

Richmond University Medical Center Provides Warm Send-Off for COVID-19 Patient



On April 10, physicians, nurses, and staff at Richmond University Medical Center gave a thunderous sendoff full of applause and cheers to Edwina Cain, a Staten Island resident who was treated and released after testing positive for COVID-19 eight days prior. Since March, Edwina is one of over 300 COVID-19 patients who have been discharged from the hospital after undergoing treatment.

"These discharge numbers thankfully continue to increase," said president and chief executive officer, Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE. "Edwina's release is a testament to her will to survive and the tremendous care she received from her team of doctors, nurses, and staff here at RUMC."

Cain, 38, recently moved to Staten Island. She was transported to Richmond University Medical Center by EMS on April 3, tested

positive for COVID-19, and was immediately placed on a ventilator. Slowly over the next few days, Cain began to fight off the virus with the help of her doctors and nurses. She was finally removed from her ventilator on April 7, having regained the ability to breathe on her own. Three days later, Cain was discharged to the care of her uncle who greeted her with tears.

Cain thanked the RUMC staff, especially the team that directly cared for her, led by Dr. Francesco Rotatori. As she left the hospital, fists raised in triumph, she repeatedly said, "I'm going home," and "You can do it...you can beat this," a message she said for other COVID-19 patients. She gave a final dance before driving away to be cared for by family in the Bronx. Edwina returned on April 24 with food and gifts for the staff that saved her life. She also had an emotional reunion with Dr. Rotatori and his team.

From the President & CEO

Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE



As we have all experienced, the past few months have been nothing short of challenging. It is in times like this that

heroes arise. As the COVID-19 pandemic has evolved, everyone at Richmond University Medical Center has risen to the occasion, exceeded expectations, and shown true heroism in the face of uncertainty.

It starts with our front line team of physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, anesthesiologists, facilities caretakers, transporters, housekeeping staff, security, dietary team, and so many others, more than can fill a single page. Your commitment and compassion has risen to new levels, creating a legacy that will be remembered for many years to come. They talk of generational events: World War II, President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassinations, the Vietnam War, and September 11, 2001. COVID-19 is the moment for this generation and when it is spoken about in classrooms and around the world, a part of that conversation will be about the selflessness of healthcare

workers. There are simply no words to adequately capture what you mean to our community, city, state, management staff, and board of trustees. You have earned your place in history.

As we move closer and closer to the light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel, our priorities remain the same. First is the continued safety of our staff and our patients. We continue to receive a great deal of support and assistance from all of our elected officials, state and local health agencies, and community partners regarding PPE. We continue to closely follow the infection control guidelines as directed by New York State and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene pertaining to PPE use. But maintaining safety precautions does not end when we step outside the hospital. It also means following all of the recommendations at home, including social distancing, hand washing, and wearing a mask.

Second, is the resiliency of our hospital, which has served our communities for over 115 years. During that span we have been faced with many challenges and we have withstood every last one of them. We will do so with this one as well. Even

at the height of this pandemic, we have constantly planned for when we can resume full hospital and outpatient services. That day is drawing closer and you can be assured that we will hit the ground running when the city and state give us the green light. Our construction projects have also continued full speed ahead, including the new emergency department, parking lot, and co-gen project. Our future is bright!

Third, but by no means least, continue to support each other. In the midst of all of this, one of the most visible and inspirational displays seen across our hospital is the bond we have formed with each other. Colleagues have gotten to know each other in more meaningful ways, new friendships have been forged, and a greater sense of family has been cemented in our foundation. Continue to laugh together and cry together. Hold tight to each other. We have been and always will be RUMC Strong! Thank you for all you do for our organization!

**Remember the Power of One —
You Make A Difference!**

Mayor de Blasio Visits Richmond University Medical Center

Mayor Bill de Blasio visited Richmond University Medical Center to personally deliver PPE supplies for the doctors, nurses, and staff on the front line in the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the supplies were face shields made at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The mayor also committed to helping provide staff support to assist the medical staff. The mayor also made a visit to the staff from the Emergency Department to personally express his gratitude for their selflessness, dedication, and commitment.

The mayor was joined by Borough President James Oddo, Assembly Member Charles D. Fall, and Council Member Debi Rose.

"I'd like to thank the mayor for taking the time to recognize Richmond University Medical Center and the incredible care provided by our heroic nurses and physicians during this unprecedented time. It provided a very uplifting moment for all of us," president and chief executive officer, Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE, said. "His accelerated delivery of PPE supplies for our hospital shows his commitment to making sure we have what we need when we need it. Coming here himself with the delivery is an exclamation point on his promise to our hospital that the city has our back as we continue to care for our communities on Staten Island."



April New Hires — Welcome to RUMC!

Catalina Agosta, *RN*
Kristen Bridges, *MD*
Marta Bryceland, *NP*
Kathy Correia, *LMHC*
Brenda Cortes, *Building Service Worker*
Kelly Cregan, *EMT*
Nicholas Devine, *Security Guard*
Michael Devlin, *EMT*
Brandon Fisherman, *Nuclear Med Tech*
Valerie Frangipani, *UltrasoundTech*
Savana Garcia, *Support Staff*
Victoria Gonzalez, *EMT*

Adrian Gonzalez, *EMT*
Joji Joseph, *Respiratory Therapist*
Keith Kouroupos, *PA*
Anthony Ladiana, *EMT*
Olga Markuskevsha, *Paramedic*
English Paige, *EMT*
Angela Palmeri, *Building Service Worker*
Michelle Palumbo, *DRT*
Laura Prognati, *Building Service Worker*
Sarah Santore, *RN*
Sharmez Savoy, *Sr. PA*

Verizon Provides 300 meals a day for the month of April

Through the generosity of Verizon's Feeding First Responders program, Richmond University Medical Center received 300 meals a day during April for our hardworking and dedicated employees. The meals were prepared by Blue Restaurant, located on Bay Terrace.

This program honors small businesses preparing daily meals to feed healthcare workers in six New York City hospitals, including RUMC. Verizon brings together New York restaurants with a desire to help both their own workers and hospital staff on the front line providing care to patients with COVID-19 and others in need. Meals are provided seven days a week, at no cost to the hospitals or their employees. The ordering and delivery process is managed by GrubHub, who donated its service to help this cause.



Patients now connect with their physicians by phone or video



With New York City standing as the epicenter of the nation's COVID-19 crisis and thousands of residents flooding area hospitals in need of treatment for coronavirus, it's important that patients with general medical conditions still receive appropriate care from their physicians in a safe and continuous way. Thanks to Richmond Health Network's new telehealth capabilities, patients at Richmond University Medical Center can now conveniently connect with their physicians by phone or video, receiving a continuity of care that helps ensure their well-being, and also prevents their exposure to COVID-19 in the hospital or at their doctor's office.

"Over the past several weeks, our emergency department has seen fewer visits from patients with general medical problems, but the acuteness of the visits we're getting is much higher," shared Philip Otterbeck, MD, chair of medicine at Richmond University Medical Center. "Patients coming to the ED are really ill from COVID-related complaints, such as shortness of breath, high fever, chest pressure, and changes in their mental state and skin color due to low oxygen levels in their blood. Our ED is busy and the number of patients with respiratory issues and the need for a ventilator is definitely higher than normal," he added. "We've successfully increased our availability of critical care beds to meet higher patient demand, but it's a very difficult situation."

Amid a sea of coronavirus-related conditions, however, "general medical issues such as high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, emphysema, high cholesterol, and others haven't gone away — they all still require medical attention and medication," Dr. Otterbeck confirmed. "Our new telehealth capabilities enable our medical providers to remotely monitor and stay abreast of a patient's blood sugar, cholesterol, and other vital signs and address conditions before patients run out of medication and

potentially end up in the ED or the doctor's office, where they could be exposed to patients with coronavirus. This system keeps them in place in their home for those things that we can handle remotely."

Offered by the Richmond Health Network, Richmond University Medical Center's multispecialty outpatient arm, Dr. Otterbeck said that patients can connect with their physicians in three ways:

Video Chat:

- Offered through the Zoom app or other private facing video chat technologies such as FaceTime.
- Patients must have an email address and access to a smartphone, laptop, or other device with a camera.
- Available for most visit types.

Phone Call:

- Telephone only visit with your health care provider.
- Ideal when technology for video chat is not available.

Patient Portal Messaging:

- Communicate with your health care provider by asking medical questions and receiving answers through the secure Athena Patient Portal supported by Richmond Health Network.
- Participants must have a patient portal account. People can register at www.rumcsi.org.

"Patients can opt for a telehealth 'video visit,' which just requires a computer and the capacity to download the application (Zoom)," Dr. Otterbeck said. Once the patient and provider identify a time at which they'll both be available, "they just need to sign in and will then be able to see each other and conduct the visit." As a second option, "patients can do a 'virtual check-in,' which is simply a phone call with the doctor. "While we always prefer to see a patient via a video connection, this

lower-tech approach can accommodate those who may not have the necessary technology or skills to conduct a video visit and can also be very effective." Overall, while certain procedures still require an office visit, "this system is an ideal platform for check-in appointments, patient questions, etc.," he said.

While telehealth capabilities were in the making for some time at Richmond University Medical Center, Dr. Otterbeck said that the recent coronavirus outbreak forced and necessitated the system's official launch this March. "We knew that we had to find a way to care for our non-coronavirus patients and keep them out of the hospital," he said, noting that patients with coronavirus symptoms such as shortness of breath, fever, cough, muscle aches, chills, stuffy nose, and diarrhea should discuss them with their primary doctor (in person or via telehealth).

Though the system initially provided access to the hospital's primary care doctors only, it's now been broadened to physicians in such specialties as pediatrics, endocrinology, orthopedics, OB/GYN, cardiology, hematology/oncology, general and bariatric surgery, neurosurgery, gastroenterology, breast surgery, ENT, and urology. "More and more patients are coming online with us and the system has been received well by providers and patients alike," Dr. Otterbeck said. "Patients have been excited to still have access to their doctor despite the pandemic and it's a convenient approach to care that some patients may prefer to continue in the long term, especially our younger patients. As long as federal regulations allow, we'll offer telehealth as a permanent addition to our treatment approach and I think it will be the future."

During this challenging time, Dr. Otterbeck confirmed that patients and providers have been grateful to keep their connections intact. "Patients like to continue getting their medication and have us available to them — it gives them a level of comfort and continuity," he said.

And though the pandemic has resulted in unprecedented demands on the health care system, "it pushed us to adopt an approach to patient care that will have a positive impact on outcomes and offer a viable new way for patients to interact with their doctor," Dr. Otterbeck said.

Written by Susan Bloom

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT & GENEROSITY

Over 450 local, national, and foreign businesses
and individuals have shown their appreciation
to our staff through much needed donations.







