

Partners files application with RIDOH on CNE acquisition

Alpert Medical School will be primary academic research and teaching institution of record for the affiliation

PROVIDENCE – On December 17, 2018, Partners HealthCare and Brigham Health filed an application with the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) and Rhode Island Attorney General (RIAG), in accordance with the Rhode Island Hospital Conversion Act, seeking approval of Brigham Health's planned acquisition of Care New England (CNE). Partners HealthCare also filed a Notice of Material Change with the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission. The Federal Trade Commission recently announced that it has decided not to challenge the acquisition.

The affiliation calls for CNE to become part of Brigham Health, the Partners-owned organization that operates Brigham and Women's Hospital, Brigham and Women's Faulkner Hospital and other entities. It is built on a shared commitment to providing the highest quality local care, physician training and biomedical innovation to Rhode Island. Importantly, it will also stabilize CNE and enable the financially-distressed system to expand its primary care and complex care resources and address much-needed capital improvements.

"This relationship will extend our existing affiliations across the Care New England system, bringing new resources to support patient care and physician training and expanding

access to research through clinical trials," said **ELIZABETH G. NABEL, MD**, President of Brigham Health. "We're committed to investing in Rhode Island's healthcare economy by becoming active members of the local business community."

"Rhode Islanders will benefit greatly from the collaboration of these two health systems," said Care New England President and CEO **JAMES E. FANALE, MD**. "Our relationship with Brigham Health will enhance the training of physicians and inspire new research. At the same time, it strengthens our commitment to preserving access and quality of care for all Rhode Islanders."

Brown affiliation

In addition, CNE, Partners, and Brigham Health finalized an agreement with Brown establishing the university's Warren Alpert Medical School as the primary academic research and teaching institution of record for the affiliation. Further, Brown's President will join the CNE Board of Directors as a voting member, and the dean of the Warren Alpert Medical School will be an ex officio member of academic and research subcommittees of that board.

Brown has a longstanding academic medical affiliation with CNE, which is home to Brown's programs in obstetrics and gynecology and neonatology (at

Care New England statement on Partners CEO resignation

"Care New England Health System (CNE) has worked diligently over the past two years towards a planned acquisition by Brigham Health, a founding member of Partners HealthCare. We expect today's [January 29] announcement by **Dr. David Torchiana**, chief executive of Partners HealthCare, that he is stepping down from that position will have no impact on our ability to finalize this important transaction.

"While we wait for the Rhode Island Department of Health and the Attorney General's office to deem the formal application complete, our sole focus remains on preparing for an affiliation we believe will ensure that high quality, affordable care remains available throughout CNE for the people of Rhode Island. We feel strongly that this affiliation will build on existing clinical relationships between CNE and Brigham Health to ensure ongoing clinical research and educational collaboration in support of the parties' charitable missions, enable the organizations to more efficiently use their resources, and establish effective and expanded approaches to population health management." ❖

Women & Infants Hospital); in psychiatry (at Butler Hospital); and in family medicine (at Kent Hospital). This new relationship will sustain medical training for healthcare providers and support for biomedical research and innovation that keeps leading physicians in the state.

"Together, we will be even better positioned to prepare our future physicians for the rapidly changing world of healthcare and medical innovation," Brown President **CHRISTINA PAXSON** said. "We will build on our ability to compete for biomedical research grants that will guide the future of medicine and inject new investment and vibrancy into the Rhode Island economy." ❖

Lifespan Statement regarding Partners HealthCare's Application to Rhode Island to Acquire Care New England

FROM LAWRENCE A. AUBIN, SR.,
CHAIRMAN, LIFESPAN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

"Like all stakeholders – both public and private – Lifespan will carefully review this application, taking into account the potential impact on Rhode Island patients, communities, health care delivery system and economy. The far-reaching consequences of an out-of-state health care provider taking control of Rhode Island's second largest health system requires a thorough and thoughtful review by all concerned – the state, other stakeholders and us. Lifespan remains committed to high-quality, patient-centered care delivered here in Rhode Island." ❖



Kent president and COO **Robert Haffey** and **Frank Lafazia, DO**, at dedication.

Kent Hospital dedicates Simulation Training Lab

Kent Hospital recently dedicated the hospital's first simulation lab (Sim Lab), located in the Graduate Medical Education (GME) Center. The new space is designed to house SimMan® 3G, a life-like adult patient simulator which will provide real-life training to Kent Hospital's residents and students. The lab, which includes a control room and procedural simulation equipment and ultrasound, was made possible by the generosity of the Luigi Damiano Foundation, represented at the event by **FRANK LAFAZIA, DO**.

Residents gave attendees a demonstration of SimMan, which breathes, cries, has a pulse, and even bleeds. "This simulation lab space is critical to our continuing goal of quality improvement," said Kent president and COO **ROBERT HAFFEY**.

"We're extremely grateful to the Lafazia family and the Foundation for their generous gift," said **ALISA MEROLLI, MD**, the GME Center's Designated Institutional Officer. "This lab allows our medical students to practice crucial procedures long before they are seeing patients." ❖

South County Health plans Centennial events

From cottage hospital to robotic surgery, a history of healthcare

WAKEFIELD – From its beginning as a cottage hospital inside a home on Kenyon Avenue, South County Hospital has grown over the past 100 years to become South County Health, a major healthcare system dedicated to those who live, work and visit the Washington County communities.

- To commemorate this historical milestone, South County Health will celebrate its Centennial throughout 2019 with a variety of events and activities, offering everyone in the community an opportunity to enjoy what they helped to create. Some of the planned events include: Centennial Kick-off Reception where a permanent historical timeline will be unveiled in the Hospital lobby
- Live performance by Trinity Rep actors, depicting the history of South County Health
- Centennial 5K Road Race from South County Hospital with Centennial celebration festivities
- Robotic technology hands-on demonstration
- The Centennial Ball: A Roaring 20s Affair at The Dunes Club
- Book signing and reception with renowned cardiac surgeon, Dr. Arun Singh. More Centennial festivities, event dates and details will be announced throughout the year. In addition, South County Health will commemorate its 100-year relationship with the people and communities of Washington County with South County Stories, a collection of stories, recollections and anecdotes from people whose lives have been touched by the doctors, nurses and medical professionals through the years. ❖

Clinica Esperanza/Hope Clinic seeks volunteers

Primary care, specialty, physicians, nurses, administrative volunteers needed

PROVIDENCE – Clinica Esperanza/Hope Clinic (CEHC) is a not-for-profit clinic serves the uninsured of Rhode Island. Due to its location in the 'Valley neighborhood' of the West Side, many CEHC patients are immigrants and refugees from Central and South America.

Concerned about Health Disparities? Would you like to improve access to

Healthcare? If you speak Haitian Creole, Spanish, Farsi, or any West/East African languages, you will be especially welcome here, as "CEHC" is International Health on the RIPTA bus line. Primary care, Specialty, Physicians, Nurses, and administrative volunteers are needed.

Sign up for a volunteer shift and see

as many patients are you are comfortable seeing – with no paperwork hassles. Volunteers who wish to work regular monthly shifts are especially needed.

Visit www.aplacetobehealthy.org to learn more, or write vcoordinator@aplacetobehealthy.org to find out which volunteer shifts are available. ❖

Multidisciplinary study to help identify veterans at risk for suicide

PROVIDENCE – A research health scientist with the VA Rehabilitation, Research and Development's Center for Neuro-restoration and Neurotechnology, or CfNN, located at the Providence VA Medical Center, has received a VA Career Development Award January 1 for a project titled "Identification of Veterans At-Risk for Suicide: A Multidisciplinary Approach."

The \$1 million award will fund a five-year project. **DR. JENNIFER BARREDO**, who is also an assistant professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at Brown University's Warren Alpert Medical School, will use magnetic resonance imaging to study patterns of brain activity in Veterans who may be at risk for suicide. Using an advanced machine learning approach, the project aims to develop new ways to identify suicide risk, and develop this into a clinical tool for early detection. New insights into the neurobiology of suicide may also guide the development and optimization of emerging treatments for suicidality in Veterans.



J. Barredo, PhD

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[PHOTO COURTESY OF ADVANCE CLINICAL AND TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH AT BROWN UNIVERSITY]

"Research that could help better identify Veterans at risk for suicide is critically important," said **DR. SUSAN MACKENZIE**, director of the Providence VAMC. "Preventing the tragic loss of Veterans to suicide – people who have served and sacrificed so much for our country – continues to be top priority for VA."

The VA Career Development Program was established to attract, develop, and retain talented scientists working to improve Veteran health, care and quality of life. ❖

RIH researchers part of national study to evaluate drug Troriluzole to slow Alzheimer's disease progression

'T2 Protect AD' study at RIH Alzheimer's Disease and Memory Disorders Center measures potential improvement in people with mild to moderate disease

Rhode Island Hospital's Alzheimer's Disease and Memory Disorders Center is recruiting participants for a new, national Alzheimer's disease clinical research study evaluating the potential benefits of an investigational medicine for people with mild to moderate Alzheimer's.

The Phase 2 study, called T2 Protect AD (Alzheimer's disease), is evaluating the investigational drug Troriluzole, which may have the potential to protect against, slow down, and eventually improve memory and thinking problems that increase as Alzheimer's disease progresses. Troriluzole is a drug that modulates glutamate, protecting against neuron loss. Glutamate problems in the brain can lead to brain cell dysfunction and disease, including Alzheimer's disease.

Troriluzole is related to riluzole, which is used to slightly slow disease progression in patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), but, unlike its predecessor, it can be taken once a day and has potential for better safety and tolerability.

"We are very excited to be able to participate in this trial. Troriluzole offers an avenue for therapy targeting an Alzheimer's-related disease mechanism that is unlike any other investigational medication we have to offer," said **JONATHAN DRAKE, MD**, the principal investigator for the study site at Rhode Island Hospital. "It has a proven track record in ALS

patients, and has been modified to have fewer side effects. Most importantly, this study will be open to patients with moderate dementia, a population that is currently under-represented in Alzheimer's disease clinical trials."

Rhode Island Hospital's Alzheimer's Disease and Memory Disorders Center is one of more than 30 sites across the U.S. participating in the T2 Protect AD study. Approximately 292 patients will be randomized nationwide on a 1:1 basis to receive 280 mg of troriluzole or placebo, taken orally at bedtime. The duration of treatment will be 48 weeks.

The study is sponsored by New Haven-based Biohaven Pharmaceutical Holding Company Ltd., and is coordinated by the Alzheimer's Disease Cooperative Study, an Alzheimer's disease therapeutic research consortium based at the University of California, San Diego.

To participate in T2 Protect AD, candidates must be between age 50 and 85 and diagnosed with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease, and already being treated with donepezil (Aricept), rivastigmine (Exelon) or galantamine (Razadyne) for at least three months, with or without memantine (Namenda). Participants must have a study partner who has regular contact with the clinical trial candidate and is able to attend study visits. ❖

W&I awards research grants to Drs. Brousseau, Ribeiro

Women & Infants Hospital has awarded two approximately \$25,000 grants from the Constance A. Howes Women’s Health Innovation Research Fund. The research fund, which has raised more than \$500,000, was established in 2014 with contributions from more than 150 donors to honor former hospital president Constance A. Howes and to support research studies that advance women’s health and gender-based research.

The two awardees are **E. CHRISTINE BROUSSEAU, MD, MPH**, of the Women & Infants’ Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology’s Division of Research; and **JENNIFER RIBEIRO, PhD**, of Women & Infants’ Program in Women’s Oncology.

Dr. Brousseau’s clinical project is entitled “A Pilot Study to Improve



E. C. Brousseau, MD



J. Ribeiro, PhD

Contraceptive Access to an Underserved Population of Women.” This project focuses on access to preventive health care for women who have been previously incarcerated.

Dr. Ribeiro’s basic science project is entitled “Identification of relevant immune regulators in epithelial ovarian cancer.” This project seeks to

identify genes and immune cell populations specifically relevant to epithelial ovarian cancer that help a tumor escape elimination by the immune system.

These investigators, selected from an impressive pool of applicants, presented their projects in December to a panel of scientific advisors and donors to the Constance A. Howes Fund. The fund honors the vision and leadership of Connie Howes, and provides seed funding for pilot studies that propel research ideas to the next level of funding. The fund has supported seven highly innovative projects so far, and leveraged multiple publications and additional grant awards including a large-scale Center of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) grant. ❖



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URI Ryan Institute initiates clinical trial to study possible role of the brain's blood vessels in Alzheimer's

In a pioneering clinical trial that will attack Alzheimer's disease by targeting inflammation in the brain's blood vessels, researchers at the George & Anne Ryan Institute for Neuroscience have received regulatory approval to initiate the BEACON Study. This URI-sponsored study is the first-ever clinical trial led and conducted entirely within the state designed to treat individuals with mild cognitive impairment probably due to Alzheimer's disease and those diagnosed with mild Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's research clinics at Rhode Island Hospital, Rhode Island Mood and Memory Research Institute, and Butler Hospital will be enrolling participants later this year for this uniquely Rhode Island study.

"Keeping this study in Rhode Island was important to us," said **PAULA GRAMMAS, PhD**, executive director of the Ryan Institute. "This state has a world-class and closely-linked community of researchers and clinicians, which enables us to pull together resources and make progress quickly."

The study is funded through a grant from the Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation (ADDF) along with private donations. The ADDF catalyzes and funds drug discovery and drug development for Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. This research is also made possible by an independent grant from Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc., which is providing the active drug for this study, dabigatran. URI's Pharmaceutical Development Institute is providing the placebo comparator for this trial.

"The role of the vasculature in Alzheimer's disease has been grossly under-recognized until relatively recently," said **DR. HOWARD FILLIT**, Founding Executive Director and Chief Science Officer of the Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation. "As a result, strategies to develop therapeutics to address this important part of the disease have been lacking. We are pleased to work with Dr. Grammas and fund her work using a very novel approach to repurpose an existing drug to treat the vascular abnormalities in Alzheimer's disease."

BEACON is a Phase I clinical trial that looks into the possible role of the brain's blood vessels in Alzheimer's disease. Grammas's research has shown that factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and stroke can injure blood vessels in the brain, resulting in inflammation that could cause the damage or death of brain cells that occurs in Alzheimer's disease. The BEACON Study repurposes an existing drug, dabigatran, FDA-approved to reduce the risk of stroke and systemic embolism in patients with non-valvular atrial fibrillation and for the treatment and to reduce the risk of reoccurrence of deep venous thrombosis and pulmonary embolism, to suppress one part of the inflammation process associated with Alzheimer's disease. Results from the BEACON Study are expected in late 2020.

"If the drug shows some effects on the progression of Alzheimer's disease, it would be the first time we've found evidence of a treatment that could slow the disease," says Grammas. "But even if the study's results are less conclusive, this is a vitally important step forward in expanding our knowledge of the multiple factors that cause this complex disease. I'm very excited to see what happens."

The BEACON Study will look at the effects of the drug dabigatran, a direct thrombin inhibitor, to slow down this harmful cascade in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. In preclinical studies using rodent models of Alzheimer's disease, the treatment significantly slowed neurodegeneration, and drugs with similar action slowed the decline of cognitive function. BEACON stands for "Blocking Endothelial Activation to Curb the Onset of Neurodegeneration." ❖

RIH participating in TANGO clinical Alzheimer's disease trial

Investigators at Rhode Island Hospital's Alzheimer's Disease and Memory Disorders Center are now recruiting volunteers for the TANGO study, a national, multicenter clinical trial. The trial will evaluate the use of a highly innovative approach treating people with Mild Cognitive Impairment or early Alzheimer's disease (AD) using an immunotherapy drug. The drug, called BIIB092, uses antibodies to target the tau protein that builds up in the brain cells of people with AD. The trial is sponsored by Biogen, a global biopharmaceutical company based in Massachusetts.

Only people with higher levels of amyloid plaques on their PET scans will qualify to participate in this study. In this study, the drug will be given intravenously monthly and 2 out of every 3 people will get BIIB092. People who do not receive the study medicine will get a placebo infusion of salt water. This study will last for about 18 months. Every person joining this study must have a study partner who is able to come to some of the study visits.

According to **DR. BRIAN OTT**, principal investigator at Rhode Island Hospital, "Because changes in tau are more closely related to the degeneration of nerve cells as well as the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, we are hopeful that this will be a successful approach to controlling the disease. Among investigational drugs currently under study for AD, BIIB092 is exciting in that it does not aim to reduce amyloid protein buildup in the brain, but is an immunotherapy that targets tau protein." ❖



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