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Recognition

Rhode Island a national leader in immunizations for adolescents

Immunization rates for teenagers in Rhode Island are among the highest in the country, according to new data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The data were gathered through a version of the CDC's National Immunization Survey that focuses on children from 13 to 17 years old. Surveyors made randomized telephone calls to parents and guardians. The information they provided was confirmed with the child's vaccination provider. The study revealed that:

- 88.5% of Rhode Island girls and 88.7% of Rhode Island boys received at least one dose of Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, the second-highest rates in the country, and much higher than the national averages for the first dose of HPV vaccine: 68.6% for girls and 62.6% for boys. HPV is a very common virus that can lead to cancer in males and females.
- 94.6% of Rhode Island teens received the combined vaccine called Tdap, which protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis. This was the fifth-highest rate in the nation.
- 94.1% of Rhode Island teens received at least one dose of Meningococcal Conjugate vaccine, the third-highest rate in the country.

A separate survey by the CDC indicated that Rhode Island had the highest overall flu vaccination rate in the nation during the 2016–2017 flu season.

The most recent National Immunization Survey data were gathered during 2017. A link to the full report is available online.

** Coverage rates produced by the National Immunization Survey are estimates – often referred to as point estimates. Because a random sample of telephone numbers is taken, these rates have an associated statistical margin of error. Due to statistical uncertainty (i.e. sampling error) in the estimates, Rhode Island's true vaccination rates may be slightly higher or lower. ❖*

South County Hospital among 2018–19 Best Hospitals by U.S. News & World Report

South County Hospital has been recognized as a High Performing Hospital in the *U.S. News & World Report's* 2018–19 edition of “Best Hospitals”. It was the only hospital in Rhode Island to receive the “High Performing” rating for knee replacement surgery.

Of the approximately 4,500 hospitals evaluated, fewer than 30 percent earned even a single High Performing rating in any category.

To be nationally ranked in a specialty, a hospital must excel in caring for the sickest, most medically complex patients. The ratings in procedures and conditions, by contrast, focus on typical Medicare patients.

Best Hospitals ratings and rankings are based on millions of data points, in-depth analyses, and expertise. By giving consumers the information they need to make appropriate healthcare decisions, Best Hospitals leads to better care for patients and better incentives for hospitals.

Knee Replacement Scorecard

South County Hospital's score on its knee replacement specialty is based on multiple data categories, including patient survival, readmissions, volume and other data points. Hospitals received one of three ratings – high performing, average or below average.

Hospitals that earned a high performing rating were significantly better than the national average.

Significant high scores were given to South County Hospital for survival, based on U.S. News analysis of Medicare claims; preventing readmissions; preventing prolonged hospitalizations; preventing complications after hip or knee replacement; and the number of patients receiving surgery. ❖

U.S. News & World Report names Southcoast Health among region's best

NEW BEDFORD – Southcoast Health announced today that it has been named among the best in the region by *U.S. News & World Report*. The magazine's annual “Best Hospitals” rankings recognize hospitals in the United States that provide the best overall patient care as well as specialized treatment in areas like surgery and cardiovascular services.

Southcoast Health, which consists of St. Luke's Hospital in New Bedford, Charlton Memorial Hospital in Fall River and Tobey Hospital in Wareham, was ranked among the best hospitals in Massachusetts (No. 9) and Providence metro area (No. 2).

It also received a High Performing ranking for specialty care in Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Colon Cancer Surgery and Heart Failure.

For the 2018-19 rankings, U.S. News & World Report evaluated data on almost 5,000 medical centers nationwide in 25 specialties, procedures and conditions. In the 16 specialty areas, only 158 hospitals were ranked in at least one specialty. In rankings by state and metro area, the magazine recognized hospitals as high performing across multiple areas of care.

The rankings are available online at <https://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals>. ❖



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Appointments

Barbara Fletcher, RN, named hospice volunteer coordinator at VNA of CNE

BARBARA FLETCHER, RN, of West Warwick, has recently joined the VNA of Care New England as hospice volunteer coordinator. In this role Fletcher will recruit, onboard, and train hospice volunteers. She will also ensure that both the volunteer and hospice patients are benefiting from the unique and rewarding experience.



As a hospice volunteer coordinator, Fletcher will attend conferences with the VNA's nursing, social work, and chaplain staff to obtain volunteer referrals. Fletcher will conduct monthly continuing education trainings to ensure volunteers understand best practices. She will also pair volunteers with patients and follow-up on the patient/volunteer relationship.

"My focus in this role is recruiting and training new volunteers," said Fletcher. "When presented the opportunity, I was ecstatic to accept. The role allows me to combine my education and training background with my understanding of the complex needs of hospice patients and their caregivers."

Fletcher began at the VNA of Care New England in January 2018 as a hospice case manager before transitioning to the hospice volunteer coordinator in April. As a hospice case manager she administered treatment to patients within the comfort of their home, developed care plans, and worked with physicians to determine individualized care plans.

Fletcher brings a breadth of experience as a registered nurse to the VNA of Care New England. Her professional experience includes serving as a nursing supervisor with the Rhode Island Blood Center, where she eventually transitioned to quality assurance and education specialist. She also dedicated seven years of her career to Providence College as the assistant director of nurses within their student health center. ❖



Paari Gopalakrishnan, MD, named Chief Medical Officer at Kent

PAARI GOPALAKRISHNAN, MD, MBA, has been named Chief Medical Officer for Kent Hospital and medical director for Integra Community Care Network. He will begin November 26, 2018.

Dr. Gopalakrishnan comes to Kent Hospital after most recently serving as chief, Division of Hospitalist Medicine at Greenville Health System in Greenville, SC. He also served as clinical assistant

professor, University of South Carolina School of Medicine – Greenville. There, he championed a rapidly growing division encompassing acute-care hospitalist medicine, post-acute care medicine, section of inpatient psychiatry, and point of care ultrasound. Prior to his time at Greenville Health System, Dr. Gopalakrishnan served as the director of the inpatient medical group (hospitalists) at Kent Hospital from 2009 to 2015.

RAYMOND POWRIE, MD, Kent Hospital interim president said, "On behalf of CNE and Kent Hospital, we are extremely pleased to welcome Dr. Gopalakrishnan back to Rhode Island and Kent Hospital. He has a proven record of accomplishment and clinical success throughout his career to date and will certainly be a tremendous asset to the leadership team as we continue to focus on key initiatives of quality, patient safety, and satisfaction. This is an exciting time for Kent as we not only welcome Dr. Gopalakrishnan later this year, but also new hospital president, Robert Haffey, next month. Re-establishing the foundations of Kent's leadership has been our priority, and I believe we are now positioning the hospital well for many years to come."

Said Dr. Gopalakrishnan, "As the new chief medical officer at Kent Hospital, I am looking forward to returning to an institution that has already been an important part of my career in health care. This new opportunity will afford me the chance to further guide Kent as it continues its journey towards excellence, while providing high quality patient care to the community who looks to this hospital for their services."

While at Greenville Health System, Dr. Gopalakrishnan was responsible for the establishment of new programs and initiatives within the division including the acquisition of new hospitalist programs, the development of an outpatient transition care program, and the expansion of acute care providers into skilled nursing facilities. In addition, he was instrumental in realizing significant improvement in patient satisfaction, quality outcomes, patient flow, physician engagement, and nurse-physician collaboration.

While director of the inpatient medical group (hospitalists) at Kent Hospital, Dr. Gopalakrishnan was responsible for the multi-specialty group encompassing Kent's Intensive Care Unit, House Officer Physician Assistant Program, and the hospitalist program which serves both Kent and Women & Infants hospitals. Earlier in his career, Dr. Gopalakrishnan also served as associate director, Division of Hospitalist Medicine at The Miriam Hospital in Providence, RI.

Dr. Gopalakrishnan received his medical degree from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and completed his internal medicine residency at Brown University. He received his MBA with honors from Bryant University. ❖

Appointments

Lisa Rameaka, MD, appointed VP of medical affairs, CMO at South County



South County Health's chief of ob/gyn, **LISA RAMEAKA, MD**, has been appointed vice president of medical affairs and chief medical officer of that healthcare system.

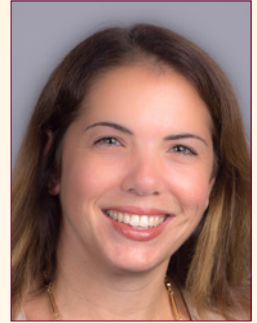
Dr. Rameaka began practicing medicine at South County Health in 2002, specializing in ob/gyn. During that time she has demonstrated her commitment to performance improvement, problem solving operational issues, and open communication with providers and staff. She has partnered effectively

with the leadership and surgical services staff to accommodate the growing demand for surgical time.

As VP of medical affairs and CMO, Dr. Rameaka will be responsible for working with the medical staff on quality, recruitment, system improvement and growth. As a senior leader, Dr. Rameaka will work with the executive team and the board of trustees to formulate the short and long-term directions for the system.

Her appointment was decided jointly by the board of trustees' executive committee and Lou Giancola. ❖

Erika Werner, MD, named Director of Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine



ERIKA F. WERNER, MS, MD, has been named director of the Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Women & Infants Hospital. Dr. Werner joined the division in 2013 and has been serving as interim director since March 2018.

"This appointment follows a national search, during which Dr. Werner's prominence and expertise in the field of maternal-fetal medicine shone. Her vision for the division will focus the entire team on excellence in clinical care, research, and education," said **MAUREEN G. PHIPPS MD, MPH**, chair, and chief of obstetrics and gynecology at Women & Infants Hospital and Care New England Health System.

A member of Care New England Medical Group, Dr. Werner is also an associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology and associate professor of epidemiology, Research Scholar Track, at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University.

Dr. Werner is board certified in obstetrics and gynecology and in maternal-fetal medicine. Her research and clinical interests include obstetrical complications of obesity, gestational diabetes, operative deliveries, and preterm birth. She has also published extensively on cost-effective medical practices. ❖



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Obituaries



YALAKKI GOWDA, MD, 83, of Central Falls, passed peacefully Aug. 11, 2018, at Roger Williams Medical Center surrounded by family.

Dr. Gowda migrated from India in 1963 after graduating from the Mysore Medical College. He specialized in cardiology and internal medicine and began his career as an intern in Chicago, Ill. He later served as a resident and fellow in several New York City hospitals, as well as The Miriam Hospital before becoming a medical staff member at Memorial Hospital in Pawtucket.

In 1971, Dr. Gowda opened his practice in Central Falls. He chose to be where he was needed most and never refused any patient, regardless of their circumstances. He was the first cardiologist to have a practice in Central Falls. Dr. Gowda was known to make house calls at 2 a.m.

In full suit and tie in times when house calls were no longer common practice. He continued practicing well into his 70s and, at 83, still worked part-time as a staff member of Open MRI of New England.

When his daughter recently asked what he would do if he wasn't a doctor, he responded: "Nothing. This is all I ever wanted to do, and I'm doing it."

His legacy lives on through his children: Keerthy, Pushpa and Anand Gowda. He was proud of his children, especially their driven nature and accomplishments around the country. He is also survived by Yashoda Gowda, his former wife of 21 years, as well as extended family in India.

The Gowda family would like to thank the staff of Roger Williams Medical Center for their dedication and superb medical care during Dr. Gowda's final days. ❖



ADIB M. MECHREFE, MD, 76, of Lincoln passed away July 30, 2018 at Miriam Hospital, Providence surrounded by his loving family. He was the beloved husband of Mary (Freij) Mechrefe. Born in Damascus, Syria, he had lived in Lincoln for the past 42 years.

Dr. Mechrefe devoted his life to taking care of others. He was a general surgeon and emergency medicine specialist who owned the Garden City Treatment Center in Cranston.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his children: Anthony Mechrefe and his wife Etienne, Tanya Gaudio and her husband Jonathan and Tara Cavanagh and her husband Robert; his nine grandchildren, and sisters and brother.

Donations in his memory may be made to the American Heart Association or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. ❖