

#### MESSAGES FROM LEADERSHIP



"The newly opened RWJBarnabas Health Field of Dreams in Toms River, a recreational complex for people of all ages and abilities, is emblematic of our mission: to help the people who live in our communities feel healthier and enjoy their lives to the fullest."

BARRY H. OSTROWSKY | Chief Executive Officer, RWJBarnabas Health



"I am deeply moved by the commitment my outstanding RWJBarnabas Health colleagues have to our mission and to serving everyone in our communities with inclusiveness for all, regardless of race, age, gender, background and ability."

MARK E. MANIGAN | President, RWJBarnabas Health

"Because Jersey City Medical Center serves a very diverse community, we are committed to addressing both clinical and social determinants of health. Our care is not confined to inside the hospital's walls, nor is it limited by zip codes, incomes or ethnic backgrounds. We are always focused on healing, enhancing and investing

in many ways to sustain a healthy community for all."

MICHAEL PRILUTSKY | President and Chief Executive Officer, Jersey City Medical Center

### Jersey City Medical Center



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#### HEALTH NEWS



#### **JERSEY CITY MEDICAL CENTER'S** ANNUAL BABY FAIR IS BACK!

Saturday, September 17 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Jersey City Medical Center 355 Grand Street, Jersey City

Our much-loved Baby Fair will offer tours of the Lord Abbett Maternity Wing, opportunities to meet with members of our Women's Health and pediatric teams, and receive information about having a healthy pregnancy, infant CPR, breastfeeding and more.

For more information about the Baby Fair, visit www.rwjbh.org/jerseycity or call 201.915.2000.

#### **NEW TECHNOLOGY BREAKS DOWN LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

A new technology introduced at RWJBarnabas Health breaks down language barriers, eases communication between patients, families and providers, and furthers the health system's mission to overcome health disparities.

Known as MARTTI (My Accessible Real-Time Trusted Interpreter), it provides 24/7 access to certified medical interpreters in more than 250 languages. MARTTI devices resemble IV carts with 12-inch tablets attached and are easily wheeled anywhere they're

MARTTI can help limited Englishproficient patients as soon as they enter Jersey City Medical Center. The patient or a family member can point out their country of origin on the MARTTI screen and choose from a list of languages. An interpreter will then communicate with the individual in the language of their choice. For deaf or hard of hearing patients, an ASL medical interpreter is readily available.



# healthogether contents

SUMMER 2022













- 2. WELCOME LETTER. A community update from our CEOs.
- 4. OB/GYN OR MIDWIFE: WHICH IS RIGHT FOR YOU? Choosing your path to a healthy pregnancy.
- 5. A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR VASCULAR CARE. A newly renovated center opens.
- 6. BIGGER, BETTER CARE FOR HUDSON COUNTY. Coming soon: an expanded, state-ofthe-art ED.
- 8. HUBS FOR GOOD **HEALTH.** Primary care, close to home.



9. HEALING HEARTS. A team approach to coronary artery disease.

10. NEW WAYS TO TREAT SKIN CANCER.

> Advanced treatment options, clinical trials and greater access to expert care.

- 12. A PLACE WHERE **EVERYONE CAN PLAY.** The RWJBarnabas Health Field of Dreams is open to kids of all abilities.
- 14. RETHINKING WORK. What to ask yourself before you retire.
- 16. THE VIRTUAL CLUBHOUSE. How Opportunity Project innovates to help adults recover from brain injury.

17. WATCH YOUR HEAD!

Concussion screening and management for young athletes is now in Hudson County.

- 18. 'THE LUCKIEST DAY OF OUR LIVES.' A very special delivery in the Lord Abbett Maternity Wing.
- 20. 8 WAYS TO HELP **EASE CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENT.** Infusion nurses share their best advice.
- 22. HOW TO BUILD A **HEALTHCARE TEAM.**

Staying your healthiest starts with your primary care provider.



#### CHOOSING YOUR PATH TO A HAPPY, HEALTHY PREGNANCY

f you're pregnant or planning to be, seeking out a prenatal care practitioner is one of the first things on the to-do list. Women who go to Women's Health at Grove Street at Jersey City Medical Center (JCMC) have a choice between having regular visits with a midwife, with an OB/GYN

or both.

PATRICIA CHAU, MD

How do you know which is the right choice for you?

TYPES OF CARE OB/GYNs and midwives differ in education as well as approach. OB/GYNs are medical doctors, and the midwives at JCMC are all RNs (Registered Nurses) as well as CNMs (Certified Nurse Midwives), meaning they have master's degrees and higher.

Both OB/GYNs and CNMs provide all types of care for women, from routine gynecological exams and prescribing contraception to delivering babies.

High-risk patients or patients looking to deliver via cesarean section should choose an OB/GYN. Patients considered high-risk include those who have a preexisting condition, are pregnant with multiple babies, or have been diagnosed with conditions like gestational diabetes or high blood

pressure. "Only OB/GYNs have the training to perform surgical procedures, such as cesarean section, as well as perform operative deliveries with a vacuum or forceps in the event that intervention is needed during labor," explains Patricia Chau, MD, an OB/ GYN at JCMC and a member of RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group.

For patients who are considered low-risk, vaginal delivery with a midwife can be an excellent option. In 2021, 77 percent of the normal vaginal deliveries at JCMC were performed by midwives. "The word 'midwife' means 'with woman,'" explains Anne Lawson, MSN-CNM, BSN, RN, Director of Midwifery at JCMC and an RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group provider. "It means that I'm here to support you with whatever kind of birth experience you want. If you want an epidural, I'm going to get it for you. If you don't, I'm going to support you with that as well."

During labor, "midwives are more present in the pushing phase," says Lawson. "We're there, encouraging you."

#### THE BENEFITS OF BOTH

At Women's Health at Grove Street, the maternity team collaborates to provide care tailored to each patient's needs. In addition, Women's Health uses rotational care to provide its pregnant patients with the opportunity to meet every practitioner.

"Each patient gets the chance to meet with each practitioner in the practice," explains Dr. Chau. "We encourage that, particularly so the patient can get to know all of the practitioners in case their regular doctor or midwife can't be there for their delivery." If a patient develops a condition that puts her in a highrisk category, an OB/GYN is always available to assume care.

"Our team shares the same goal for all of our patients," says Dr. Chau, "and that is a normal, healthy delivery."

To learn more about maternal care at Women's Health at Grove Street, call 201.984.1270. To learn more about giving birth at JCMC, visit www.rwjbh.org/hudsoncounty.





At left, a room in the newly renovated Vascular Center. Below. JCMC's Vascular Center team reviews its EMR system. From left, Jeffrey Rodriguez, Practice Manager; Michael Curi, MD, Director; Joseph Huang, MD, attending vascular surgeon; Saqib Zia, MD, attending vascular surgeon.



### A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR VASCULAR CAR

#### AN UPGRADED CENTER PROVIDES A FULL SPECTRUM OF ADVANCED TREATMENT.

he newly renovated Vascular Center at Jersey City Medical Center (JCMC) allows patients to receive comprehensive diagnostic testing and treatment in one convenient location.

"The beauty of our Vascular Center is that it's a one-stop shop for patients," says Michael Curi, MD, Director of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery at JCMC and Chief, Division of Vascular Surgery, at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School.

"In the past, patients would see a doctor to be evaluated, be sent elsewhere for their testing and then have to come back to review the results," he says. "Now all three of those visits can be condensed into one."

The state-of-the-art Vascular Center is approximately 2,350 square feet and includes a procedure room, a testing room and three examination rooms.

#### A RANGE OF NEEDS

While cardiologists specialize in diseases of the arteries leading to the heart, vascular surgeons specialize in treating the rest of the circulatory system.

A patient will typically be referred to a vascular surgeon by a primary care provider, a cardiologist or a podiatrist. Conditions commonly treated by vascular surgeons include:

• Varicose veins, usually in the legs, which are enlarged due to increased blood pressure in the veins. "Nine times out of 10, these aren't dangerous, but if somebody notices enlarged veins, they should come in for an evaluation," says Dr. Curi.

- Carotid artery disease, which occurs when plaque clogs the blood vessels that deliver blood to the brain and head, increasing the risk of stroke. "Without having to do invasive testing, we can do an ultrasound and determine whether someone is at risk of stroke," says Dr. Curi. "We can treat this condition by cleaning the plaque or placing a stent—a small metal tube—in the artery to break up the blockage."
- Peripheral arterial disease (PAD), in which narrowed arteries reduce blood flow to the limbs. "One of the first signs of PAD is a cramping pain in the calf muscles while walking, because the body is unable to get sufficient blood flow to the muscles," says Dr. Curi.
- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT), which occurs when a blood clot forms in one of the deep veins of the body, usually in the legs. "DVT can occur when a person is confined for a long time, such as on a long flight or being in bed for several days," explains Dr. Curi. "The blood clots need to be managed carefully by vascular surgeons to prevent serious complications."

Treatment for any of these conditions may or may not involve surgery. "At our center, we have the capability for minimally invasive endovascular procedures to treat conditions like varicose veins or vein disease," says Dr. Curi. "However, we also prescribe many noninvasive therapies, such as medications, exercise therapy and compression therapy."

The Jersey City Medical Center Vascular Center is located at 377 Jersey Avenue, Suite 460, Jersey City. To make an appointment, call 201.915.2448 or visit www.rwjbh.org/hudsoncounty.





## BIGGER, BETTER CARE FOR HUDSON COUNTY

COMING SOON: AN EXPANDED, STATE-OF-THE-ART EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT



Clockwise, renderings show the new ED entrance; child-size furniture to accommodate small patients; a private, comfortable observation room adjacent to the ED; and a bright, roomy waiting room.





ersey City Medical Center (JCMC) is healing, enhancing and investing in Hudson County through major initiatives, from primary care through cancer and cardiac care, and beyond. Soon, JCMC will unveil the \$110 million expansion of its Emergency Department (ED) facilities, including convenient parking and advanced hybrid operating rooms. "We will be celebrating the opening and this significant investment in Hudson County healthcare in a very big way," says Michael Prilutsky, President and CEO of JCMC. Here, he explains the vision behind the expansion.

#### What is the expected economic impact to Hudson County of the expanded ED?

Our mission is to create and sustain a healthy community, so the goal of any new investment has to support that. The expanded ED is no exception.

To start, we built a brand-new parking lot that's well-lit and convenient. Inside, in addition to creating more ED space and providing the most modern equipment, we've created a totally separate experience for pediatric patients. The Pediatric ED has its own entrance area, waiting rooms, observation rooms and inpatient beds. It's the only one of its kind in Hudson County.

On the second floor, we've built state-of-the-art hybrid operating rooms, which can accommodate different surgical specialties and advanced procedures, including minimally invasive surgery that allows faster recovery time.

As far as economic impact, having the best ED in Hudson County has a direct impact on the ability of people to go to work and earn a living. The expansion has created many jobs. Our advanced facilities also enable us to recruit and retain staff so that we have a great team serving our patients.



MICHAEL PRILUTSKY. PRESIDENT AND CEO

#### What element of the new ED are vou most excited about?

That would have to be the patient experience. We're adding 60,000 square feet, doubling the size





Top, the expanded ED will allow improved flow of traffic for visitors and staff. Bottom, one of the new hybrid operating rooms, which can accommodate both open and minimally invasive surgery.

of the existing ED. That means there will be an improved flow of traffic for visitors as well as the healthcare and support staff that come through.

The space is larger, more modern, brighter and more accessible. We have much more room for storage and more space to enforce infection control. Young patients and their families will have spaces that are tailored to their needs. Separate pediatric exam rooms, observation units and inpatient beds right next to the ED will allow a seamless flow from one level of care to another. Our state-designated Level

II Trauma Center, which serves all of Hudson County, is going from two rooms to four.

We do expect there to be more demand for our ED services as Jersey City and Hudson County continue to grow, but we don't expect it to double. The reason for doubling the size of the ED is to provide safe, quality care. It's very exciting to be able to stand up and say we're offering the best healthcare team and by far the best facilities in Hudson County. Patients don't need to go anywhere outside Hudson County to receive world-class care.

To learn more about Jersey City Medical Center services for Hudson County, visit www.rwjbh.org/hudsoncounty.





#### HOW JCMC IS MAKING IT EASY FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO GET THE CARE THEY NEED

udson County residents don't have to travel outside the county to get world-class care and increasingly, they don't have to leave their own neighborhoods.

"We're establishing primary care hubs in a number of locations. Our goal is to create one-stop shopping for state-ofthe-art care in people's neighborhoods," says Michael Prilutsky, President and Chief Executive Officer of Jersey City Medical Center (JCMC).

In addition to providing primary and certain kinds of specialty care, these hubs connect to supportive services that help keep people healthy, including behavioral and mental health services, physical therapy and nutrition counseling.

The primary care hubs are currently open in Bayonne as well as in Greenville and Journal Square in Jersey City. Coming soon are similar hubs in Hoboken and at Exchange Place in Jersey City.

#### WHERE THE NEED IS

Primary care hubs are a key part of JCMC's overall mission of helping Hudson County residents stay healthy.

"We want people to see their primary care providers for well checkups so

medical conditions don't progress in a way that leads them to have to go to the Emergency Department," Prilutsky says.

"However, we know that an

overarching issue in Hudson County, as in many other areas of New Jersey, is the lack of easy access to primary care physicians or nurse practitioners. That's why our primary care hubs are located within walking distance for many and are also easily reachable via mass transit. If services are easy to reach, people will use them more."

Each area in which a primary care hub is located has been carefully studied to determine local needs, such as the prevalence of widespread chronic illnesses like diabetes and hypertension. The primary care hubs will accept most insurances.

If patients need advanced care, they can be seamlessly connected to JCMC's comprehensive range of services. They also have the benefit of JCMC's affiliation with Rutgers Health and

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

In Hoboken, RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group will offer primary care services at 59 Newark Street.

> The site will also feature women's healthcare, including imaging

services such as mammography and bone densitometry. At Exchange Place in Jersey City, RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group will offer primary care services at 95 Greene Street. This location will feature extended hours and

walk-in access to accommodate those who need to find care before or after work and close to the Light Rail and the PATH.

"Many health needs in our communities can be addressed by both preventive education and medical specialists," Prilutsky says. "With these primary care hubs, we are helping people to take charge of their own healthcare."

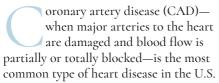
"WITH THESE PRIMARY CARE HUBS, WE ARE HELPING PEOPLE TO TAKE CHARGE OF THEIR OWN HEALTHCARE."

Chief Executive Officer,

To learn more about primary care services at Jersey City Medical Center, call 888.724.7123 or visit www.rwjbh.org/medgroupprimarycare.



#### A TEAM APPROACH TO **CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE**



However, new technology, along with a team-based approach to treatment, have greatly improved patient outcomes, says interventional cardiologist Bruce Haik, MD, Chief of the Division of Cardiology and Director of the Cardiac Catheterization Lab at Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center (CBMC), who is also a member of RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group.

"Treating CAD sometimes involves a complex decision tree requiring a Heart Team consultation," says Dr. Haik. "When a patient and family have input from cardiac specialists with a wide array of expertise, they can feel confident in making a decision about treatment."



BRUCE HAIK, MD

#### **MEMBERS OF** THE TEAM

CAD can be diagnosed in a variety of ways, including cardiac stress tests, which show how the heart works during physical activity; a

coronary CT scan, a specialized, ultra-fast imaging test that can provide a calcium score and also provide noninvasive information about the arteries; and an angiogram, an X-ray that can accurately detect blockages. These tests are often ordered by a cardiologist, a doctor trained in finding, treating and preventing cardiac disease.

The noninvasive cardiologist may refer the patient to an interventional **cardiologist**. "This is a specialist in the nonsurgical opening of arteries," says Dr. Haik. A procedure done by an interventional cardiologist is angioplasty, also known as percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI). In this procedure, a soft, flexible guide wire and various balloon catheters and devices are inserted into a narrowed blood vessel in order to open the artery with stents. The process is sometimes aided by imaging from within the blood vessel utilizing specialized imaging systems.

The interventional cardiologist will consult with a cardiac surgeon, whose specialty is open heart surgery, in which an incision is made in the chest in order to perform coronary artery bypass graft surgery, sometimes combined with valve repair or replacement.

Both of those doctors will rely on the information provided by a cardiac imaging specialist, who uses sophisticated technology to provide detailed images of a heart's chambers, valves, walls and blood vessels. "It's important to know the severity, location and extent of the narrowing, but also to understand whether the blockage is rigid and calcified, or is more consistent with soft plaque," says Dr. Haik.

#### MAKING THE CALL

The Heart Team approaches each patient's individual treatment plan by considering many clinical factors, including age, frailty and coexisting medical conditions like diabetes in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.

"The cardiology field has evolved so that we now have many effective ways of treating CAD and related conditions," says Dr. Haik. "For example, the Shockwave balloon utilizes ultrasound waves to break up calcified plaque before placing a stent, allowing for more complete expansion.

"All of these options are weighed along with the particular patient's risk profile," he explains. "A major benefit of the Heart Team process is that sometimes a hybrid approach using both catheterbased procedures and surgery turns out to be the safest and most effective means of treatment."

RWJBarnabas Health supports the largest-volume elective and emergent angioplasty program in New Jersey. To connect with a top cardiovascular specialist at RW[Barnabas Health, call 888.724.7123 or visit www.rwjbh.org/heart.



**OUR PATIENTS HAVE THE BENEFIT OF ADVANCED** TREATMENT OPTIONS. CLINICAL TRIALS AND GREATER ACCESS TO EXPERT CARE.

ver the years, there's been a revolution in the way we treat skin cancers, especially melanoma," says Sarah Weiss, MD, Director, Melanoma/Cutaneous







SARAH WEISS, MD

Oncology Program at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, the state's only NCI-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center. "The important thing to know is that with skin cancer, even if it's advanced, there are now a number of potentially effective therapies available."

"A diagnosis of skin cancer can be scary," says Adam Berger, MD, FACS, Chief, Melanoma and Soft Tissue Surgical Oncology at Rutgers Cancer Institute, "but when you're treated by a multidisciplinary team, the chances of a good outcome are excellent."



#### MELANOMA: WHAT TO KNOW

Melanoma is a type of skin cancer that develops when melanocytes (the cells that give the skin its tan or brown color) start to grow out of control. It's more likely than other skin cancers to spread to other parts of the body if not treated early.

"I advise patients to see a dermatologist for a skin check regularly, and if there's any change in a mole, to be seen right away," says Adam Berger, MD, FACS, Chief, Melanoma and Soft Tissue Surgical Oncology at Rutgers Cancer Institute.

The most important warning sign of melanoma is a new spot on the skin or a spot that is changing in size, shape or color. Be on the lookout for spots that have any of the following features:



#### A IS FOR **ASYMMETRY:**

One half of a mole or birthmark does not match the other.



#### **BIS FOR BORDER:**

The edges are irregular, ragged, notched or blurred.



#### C IS FOR COLOR:

The color is not the same all over and may include different shades of brown or black, or sometimes patches of pink, red, white or blue.



#### **D IS FOR DIAMETER:**

The spot is larger than 6 millimeters across (about 1/4 inch—the size of a pencil eraser), although melanomas can sometimes be smaller than this.



### **EVOLVING:**

The mole is changing in size, shape or color.











Source: American Cancer Society

#### ADVANCED TREATMENTS

Although melanoma accounts for only 1 percent of skin cancers, it causes the majority of skin cancer deaths. "Physicians at Rutgers Cancer Institute and RWJBarnabas Health treat all types of skin cancers, but we worry about melanoma because it has the highest chance of spreading in the body," says Dr. Weiss.

"The majority of patients we see will have surgery to remove the melanoma, and that will be the only treatment they'll need," explains Dr. Berger. However, if a lymph node biopsy reveals that the cancer has spread, systemic treatment may be given. This may include targeted therapy or immunotherapy.

"The FDA has approved many new therapies over the past 10 years, including several new ones just this year, that enable us to harness a patient's immune system to fight melanoma as well as other skin cancers," says Dr. Weiss.

Patients may be eligible for one of

a number of clinical trials available at Rutgers Cancer Institute or one of the RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) hospitals. "Our goal is to offer clinical trials in every setting of the disease, for patients who've never had treatment to patients who've had prior treatments but are in need of new therapies," says Dr. Weiss.

#### **MANY MINDS**

Multidisciplinary care means that patients at RWJBH hospitals and Rutgers Cancer Institute benefit from the expertise of a dedicated team of specialists, including surgical oncologists, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, radiologists, dermatologists, pathologists, nurses, nurse navigators and social workers.

"We meet on a weekly basis to discuss each patient's case," says Dr. Berger. "We put our heads together to create a personalized plan of care for each individual."

Physicians throughout Rutgers

Cancer Institute and RWJBH coordinate care across the state at RWJBH hospitals. Their mission, says Dr. Berger, is to make top-level cutaneous oncology (skin cancer) care available for patients close to home.

Franz O. Smith, MD, MAcM, MMM. FACS, Northern Lead, Melanoma and Soft Tissue Oncology Program, RWJBarnabas Health, and Medical Director, The Melanoma Center at Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center, collaborates with the cutaneous oncology team at Rutgers Cancer Institute, attends the weekly multidisciplinary tumor board meetings and offers patients access to clinical trials. He also sees patients at Clara Maass Medical Center in Belleville.

The cutaneous oncology team at Rutgers Cancer Institute also works closely with surgical oncologist Victor Gall, MD, who treats melanoma and skin cancer patients at Community Medical Center in Toms River, Monmouth Medical Center in Long Branch and Monmouth Medical Center Southern Campus in Lakewood.

To learn more about treatment for skin cancers at RWJBarnabas Health and Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, call 844.CANCERNJ or visit www.rwjbh.org/beatcancer.









# A PLACE WHERE **EVERYONE CAN PLAY**







At the ribbon cutting for the RWJBarnabas Health Field of Dreams, opposite page, from left: Maurice Hill, Mayor, Toms River; Mitchell Little, Police Chief, Toms River; Barry Ostrowsky, CEO, RWJBarnabas Health; Christian, Gavin and Mary Kane; Michael Ritacco, Board President, Field of Dreams; Michelle Minnelli, Kane family friend; and Todd Frazier, former Major League Baseball All-Star and supporter of Children's Specialized Hospital.

#### THE RWJBARNABAS HEALTH FIELD OF DREAMS IS OPEN TO KIDS OF ALL ABILITIES.

avin has no place to go. He used to have places to go, but a beer truck changed all that. And that can happen to you or someone you love in the blink of an eye."

That's how Christian Kane explained the need for a recreational complex for people with disabilities to potential donors. In 2012, the car Christian was driving was hit by a truck, leaving his son, Gavin, just 19 months old, with a fractured skull and severe disabilities.

Since then, Kane and his wife, Mary, who also have four other children, have spared no effort to help Gavin have as normal a childhood as possible. That's how they learned that even "inclusive" playgrounds—"with some rubber flooring and a big red swing chair"—can create an environment in which disabled children feel unwelcome. And that's why they decided it was necessary to build a comprehensive recreational facility where children of all abilities, and their caretakers, would feel at home.

So Kane, a math teacher at Toms River North High School, became the chief organizer, fundraiser and salesperson for their dream. "To sell teenagers on the idea that math is cool, you have to know how to sell," he says with a laugh.

Five years and one month from the day the couple had the idea, the RWJBarnabas Health Field of Dreams opened in Toms River. It features a basketball court, baseball field, nine-hole miniature golf course and a playground

area specially designed for wheelchairs and adaptive equipment. The complex has a "quiet corner" pavilion for children with autism, strategically placed outlets for recharging wheelchairs and more. There's nothing like it anywhere in the country.

"The Kanes' passion project aligned perfectly with RWJBarnabas Health's commitment to health equity and supporting community-based initiatives," says Barry Ostrowsky, Chief Executive Officer of RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH).

#### **OUTSIDE THE BOX**

The Kanes already had a connection with RWJBH through Children's Specialized Hospital in Toms River, an RWJBH facility, where Gavin has been receiving physical and occupational therapy since the accident.

"Mind you, most of the doctors we were seeing early on told us to put Gavin in a home because he would amount to nothing," says Kane. "We said, we'll take him to our home, and we found help for Gavin at Children's Specialized. The physical and occupational therapists there have basically treated Gavin like their own child. They're always thinking outside the box, trying new thingsanything to help him get better."

Gavin is now in fourth grade in the Toms River public school system. "Through the use of a tablet, he's able to communicate and learn," says Kane. "Through the use of my body and my wife's body, he's able to walk around. He's come a long way, but he's still not where we want him to be. That's our number one project."

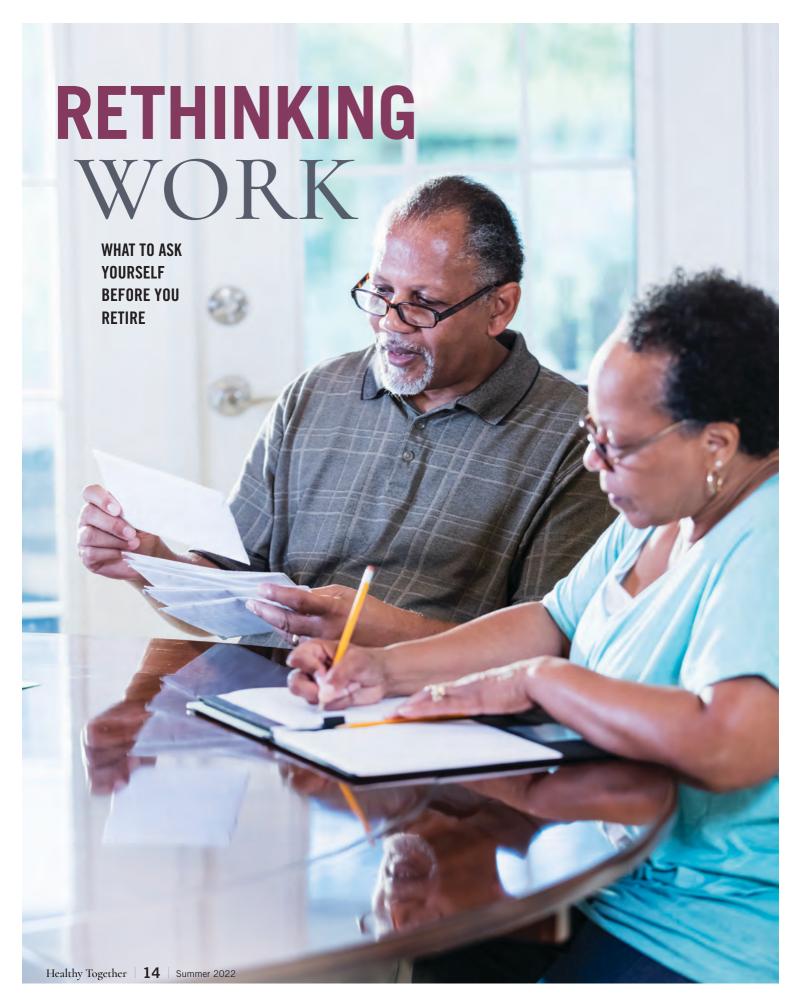
After that priority comes Field of Dreams, which now needs to be maintained and to grow. Adults with disabilities—who often have limited options after they age out of support provided by the public school system will make up a large part of the staff. Sports leagues are being formed. Since the complex is a private entity and doesn't get state funding, fundraising will be a constant need.

"This project is immensely important to individuals with special healthcare needs," says Matthew McDonald III, MD, Chief Executive Officer of Children's Specialized Hospital. "It gives folks an opportunity to socialize and exercise. We are so looking forward to packing this place."

"Gavin is extremely excited," says Kane. "Now he can play with his friends and meet new people."

To learn more, visit www.rwjbhfieldofdreams.com.





or most of the past 20 years, retirement rates in the U.S. were declining. People were staying in jobs longer, experts speculated, because of factors such as increased life expectancy, higher education levels and the rise in the minimum age to collect full Social Security benefits.

In the past two years, that trend began to reverse: Beginning with the pandemic-related economic shutdown, a significant number of U.S. adults who hadn't necessarily planned to retire did so. It's estimated that two and a half million "excess" retirements took place between March 2020 and the second quarter of 2021.

"What we've been seeing is a wave of people who have rethought the contract between themselves and the world of work," says Frank A. Ghinassi, PhD, Senior Vice President of Behavioral Health and Addictions at RWIBarnabas Health and President and CEO of Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care. "The question is whether they made the choice with a complete understanding of what the consequences would be."

#### **REASONS TO LEAVE**

Fear was a motivator for many, Dr. Ghinassi says. "Early in the pandemic, before we had vaccinations and better medications, lots of people were dying," he says. "People began to ask themselves, is going into work worth my personal risk? You saw this in people who couldn't work from home, such as environmental services workers, first responders and healthcare workers.

"Also, many individuals began



FRANK A. GHINASSI, PHD

to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression. Surveys indicate that's been true for an increasing number of people in the past two years.

"Then, as the

pandemic ground on, making decisions about vaccination and risks and new variants have all begun to weigh on people," Dr. Ghinassi explains. "Older adults started thinking about how they wanted to spend the rest of their lives. A lot of employees began to examine whether they could make retirement work earlier than previously planned."

For a fortunate subset of people, personal wealth grew during this time period due to a heated housing market and booming stock market. With more money came more options.

#### AND THEN WHAT?

"Some people have a good plan for retirement and have really thought out the budget and what they'll do," says Dr. Ghinassi. "But often, people have a fantasy of retirement life that's based on their vacations: You don't have the stress of work, you go somewhere nice and spend more money than you usually do. The reality of retirement is that you have to create a lifestyle that can fit your budget, 52 weeks a year for the next 25 to 30 years."

Retirees also need to be prepared to find new ways of being with their families, he says. "Americans tend to be very hardworking. That means you were away from your family 45, 55, sometimes more hours a week," he says.

"When you retire, your family members are going to see you infinitely more than they have before and that's a big change, even in happy, well-adjusted families," he says. "Now you have to find structured ways not only to be together, but to be apart. People deal with issues like, how do you get your alone time when your spouse is always around?"

Selling a house and downsizing to a smaller space can present challenges as well. "You're not only spending way more time together, but now you're doing it in a smaller space," Dr. Ghinassi says. "That's not necessarily good or bad, but it does require renegotiation. Ideally, retirement is based on a realistic plan."

If it turns out that full-time retirement doesn't suit, the current

#### 8 QUESTIONS TO ASK

"It's important to walk through the actual realities of retirement as thoroughly as you can before you take that step," says behavioral health specialist Frank A. Ghinassi, PhD.



 How are you going to cover medical costs?



What is your debt situation? How much of your nest egg is tied to the stock market? Finances can be a source of significant stress.



• Are your friends retired and if not, how will that affect vour social life?



• How will you structure a typical day, from the time you get up until the time you go to bed? What will a typical week look like? A month?



• What are your hobbies, and how will they help provide structure for your time?



 Have you talked to people you know well and asked them what retirement has meant for them?



• If you've decided to move away from where you've lived, how will you make new friends?



• If your partner is also retired or not working, how will you negotiate daily life now that you're together for a greater part of the day?

shortage of employees in the U.S. offers opportunities to return to the workforce. "Some people," says Dr. Ghinassi, "decide to rejoin the workforce in a totally different profession and become reinvigorated about work."

To learn about mental health services at RWJBarnabas Health, call the Behavioral Health Access Center, which is open 24 hours a day, at 800.300.0628.







Opportunity Project now provides a combination of hybrid and virtual support to adults with brain injuries.

### THE VIRTUAL CLUBHOUSE

A UNIQUE PROGRAM INNOVATES TO HELP ADULTS RECOVER FROM BRAIN INJURY.

hen lockdowns created by the pandemic began, the staff at Opportunity Project, a program for adults with brain injury, knew they had to pivot quickly. Members of the Opportunity Project Clubhouse were relying on them as they worked

to rebuild their life skills—and they were used to meeting in person at the Millburn-based facility.

"People were in a panic," says Jacqueline Marino Rizzi, Cognitive and Community Integration Skills Counselor. "We had to think fast. Right away, we created a Facebook private group for members. But we knew our members varied greatly in technology know-how and access."

The staff learned how to create meetings that members could join by either video or phone. They helped those without an internet connection get one. Members left their iPads out on their porches so a staffer could download the apps needed for virtual meetings. Soon, just about everyone had the appropriate technology to participate in video calls.

"Then we made sure to keep our programs very consistent, because our members are routine-oriented," Marino Rizzi says. "We held the groups at the same times and we provided reminders to make sure people would stay engaged."

#### A NEW MODEL

Now there's a range of new services, including Mental Health Mondays, Grief Counseling Tuesdays, Wellness Wednesdays, Team-Building Fridays and an Adjustment Counseling Group on Saturdays. There's virtual cognitive retraining, adaptive chair yoga, music therapy, team building, stress relief and more. The OP Resilience Squad, where members provide peer-to-peer support, was launched, as was the OP Caregiver Support Group.





Similarly, Melissa Moyer, Nutrition Counselor, adapted her wellness groups to the virtual world. Fitness classes became videos that groups watched together, following along at home. Opportunity Project teamed with the SPIRIT Club to connect with its online database of inclusive fitness classes. Healthy cooking classes were livestreamed from the Clubhouse.

In individual and group sessions, members discussed ways to overcome limitations related to their brain injury that hinder them from meeting their health and wellness goals.

Now, as COVID-19 health protocols permit, the Opportunity Project Clubhouse has transitioned to a hybrid model, with limited in-person activities. Counselors say, however, that a virtual component is here to stay.

"Sometimes members had transportation barriers to coming to our in-person programs," Moyer says. "Others struggled with the amount of preparation it takes to get out of the house. The fact that they can participate from their living rooms has been a great thing for them."

"We've evolved and been able to keep providing positive support," says Marino Rizzi. "Our members are continuing to make progress!"

Children's Specialized Hospital partners with Opportunity Project to ensure that children in its brain injury programs can continue to have the support they need throughout adulthood. To learn more, visit www.opportunityproject.org. For more information about Children's Specialized Hospital, call 888.244.5373 or visit www.rwjbh.org/childrensspecialized.

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, Egg Harbor Township, Hamilton, Jersey City, Monmouth, New Brunswick, Newark, Somerset, Toms River, Union and West Orange.



#### COMPREHENSIVE CONCUSSION SCREENING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IS NOW AVAILABLE IN HUDSON COUNTY.

early 7 percent of children under age 17 have had symptoms of concussion in their lifetime, according to a recent national survey. Left untreated, a concussion can lead to more serious problems, such as a greater risk of repeat concussion, or even brain damage.

Now Hudson County residents ages 5 through 18 can get the benefit of comprehensive preseason screening. Post-concussion management at the Newport Centre location of the Matthew J. Morahan III Health Assessment Center for Athletes at RWJBarnabas Health is offered for ages 12 and up.

"Our services are unique in the state of New Jersey," says Diana Toto, MS, Director, Sports Medicine and Business Development, for the center. "We provide a comprehensive program with visual and vestibular testing, as well as an active recovery and academic program to complement the physician

evaluation." Young people can get baseline concussion testing that will assess balance and brain function. Should a concussion be suspected, this information will be invaluable in determining whether there's an injury to the brain.

The center offers FDA-approved ImPACT Pediatric screenings, which previously were available only to those ages 10 and above. The screening process also includes cardiac testing to identify possible heart conditions that should be investigated before a young athlete hits the field, track or court.

#### A PERSONALIZED PLAN

A child or teen with a possible concussion needs to be seen by a medical provider, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If a concussion is suspected, the child should be removed from play. The classic symptoms of a concussion, including headache, blurred



#### WHAT IS A **CONCUSSION?**

A concussion is a blow to the head or hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. The brain may bounce or twist around in the skull, sometimes creating chemical changes in the brain and damaging brain cells.

Symptoms include headache or a feeling of pressure in the head, nausea or vomiting, balance problems or dizziness, blurred vision, difficulty thinking clearly and sensitivity to noise and light. To learn more, visit www.cdc.gov/headsup.

vision and nausea, may not appear for hours or even days.

"People who've had a blow to the head and are showing concussion symptoms should have 48 hours of cognitive rest before they're examined," Toto says. "After that, the faster you can get your child screened, the better the outcome for their recovery. We tell our patients that we'll get them in to be seen within 48 to 72 hours of the time they contact us."

If a concussion is confirmed, physicians at the center will create an individualized plan for when and how the youngster can return to school and sports.

"Each case is different. Our team will identify measurable tasks for the child that won't overstimulate the brain," Toto says. "It's easy to overdo and make matters worse if you don't know how much is too much. We will provide a plan that moves at the right pace to allow the brain to heal."

The Matthew J. Morahan III Health Assessment Center for Athletes at RWJBarnabas Health is open at Newport Centre, 100 Town Square Place, Suite 403, in Jersey City. To make an appointment, call 973.322.7913.



## 'THE LUCKIEST DAY OF OUR LIVES'

#### A VERY SPECIAL DELIVERY IN THE LORD ABBETT MATERNITY WING

or Jersey City residents Dan ≺ Kirschner, 31, and his wife Stephanie, 32, there was never a question about where they'd have their first baby. Their choice was the Lord Abbett Maternity Wing at Jersey City Medical Center (JCMC).

What they couldn't have expected was that a routine checkup late in the pregnancy would end up with the couple at the maternity wing, having the baby delivered by emergency cesarean section.

"The medical professionals at Jersey City Medical Center saved our baby's life," Dan says. "We can never thank them enough."

#### A LOW HEART RATE

Dan, a CIS Associate in Client Lifecycle Solutions, has worked at Lord Abbett, an investment management company, for eight years and had been part of its community involvement team. Along with the rest of the company, he'd been

hearing regular reports about the state-ofthe-art Lord Abbett Maternity Wing that opened in 2020, made possible in part by a \$1 million donation from Lord Abbett.

The couple moved from Hoboken to Jersey City in early 2020. Knowing that they wanted to start a family, Stephanie became a patient at JCMC's Women's Health at Grove Street, which offers a full spectrum of maternal healthcare.

"We knew I'd be giving birth on the Lord Abbett Maternity Wing, and I wanted streamlined care, with no barriers or red tape," Stephanie explains. "I'm so

glad we did. Throughout the pregnancy, even though it was not an easy one, I had a wonderful experience—it's a lovely, bright, airy space, and people are so friendly and happy to be there. It was a night-and-day contrast with any other gynecological experience I'd ever had."

Stephanie was three days past her due date of February 19 when she went for a checkup at Women's Health at Grove Street. The Certified Murse Midwife who examined her observed that the baby's heart rate was unusually low. She advised them to go the Emergency Department at ICMC for further evaluation.

From there, Stephanie was admitted to the Lord Abbett Maternity Wing. She was put on oxygen and helped with different positions to assist the baby's heart rate.

#### A TEAM IN ACTION

Because of COVID-19 protocols in place at the time, Dan couldn't go with Stephanie into the operating room where the cesarean section would be performed. Though his adrenaline was high, he found himself firmly boxed into a separate room by two petite but determined Labor & Delivery nurses. "We promise we'll keep you informed every minute," they said.

In the operating room, a nurse held a panicking Stephanie's hand and said, "Just look at me." The anesthesia soon took effect, and within minutes, baby Evan was born and doing fine.

Later, the couple learned that a detaching placenta had been the cause of the baby's low heart rate. "The medical professionals were so in tune about what's typical and healthy, they knew right away that something was abnormal. We just could not be more grateful to them," says Stephanie.

Evan was born on February 2, 2022. "His birthday was 2/2/22. Some of my colleagues have informed me that two is a lucky number in the Chinese culture, and that his birth date is one of the luckiest dates on the calendar," Dan says.

"Quite honestly, it was the luckiest day of our lives."



Private rooms in the Lord Abbett Maternity Wing at JCMC offer spectacular views.

#### JCMC AND LORD ABBETT: A ROBUST PARTNERSHIP

Lord Abbett & Co., one of the oldest money management firms in the U.S., is committed to nurturing future generations in Jersey City, where it is headquartered. Jersey City Medical Center (JCMC) is an anchor institution on a mission to keep people in its community healthy.

Perhaps it's not surprising, then, that the two organizations have formed a robust and mutually beneficial relationship as they pursue their shared vision.

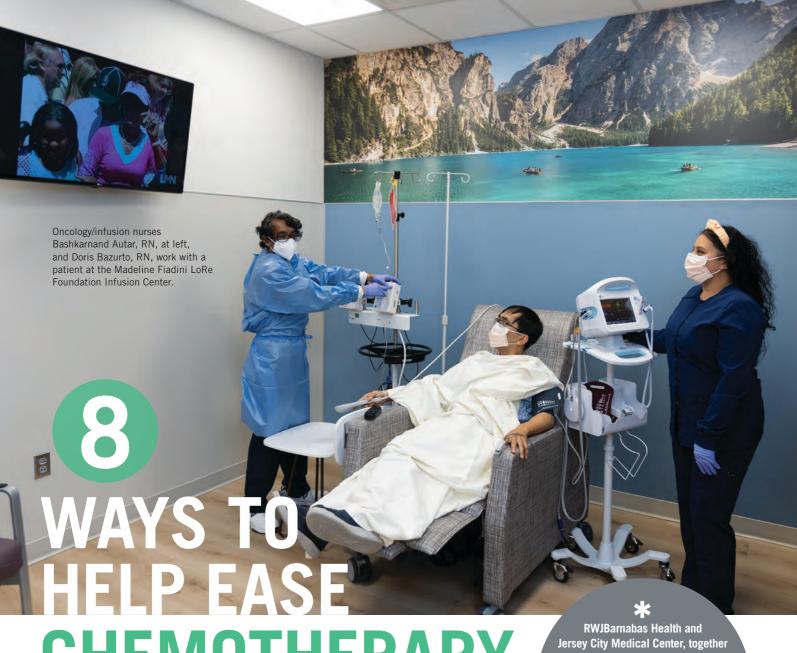
In 2019, Lord Abbett gave a \$1 million donation that, in part, allowed the creation of the Lord Abbett Maternity Wing, a 17,500-square-foot space offering expert care, spacious private rooms and many amenities. The firm has also recently made a generous donation to support mental health services in the community.

Building on the two organizations' shared goals of community health and wellness, JCMC has become a valuable resource for Lord Abbett employees. "We've provided fact-based information and medically sound advice on topics like vaccines and back-to-work protocols for COVID-19," says Nicole Kagan, Vice President of the Jersey City Medical Center Foundation. "We've given CPR training and certification. We've offered information on breast cancer screenings and presented workshops on stress and work/life balance, among other topics." JCMC also provides referrals to a statewide network of doctors across RWJBarnabas Health, demonstrating the value of an integrated healthcare system.

In addition, Lord Abbett employees take part in hands-on employee engagement opportunities on-site with many JCMC programs.

"At Jersey City Medical Center, we develop ongoing relationships with our donors," Kagan explains. "It's a two-way street, a true partnership. We are deeply committed to helping the community be healthier, and that extends to people in the companies we work with."

To learn about maternity services at Jersey City Medical Center, visit www.rwjbh.org/maternity. To learn about giving to Jersey City Medical Center, call 201.984.1270 or visit www.rwjbh.org/hudsoncounty.



# **CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENT**

HOW TO FIND THE BEST CARE—AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, TOO

acing chemotherapy can be a daunting prospect, but there are ways to make the experience more manageable, according to infusion/ oncology nurses at the Madeline Fiadini LoRe Foundation Infusion Center at Jersey City Medical Center.

The Infusion Center, which

opened last year, provides the latest in treatments, design and amenities. "We have a big space that can house everybody," says infusion/oncology nurse Bashkarnand Autar, RN. Large-screen TVs and nature-inspired wall murals help create a relaxing experience.

The Infusion Center also houses

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.

a multidisciplinary staff of doctors, oncology/infusion nurses, nurse navigators, a social worker and other staff members.

"Treatment is easier and more cohesive when the patient sees the doctor, the case manager, the nurses, all in one place," Autar says.

But it's the expertise and compassion of the staff that are most helpful as patients navigate the physical and mental challenges of chemotherapy. Autar and his colleague, infusion/oncology nurse Doris Bazurto, RN, share the advice they give their patients:

Get your body ready.

Eat well and rest as much as possible in the days or weeks leading up to your chemotherapy. The better shape you're in when you begin treatment, the more the side effects will be minimized.

Set up a support team.

"People need friends and family to come and support them through chemotherapy, at least for the initial treatments," says Autar. A friend or family member can bring the patient to the Infusion Center, take them home, and help with shopping, cooking and laundry. "It will take a few treatments for patients to know how they'll feel after each treatment and exactly what kind of help they'll need," Autar says.

#### Consider a haircut before beginning treatment.

Unfortunately, hair loss from chemotherapy is a side effect that usually can't be prevented. From a medical standpoint, the hair loss isn't important, and it will grow back after chemotherapy stops. Still, it can be unsettling for both men and women.

That's why Autar and Bazurto recommend that people cut their hair short before starting treatment. "With a shorter haircut, when the hair does fall out at least it won't be shed in long strands," Bazurto says. The Infusion Center can refer patients to a website that offers wigs, and doctors can write prescriptions so that insurance will help cover the cost. Free wigs are available for those who qualify.

### 4 Keep yourself hydrated, both before and after treatment.

"We encourage patients to drink lots of water, which helps to cleanse the body," says Bazurto. "If patients feel too nauseated to drink enough, we can give them IV fluids at the Infusion Center."

#### Get help for Unausea.

Chemotherapy drugs are designed to be toxic to rapidly reproducing cells, like cancer cells. However, they can also disrupt other cells that reproduce rapidly, including those in the gastrointestinal tract. As a result, nausea and vomiting are common side effects.

"Even so, you have to keep eating because if you don't then you become weak," Autar says. "Try eating smaller meals to help with digestion." The Infusion Center recommends nutritional supplements and can also refer patients to a nutritionist as needed.

"Doctors can provide anti-nausea medication in pill form that patients can take at home before they start their treatment and in the days right afterward," says Bazurto.

Stay active to fight fatigue.

Chemotherapy can cause fatigue because it works on the bone marrow, so it makes some people anemic," explains Autar. Anemia results from not having enough red blood cells to deliver adequate oxygen throughout the body.

"For fatigue, it's usually recommended that people try to do some exercise. Even walking can be enough. Anything so that you don't stay in bed too much," says Autar. Physical therapy may also be an option.

#### **7** Don't neglect your emotional health.

At the Infusion Center, staff members assess a patient's physical, emotional and social status. That information is relayed to the oncology social worker, who sees patients and helps them sort through their feelings and circumstances.

"Some patients do become depressed," says Bazurto. "Sometimes the social worker can see the patient in their infusion chair and make a referral for the appropriate support

Doris Bazurto, RN, and Bashkarnand Autar, RN, provide expert care for chemotherapy patients.

needed." Two nurse navigators also provide support.

Talk to your doctors and nurses!

Oncology doctors and nurses have many more ways than those described here to help patients through chemotherapy treatment—but they can't offer help unless you let them know how you're

While most chemotherapy side effects are temporary, neuropathy—a tingling or numbness in the hands or feet caused by nerve damage—can become permanent if not addressed right away, so always let your medical team know if you experience it.

"The doctor will assess the patient," Bazurto explains, "and depending on the severity of the neuropathy, it may be necessary to adjust the dosage of the chemotherapy, or even to take a break from treatment."



comprehensive cancer care

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www.rwjbh.org/hudsoncounty.

information, call

855.571.3400 or visit



eople get things done by working with teams—in sports, in accomplishing goals at work and more.

In many ways, though, the most important team in a person's life is their healthcare team—all the doctors, nurses, lab technicians and other professionals who play a part in keeping a patient healthy.

Your primary care provider (PCP), who may be a family physician or

NEHA PATEL, MD

an internal medicine specialist, is the person who helps to coordinate the team and helps you choose some of the people on it. "While doctors

and nurses may be the most visible members of a healthcare team, there are many more members, all of whom are important for helping to keep you at your healthiest," explains Neha Patel, MD, a family medicine specialist affiliated with Jersey City Medical Center and a member of RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group.

> **MANY WAYS** TO CARE

> > Your healthcare team members will include:

**PRIMARY CARE** PROVIDER. You

should see your PCP each year for your annual physical. During this visit, the PCP will discuss preventive care,

treatment of common illnesses, early detection of diseases and management of chronic conditions. In most cases, he or she can recommend appropriate testing as well as provide a diagnosis,

advice and a treatment plan.

"If a patient has a

#### **MEDICAL SPECIALISTS.**

condition that a primary care physician does not have the expertise for, we will refer the patient to another specialty," says Dr. Patel. Common referrals include cardiologists, orthopedists, pulmonologists, neurologists, surgeons and obstetricians.

It's helpful if your team's doctors are all connected with the same health system. "Being cared for by practitioners within the same system allows for continuity of care,"



is the one who makes the decision about which specialist to choose. "It's really important for the patient to be part of the treatment plan and to be comfortable with all their healthcare providers," says Dr. Patel.

> **CERTIFIED MEDICAL** ASSISTANTS. On

an office visit. you'll generally see someone from the practice's medical staff before you meet with the physician or nurse practitioner. "Everyone in the medical office is part of the team," says Dr. Patel. "These are the people who bring you into the examining room, weigh you and take your blood pressure. They're available if you need anything."

Certified medical assistants help keep medical records by recording patients' histories, medicines and treatments. They provide patient education and perform some diagnostic tests. Afterward, they'll be available to address many of your questions and concerns.

**MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EXPERTS.** "I'm a

family physician, so sometimes the whole family comes to see me and I get to see the family situation," says Dr. Patel.

"That means I am able to understand and assess the entire family's health status. Patients' emotional well-being is as important as their physical health."

Your PCP may refer you to a psychologist, counselor or behavioral health specialist to help with emotional issues or with behaviors that are preventing you from maintaining healthy habits.

**TECHNICIANS.** Members of the team include phlebotomists (who draw blood for your lab tests), radiologists and technicians who take your X-rays or do vour MRI.

PHARMACISTS. They not only fill prescriptions but also keep an eye out for harmful drug interactions and can answer patients' questions about their medications.

PHYSICAL THERAPISTS AND REHABILITATION **SPECIALISTS.** These providers help get people back into action after an injury, major surgery or illness.

**NUTRITIONISTS AND DIETITIANS.** These specialists will be your go-to for learning to eat well and manage chronic conditions, such as hypertension and diabetes.

There may be times when your health team expands to include care providers outside of the "regular" medical system. Sometimes patients decide to try alternative therapies and may consult an herbalist, an acupuncturist or others.

"It's very important to let your primary care doctor and other members of your medical team know about these alternative treatments," says Dr. Patel. "Things like herbal supplements, for example, can sometimes have side effects or interact badly with other medications."

Always make sure that your PCP the captain of your health team—is in the loop about any care you're receiving outside of your main medical team, so that you can be sure you're consistently getting the best treatment.

explains Dr. Patel. "For instance, many of the physicians affiliated with RWJBarnabas Health share an electronic health records system. This means that if I send a patient to a cardiologist, in some cases I can check online and see what happened—all the care information is in there."

Patients sometimes weigh in on a PCP's specialist recommendation. "A patient might tell me, 'I went to see the cardiologist you recommended. He's great. I like how he treated me," says. Dr. Patel. "Then I'll suggest the next patient go to that doctor because I heard good things about them."

Ultimately, however, the patient

To find an RWJBarnabas Medical Group primary care provider affiliated with Jersey City Medical Center, call 888.724.7123 or visit www.rwjbh.org/medgroupprimarycare.





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