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## Women & Infants, Bradley Receive \$1.5M to Support Phase II of Rhode Island Consortium For Autism Research and Treatment

*Grant will enable further recruitment and development of statewide partnership to support population-based research on autism spectrum disorder*

The Rhode Island Consortium for Autism Research and Treatment (RI-CART), a group of the state's leading experts on autism research, education, health and services, has received a \$1.5 million renewal grant from the Simons Foundation Autism Research Initiative. The three-year grant, awarded to Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island, and with a subcontract to Bradley Hospital, will enable RI-CART to continue recruitment and development of a statewide, population-based autism patient registry.

The first grant from Simons Foundation was received in August 2013. Since then, RI-CART has recruited more than 1,000 individuals and their families to participate in the registry. The goal for phase II of this effort is to recruit an additional 1,000 participants into a study that includes a brief clinical assessment, collection of biological samples for genetic analysis, and referrals to other research studies. Participants' families are active in the management and function of RI-CART. The long-term goal is to enroll all individuals with autism in Rhode Island in this unique research network.

"Autism is a poorly understood family of related conditions. Unfortunately, there is no specific medical treatment for autism, underscoring the importance for additional research," said **STEPHEN SHEINKOPF, PhD**, a clinical researcher at Women & Infants Hospital's Brown Center for the Study of Children at Risk, assistant professor at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, and co-director and principal investigator of RI-CART. "What makes RI-CART truly unique is that this statewide collaboration is building an infrastructure for clinical and translational research on autism spectrum disorders."

A unique aspect of RI-CART is that families actively participate in the management and function of the project. RI-CART has partnered with The Autism Project, an organization that offers support and programming for individuals with autism. "RI-CART is an exciting opportunity for collaboration between clinicians and researchers, as well as the individuals and families impacted by autism," said Joanne Quinn, executive director of The Autism Project and a member of the RI-CART leadership team.

RI-CART has also been supported by funds from the Brown University Institute for Brain Science, the Norman Prince Neuroscience Institute, and the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University.

For more information about RI-CART, visit [www.AutismRI.org](http://www.AutismRI.org).

### About RI-CART

The Rhode Island Consortium for Autism Research and Treatment (RI-CART) is comprised of clinicians, researchers and community members with the shared mission of accelerating research on the causes of and treatments for Autism Spectrum Disorders. RI-CART is a unique collaboration among partner organizations across Rhode Island – the state's leading hospitals including Bradley Hospital, Hasbro Children's Hospital, Women & Infants Hospital, Butler Hospital, Memorial Hospital and Rhode Island Hospital; institutions of higher education including Brown University, the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College; service agencies including the Groden Center and Perspectives Corporation; state agencies including the Rhode Island departments of Health and Education; and community programs and parent advocacy groups including The Autism Project. RI-CART is based at Bradley Hospital in East Providence, RI. Learn more by contacting [RICART@lifespan.org](mailto:RICART@lifespan.org) or on the web at [www.AutismRI.org](http://www.AutismRI.org). ❖



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## Southcoast Health, Care New England Move to Next Step in Affiliation Process

*Combined system would create two-state, eight-hospital, \$2 billion-plus, not-for-profit healthcare system*

In separate actions undertaken by their respective governance Boards, Southcoast Health and Care New England have voted to move forward with the proposed affiliation of the two not-for-profit hospital and healthcare systems. The announcement was made May 3, 2016 by **CHARLES R. REPPUCCI**, Board Chair for Care New England, and **JEAN F. MACCORMACK**, Board Chair for Southcoast Health.

The two Chairs stated that Southcoast Health and Care New England have worked toward this agreement to affiliate since they announced their intent to study partnership potentials last November. The parties will now move toward the execution of the affiliation agreement and subsequent initiation of the required regulatory review processes in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Both organizations will continue their collaborative due diligence reviews, and begin to develop the plans to operate an integrated health system capitalizing on each organization's strengths in patient services and population health management.

Combined, the new system would be a \$2 billion-plus entity with eight hospitals and more than 15,000 employees. It would span a broad geographic area in Southeastern New England and offer an integrated network of comprehensive patient services.

Care New England and Southcoast Health would be combined under a new system parent entity to be named following a comprehensive brand assessment. The combined not-for-profit system will uphold Care New England's and Southcoast Health's proud traditions of providing the best community-based healthcare possible to all patients.

Under the proposed framework for the new entity agreed upon by each Board, Southcoast Health President and CEO **KEITH HOVAN** will serve as the President and CEO of the new health system parent company; Care New England CEO **DENNIS KEEFE** will become CEO of the Population Health initiative for the unified system; Care New England's Board will select the new Chair of the system parent Board, and the Southcoast Health Board Vice Chair will serve as its Vice Chair. Southcoast Health and Care New England will each select 10 individuals in all to serve on the new system parent Board of Trustees.

The Population Health initiative will be a signature program for the new system. Both Care New England and Southcoast Health have established Accountable Care Organizations and have been working to advance innovative approaches to care that improve outcomes, enhance patient experience and reduce cost.

"We know nothing is more important to the people of southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island than a strong future for the healthcare systems that safeguard their health while providing jobs and community benefits, and advancing our teaching and research missions," said Reppucci.

"This affiliation helps to build an even stronger future for our organizations while importantly maintaining our steadfast commitment to our local communities. We look forward to continuing this collaborative and transparent process, sharing additional details about our vision for healthcare delivery as plans are developed and as we begin the regulatory process," said MacCormack. ❖

## Roger Williams' gastroenterologist introduces new stent technology

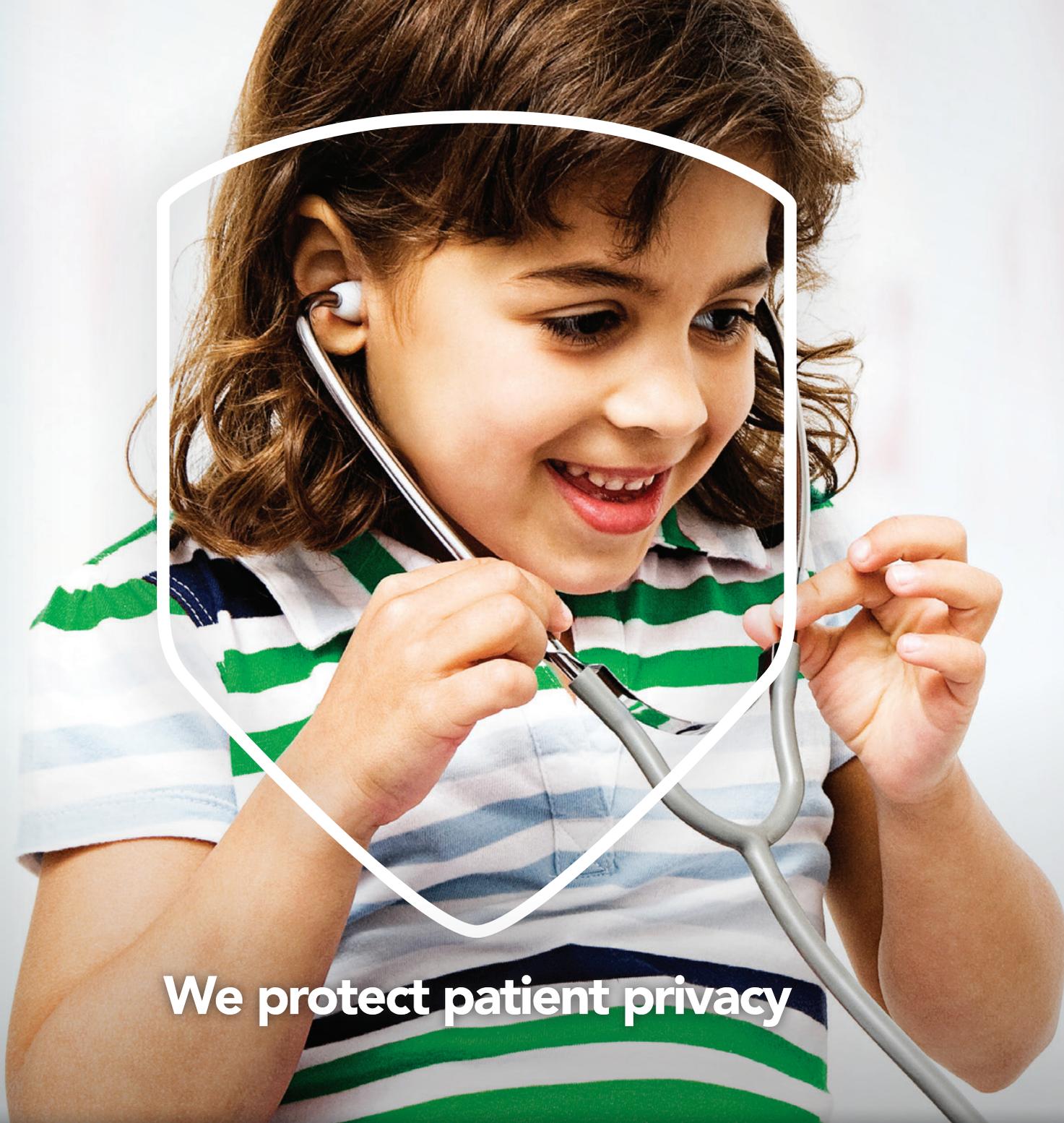
PROVIDENCE – **DR. NABIL TOUBIA** is the first physician in Rhode Island to utilize new stent technology that helps physicians manage serious complications from pancreatitis using a minimally invasive endoscopic approach. On April 28, Dr. Toubia, a gastroenterologist at Roger Williams Medical Center, utilized the new AXIOS stent technology on a patient's pancreas, while guided by ultrasound.

This technology has been FDA-approved and on the market since

March 2016. The AXIOS System, a product of the Boston Scientific Corporation, has been cleared for endoscopic management of pancreatic pseudocysts and certain types of walled-off pancreatic necrosis.

"This technique for treating pancreatic pseudocysts is not new; the technology, however, is," said Dr. Toubia. "We can now treat certain complications in the pancreas in a safer, less invasive manner and that is good news for our patients."

This system is the first stent specifically designed for drainage of a pancreatic pseudocyst by creating a new, temporary opening between the pancreas and the gastrointestinal tract. The new technology enables physicians like Dr. Toubia to complete this procedure with just one stent, as opposed to the previous technique. This advancement allows for reduced procedural time with less manipulation and less complication. ❖



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## Southcoast Health expands existing relationship with Boston Children's Hospital; physician leadership appointed

NEWBEDFORD, MASS.—SouthcoastHealth has expanded its affiliation with Boston Children's Hospital to include the Level II nurseries at Charlton Memorial Hospital in Fall River and St. Luke's Hospital in New Bedford as of May 1.

Southcoast Health currently has an affiliation with Boston Children's for pediatric inpatient and emergency care at St. Luke's as well as nursery care at Tobey Hospital in Wareham.

A change in physician leadership will accompany this transition.

**BRIAN SARD, MD**, has been appointed Chair of Pediatrics. Dr. Sard served as the medical director of pediatric programs at St. Luke's since 2012. Dr. Sard has led the program to significant growth in terms of both patients seen and services provided during his tenure. In his new role, Dr. Sard will oversee delivery of pediatric and newborn care across Southcoast Health, collaborating closely with clinical leadership in neonatology, obstetrics and other departments, as well as administrative leaders at both Southcoast Health and Boston Children's.

**ATHENA XIFARAS, MD**, will continue to serve as a leader within the pediatric program in her role as Division Chief of Inpatient Pediatrics. This work includes coordinating pediatric care both within the St. Luke's pediatric program and with community providers across Southcoast Health.

**DAPHNE REMY GOMES, MD, MPH**, will take on the role of Division Chief of Neonatology and Site Leader for the Charlton Memorial Hospital Special Care Nursery. Dr. Gomes has served as a staff neonatologist within level IIA, IIB and III nurseries across the Boston Children's affiliated community hospitals since 2013, currently as an attending neonatologist at Winchester Hospital. Dr. Gomes also spent time as a neonatology consultant in Rwanda and currently serves as the Associate Director of Education for the Boston Children's Division of Newborn Medicine; work that includes facilitation of neonatal simulation training.

**JESSICA SLUSARSKI, MD**, will be the Site Leader for the St. Luke's Hospital Special Care Nursery. Dr. Slusarski has been part of the team from Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island for the past six years. At Women & Infants, she was a leader of the transport team and has experience with simulation training. Dr. Slusarski also served as an Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at both the University of Washington and more recently at Brown University. For the past three years, Dr. Slusarski has served as the Medical Director of Neonatal Transport for Women & Infants' NICU.

**CYNTHIA DE MEESTER, MD, PhD**, has been named the Site Leader for the Tobey Hospital Nursery. Dr. De Meester brings more than 15 years of experience from both the pediatric primary care and hospital-based perspective, most recently as a pediatric hospitalist at Cape Cod Hospital. In addition, Dr. De Meester offers program administrative experience and a personal interest in working with families that struggle with addiction. ❖

## RI Health Centers Receive Nearly \$3M to Expand Services

PROVIDENCE – Rhode Island's Congressional delegation announced on May 6th that three Rhode Island health centers will receive \$2,988,180 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for facility renovation and expansion, increasing access to health care for a projected 11,250 additional patients.

Comprehensive Community Action in Cranston and Blackstone Valley Community Health Care in Pawtucket will receive \$1 million each and the Providence Community Health Centers in Providence will receive \$988,180.

"We are extremely excited about receiving this grant, and want to thank our entire federal delegation for their continued support," said Joanne McGunagle, President and CEO, Comprehensive Community Action (CCAP). "This funding will allow CCAP to expand much needed quality and affordable dental services at our Family Health Services of

Coventry health center."

"We are most appreciative of the efforts of our Congressional delegation for their continued support of health centers. Our HRSA funding will help Blackstone establish the nation's first Neighborhood Health Station in Central Falls. We look forward to great accomplishments with the help of this federal funding," said Ray Lavoie, Executive Director, Blackstone Valley Community Health Care.

"The Providence Community Health Centers are very happy to receive this grant as it will allow us to add additional exam rooms and clinical support space needed to meet our growing patient's needs. We also thank our entire Rhode Island Congressional delegation as their continued support make grants like this possible, and directly impact our community," said Merrill Thomas, CEO and President, Providence Community Health Centers. ❖