

Richmond University Medical Center Receives Get With The Guidelines–Stroke Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award

Richmond University Medical Center has received the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's *Get With The Guidelines–Stroke Gold Plus* Quality Achievement Award. The award recognizes the hospital's commitment to ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines based on the latest scientific evidence.

RUMC earned the award by meeting specific quality achievement measures for the diagnosis and treatment of stroke patients at a set level for a designated period. These measures included evaluation of the proper use of medications and other stroke treatments aligned with the most up-to-date, evidence-based guidelines with the goal of speeding recovery and reducing death and disability for stroke patients.

RUMC additionally received the Association's *Target: Stroke Elite Honor Roll* award. To qualify for this recognition, hospitals must meet quality measures developed to reduce the time between the patient's arrival at the hospital and treatment with the clot-buster tissue plasminogen activator, or tPA, the only drug approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat ischemic stroke.

According to the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, strokes are the fifth leading cause of death and a leading cause of adult disability in the United States. On average, someone in the country suffers a stroke every 40 seconds, and nearly 795,000 people suffer a new or recurrent stroke each year.

"This recognition of RUMC's stroke center gives the Staten Island community the most cutting-edge treatment options for stroke care," chief of neurology and medical director of the Stroke Center at RUMC, Allan Perel, MD, said. "The team behind the stroke center at RUMC includes neurologists, interventional neurologists and radiologists, internists, hospitalists, nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, and social workers who work together as a unit to provide the highest level of care."



Long recognized for its role as a leading provider of care for stroke victims, RUMC expanded its stroke care services in April 2019 with the addition of a mechanical thrombectomy subspecialty program. A few weeks after adding the program, the first successful procedure in the hospital's history was performed. In a mechanical thrombectomy, a blood clot is removed from a blood vessel using a catheter inserted into an artery and a net-like device called a stent retriever. RUMC has partnered with Interventional Neuro Associates (INA), to add this procedure to its stroke care services.

"This certification is a reflection of the supreme effort and care that Richmond University Medical Center and the stroke team make on a daily basis to provide the absolute best and most advanced care for all stroke patients," Jeffrey Farkas, MD, endovascular neurosurgical radiologist at Interventional Neuro Associates, said.

Message From the President & CEO, Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE



September is National Cholesterol Education Month, which means now is a good time to get your blood cholesterol checked and take the appropriate steps to lower it, if needed. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 102 million adults, people 20 years or older, have total cholesterol levels at or above 200 mg/dL, which is above healthy levels. More than 35 million of these people have levels of 240 mg/dL or higher, which puts them at high risk for heart disease. High cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States.

High cholesterol often has no symptoms, so many people do not know that their cholesterol levels are higher than normal. However, a simple blood test called a lipid profile can measure your total cholesterol levels, including LDL (low-density lipoprotein, or “bad” cholesterol), HDL (high-density lipoprotein, or

“good” cholesterol), and triglycerides. The National Cholesterol Education Program External recommends that adults ages 20 years or older have their cholesterol checked every five years.

Lifestyle changes and/or medication can be used to control high cholesterol. Lifestyle changes to consider if you have high cholesterol include a low-fat and high-fiber diet with lots of fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, and whole grains; increasing your weekly physical activity to at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate exercise a week; maintaining a healthy weight; and do not smoke or quit if you do. We have a very successful tobacco cessation program at RUMC, led by Nurse Navigator Nancy Sayegh-Rooney, RN, ONN-CG, NCTTP, who can assist you or a loved one looking for assistance with tobacco dependency. Nancy can be reached at 718-818-2391.

So make sure to visit your primary care physician and ask that they include a lipid profile in your blood work. Visit our website at rumsci.org to find one of our primary care physicians through

our Richmond Health Network, or visit one of our three Immediate Care/Primary Care/Walk-In Centers at 1161 Victory Boulevard, 1058 Forest Avenue, or 4360 Hylan Boulevard.

On a different note, we are finally at the end of one of our many capital projects, namely our new parking lot, which will be ready for use shortly! Construction of both our new emergency department and Co-Gen project continue to move forward. Both projects are scheduled for completion next year.

Please stay safe, remember to follow all COVID-19 precautions, and thank you for all your continued commitment to our patients!

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

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE
President and Chief Executive Officer

Patient Satisfaction: A Note of Thanks

My name is Hassan M. Sharif, a patient at the rehabilitation center at Richmond University Medical Center. I was referred to the center by my family doctor for physical therapy due to severe pain in the shoulder, difficulty in stretching and correctly using my left arm, and throbbing pain that resulted in great difficulty sleeping on my left side.

Frankly speaking, I did not expect much could be done. However, after meeting with Kristine Delgado, the director, and Dr. Hassan, who examined my shoulder and sent me for an MRI & X-rays, he recommended three weeks of physical therapy, which was interrupted by closure of the center due to COVID-19.

Once New York City entered Phase 2, I was called back to start my therapy and was referred to a new staff member,

Dr. Ahmed Dardeir. Dr. Dardeir met me with a big smile and examined my shoulder. He wasted no time giving several exercises that hit all the affected muscles of my shoulder, including the use of heating pads, weights, hand-foot bicycles and a barrage of other exercises to do at home.

I was impressed with his dedication, professionalism and on top of that, his timing. My shoulder is almost healed. I am still under his care for a couple of more sessions. Dr. Dardeir meets me at the door and walks me out at the end of each session. He is always professional and makes me feel comfortable by taking proper precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Delgado, thank you to you and your staff for your services and the quality job your department provides. And a special

thanks to Dr. Ahmed for helping me and the great job he does in your department.

One of the patients I have met was a two-year-old girl, unable to stand or walk. She came with her mother at the same time I came to your office. The little girl became Dr. Dardeir's special patient. After two weeks of therapy, I saw Dr. Dardeir walking behind that girl as she pushed her walker on her own among the cheers of the girls at the front desk and a mother who could not help her tears of joy.

I am forever grateful for you, your staff, and Dr. Ahmed Dardeir for such good service and dedication. I wish you great success.

Sincerely,
Hassan Sharif

Rita Shats, MD, FACOG, Becomes Staten Island's First Physician to Achieve Board Certification in Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology



Rita Shats, MD, FACOG

Rita Shats, MD, FACOG, recently achieved board certification in pediatric and adolescent gynecology, making her the first obstetrics and gynecology (OB/GYN) physician on Staten Island to achieve this specialized certification from the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS). It is also the third board certification in the field of OB/GYN for Dr. Shats.

"Board certification in pediatric and adolescent gynecology recognizes a physician who possesses the appropriate skill set and understanding of common and

complex health issues that are unique to both the pediatric and adolescent patient populations," chair of RUMC's OB/GYN department, Michael Cabbad, MD, said.

The latest certification further positions Dr. Shats as a leading provider of services for young women's reproductive and sexual health issues, including irregular or heavy menstruation cycles, delayed puberty, ovarian cysts, endometriosis, vaginal infections, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

"Continuity of care is of the highest importance to me," Dr. Shats said. "I was always taught as a medical student not to refer patients, but to take care for them by providing the most complete care possible. To be able to be there for my patients from birth, through adolescence, to adulthood and then retirement age means I can provide the most comprehensive care, in one office, allowing my patients to stay on Staten Island throughout their lives."

Certification in pediatric and adolescent gynecology is the third ABMS certification for Dr. Shats. She is also board certified in obstetrics and gynecology as well as cosmetic gynecology. The latter reinforces her skills in providing unique procedures such as vaginal rejuvenations; vaginoplasties, which are the construction or reconstruction of the vagina; labiaplasties, surgical procedures to decrease the tissue size of the inner female genitalia; vaginal relaxations; and episiotomy revisions.

For over a decade, Dr. Shats has been one of the leading physicians on Staten Island, having helped bring over 3,000 new lives into the world over the span of her career. In addition to her board certifications, she is the first female physician at Richmond University Medical Center trained to perform robotic surgeries. Dr. Shats received her medical education at Ross University School of Medicine in Dominica, West Indies, and graduated as a chief resident from the former St. Vincent's Medical Center, now Richmond University Medical Center.

A fellow of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Dr. Shats is also RUMC's associate director of gynecology and director of the hospital's family planning clinic. She also serves as assistant director of the OB/GYN residency program and clerkship director for American University of Antigua and St. George University School of Medicine. She is also an associate professor at New York Medical College.

RUMC to Launch New Vocal & ENT Disorder Rehab Program



Christopher Lisi, MD, chief of otalaryngology-head and neck surgery

In August 2018, Richmond University Medical Center launched its specialized Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Center at 288 Kissel Ave. Then this past June, the hospital further expanded its rehabilitation services to include a comprehensive new Post-COVID-19 Care Center to assist recovering COVID-19 patients with their short-term and long-term health care needs. This fall, RUMC is further expanding its rehabilitation programs with the opening of a specialized service for those with voice, swallowing and airway disorders.

"This new program represents a collaboration between the ear, nose and throat (ENT) medical specialty and speech, swallow and airway therapists," said Christopher Lisi, MD, chief of otalaryngology-head and neck surgery. According to Dr. Lisi, ideal candidates for the program are those with vocal and ENT disorders that have resulted from such conditions as stroke, cancers of the neck and throat, laryngectomy, which is the surgical removal of the larynx, or vocal cord paralysis.

The program also will support those with vocal and ENT disorders resulting from prolonged intubation for COVID-19. Specifically, "patients who were hospitalized for COVID-19 and intubated on a ventilator for days or weeks who may now suffer from voice disorders, hoarseness, swallowing difficulties due to weak muscles, narrowing of the airway, or scar tissue in the airway, or else from having a tracheostomy, a surgical incision made in the neck in order to place a tube into a person's windpipe," Dr. Lisi said.

"This program crosses over between ENT and speech pathology and is a multidisciplinary collaboration," said Kristine Delgado, a certified speech pathologist who oversees the hospital's physical, occupational, and speech therapy services as well as its Cardiac Rehabilitation Center as administrative director of rehabilitation. "We'll have several dedicated exam rooms, as well as state-of-the-art equipment to perform voice analyses and swallowing assessments onsite using X-rays or minimally invasive fiber

optic endoscopy to determine where the problem lies. Once the issue is diagnosed, our therapist will work with the patient to strengthen their swallowing muscle and/or help them use their voice in a more efficient way. The therapist will also work with the patient to modify the consistency of their food or liquid to prevent it from going to their lungs — a condition known as aspiration, which can cause pneumonia."

Staffed by Dr. Lisi, one or two speech pathologists, and an administrative team to run the clinic, a patient in recovery from a condition with a diagnosed voice, swallowing, or airway disorder would be referred by their healthcare provider.

While this range of services has long been available at Richmond University Medical Center, "this program is something we've never offered collaboratively before," Delgado said. "It conveniently centralizes all of the disciplines in one place, avoiding the need for a patient to have to go to different places at different times and ensures an extremely thorough evaluation by the doctor and speech pathologist working together."

"Our goal is to diagnose and treat otherwise unrecognized voice and swallowing conditions caused by COVID-19 and other issues, and this program represents the first of its kind in a multidisciplinary setting on Staten Island," Dr. Lisi said. "A lot of patients may not know that these services are an option or can represent the next step in their care, so we're excited to be able to perform sophisticated in-office evaluations of these disorders as well as to provide specialty care and treatment for them right here on Staten Island."

Richmond University Medical Center's Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Center, which will house the new ENT Rehab Program, is located at 288 Kissel Ave. (behind the main hospital building) and can be reached at (718) 818-2515.

This article was written by Susan Bloom and can be found on Sllive.com.



Kristine Delgado, certified speech pathologist, administrative director of rehabilitation

Max Shulimovich, DO, Appointed New Division Chief of Hematology/Oncology

Maxim Shulimovich, DO, has been promoted to the position of division chief of hematology/oncology and program director of Richmond University Medical University's hematology/oncology fellowship program. Dr. Shulimovich is board certified in internal medicine, hematology, and medical oncology.

"Since joining our oncology team in 2018, Dr. Shulimovich has been a driving force behind our advanced cancer care programs," president and chief executive officer, Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE, said. "Dr. Shulimovich's knowledge of the latest medically proven treatments, coupled with his compassion and dedication to his patients, cements his role as a leader in the field of oncology and the very best physician any oncology patient would want in their corner in the fight against cancer."

Since 2018, Dr. Shulimovich has been providing hematology/oncology services at RUMC's Center for Cancer Care, located at 1000 South Avenue. In 2020, Dr. Shulimovich developed the hospital's independent hematology/oncology fellowship program. Prior to joining RUMC, Dr. Shulimovich was an attending hematologist/oncologist and director of inpatient hematology/oncology at Maimonides Medical Center, focusing on head and neck malignancies, GYN malignancies, and AML/MDS.

"I am excited and honored to lead the hematology/oncology program in this moment of great challenges and opportunities," Dr. Shulimovich said. "As we work diligently to keep our patients safe and healthy, and as we enter a new affiliation with Mount Sinai Health System, I look forward to providing patient-



Max Shulimovich, DO

focused, evidence-based care, as well as providing training to the next generation of hematologists and oncologists."

Dr. Shulimovich completed his medical school in 2006 at New York College of Osteopathic Medicine. He completed his internal medicine residency program at Beth Israel Medical Center

followed by a hematology/oncology fellowship at Maimonides Medical Center, where he also served as chief fellow. Dr. Shulimovich has been providing hematology/oncology care in New York City since 2010, first as a hematology/oncology fellow and then as a hematology/oncology attending in The Brooklyn Hospital Center.

August New Hires — Welcome to RUMC!

Nermin Ahmed, *Navigator*
Gabrielle Blinder, *Nursing Assistant*
Denise Cassidy, *RN*
Noelle Ciavola, *Echo Tech*

Cheryl Garber, *Sr PR and Marketing Specialist*
Tyler Logan, *Building Service Worker*
Bozena Mazur, *Building Service Worker*
Stephanie Ozone, *Nursing Assistant*

Richmond University Medical Center Announces Benefit Program for Military Members

As a thank you to members of the United States Armed Forces, Richmond University Medical Center has introduced a Veterans VIP program, offering discounts and exclusive benefits for veterans seeking care at the hospital or its three primary care sites across the borough. Active, retired, or reserve members of the United States military can enroll in the program at no cost.

Benefits of the program include:

- Same day scheduling at RUMC's three Immediate Care/Primary Care/Walk In Centers
- Free parking at the main hospital
- Free patient room television and/or telephone service, when admitted
- Complimentary access to a private maternity room, based on availability
- Discounts at the hospital gift shop and Starbucks.

RUMC's three Immediate Care/Primary Care/Walk In Centers are located at 1161

Victory Boulevard, 1058 Forest Avenue, and 4360 Hylan Boulevard.

A special 24/7 behavioral health hotline has also been set up to assist veterans who may need support for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or any behavioral health issue. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs' 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, approximately 17 military veterans die by suicide each day. Veterans do not need to be enrolled in the VIP program to access the hotline. The number for the hotline is 718-818-6300 and is printed on all VIP membership cards.

Veterans can enroll through RUMC's website at rumcsi.org/militaryvipprogram. After completing the online form, veterans will also need to provide proof of service, such as a valid driver's license with veteran designation; DD214 or VA healthcare card; or a current veteran's organization membership card, such as the VFW or American Legion.



David Mostafavi, MD, Named New Chair of Ophthalmology



David Mostafavi, MD

David Mostafavi, MD, has been appointed as the new chair of ophthalmology. Dr. Mostafavi is a board certified member of the American Board of Ophthalmology, the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery.

"Dr. Mostafavi brings impeccable credentials to our robust team of physicians," president and chief executive officer, Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE, said. "His expertise in the field of ophthalmology will take our comprehensive eye and vision care services to a level never before achieved at the hospital."

Dr. Mostafavi received his medical degree from New Jersey Medical School (Rutgers) and subsequently completed his ophthalmology residency at SUNY Downstate where he was named administrative chief resident by the faculty his last year. While a resident, he was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) medical society. After residency, Dr. Mostafavi extended his training with a fellowship in Ocular Immunology and Uveitis at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary under the guidance of Michael Samson, MD, and Sanjay Kedhar, MD, both recognized leaders in the fields of ocular inflammation and corneal disease. He has also spent the last five years teaching

cataract surgery to ophthalmology residents. Dr. Mostafavi is also the author of numerous publications in peer reviewed journals and chapter textbooks.

"This is an opportunity to transform the hospital's advanced eye and vision care center into more of a private practice style center where patients are treated in a timely manner with exceptional physicians who have access to the latest technology," Dr. Mostafavi said. "We are also starting to train ophthalmology residents, which we haven't done in a long time."

Richmond University Medical Center's Advanced Eye and Vision Care Center provides a full range of ophthalmology services for patients of all ages. Services include routine vision exams, diabetic eye exams, glaucoma screenings, pediatric exams, diagnosis of ocular disorders and diseases, and the management and treatment of macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma, and other conditions.

Moving forward safely with COVID-19

Ever since the appearance of coronavirus in March and the extensive shutdowns, social distancing mandates, and 'new normal' practices that followed, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our way of life, elevated fear and anxiety, and often raised more questions than answers relative to how to move forward in a safe way, both physically and mentally.

"The truth is, these remain uncertain times because there's a lot we still don't know about the virus," shared Joel Idowu, MD, medical director of Outpatient Services and chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

Experts remind area residents that now is not the time to put the brakes on safety precautions. "While we've done a great job with social distancing so far, it's important that we remain vigilant so that we can continue to keep our COVID-19 cases down," said Philip Otterbeck, MD, chair of Medicine.

Dr. Otterbeck and Dr. Idowu shared best practices to help minimize the risk of exposure and to stay healthy, both physically and mentally:

- **Stay Connected:** Avoid isolation by staying connected to family, friends, and social networks through Facetime, Zoom, or other platforms.
- **Guard Your Group Sizes:** Dr. Otterbeck confirmed that small gatherings outside are okay. "Up to 25 people are now allowed to congregate, per local guidelines, but the fewer the better, and anyone experiencing fever, chills, shortness of breath, etc., as well as the elderly or those suffering from underlying health conditions should refrain from joining."
- **Follow the Rules:** At restaurants or retail stores, adhere to the rules of the establishment and wear a mask if you're unable to maintain adequate social distance, especially if you use the restroom or are in another common area where you're passing others.
- **Avoid Risky Situations:** In addition to avoiding places where many people are packed together, it's important to refrain from heavy drinking, substance use, or other behaviors that reduce one's inhibitions and lead to a lack of social distancing, mask-wearing, hand-washing, and other important safety precautions.
- **Use Good Judgment:** "Apply the health and safety guidelines offered by experts in a sensible way rather than focusing on every little detail, as constant worrying can paralyze you from functioning," Dr. Idowu said.
- **Reach Out:** With the pandemic driving greater levels of fear, anxiety, depression, and substance use, "our trained clinicians are here to help," Dr. Idowu said. "In addition to seeing an increase in alcohol and drug use, we've also seen a spike in anxiety disorders, with pre-existing cases getting worse or new cases developing due to our uncertain future." Richmond University Medical Center offers a broad spectrum of mental health services, including support for children and adolescents, psychiatric emergencies, counseling for substance use disorders/addiction, and general mental health conditions.
- **Be Present:** "Take one step at a time, plan for the here and now, and don't look too far down the road about things you can't predict or control," Dr. Idowu recommended.
- **Protect Yourself:** While no one knows what the coming months will bring, medical experts are concerned about the combined presence of flu and COVID-19 this fall. "Flu is dangerous and deadly itself," Dr. Otterbeck said, "so it's important to get a flu shot to protect yourself."
- **Stay Cautious and Have Faith:** "Humans are very resilient and as a society, we've come through challenging situations before," Dr. Idowu said. "We'll get through this, too – it's not a forever situation as long as we do the right things."

This article was written by Susan Bloom and appears on SLive.com.



Joel Idowu, MD, medical director of Outpatient Services and chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.



Dr. Philip Otterbeck, MD, chair of Medicine



Save the Date

Thursday, September 24, 2020

Jack Sipp Golf and Tennis Outing

benefitting
Richmond University Medical Center

Register at www.rumcsi.org/golf