTS ABOUT

CARDIAC STRESS TESTS

MONITORING YOUR HEART WHILE YOU EXERCISE IS SAFE AND CAN GIVE YOUR DOCTORS IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

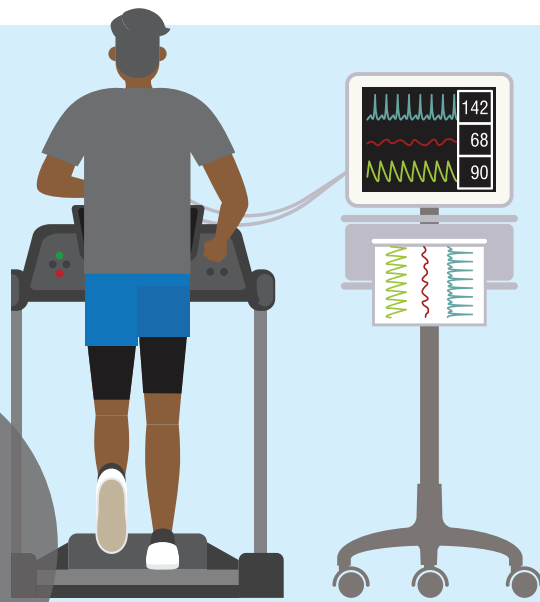
A stress test is a way to detect heart disease while the body is in motion.

“We have several noninvasive tests, such as electrocardiogram (ECT) or echocardiogram, to help detect coronary artery disease as well as heart disease,” explains Sharan Mahal, MD, an interventional cardiologist at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset and a member of RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group. “Those tests are done when the patient is sitting or lying down. However, some people are not symptomatic until they are exercising.”

Think of the heart as an engine, he suggests. “You can only get so much information when the engine is at rest; to really see how it’s working, you have to rev it up and take it for a drive. A stress test lets us see how the heart acts and how blood flows through the body while it’s moving.”



SHARAN MAHAL, MD



WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN EXERCISE STRESS TEST?

- Most stress tests are done in a cardiologist’s office. Patients should wear comfortable clothes and refrain from eating or smoking for four hours in advance.
- The patient is connected to heart-monitoring equipment, then walks on a treadmill under the supervision of a doctor or healthcare professional.
- At first, the pace is a gentle 1.7 miles per hour. The pace will gradually be increased to a brisk walk or light jog.
- At the same time, the incline of the treadmill is increased by two degrees every three minutes. It begins at 10 degrees and progresses to 16 degrees.
- The patient’s heart rate, blood pressure and breathing are monitored throughout the test, which can last up to 15 minutes. The patient can stop at any time if needed.
- After the stress test, the patient will be observed for five minutes during cooldown.



STRESS TESTS ARE PRESCRIBED WHEN SYMPTOMS EXIST.

Unlike a colonoscopy or mammography, there’s no recommended age for a person to begin having stress tests. “People need a stress test if they’re having symptoms, usually chest pain or shortness of breath with activity, or unexplained passing out,” says Dr. Mahal. “In the absence of symptoms, you might also want to do a stress test if a patient has a family history of cardiac disease, or as a precautionary measure if a patient who has been sedentary wants to start an exercise program.”



THERE’S NO NEED TO BE AFRAID OF A STRESS TEST.

“It’s a simple, cost-effective and low-risk procedure,” says Dr. Mahal. “You’ll be carefully monitored the whole time, and if there’s any problem at all—which only about one in 10,000 patients will experience—be reassured that your cardiologist is prepared and will be able to take care of you.”



THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF STRESS TESTS.

The most common is the exercise stress test as described in “What Happens During an Exercise Stress Test?” above. Depending on your risk factors, your physician may prescribe a nuclear stress test, which is the same as an exercise stress test, except that a safe radioactive dye is injected and an imaging machine is used to take pictures. If for some reason you can’t handle the physical activity of a stress test, your doctor can prescribe a medication that will mimic the effects of exercise.

Your heart doesn’t beat just for you. Get it checked. To connect with one of New Jersey’s top cardiac specialists, call **888.724.7123** or visit www.rwjbh.org/heart.



CANCER SURGERY: PART OF A PLAN

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN YOU'RE DECIDING WHERE TO BE TREATED FOR CANCER

Surgery has been a mainstay of cancer treatment for millennia—in fact, the use of surgery to treat cancer appears in Egyptian papyri dating back as far as 2500 BC. Today, medical breakthroughs have opened exciting new possibilities for the successful surgical treatment of cancer.

As critical as surgical advances are, however, they're most effective when they're part of a continuum of cancer care, says H. Richard Alexander Jr., MD, FACS, Chief Surgical Officer and Chief, Surgical Oncology



H. RICHARD ALEXANDER JR., MD

at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, the state's only National Cancer Institute-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center.

"The best outcome for surgery doesn't just depend on what happens in the operating room," says Dr. Alexander. "The best outcome happens when surgery is integrated into a comprehensive, individualized plan of care for a patient who has a new diagnosis of cancer."

COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENTS

As part of the robust partnership between RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) and Rutgers Cancer Institute, experts from a wide range of specialties—surgical oncology, radiation oncology, medical oncology, gastroenterology, genetics

counseling and more—have weekly conferences to assess individual patient cases and make recommendations.

"These discussions aren't about deciding whether to do surgery versus some other treatment," explains Dr. Alexander. "Instead, because we understand cancer so much better now, these discussions are about finding the best ways to use surgery to complement the latest chemotherapy, immunotherapy or biologic treatments."

All treatments offered by Rutgers Cancer Institute and RWJBH are available to any patients being treated within the system, regardless of the facility at which the patient's treatment originated. Among those treatments are advanced and complex surgeries, some of which are only available at Rutgers



CANCER CAN'T WAIT

Because of the pandemic, cancer patients may have concerns about scheduling surgery. However, cancer care shouldn't be delayed. Rutgers Cancer Institute and RWJBarnabas Health facilities have taken every precaution to keep patients, visitors and care-team members safe, including:

- COVID-19 screening and testing of all patients and staff prior to working in an operating room or being involved in a surgical procedure
- Rigorous cleaning and disinfecting practices in recovery room spaces, frequently touched surfaces, exam rooms and terminals.

abdominal cavity, which is designed to obliterate the remaining invisible cancer cells that may be present in the tissues.

•**Preventive, or prophylactic, surgery**, in which sophisticated testing and analysis is used to identify high-risk patients and remove an organ or gland before cancer can develop. This may be recommended for people at risk of developing breast, colon, endometrial, gastric, ovarian, thyroid and many other types of cancer.

Experience counts when it comes to cancer surgery. "There's a large body of literature showing a relationship between the volume of operative procedures done and how successful the outcomes are," says Dr. Alexander. "The more experience surgeons and hospitals have, the better patients do in terms of a shorter length of stay, fewer complications and the return to a normal life more quickly.

"That's something we do especially well at Rutgers Cancer Institute and

RWJBarnabas Health," he says. "We have the experience and technology to recognize potential complications early on and intervene as necessary."

NEXT STEPS

When a patient is told that cancer surgery is needed, how should he or she decide what to do next?

The first step, says Dr. Alexander, is to do further research. "Every doctor wants the best outcome for their patients, and no doctor should object to a patient asking for a referral for another opinion," he says.

Patients also have the option of calling the RWJBH Oncology Access Center at 844.CANCERNJ (844.226.2376). "The call will be taken by a specialist who is trained to gather information about the patient and identify the appropriate experts to evaluate and potentially provide treatment for them," explains Dr. Alexander.

Be sure to consider the continuum of care in the place where you will receive treatment. "Treatment that is fragmented, or administered in different locations without proper coordination, becomes more challenging," he says. "To me, it's always best for a patient to get cancer treatment from a multidisciplinary team of specialists who have good communication and coordination, from diagnosis through treatment, discharge and survivorship."

To help keep communication flowing smoothly among all experts treating a cancer patient at RWJBH facilities and Rutgers Cancer Institute, an oncology nurse navigator assists each patient throughout the cancer journey.

"When it comes to cancer treatment, patients shouldn't move forward until they're absolutely certain the best care plan has been presented to them," says Dr. Alexander. "We're uniquely positioned to provide that plan through the partnership between Rutgers Cancer Institute and RWJBarnabas Health."

Cancer Institute or RWJBH facilities, including:

•**Robotic surgery and laparoscopic surgery**. These are minimally invasive and very precise, and are performed with the most up-to-date technology on the market.

•**HIPEC (hyperthermic intraperitoneal chemotherapy) surgery**, used for cancers that have spread to the abdominal cavity. This treatment strategy involves the surgical removal of metastatic cancer, followed by heated chemotherapy given within the

RWJBarnabas Health, together with Rutgers Cancer Institute—the state's only NCI-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center—provides close-to-home access to the latest treatment options. For more information, call **844.CANCERNJ** or visit **www.rwjbh.org/beatcancer**.





WHAT A HOSPITALIST CAN DO FOR YOU

THIS DOCTOR'S SPECIALIZED SKILLS CAN GET YOU FEELING BETTER FASTER AND HOME SOONER.

If you're admitted to a hospital, you'll be cared for by a specialist physician known as a hospitalist. Though the specialty has been growing



MANINDER ABRAHAM, MD

fast for more than 20 years, many patients and family members may not be familiar with what a hospitalist does.

Maninder "Dolly" Abraham, MD, has been a

hospitalist for 18 years and was recently named Chief of Hospitalist Medicine at RWJBarnabas Health. Here, she explains what patients should know.

What is a hospitalist?

A hospitalist is usually an internal medicine-trained physician who has undergone a residency training and is dedicated to and skilled at inpatient care.

Whether a patient is admitted to the hospital from the Emergency Department or as part of a planned admission, the hospitalist will manage

that patient's care during the time the patient is in the hospital.

How does the hospitalist manage a patient's care?

The hospitalist will see the patient every day during the hospital stay, sometimes more than once. In addition to evaluating the patient, they will spend a large amount of time coordinating their care. This means making sure all consultants and specialists are on the same page, keeping the primary care physician in the loop and

FAST FACTS ABOUT HOSPITALISTS



1996

IT'S A RELATIVELY NEW FIELD

The term "hospitalist" was coined in 1996.



60,000

IT'S GROWING FAST

More than 60,000 physicians practice hospital medicine, up from just a few hundred 20 years ago.



30%/20%

THEY SAVE TIME AND MONEY

Studies show that hospitalists can reduce patient lengths of stay by up to 30 percent and reduce hospital costs by up to 20 percent.



March 4

NATIONAL HOSPITALIST DAY

is held on the first Thursday in March every year (this year, March 4).

Sources: Staffcare.com, Society of Hospital Medicine

"A HOSPITALIST IS LIKE A STAR QUARTERBACK WHO KNOWS HOW TO CALL THE PLAYS AND NAVIGATE YOU THROUGH THE SYSTEM TO GET YOU HOME AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE."

communicating with nurses, social workers, case managers and discharge planners, as well as the patient's family.

Schedules are usually in blocks of days to ensure continuity of care for patients.

Why doesn't a patient's "regular doctor" see him or her in the hospital?

As medicine has evolved, primary care doctors need to dedicate more time to seeing patients in an outpatient setting. In addition, as treatments have become more sophisticated, doctors are able to treat more patients on an outpatient basis.

As a result, patients who are admitted to the hospital these days tend

to be those who are very sick. They require a lot of time and attention, which hospitalists are able to provide. Primary care providers entrust their patients to us. We become an extension of that primary care physician.

How does a hospitalist get up to speed on a patient's history and condition?

There is a steep learning curve on day one. The primary care or referring physician sends over a patient's file and has a phone conversation with the hospitalist. At the first encounter with the patient, the hospitalist will do a detailed history and physical exam on the patient, getting to know him or her as well as possible.

Electronic sharing of medical records has made this process much easier and faster. We have access to the patient's history and to all the doctors involved. In addition, we have HIPAA-compliant, secure text messaging, so we can communicate with other physicians efficiently.

How does a hospitalist communicate with the patient's family members?

Hospitalists spend a lot of time talking with patients and family members. We

train new hospitalists on how to talk with them in layman's terms and not use medical jargon.

We ask families to designate one person to be our contact, and we make every effort to communicate with the patient's family every day.

What advantages does a hospitalist have when it comes to treating a patient?

Hospitalists have broad knowledge of most illnesses and how to manage cases, including surgery patients, diabetes and cancer patients and more.

We are specialists in inpatient care. We organize care throughout the hospital. We're there to order tests, track the results and order follow-up tests promptly. We can clear a patient for surgery and manage him or her post-operatively.

We're also available to explain test results to patients and family members and respond to any medical crises. Then, at discharge time, we have all the tools needed for a smooth handoff to the next step of the healthcare plan.

A hospitalist is like a star quarterback who knows how to call the plays and navigate you through the system to get you home as quickly as possible.

To find a physician at an RWJBarnabas Health facility, call **888.724.7123** or visit www.rwjbh.org/doctors.





THE TRUTH ABOUT DEPRESSION AND OLDER ADULTS

SYMPTOMS TO WATCH FOR, AND HOW TO GET HELP

Do old age and depression go together—especially in a pandemic? We asked two people who know: Jessica Israel, MD, Senior Vice President, Geriatrics



FRANK GHINASSI, PhD



JESSICA ISRAEL, MD

and Palliative Care, at RWJBarnabas Health, and Frank Ghinassi, PhD, ABPP, Senior Vice President of Behavioral Health and Addictions at RWJBarnabas Health and President and Chief Executive Officer of Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care.

Many people expect older adults to be depressed, or at least unhappy. Is that fair?

DR. GHINASSI: Seniors get a bad rap about that. In fact, the age 40 to age 58 group is more likely to be prone to depression. For every older person who is struggling, there are probably seven

or eight who are doing very well as they transition to the later stages of their career and life.

DR. ISRAEL: That expectation is a stereotype and needs to change. In fact, chances are that someone who has had 80 years to develop strategies to deal with stresses in life is, in many ways, better at coping than a younger person.

How does social isolation affect seniors?

DR. ISRAEL: In my experience, people of any age who were already prone to depression have seen their symptoms magnified since the pandemic began. Of

course, COVID-19 struck older adults in disproportionate ways. I would say that a significant number of my patients were able to stay safe at home and find new resources to help them stay connected, although some of them needed extra help to find those connections and services. DR. GHINASSI: The folks we worry most about have a troubling package of circumstances—for example, they live alone, their children have moved away or they never had children, friends are beginning to die off, or they’ve moved to a community where they don’t have an existing network. Some may begin to show cognitive decline. If that’s combined with a history of depression or anxiety, that’s when we get most concerned.

What are signs of depression?

DR. GHINASSI: At any age, changes in baseline behavior are concerning: somebody who had a good sense of humor no longer laughs, somebody who had a healthy appetite isn’t eating, somebody who was a good sleeper now has sleep disturbances. Have they stopped doing things they enjoy? Are they saying things like, “What’s the point of going on?”

DR. ISRAEL: These days, it may be harder to pinpoint these changes because people have less contact with other people—they haven’t been going to the gym, or they no longer get together with their knitting circle.

How can loved ones help?

DR. ISRAEL: It’s so important to reach out to someone who may be isolated and depressed—to learn more about the situation surrounding the person, and what’s happening inside that situation. If you see signs of depression, know that it’s treatable. The first step, the critical one, is to reach out.

DR. GHINASSI: This is the time to connect with seniors more frequently than usual. Options range from phone and video calls to screen porch visits and talking through windows—even providing iPads. Visual contact can be a godsend for both the senior and his or her family.



HOW TO THRIVE WHILE SOCIAL DISTANCING

Seven research-backed ideas to promote physical and mental health.



- **KEEP TO A CONSISTENT ROUTINE.** Studies show that a regular daily routine, especially a consistent pattern of sleeping and waking, has distinct benefits for mental health. Create new routines for daily and weekly activities, including time for self-care, such as exercise or meditation.



- **SPEND TIME WITH CRAFTS AND HOBBIES.** People who take part in creative activities feel higher levels of positive emotion, according to recent studies. Creativity includes not only hobbies such as drawing, knitting or woodworking, but even simple activities like coloring or keeping a diary.



- **TAKE A DAILY WALK.** Walking helps maintain a healthy weight, improves heart health and elevates your mood by increasing your body’s levels of endorphins, the feel-good hormones. If you can get outside, so much the better: Numerous studies have shown that time in nature is an antidote for stress. If weather or slippery conditions prevent going outside, put on your sneakers, put on some music and walk in place at home.



- **READ BOOKS.** Reading books reduces stress, decreases blood pressure and lowers heart rate. Reading actually strengthens the brain by promoting the development of neurons. Moreover, studies show that reading fiction books increases the ability to empathize. If you use an e-reader, turn to a print book at bedtime. The blue light from screens can interfere with sleep.



- **LISTEN TO PODCASTS.** Podcasts are mini-radio shows created on every topic you can imagine, and they’re available free online or through apps for iPhone or Android. A 2016 study found that listening to podcasts activates multiple parts of the brain and can soothe, excite or make you laugh.



- **LISTEN TO YOUR FAVORITE MUSIC.** Music is an effective form of mood regulation, helping us to calm down, feel pleasure or even indulge in a good cry. One study found that adults with chronic osteoarthritis who listened to music daily for two weeks reported less pain.



- **KEEP AND BUILD YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK.** A range of studies has shown that meaningful social connections increase longevity and feelings of well-being. Stay connected by reaching out to friends and family, whether it’s via your phone or laptop, or the “old-fashioned” pen-and-paper way.

To reach the physician referral service at RWJBarnabas Health, call **888.724.7123**. To learn about mental health services, call the RWJBarnabas Health Behavioral Health hotline at **800.300.0628**.



Jen Fecowycz and her son, Oscar; far right, Oscar shortly after he was born with the congenital condition arthrogryposis.



ONE STEP AT A TIME

**INTENSIVE PHYSICAL THERAPY
ALLOWS A LITTLE BOY TO
OVERCOME A RARE CONDITION.**

Jennifer Fecowycz was only 13 weeks pregnant when she learned her baby wasn't developing normally in utero. Doctors could see that he wasn't bending at his wrists, knees, ankles or elbows, and diagnosed a rare condition called arthrogryposis—a congenital joint contracture (stiffness) in two or more areas of the body.

When Jen's baby, Oscar, was born he faced a myriad of complications: club feet, hyperextended knees and elbows, and wrists that hooked under the wrong way. All necessary healthcare services, including surgery and casting, began right after birth. Then, when he was just six weeks old, he began weekly physical therapy sessions at Children's Specialized Hospital (CSH) in Mountainside.

TRUSTING THE PROCESS

Because Oscar couldn't bend his elbows, "tummy time" to strengthen the neck was very difficult. Nighttime splints

**Children's
Specialized Hospital®**

An RWJBarnabas Health facility

were needed to increase the ability of his arms to bend. He had casts on his legs from the age of five weeks to six months, which made rolling over a big challenge.

Oscar and his therapist Diana Deshefy, PT, DPT, PCS, worked on exercise modifications. When the leg casts were removed, Deshefy taught him how to roll over. Deshefy also served as a friend and confidant to Jen and made sure Oscar's entire care team had the most up-to-date information on his case.

"When Oscar was born, we were told that the only way he'd ever walk would be if we amputated his legs at his knees," says Jen. "Children's Specialized made sure that was a decision we never had to make." Because Oscar couldn't bend his knees, physical therapists began by having him stand and put pressure on his legs. "The team at Children's continued to work with us each week, figuring out

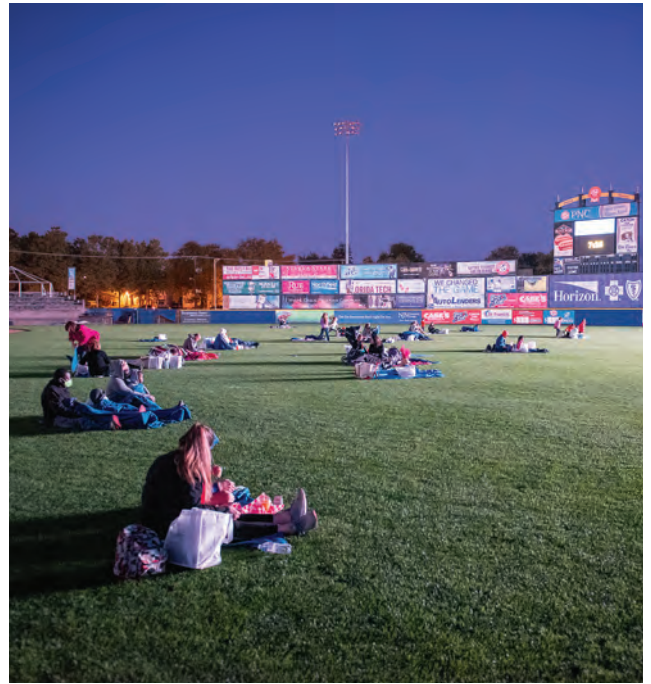
where his legs needed the most support and creating bracing options for his unique needs," Jen says. Just before Oscar's second birthday, Deshefy helped him take his first independent steps.

Today, Oscar is a typical 5-year-old boy who loves to spend time outside hiking, swimming and throwing rocks into the creek. He also enjoys coloring, building with Legos and playing with trucks, cars and dinosaurs. Oscar continues to see Deshefy weekly and interact with all of his friends at CSH.

"My advice for parents going through a similar situation is to take a deep breath, be patient and trust your therapists and the process," Jen says. "It can be overwhelming to hear the therapists set goals for three, six and 12 months and worry that your child isn't going to hit them. But your therapists work with you and your child, adjusting the plan as needed. I'm so grateful to Children's Specialized for all they've done for Oscar and our entire family."

To learn more about Children's Specialized Hospital, call **888.244.5373** or visit www.childrens-specialized.org.

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 developmental and behavioral issues, like autism and mental health conditions. We have convenient locations throughout the state: Bayonne, Clifton, East Brunswick, Egg Harbor Township, Hamilton, Jersey City, Mountainside, New Brunswick, Newark, Toms River and Warren.



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

A FAMILY MOVIE EVENT RAISED FUNDS FOR THE CANCER CENTER.

Last spring, the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Hamilton Foundation's Young Professionals Group (YPG) was looking for a creative way to raise funds during the COVID-19 pandemic. The group of 30 members under age 40 knew they couldn't have their annual spring fundraiser, the "All in Good Taste" beer and wine mixer, which is held at The Boathouse at Mercer Lake. So, they came up with an idea for a new event: a safe and social family movie night. "We realized we wanted to focus on families," says Robert Boka, Chair of the YPG and a partner in a technology software company. "We thought this would be a great option for the community."

A REPRIEVE DURING THE PANDEMIC

On September 18, 325 people gathered in the outfield of ARM & HAMMER Park, the home of Trenton Thunder Baseball, to watch "Trolls World Tour." Attendees, who paid \$30 for individual tickets and \$100 for a family of four, received a gift bag that included blankets, popcorn and food truck and water ice vouchers, which were used at one of three food trucks—D&D Catering, Beach Shack and Chill Out Italian Ice. They were required to wear masks and have their temperature checked. "It was a reprieve in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic," says Brian Hartmann, former YPG Chair, chair of the movie night and a certified financial

Community members enjoyed a socially distanced movie night. At left, from left to right: Nina Melker, Chair, RWJUH Hamilton Foundation; Kacie Hurley, Business Development Executive, Withum; Carli Spires and Emma Natale, Ritchie & Page Distributing Company; and Yolanda Stinger, Vice Chair, RWJUH Hamilton Foundation.

planner at Knox Grove Financial in Pennington. "We were able to get out with the kids and enjoy ourselves."

The group honored Kacie Hurley, a longtime YPG member and Business Development Executive at Withum, as the "Young Professional of the Year." "It was an easy decision," says Hartmann. "She's admired professionally and for her community work." Also honored was Ritchie & Page Distributing Company, Inc. as Corporate Honoree for its commitment to the community.

The event, which raised more than \$30,000, helped the YPG complete a three-year, \$150,000 pledge that it made to the Cancer Center. "To have raised that amount of money during a pandemic is pretty incredible," says Boka.

The event was so successful that the group plans to hold another movie night next year around the same time. It won't replace "All in Good Taste," which will be held this spring.

Learn more about innovative fundraising events from the RWJUH Hamilton Foundation at www.rwjbh.org/events. To support the hospital, visit www.rwjbh.org/hamiltongivenow.



A TALE OF THREE SPINE SURGERIES

HOW ONE COUPLE OVERCAME DEBILITATING BACK AND NECK PAIN.

Denise and Michael Newkirk are able to enjoy quality time with their grandchildren now that they've regained their mobility.



One day in 2018, Denise Newkirk of Hamilton picked up her 1-year-old granddaughter and felt sharp, burning pain in both legs. “I couldn’t move for a week,” recalls the 55-year-old nurse. “I couldn’t twist from right to left or get out of a chair.” When she became more mobile, she had trouble walking, standing and lifting. She and her husband, Michael, have an RV, and they are typically on the road for seven months each year. Every 28 days, they move to a new campsite. “I lift supplies, firewood and equipment to set up our campsites,” says Denise. As a result of her back pain, the couple was forced to stop traveling.

REGAINING MOBILITY

Denise’s daughter had had spine surgery several years earlier, so Denise made an appointment with her surgeon, Marc J. Levine, MD, Director of Orthopedic Spine Surgery at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Hamilton and Clinical Assistant Professor of Orthopedic Surgery at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. An X-ray and MRI revealed that Denise had lumbar stenosis, in which the spinal canal narrows, putting pressure on nerves. She also had spondylolisthesis, in which a spinal bone slips forward, causing pain. Dr. Levine recommended a minimally invasive spinal fusion, in which two or more spinal bones are connected, to stabilize her lower back. “I had confidence in him because he operated on my daughter,” says Denise, who was reluctant to have the operation. “But he never pressured me to have the surgery. He always said, ‘Let me know when you’re ready.’”



MARC J. LEVINE, MD

Dr. Levine prescribed physical therapy and pain medication, but Denise didn’t experience much


relief. She put off the surgery until October 2018, when she couldn’t cope with the pain any longer. To improve her chances of a quick recovery, Dr. Levine used a minimally invasive technique to go through Denise’s side rather than the front or back of her body. “There was no blood loss or damage to her back muscles or spinal canal,” says Dr. Levine. “This surgical approach also reduces the risk of infection.” Denise did well and resumed her usual activities.

Then, in April 2019, Denise was in a car accident and suffered a neck injury, which caused tingling and numbness in both of her arms. She saw Dr. Levine, who recommended surgery, which included fusing two spinal segments in her neck. “It was a fast recovery,” says Denise, who wore a neck brace afterward but didn’t need physical therapy. “I feel much better. The tingling in my arms has stopped, and I can pick up my grandkids now.” Denise and Michael babysit their grandchildren two nights per week.

RELIEF AFTER 15 YEARS OF PAIN

Michael, a former nursing technician at a psychiatric hospital, was injured at work in 2004. He suffered a perforated eardrum, a torn rotator cuff and a herniated disc in his neck. He had surgery to reconstruct his ear and repair his shoulder, but he put off the neck surgery. “I was told that surgery might not improve the pain,” he says. The neck injury caused pain in both arms, although it was worse in the left arm. “The pain would cause my arm to ‘jump’ at night,” he says. “I had trouble lifting things, and I would drop things—even something light, like a plate of food.” Denise took over driving the RV, but the tingling in Michael’s arm and fingers was so uncomfortable that the couple would have to pull over at rest stops so he could take pain medication.

After Denise had her surgeries, Michael, 64, decided it was time to do something about his neck. “I was tired of taking medication,” he says. Michael



STATE-OF-THE-ART CARE

At Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Hamilton, orthopedic surgeons, neurologists, radiologists, physical therapists and nurses collaborate to care for patients with back and neck conditions. “All of our services are under one roof,” says Marc J. Levine, MD, Director of Orthopedic Spine Surgery and Clinical Assistant Professor of Orthopedic Surgery at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. In addition, the hospital’s physicians perform research and organize national spine meetings. “We want to use new technologies to deliver the safest and most effective surgical solutions,” says Dr. Levine.

saw Dr. Levine, who recommended a time-tested procedure called a cervical decompression and fusion. In October 2019, Dr. Levine removed the damaged spinal discs in Michael’s neck; inserted an implant to increase the space between two spinal bones, reducing pressure on the nerves; and covered the bones with a plate. “Michael did well,” he says. “He wished he’d had the operation sooner.”

Michael wore a neck brace for six weeks. After he took it off, it was like he had a “new neck,” he says. “There was no pain and no tingling.” Michael didn’t need physical therapy, but he does perform exercises, such as stretches and “mini push-ups,” to strengthen his neck muscles.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented Michael and Denise from resuming their road trips. As soon as it’s safe to do so, they will pack up their RV. Says Denise: “We’re ready to hit the road.”

For more information or to schedule an orthopedic consultation, call **609.689.7031** or visit www.rwjbh.org/ortho.



To keep patients safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, staff members are required to wear personal protective equipment and follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hand hygiene guidelines. In addition, a disinfection robot is used for cleaning.



A COMMITMENT TO SAFETY



AT RWJUH HAMILTON, HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS USE INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY AND BEST PRACTICES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF INFECTION.

Safety has always been at the forefront of patient care at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Hamilton. But when the COVID-19 pandemic struck last spring, staff members took routine precautions up a notch. “We implemented additional safety measures to ensure the well-being of our patients and staff,” says Anne Dikon, BSN, RN, CIC, Director of Infection Prevention. “We had to stay abreast of what was happening outside Hamilton so we could decide how to move forward inside Hamilton.”

Dikon follows guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In the early weeks of the pandemic, visitors and vendors were not permitted to enter the hospital; temperature, symptom and travel history screenings were taken; and elective surgeries were temporarily halted. Hand sanitizer was made available in all patient and staff areas. In addition, hand hygiene guidelines, which are in line with the CDC’s recommendations, were (and still are) strictly enforced. They include using an alcohol-based hand rub or washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after touching a patient and immediately after removing personal protective equipment.

Dikon worked closely with hospital staff members to ensure they have the tools they need to safely care for patients, including personal protective equipment, such as masks and gowns. “It’s been a collaborative effort, and I’m proud of the way our teams have worked together,” says Dikon.

INNOVATIVE CLEANING TECHNOLOGIES

The pandemic gave Dikon the opportunity to expand the use of innovative technologies, such as the Tru-D disinfection robot. After a patient room or other clinical area is cleaned, the robot is placed

inside the space and activated remotely. Tru-D uses ultraviolet light to disinfect all hard surfaces. The hospital already had one of these robots, which was used to clean rooms occupied by patients with serious infections like *C. difficile*. Since May, two additional robots were purchased to clean all patient rooms.

Recent safety precautions include screening hospital staff members, patients and visitors. Today, everyone who enters the hospital must wear a mask. To facilitate social distancing, the hospital reduced the amount of time patients spend in waiting areas, spaced chairs at least six feet apart, marked floors with tape at appropriate intervals, and kept an eye on the number of patients to avoid crowding.

All admitted and surgical patients are tested for COVID-19. In addition, Emergency Department (ED) patients who have flu-like symptoms are tested. Hospitalized patients can connect with loved ones virtually through apps, such as FaceTime. In addition, RWJUH Hamilton continues to offer telemedicine visits for patients who are unable to see their providers in person.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Today, patients can safely have elective surgeries, receive routine screenings like mammograms and come to the ED if they have symptoms of serious conditions, such as a heart attack or stroke.

RWJUH Hamilton’s commitment to patient safety and best practices was recently recognized with an “A” Hospital Safety Grade—the highest patient safety rating—by The Leapfrog Group, an independent national healthcare watchdog organization. This is the ninth time the hospital has received such recognition. Still, Dikon remains vigilant. “We won’t let our guard down,” she says. “We want to provide the safest care for our patients and for everyone in our community.”



If you’ve put off care due to COVID-19, please don’t delay it any longer. For more information about safety precautions at RWJUH Hamilton, visit www.rwjbh.org/welcomeback.






Melanie Wright, a breast cancer patient, used aromatherapy just before radiation treatment sessions to help her relax.

A CALMING WAY TO COPE WITH CANCER

HOW HOLISTIC THERAPY HELPED ONE PATIENT SAIL THROUGH RADIATION TREATMENT.


 RWJBarnabas Health and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton, in partnership with Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey—the state’s only NCI-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center—provide close-to-home access to the most advanced treatment options. Call 844.CANCERNJ or visit www.rwjbh.org/beatcancer.

difficult road ahead. Rachana Singh, MD, Melanie’s radiation oncologist at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Hamilton, recommended four weeks of radiation treatment, an accelerated schedule that allows patients to return to their lives more quickly. The radiation didn’t worry Melanie as much as the machine used to deliver it. She had to lie on her stomach on a table so the treating arm of the machine could rotate around her.

“I’m extremely claustrophobic, and I had to lie flat on my stomach with my head down,” says Melanie. “It was very unnerving for me.” It didn’t help that Melanie was still experiencing soreness from her back surgery, making it difficult to get on and off the table and remain comfortable during each of the 15-minute treatments.

A SOOTHING SOLUTION

Melanie was so anxious that she had to take a tranquilizer prior to the first few radiation sessions. But then she discovered a more soothing solution: aromatherapy, which was offered through the hospital’s Holistic Program. Thanks to funding from the RWJUH Hamilton Foundation, cancer patients can receive a range of complementary treatments, including Reiki (a hands-on healing technique), meditation, massage, pastoral care, nutrition counseling and art, music and pet therapies, all free of charge.

For 30 minutes before each radiation session, Melanie relaxed in a reclining chair with warm blankets and lavender aromatherapy. “It was a half hour of peace and quiet,” Melanie says. “The aromatherapy was very calming and relaxing, and it put me in a better frame of mind. It was extremely helpful.”

The aromatherapy was so beneficial that Melanie was able to stop taking a tranquilizer before her treatments and relied only on pain medication for her back. “The aromatherapy gave her time to center herself and get ready for her treatment sessions,” says Dr. Singh. “She tolerated the treatment well. By the end, she was so calm.”

Holistic therapies can benefit patients emotionally and spiritually, says Dr. Singh. “Very often, these specialized services are offered at bigger hospitals, so patients have to travel,” she says. “The stress of travel negates the benefit. So being able to offer these services at our center has been amazing. We want to help our patients get through treatment in the most stress-free way possible.”

The Holistic Program has been in place for more than a decade but has become even more robust in recent years as interest in complementary therapies has grown and doctors are focusing more on treating the mind as well as the body, says Maqsood Amjad, MD, director of medical oncology at the RWJUH Hamilton Cancer Center. “The field of oncology has progressed significantly in the last decade with newer medications, and we are treating the diseases much more effectively,” says Dr. Amjad. “But we don’t always pay attention to the patient as a whole. That’s why we are looking at patients not only in terms of their physical ailment but also what goes on in their mind, their spirit. It’s about integrating a holistic approach into our conventional treatment.” The approach has been very successful, and the hospital is continually striving to offer evidence-based holistic therapies that meet patient needs and interests, says Dr. Amjad.

STAYING WELL

Melanie is now cancer-free, and her only treatment is to take a daily medication that can help prevent a recurrence of her cancer by lowering her estrogen levels for 10 years. She’s still doing aromatherapy for relaxation. “I’m a believer in holistic therapies,” she says. “I think they play a big part in helping people get well. Now I do aromatherapy at home with a diffuser a couple times a week. I even have one in my car.”

In November 2019, Melanie Wright had back surgery. A month later, she had her annual mammogram. There was a suspicious finding in her left breast, and follow-up scans and a biopsy confirmed she had ductal carcinoma in situ, or DCIS, a noninvasive precancer that’s confined to the milk ducts. At the end of January 2020, she was back in the operating room for a lumpectomy.

Even after all she’d been through, Melanie, 64, of Trenton, still faced a



MAQSOOD AMJAD, MD



RACHANA SINGH, MD

Top Ranked for Quality & Safety.

