

# Equity Report

Volume 2: 2023



**RWJ**Barnabas  
HEALTH

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Robert Wood Johnson  
University Hospital

[rwjbh.org/rwjuhthequity](http://rwjbh.org/rwjuhthequity)

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## A Message from the Chief Executive Officer and President

At Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH), we, as our state’s most comprehensive academic medical center, have a unique opportunity to provide high quality and culturally sensitive and competent care to the diverse communities we serve. Our goal, in alignment with the mission of RWJBarnabas Health, is to make our communities healthier. A key component of achieving this mission is the elimination of health disparities. Through strategic priorities and initiatives, we are working towards equitable care and outcomes for all patients. This work requires tremendous organizational agility and an ongoing journey of learning and understanding that creates a culture inclusive of every employee and patient we serve. At RWJUH, it is our aim to be the provider, employer, and community partner of choice. Our strong and shared commitment to equity is fundamental to accomplishing this goal.



**Bill Arnold**  
Executive Vice President  
and President, Southern Region,  
RWJBarnabas Health;  
and Chief Executive Officer,  
Robert Wood Johnson  
University Hospital



**Alan Lee**  
President,  
Robert Wood Johnson  
University Hospital

## A Message from the Assistant Vice President, Administration and Equity

In 2021, RWJUH implemented its first Equity structure with a strategic focus on care optimization, operational alignment, patient navigation, and community outreach. Our goal is to eliminate health disparities and increase access to care. We understand that such a task requires a shift in paradigm as we learn to intentionally review our systems, identify areas of improvement and collectively work with our various teams to outline the best interventions leading to equitable outcomes. With our teams’ collaboration, along with the engagement of the communities we serve, we will continue to adopt cultural humility as we deliver equitable care to those we serve to achieve excellent outcomes.

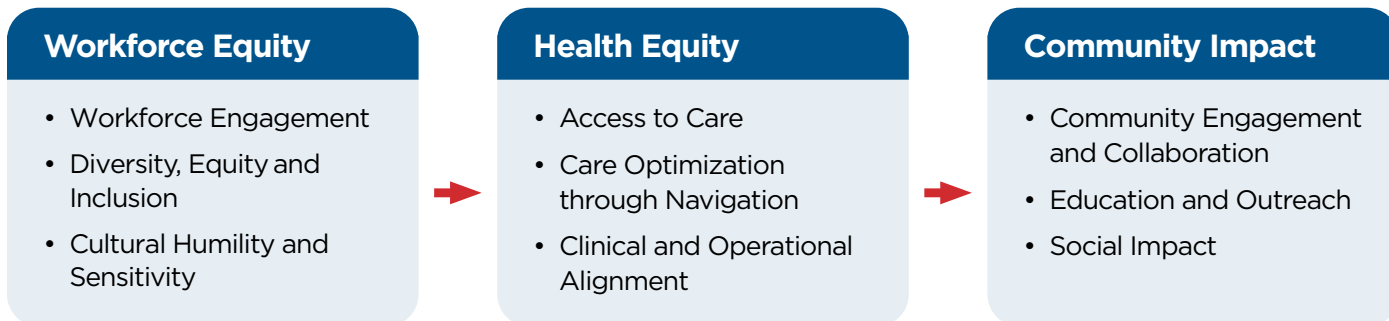


**(Franck) David Nelson,**  
**MSN, RN**  
Assistant Vice President,  
Administration and Equity



# RWJUH Equity Framework

To demonstrate our commitment to equitable care and outcomes for every patient we serve, we established a model of organizational equity that strategically supports our workforce, our patients and our community. This model crosscuts all of our organizational priorities and includes the following:



## Our Definitions

**Health Equity** is the attainment of the highest level of health for all people, intentionally removing barriers that may prevent one from reaching their full health potential.

**Diversity** brings together people of many backgrounds, beliefs and experiences to foster a culture of inclusion that enriches the workforce, physicians, patients, families, partners and communities.

**Inclusion** creates a sense of belonging by consciously inviting, welcoming, respecting and engaging each other without bias; inclusion requires that we intentionally embrace an expansive set of attitudes, attributes, cultures and skills where everyone is valued and treated with respect and dignity.

**Unconscious Biases**, also known as Implicit Biases, are the attitudes and/or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions in ways we are not aware. Everyone possesses these biases.

**Cultural Humility** is being aware of our deficient knowledge and having a humble and respectful attitude towards individuals and other cultures. It is the idea of adopting a growth mindset to continuously learn from others as we learn to treat them the way in which they want to be treated.

**Microaggressions** are brief, common exchanges that can communicate hostility, disrespect or similar negative messages about the identity of a person or group of people. Microaggressions can be hard to recognize because they are often subtle and sometimes unintentional.



# Workforce Equity



**Suzette Robinson, MHA**  
Vice President and  
Interim Chief of Diversity,  
Equity and Inclusion Officer

## A Message from the Vice President and Interim Chief of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer

At RWJBarnabas Health, we are proud to be a health care leader in New Jersey, the fourth most diverse state in the country. It is our goal to create an equitable environment in which to work and receive care, to champion a diverse workforce and to foster an inclusive setting to improve the health of the diverse patient communities we serve throughout the state.

We embrace the diverse values and beliefs, life experiences and behaviors of our patients, physicians, employees and communities, treating every person with kindness, respect and dignity, by tailoring health care delivery and work experiences to meet the social, cultural and linguistic needs of our patients and employees, respectively. Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion leaders guide RWJBarnabas Health to ensure this is achieved in every aspect of our organization's operations. However, our work does not stop at the organizational level. Our goal of achieving a safe and equitable RWJBarnabas Health also requires individual reflection and effort to learn and grow, to overcome biases, and to look at every situation through lenses of cultural humility and equity. That is how we will all be healthy, together.

Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts are woven into the fabric of everything we do. In alignment with our aim to create an inclusive culture where everyone is treated with respect and dignity, our employees are involved with our business resource groups (BRGs), which are sponsored by executive leaders. Generally, BRGs provide support for colleagues, promote career advancement and enhance cultural sensitivity in the work environment. At RWJUH, they have proven to be so much more. These efforts empower our employees, enrich the patient experience, and engage the communities we serve, supporting RWJUH's efforts to eliminate health disparities.

asian ASIAN SOCIETY FOR  
IMPACT & ADVOCACY  
NETWORK

aware ADVANCING WOMEN THROUGH  
ADVOCACY, RECOGNITION AND  
EMPOWERMENT

bpn BLACK  
PROFESSIONALS  
NETWORK

edge EMPOWERING  
DIVERSE GROUPS  
OF EMPLOYEES

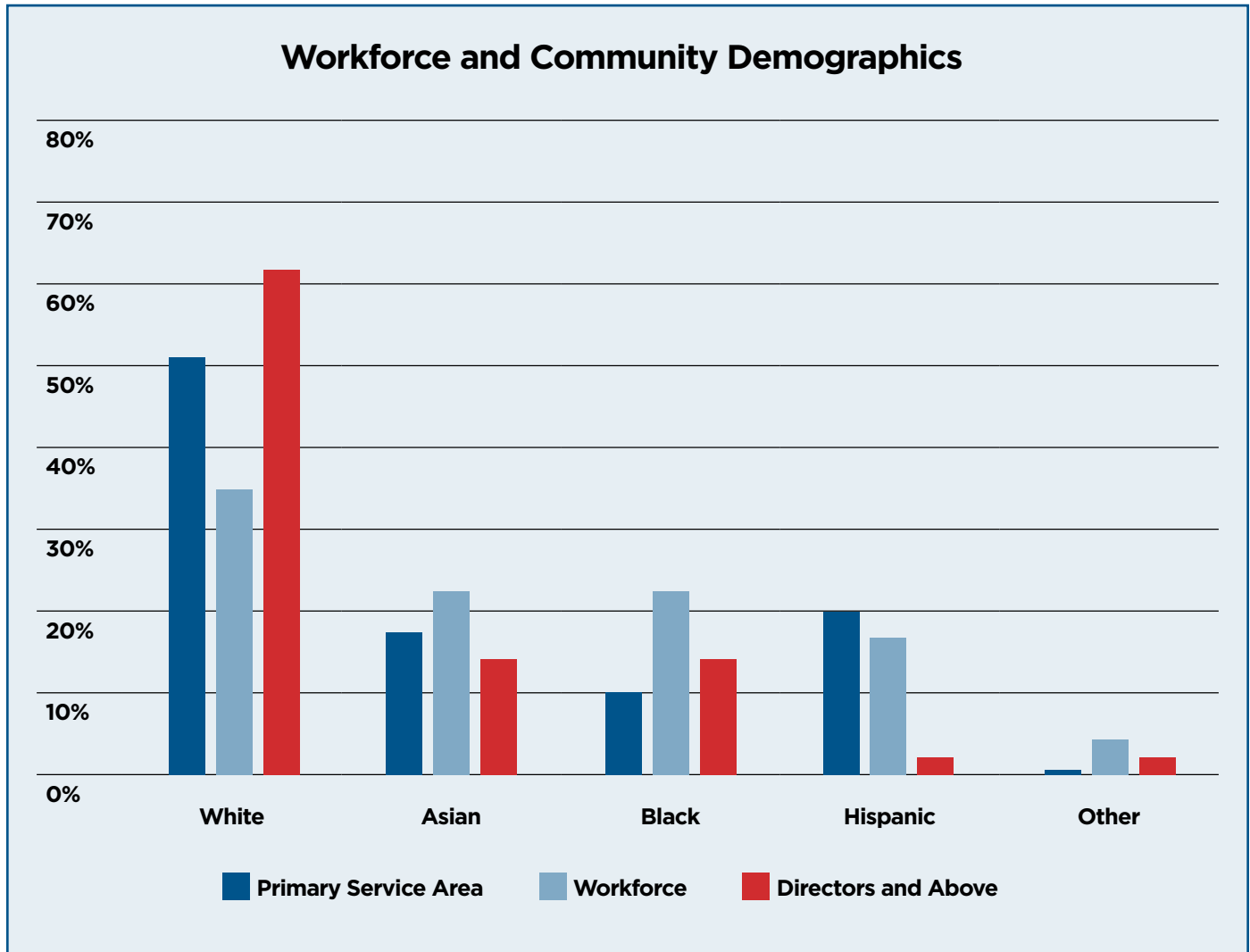
proud PROMOTING  
RESPECT, OUTREACH,  
UNDERSTANDING, AND DIGNITY

salud SERVICE AND ADVOCACY  
FOR LATINOS UNITED  
FOR DEVELOPMENT

vets VETERANS  
ENGAGING  
THROUGH SERVICE

# Workforce Equity: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

A strategic priority for RWJUH is to create a diverse workforce and leadership team that reflects the community we serve.



To nurture and maintain cultural humility and sensitivity amongst our workforce, the RWJUH Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion provides ongoing training and learning opportunities covering topics such as (but not limited to) cultural humility, unconscious bias and LGBTQ+ sensitivity. In 2023, as a collaborative effort between Human Resources and department leaders, RWJUH improved the completion rates of mandatory learning management system modules.

Completion Rate	
<b>65%</b>	Cultural Competency Humility
<b>61%</b>	LGBTQ+ Education
<b>64%</b>	Unconscious Bias Training

# Workforce Equity: Business Resource Group (BRG) Highlights



## Black Professionals Network (BPN) Makes History at their First Annual Black History Celebration

February 2023

The event included the first Pan-African flag raising, food, an assortment of minority vendors, and keynote speaker, Reverend Dant'e R. Quick, PhD. We honored the rich legacy of Black Americans and the ways in which they have shaped, and continue to shape our nation. RWJUH became the first hospital in the RWJBH healthcare system to raise the Pan African flag in celebration of Black History Month.

## We Celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Sickle Cell Blood Drive

February 2023

More than 200 individuals turned out to donate 257 blood products. Over the past decade, the blood drive has positively impacted the lives of more than 2,500 patients! At this year's drive, the Tackle Sickle Cell Campaign, Embrace Kids, and RWJUH celebrated a successful 10-year partnership. Tackle Sickle Cell was launched by former Rutgers football stars, Devin and Jason McCourty, to increase awareness, raise funds and encourage individuals to donate blood in support of sickle cell patients.



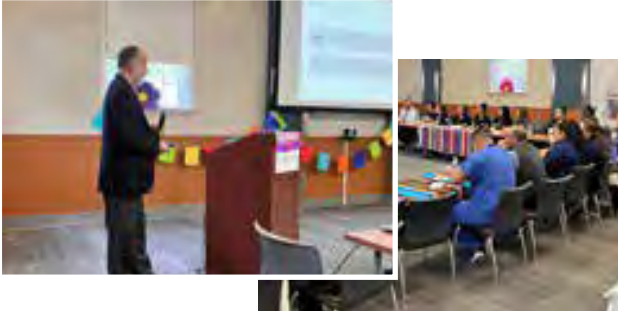
## International Women's Day Retreat

March 2023

This inspiring day was led and coordinated by Odette Perriel, Vice President of Support Services. The event featured a keynote address and question-and-answer session with Rutgers Women's Head Basketball Coach, Coquese Washington, along with many empowering and enriching breakout sessions. They focused on topics such as negotiating salary, public speaking with confidence, networking for success and optimizing social media presence led by New Jersey Devils and Prudential Center Host, Reporter, Editor and Producer, Catherine Bogart.



# Workforce Equity: BRG Highlights



## Cinco De Mayo Celebration

May 2023

Presented by SALUD BRG, we celebrated Cinco de Mayo with a workshop about accessing medical interpreter services. Additionally, team members were offered an opportunity to register for Interpreter Training Course.

## Tai Chi in the Courtyard

May 2023

Presented by Asian BRG, RWJBH team members enjoyed the meditation movement of Tai Chi in the Courtyard to relax, re-center, and recharge in a traditional Chinese way with Tai Chi Master Gang Huang.



## PROUD Pride Flag Raising Ceremony

June 2023

On June 9, RWJUH and the Proud BRG had its Pride Flag Raising Ceremony. (Franck) David Nelson, MSN, RN, Assistant Vice President, Administration and Equity; Edward House, Director, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Courtney Vose, DNP, MBA, RN, APRN, NEA-BC, FAAN, Chief Nursing Officer; Ashley Harris, Patient Navigator; and, special guest, Mr. A'Yohntae' Walker spoke at this event. The Pride flag was raised outside the Administration Building and remained there until June 30, 2024.

## Celebrating Freedom Juneteenth

June 2023

On June 19, our Black Professionals Network BRG held a celebration in the large private dining room to honor and celebrate Juneteenth. Juneteenth is a federal holiday in the United States commemorating the emancipation of enslaved African Americans.



## Suicide Prevention Discussion by BPN

September 2023

Hosted by the Black Professionals Network, this educational event discussed suicide prevention in the Black community. The keynote speaker was Kalisha Smith, LCSW, Owner & Lead Therapist, Wise Counsel Service, LLC. Kalisha Smith spoke to attendees about suicide and suicide prevention in the Black community, lending her insight expertise on this very sensitive topic.



# Workforce Equity: BRG Highlights

## RWJUH Celebrates Latino Heritage Month

October 2023

Salud BRG hosted a Latino Heritage Month celebration for our team members. This month is dedicated to recognizing the contributions and influence of Latin Americans to the history, culture and achievement. Our host made sure it was packed with music, food, fun and games with prizes that celebrated the Latinx culture. Alan Lee, President attended and gave a heartfelt speech that inspired all who attended this event.



## Diwali

November 2023

Our Asian BRG celebrated Diwali in the Courtyard. Anthony Altobelli, III, MD, FACC, opened the celebration with a heartfelt speech. Diwali is the Hindu festival of lights with variations also celebrated in other Indian religions. It symbolizes the spiritual victory of light over darkness.

## Veterans Annual Breakfast

November 2023

Every year our VETs BRG host a breakfast to honor all who have served our county. This breakfast is a space where all who have served our country can sit back and reminisce about the past, present and future. It also allows them to know how much we appreciate the sacrifice they made for the freedoms we enjoy today.



## PROUD BRG - 1<sup>st</sup> Friendsgiving

November 2023

The Proud BRG, in collaboration with the Proud Gender Center, held its first Friendsgiving. Some of the food was prepared by members of the Proud BRG and Proud Gender Center guests.

## Kwanza Celebration

December 2023

Hosted by the Black Professionals Network BRG, Kwanza was celebrated with a week-long celebration of the African American culture and heritage with a final day of celebration in the courtyard with food, vendors and dance. The holiday was created by activist Maulana Karenga in 1966. It is based on harvest festival traditions from West and Southeast Africa.





## Workforce Equity: “We Value Our Veterans” Award

*November 2023*

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital has been recognized by the New Jersey Governor’s Department of Veterans Affairs with the “We Value Our Veterans” Award for its commitment to veterans’ causes and support of veterans within its 5,200-member workforce.

RWJUH’s Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Edward House, accepted the award from New Jersey Lt. Governor Tahesha L. Way, Esq. and Brigadier General Lisa J. Hou, D.O. at a special Veteran’s Day ceremony held at the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Holmdel on Saturday, November 11, 2023.

The “We Value Our Veterans” Award gives counties, municipalities, businesses and academic institutions across New Jersey the opportunity to value and honor the sacrifices, patriotism and bravery displayed by men and women who have worn the military uniform. RWJUH is one of only three recipients in the business/ employer category, statewide, to receive the award.



# Health Equity

## A Message from the Executive Vice President and Chief Health Equity and Transformation Officer



**Paul Alexander, MD, MPH**  
Executive Vice President,  
Chief Health Equity and  
Transformation Officer

At RWJBarnabas Health, we are steadfast in our commitment to create and sustain healthy communities. As we fulfill that mission, we have implemented a System’s approach to health equity that is designed to address both clinical and social barriers that may prevent one from reaching their full health potential. Our social mission is to improve the health of all New Jerseyans by strategically working to foster health-promoting environments and conditions across the key social determinants of health. As the leading academic health system in the state, we are advancing innovative strategies in high-quality patient care, education and research to address health disparities in the communities we serve. Together, we will continue to ensure that RWJBarnabas Health is well positioned to provide equitable care to all.



In alignment with RWJBarnabas Health System’s mission to improve the health of the diverse communities of New Jersey, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, a comprehensive academic medical center, is well positioned to address disparities in care throughout our community and beyond. Expanding our services with a commitment to cultural humility and sensitivity is crucial to achieving our mission of creating healthier communities. Our innovative programs and services attract our state’s diverse population to RWJUH; as such, we are intentional about identifying strategic priorities that address the needs of our diverse population.

— **Bill Arnold**

Executive Vice President, RWJBarnabas Health  
President, Southern Region  
Chief Executive Officer, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital



### **Mission**

To ensure the delivery of equitable, person-centered and culturally sensitive care to the communities we serve through a workforce culture of equity and inclusion.

### **Vision**

To eliminate health disparities by increasing access to care and transform health and wellness one person at a time.

### **Overview**

Our Health Equity model focuses on access to care to the vulnerable communities, care optimization through population-specific navigation services, a better understanding of the social determinants of health that impact our patients and operational initiatives to address disparities in care and outcomes.





## Health Equity: Access to Care

RWJUH works to improve access to care to the medically underserved. For example, through our collaborative efforts with our local Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), RWJUH facilitated follow-up appointments upon patient discharge and improved the booking rate by 9% from 2022.

**1861** Total Referrals

**85.70%** Booking Rate:

**77.31%** Outcome Completion Rate

2023 was the first full year Access to Care assisted postpartum and newborns booking post discharge patient served by the local FQHC. In June 2023, Postpartum Booking extended to High Risk OB patients.

### Postpartum Data

**700** Referrals

**93.71%** Booking Rate

### Newborn Data

**448** Referrals

**92.63%** Booking Rate

*\*Booking rate is the percentage of patient appointments scheduled\**



## Health Equity: Care Optimization: Community Medical Programs

**African-American Medical Program | Chinese Medical Program | Su Salud Medical Program**

Care optimization at RWJUH consists of population-specific medical programs implemented in response to our community needs assessment and feedback from the community via the Health Equity Advisory Council. Another specialty program was developed in collaboration with Rutgers Cancer Institute..

Such programs address the needs of specific patient groups, including lack of access to care, and ensure a navigation model that enhances care delivery and outcomes.

### These navigation programs assist patients by:

- Making medical appointments on their behalf
- Arranging transportation
- Identifying and addressing social determinants of health
- Completing forms
- Providing interpretation services

With an emphasis on addressing health disparities through language support and other services, our navigators adopt a mindset of cultural humility and build trust with each patient, ensuring that each patient is treated the way they wish to be treated, with respect and dignity.

**1,817** Rounding

**1,235** Discharge Calls

**9,278** Services Completed



# Health Equity: Care Optimization: Breast Care Connection

## Early Detection is Key!

Breast cancer is one of the leading causes of death for women in the United States. Breast Care Connection (BCC) is a unique breast health program - developed in partnership with Rutgers Cancer Institute and designed to guide women through the breast health process in a private, comfortable and friendly environment. Breast health includes a full range of specialty services.

**1,500** Total Patients Enrolled

**2,162** Total Services Completed

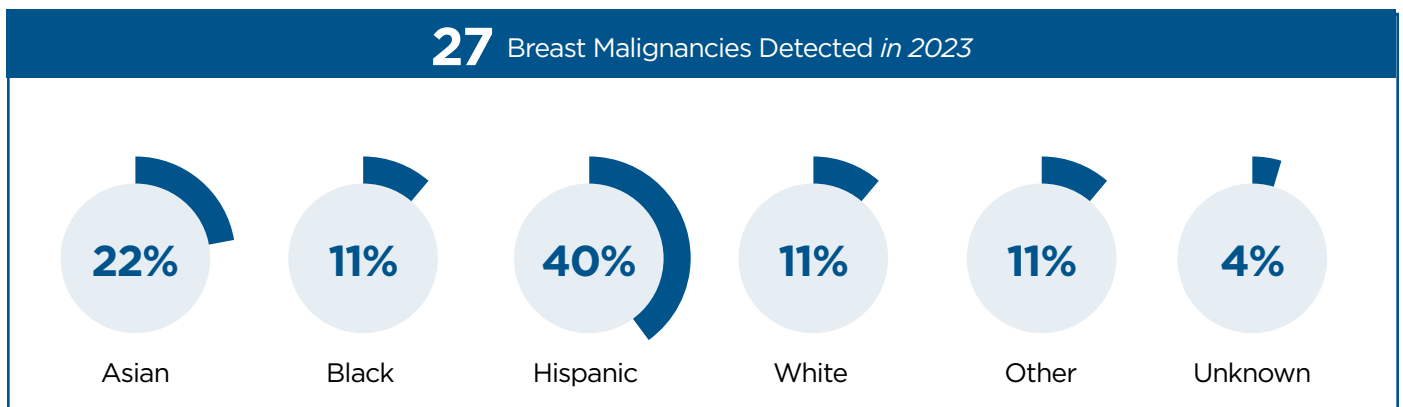
**529** Total Patients Screened

### These include:

- Women’s imaging and diagnostic work up
- Plastic Surgery
- Community education
- Genetic Counseling
- Oncology
- Breast surgery consultation
- Psycho-social services

Clients of BCC receive high-quality, reliable, safe, equitable and individualized care. The program’s navigators help patients gain access to services that reduce breast cancer morbidity/mortality.

## 27 Breast Malignancies Detected *in 2023*







## Health Equity: Clinical and Operational Alignment

We aim to ensure that outcomes are equitable across all aspects of care, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity, ability/disability status, religion and any other attribute that contributes to the uniqueness of an individual. This can be achieved by addressing disparities in care and outcomes for the diverse communities we serve.

**22%** 2022 Baseline Null Value

**15.57%** 2023 Null Value

**6.43%** Improvement Rate

At RWJUH, health equity is, therefore, embedded as a key element of our care delivery model. Improving our collection of Race, Ethnicity and Language (REaL) and Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity (SOGI) data is important to identify health care disparities and to strengthen our efforts in developing intervention programs that will help us achieve that goal.

Such data is analyzed in every aspect of care delivery, assessing metrics including (but not limited to) quality, patient experience and readmissions. Through ongoing staff training, RWJUH is improving the quantity and quality of REaL and SOGI data collected. For more information on REaL and SOGI, visit [rwjbh.org/realandsoqi](http://rwjbh.org/realandsoqi)

### The Joint Commission Standards

Effective January 1, 2023, The Joint Commission set new requirements and elements of performance to reduce health care disparities as it is an important step in prioritizing quality and safety issues.

# Community Impact



As an organization, we acknowledge the importance of engaging our community to best understand their needs. In collaboration with the RWJUH Community Health Promotions team, we connect with members of our community through a Health Equity Advisory Council. To support our community engagement efforts, we ensure representation and direct feedback from community leaders through advisory councils, community events and growing community relationships. In alignment with our core mission to hire local, invest local and buy local, RWJUH partners with internal and external stakeholders to adopt a comprehensive supplier diversity model that is reflective of our community composition.



## Year of the Rabbit Celebration

*January 2023*

In collaboration with the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy & Aging Research, and the Chinese Medical Program (CMP), a community event was hosted to celebrate the Year of the Rabbit. Programs included the Lion Dance, Traditional Peacock Dance, Flute demonstration, Chinese Knots Making and table display with health information.

## Cancer in the Black Community

*March 2023*

In partnership with The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and Rutgers Cancer Institute, attendees learned about the types of cancers most commonly diagnosed in members of the Black community, ways to reduce the risk of some of these cancers, what to do if you or your loved one is diagnosed and how to access quality care.







## Colon Cancer Prevention and Treatment Webinar

March 2023

Faye Yin, MD, FACP, Medical Oncologist, RWJBarnabas Health, and Karen WeiRu Lin, MD, MS, FAAFP, Rutgers Global Health Institute, provided an overview and statistics of colon cancer. They discussed practical tips on how to reduce the risk of developing colorectal cancer by increasing physical activity, keeping a healthy weight, limiting alcohol consumption and avoiding tobacco.

## Heart Health Education

March 2023

In collaboration with Piscataway Senior Center and Rutgers Health, guest speaker Ibiuo Lawrence, MD, FACP, RWJMS, shared heart health information. In addition, blood pressure screenings were offered by members of the Student National Medical Association to those who attended.



## Cancer Wellness Support Group Kick-off Reception

June 2023

The Chinese Medical Program successfully hosted the kick-off reception at their much-anticipated Cancer Wellness Support Group. Over 120 attendees consisted of patients and leaders from New Jersey Chinese American Chamber of Commerce (NJCACCC), New Jersey Chinese American Physician Association (NJCAPA), Fujian Asian Association of New Jersey (FAANJ), Asian Real Estate Association of America (Central New Jersey) (AREAA) and Center for Cultural and Creative Exchange (CCCE).

## First Annual Employee Health Fair

June 2023

Our employees' health and well-being is a top priority at RWJUH. In an effort to share health resources with RWJUH community, the Health Equity team conducted the First Annual Employee Health Fair. Hospital and community partners provided screenings and information relating to tobacco cessation, the Your Health Kiosk program, diabetes, heart health, stroke awareness, HIV, breast cancer, lung cancer and prostate cancer. More than 440 individuals attended this event.







## CMP Cancer Support Group Wellness and Prevention Forum

June 2023

CMP hosted its first group forum with four panel speakers including Karen WeiRu Lin, MD, MS, FAAFP, Rutgers Global Health Institute; Faye Yin, MD, FACP, Medical Oncologist, RWJBarnabas Health; Carol Shu, LSW, Rutgers RWJ Medical School; and Dale Chang, a longtime volunteer at ACS. During the panel discussion, guests learned useful information as well as a question and answer with experts as to how to face the challenges of cancer in the family. A meditation coach and Zumba instructors taught the audience some techniques on how to improve their overall well-being.

## Medication Safety Event

July 2023

Hosted by the Piscataway Senior Center, the Health Equity and Rutgers Health Pharmacy teams presented workshops about medication safety to the community. Participants learned how to take medications as directed, discard expired medication, and to ask questions. A patient navigator was on-hand to provide additional support to the event attendees.



## Prostate Cancer Health and Urology Robotic Surgery Webinar

July 2023

CMP hosted the 11th community health education webinar since the pandemic started, with over 80 participants. Sammy Elsamra, MD, Director of Robotic Urologic Surgical Services at RWJUH, was the featured speaker and Karen Wei Ru Lin, MD, MS, FAAFP, Rutgers Global Health Institute, was the moderator and interpreter. The audience learned about prostate cancer prevention and treatment as well as about the history, evolution and current application of laparoscopic and robotic surgery.

## Mammogram and Pap smear Event

September 2023

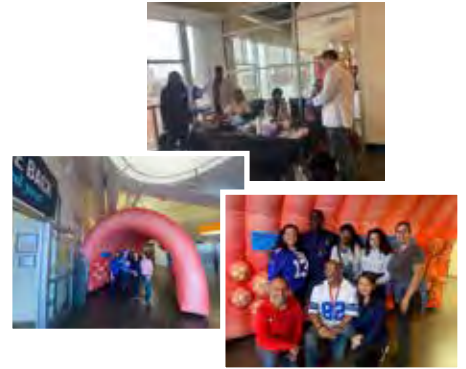
In collaboration with Rutgers Health and University Radiology, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital provided free cancer screening and health education to members of the community. Cervical and breast cancer screening were offered along with produce to address food insecurity. This program is an example of RWJUH and Rutgers Health's commitment to addressing health equity. Support for this program, including related education opportunities and follow-up navigation, was made possible by NJCEED, Rutgers Health, RWJBH Alliance for Equity in Cancer Care, and RWJUH's Community Health and the Health Equity teams, we were able to provide support for this program and ensure that patients received related education and follow-up navigation as needed.



## Community Health Fair & Football Watch Party

October 2023

RWJ Fitness and Wellness Center New Brunswick, ScreenNJ and RWJUH's Community Health and Health Equity teams hosted a community health fair and football watch party to distribute health information and resources from community organizations, prostate cancer screenings and medical navigation were available to attendees.



## Lung Cancer Awareness Month Webinar

November 2023

CMP hosted the 12th community health education webinar, with featured speaker Richard Lazzaro, MD, Chief of Thoracic Surgery, RWJBarnabas Health's Southern Region. Karen WeiRu Lin, MD, MS, FAAFP, Rutgers Global Health Institute, served as moderator and interpreter. Over 90 attendees learned about lung cancer symptoms, new screening guidelines established by the American Cancer Society, diagnosis and treatments. As a leading expert in his field of practice, Dr. Lazzaro discussed the cutting-edge technologies that he teaches and uses in lung cancer and thoracic surgeries.

## Breast Health Education Series

Various dates in 2023

Over the year, BCC has held educational sessions about breast health. Within the community, in places such as senior centers, faith-based organizations, housing authorities and public libraries. Attendees gained knowledge about breast anatomy, breast cancer risk factors, screening, self advocacy and the importance of early detection.





## Health Equity: 2023 Carolyn Boone Lewis Equity of Care Award

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital's Health Equity Program was honored by the American Hospital Association (AHA) with the 2023 Carolyn Boone Lewis Equity of Care Award, Emerging Winner for dismantling structural barriers in its care delivery system and the community it serves. RWJUH accepted the award at the AHA's Annual Leadership Summit in Seattle.

The Carolyn Boone Lewis Equity of Care Award is an annual recognition of outstanding efforts among hospitals and health care systems to advance equity of care to all patients and to spread lessons learned and progress toward diversity, inclusion and health equity. Lewis was the first African-American and first hospital trustee to chair the AHA Board health care services directly to those in need. The efforts of the Community Health Promotions Program, led by Mariam Merced, focuses on increasing health literacy, providing better access to quality health care facilities and providers and supporting communities in need by funding vital health programs.