

URI College of Health Sciences Dean Gary Liguori updates ACSM's "Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription"

KINGSTON – University of Rhode Island College of Health Sciences Dean **GARY LIGUORI, PhD**, is the lead editor of the 11th edition of "ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription," the flagship title from the American College of Sports Medicine, which sets the standards for the exercise profession. Health Sciences Associate Dean Deb Riebe edited the 10th edition of the book in 2017, for which Liguori served as an associate editor.

The book is updated every four to six years, delivering the latest evidence-based recommendations and guidelines. Liguori's edition is due out in March 2021, with exercise standards expected to be implemented in the fall. Liguori estimates he and his team of authors – including Riebe and Bryan Blissmer, director of the URI Institute for Integrated Health and Innovation – revised more than half the content in the book, including updating research with more relevant studies, deemphasizing antiquated exercise advice, and reflecting new techniques for measuring vital signs like ideal heart rate.

"One notable suggestion we made is around people who have open heart surgery," Liguori said. "Patients have typically been ordered to restrict arm movement for fear of reopening the incision. But really all the evidence says that you can have arm movement; just be thoughtful about it. We're not telling them to go out and do pushups or boxing the next day. But we're really saying the evidence shows, within limits, you don't have to be so restricted."

Physical activity is also critical for brain health, the subject of a new, standalone chapter Liguori added to the Guidelines. It advocates the benefits of physical activity on everything from Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, to ADHD, depression and anxiety.

The benefits of high-intensity exercise, particularly in regard to various disease states like heart disease and high blood pressure, along with neurological disorders, continues to mount and is emphasized in this edition.

"The mode of exercise is not so important; just that you're really working hard for a short burst of time," Liguori said. "High intensity activity can be quite effective for a whole host of conditions. But really, any bout of activity, of any length, of any intensity, is helpful and absolutely better than no activity. If you sit at a desk all day, and you can get up periodically, even for just a minute or two to take a walk, that's much better than not getting up at all throughout the day. The evidence is overwhelming that anything is helpful."

This is not the first book Liguori has worked on with the organization. In addition to serving as associate editor on the previous iteration, he has also served as senior editor on the first edition ACSM Resources for the Exercise Physiologist, and senior editor on the organization's annual Health Related Physical Fitness Assessment Manual. Editing the "Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription" was a particular honor for him, given the importance the text holds in the exercise, kinesiology, physical therapy industries and more.

"I get a little chill when I think about being the editor," Liguori said. "As a student and a young professional, one of the things I looked forward to every four or five years was when the new edition would come out, and seeing who was the team that did the new version. I really looked up to those people and admired them. So for me, it is incredibly humbling. It's something I never even imagined would be on my horizon." ❖



PHOTO COURTESY OF URI

RI receives \$70.4M to expand COVID-19 testing, vaccine distribution efforts

Rhode Island has received an infusion of \$70.4 million in federal funding to bolster the state's coronavirus testing and vaccination programs, U.S. Senator Jack Reed announced in a statement on January 25th.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funding, from the COVID-19 emergency relief package signed into law in December 2020, was awarded to the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), and will be used to expand COVID-19 testing and vaccine distribution across the state, according to the statement from Sen. Reed. Nearly \$61 million is allocated to support the state's COVID-19 testing capacities, contact tracing and containment and mitigation efforts, while an additional \$9.5 million will enhance vaccine distribution. ❖

Brown researchers designing adverse event monitoring system for post-COVID-19 vaccination impacts in elderly nursing home residents

PROVIDENCE – The National Institute on Aging (NIA) has awarded a supplemental grant to Brown University School of Public Health to design an adverse event monitoring system to identify adverse health impacts after receipt of COVID-19 vaccination by elderly nursing home residents.

This new effort, a supplement to the \$53.4M NIA IMPACT Collaboratory grant awarded to the School of Public Health and Hebrew SeniorLife in September 2019, provides funding for the School to work with Genesis HealthCare (Genesis), one of the nation's largest post-acute care providers with more than 350 facilities across 25 states. Brown will monitor the occurrence of adverse events following nursing home residents' receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine in facilities affiliated with Genesis. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Brown and Genesis have been working together to study data and uncover patterns that can be used to develop informed strategies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in nursing homes.

VINCENT MOR, PhD, lead investigator and Professor of Health Service, Policy and Practice in the School of Public Health, said "Nursing home residents constitute about 40% of all deaths due to COVID in the nation, but make up less than one half of one percent of the US population. Residents are in desperate need of protection from the virus but no one as sick as a nursing home resident was enrolled in any of the vaccine trials."

This work is part of the Centers for Disease Control's effort to establish Vaccine Adverse Event Monitoring Systems, particularly focused on the frail elderly who were not included in the vaccine trials.

Mor added that "We don't know how frail seniors will react to the vaccine and it will roll out quickly once distribution begins. Under normal circumstances, we would not know until most residents have been vaccinated if the rate of adverse events is higher than expected. Therefore, the 'real time' adverse event monitoring system we are establishing cooperatively with the CDC and Genesis is unique and critically important to understand how frail seniors will respond to the vaccines."

Additional local collaborations in this work include the Rhode Island Quality Institute led by **NEIL SARKAR, PhD**, president and chief executive officer, and Associate Professor of Medical Science at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University.

The work is supported by the National Institute on Aging of the National Institutes of Health under Award No. U54AG063546. ❖

Trio of centenarian Navy veterans receive COVID-19 vaccination

PROVIDENCE – Three Rhode Island centenarian Navy Veterans of World War II received their initial doses of COVID-19 vaccine at the Providence VA Medical Center on Jan. 20.

105-year-old **ARTHUR PRISCO**, of Warwick, and 100-year-olds **RAYMOND GANNON**, of Pawtucket, and **PETER RICCI**, of West Warwick, are three of the most recent recipients of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at the Providence VA Medical Center's COVID-19 Veteran Vaccination Clinic,



100-year-old World War II Navy Veteran and Pawtucket resident **Raymond Gannon**, left, and 105-year-old World War II Navy Veteran and Warwick resident **Arthur Prisco**, after receiving their initial dose.

[VA PROVIDENCE HCS PHOTO BY KIMBERLEY DIDONATO]



100-year-old World War II Navy Veteran and West Warwick resident **Peter Ricci** points to his bandage after receiving his initial dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at the Providence VA Medical Center, January 20, 2021.

[VA PROVIDENCE HCS PHOTO BY WINFIELD DANIELSON]

located in Building 32 on the main campus, 830 Chalkstone Ave. in Providence. In all, more than 700 Veterans enrolled with the VA Providence Healthcare System have received the vaccine.

"Some people are refusing to get it," said Ricci. "I say, what have you got to lose?"

"We're excited to be taking the offensive against the coronavirus in 2021, offering the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to our Veterans at highest risk of severe illness," said **LAWRENCE CONNELL**, director of the VA Providence HCS. "As vaccine supplies continue to arrive, our ultimate goal is to offer free COVID-19 vaccination to all enrolled Veterans and VA employees who want it." ❖

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¹ www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm

Lung Association Report: Rhode Island has mixed grades in ending tobacco use

State earns F grade for prevention funding; D grade in new flavored tobacco category

PROVIDENCE – This year’s “State of Tobacco Control” report from the American Lung Association grades federal and state efforts to reduce tobacco use and calls for meaningful policies that will prevent and reduce tobacco use and save lives. The report finds that Rhode Island had mixed grades on its efforts to reduce and prevent tobacco use, earning an F grade for tobacco prevention and control funding and a D grade for flavored tobacco products.

Tobacco use remains the nation’s leading cause of preventable death and disease, taking an estimated 480,000 lives every year. Much like COVID-19, tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure disproportionately impacts certain communities, including communities of color, LGTBQ+ Americans and persons of lower income. To address this critical public health threat, “State of Tobacco Control” provides a roadmap for the federal and state policies needed to prevent and reduce tobacco use.

“In Rhode Island, our high school tobacco use rate remains at 33.3%. The surge in youth vaping combined with the fact that smoking increases the chance of severe COVID-19 symptoms, make it more important than ever for Rhode Island to implement the proven measures outlined in ‘State of Tobacco Control’ to prevent and reduce tobacco use,” said American Lung Association Senior Manager of Advocacy in Rhode Island, **DANIEL FITZGERALD**.

Rhode Island’s Grades

“State of Tobacco Control” 2021 grades states and the District of Columbia in five areas that have been proven to prevent and reduce tobacco use and save lives. Rhode Island received the following grades:

1. Funding for State Tobacco Prevention Programs – Grade F
2. Strength of Smokefree Workplace Laws – Grade A
3. Level of State Tobacco Taxes – Grade B
4. Coverage and Access to Services to Quit Tobacco – Grade C
5. **New:** Ending the Sale of All Flavored Tobacco Products – Grade D

The report finds that while Rhode Island has taken significant steps to reduce tobacco use, including prohibiting the sale of flavored e-cigarettes in the state, elected officials must do more to protect youth from all tobacco products. With 1 in 5 teens vaping, children are becoming the next generation addicted to tobacco. Youth vaping and tobacco use overall is largely driven by flavored tobacco products, and the 19th annual report has added a new state grade calling for policies to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, flavored e-cigarettes and flavored cigars. Rhode Island received a D grade in this category, recognizing its progress in restricting flavored e-cigarettes in all locations, but calling for further action prohibiting the sale all flavored tobacco including menthol cigarettes.

In 2019, about 8,000 kids began vaping every day – typically with flavored

e-cigarettes – setting them up for a lifetime of addiction to nicotine. Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products, including menthol, will not only help end youth vaping, but will also help address the disproportionate impact of tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke on Black and Brown communities. Menthol cigarettes remain a key vector for tobacco-related death and disease in Black communities, with nearly 85% of Black Americans who smoke using them.

“Kids follow the flavors and ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Rhode Island is key to ending the youth e-cigarette epidemic and youth tobacco use overall. We call on legislators in Rhode Island to prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol.” said Fitzgerald.

The American Lung Association also encourages Rhode Island to increase funding for prevention and control funding, equalize taxes for all tobacco products, and prohibit the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies.

“Despite receiving over \$188 million from tobacco settlement payments and tobacco taxes, Rhode Island only funds tobacco control efforts at 13.5% of the level recommended by the CDC. The Lung Association believes the funds should be used to support the health of our communities, and to prevent tobacco use and help smokers quit, and not switch to e-cigarettes. These programs are also critical for helping to end tobacco-related health disparities,” said Fitzgerald. ❖

Basal cell carcinoma chemoprevention VA trial funded

PROVIDENCE – Researchers from VA healthcare systems across the country will participate in a basal cell carcinoma preventive medication trial that received a funding decision January 8.



Dr. Martin A. Weinstock

Study chair **DR. MARTIN A. WEINSTOCK**, Chief of Dermatology Research for the VA Providence Healthcare System, and professor of Dermatology and Epidemiology at Brown University, and co-chair **DR. ROBERT DELLAVALLE**, Chief of Dermatology for the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System, and professor of Dermatology and Public Health at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, will research imiquimod, a topical medication with minimal side effects, as a preventive measure against basal cell carcinoma, known as BCC, which is the most common cancer in the United States.



Dr. Robert Dellavalle

The six-year, \$34 million trial, funded by the VA Cooperative Studies Program, will recruit more than 1,600 participants at 17 VA medical centers, including male and female veterans at high risk for BCC. The study will follow participants actively for three years, with an additional year of passive follow-up.

“This study is important for VA because active duty military and Veterans are at higher risk for developing basal cell carcinoma,” said Weinstock. “If this trial finds that imiquimod is successful at preventing BCC, it would fundamentally transform our approach to the disease.”

BCC generally occurs on the face and requires surgery to avoid serious complications. If the medication proves effective, it may avoid these complications, reduce skin damage and scarring, and reduce the need for medical visits and the resulting costs, as well. In addition to evaluating effectiveness of the treatment, researchers will collect genetic material from some of the participants to determine factors that may indicate greater risk reduction and better tolerance of imiquimod therapy, to help target therapy to those with greater potential for BCC prevention from the medication with fewer bothersome side effects. ❖

CNE expands services in South County

Includes programs, clinics for behavioral health and addiction issues, women's healthcare, bariatrics

Care New England has opened additional programs and clinics at its current South County location in South Kingstown. Among the programs and services that have now been expanded in South County are behavioral health, women's healthcare and surgical weight loss.

Butler Hospital programs

To offer care to people with behavioral health and addiction issues, Butler Hospital will offer recovery stabilization services to patients in South County and throughout Rhode Island, at its new facility, located at 20 Commons Corner Way, Building 12 in Wakefield, RI. Programs include Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOP) for substance use, medication assisted therapy, early recovery groups, outpatient therapy, and outpatient psychiatry.

W&I, Kent women's healthcare programs

In addition, in an effort to provide easy access to women's healthcare, and to create a more comprehensive women's health center in South County, Women & Infants Hospital and Kent Hospital, is expanding breast health services, urogynecology, prenatal services and other programs in its South County location.

The Care New England Center for Health has opened a Urogynecology and Pelvic Floor clinic at 49 South County Commons Way in South Kingstown, to offer a full spectrum of women's care to patients located in the southern part of the state.

The High Risk Breast Program offers such services as close examination and imaging of higher density breast tissues, and other factors that may genetically increase chances of being affected by breast disease.

Center for Surgical Weight Loss

Also, recently, Care New England's Center for Surgical Weight Loss has opened an additional office at 49 South County Commons Way, where **DR. JEANNINE GIOVANNI**, Director of Bariatric Surgery, and **DR. LINDSAY TSE**, bariatric surgeon, provide patients in South County with easier access to surgical weight loss consultation and treatment. ❖

Partners in Primary Care joins South County Health as South County Primary Care

Drs. Brian J. Pickett, Stephanie Krusz join South County Health Medical Staff

CRANSTON – South County Health, along with **BRIAN J. PICKETT, MD**, and **STEPHANIE KRUSZ, MD**, recently announced that Partners in Primary Care, a two-physician primary care practice located at 905 Pontiac Avenue in Cranston, is now part of the

Dr. Pickett received his medical degree from Ross University School of Medicine, Dominica, West Indies and completed his residency and internship at Brown University/Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island. A board-certified physician, he is currently the physician-in-chief for the Rhode Island State Police, a position he has held since 2002.



Dr. Brian J. Pickett



Dr. Stephanie J. Krusz

Dr. Krusz, an Air Force veteran who served as General Medical Officer and Medical Director of Emergency Services at Hanscom Air Force Base, Massachusetts, and Osan Air Force Base, South Korea, respectively, is board-certified in internal medicine. She received her medical degree from Brown University Medical School and completed residency at David Grant Medical Center, Travis Air Force Base, California.

“We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Pickett and Dr. Krusz to the South County Health team,” said **AARON ROBINSON**, President/CEO of South County Health. “These physicians are known for their focus on the individual needs of their patients while bringing a record of high-quality service. Their approach to medicine is a perfect match for the South County Health culture. We look forward to working with them as they continue to serve the Cranston community.”

In addition to the new Cranston location, South County Health operates Primary Care practices in East Greenwich, Wakefield, and Westerly. ❖

[L–R] **Dr. Stephanie J. Krusz, Dr. Brian J. Pickett, and Aaron Robinson**, President/CEO of South County Health, cut the ribbon to celebrate the practice joining the South County Health system.



Dr. Pickett and Dr. Krusz, along with their staff, stand next to the outdoor sign bearing the practice’s new name at 905 Pontiac Ave.

South County Health Medical Group. As of January 1, 2021, the practice was renamed South County Primary Care – Cranston. It is now part of the South County Health system in Wakefield. A formal ribbon-cutting ceremony took place on January 25th.



Researchers at Providence VA, Butler awarded DHHS \$2.24M grant to study sleep disruption, suicide risk

PROVIDENCE – Butler Hospital has announced that the Department of Health and Human Services has awarded it a research grant in the amount of \$2.24 million for its study, Dynamic Impacts of Sleep Disruption on Ecologically Assessed Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive Risk Factors for Suicide, which will try to identify proximal predictors of suicide risk.



Dr. Michael Frederick Armeý



Dr. Melanie Bozzay

greatest suicidal risk, modeled at the individual level.”

The proposed study builds upon Armeý and Bozzay’s team’s extensive expertise in sleep/wake cycles, psychophysiology, deep phenotyping, and multi-method, multivariate, ecologically valid models of suicide vulnerability in high-risk psychiatric populations. During their upcoming research, they will examine how

The principal investigators for the grant are **MICHAEL FREDERICK ARMEÝ, PhD**, Research Psychologist, Butler Hospital, Associate Professor of Research, Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, Associate Director of the Consortium for Research Innovation in Suicide Prevention (CRISP), The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, and **MELANIE BOZZAY, PhD**, Postdoctoral Fellow at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University and the Providence VA Center for Neurorestoration and Neurotechnology.

“While we know who, in general, is at risk for suicide, such as people with mental illness, older adults, men, veterans, and others, these are huge groups, and even in people identified at risk, the chance of any one individual dying by suicide remains low. So, we can use proximal predictors of risk - in the case of this study, technology to monitor sleep and affective, behavioral, and cognitive predictors of suicide risk - in the real world,” said Dr. Armeý.

“We follow patients after they’re discharged from the hospital. They wear a sleep monitor watch and complete questionnaires on their phones to give us a clearer picture of each individual’s risk profile. Although this technology and approach is fairly new, we published a paper back in 2018 that showed our approach is between two and three times better at linking emotional disturbance to elevations in suicidal ideation over a three-week, post-hospital discharge,” he added.

According to Dr. Bozzay, “Suicidal ideation and behavior are growing public health problems in the United States. Unfortunately, our current ability to predict suicide is only slightly above chance, which may be attributable to an overreliance on distal or cross-sectional risk factors that are weak proximal predictors of suicide risk. Modeling the complex process by which atypical sleep impacts daily functioning in conjunction with established proximal risk factors can aid in identifying contexts and time periods of

a holistic model of atypical sleep relates to known trait (baseline neurocognitive performance; e.g., greater impulsive tendencies, higher loss sensitivity, reduced ability to regulate emotions) and state (time-varying, occurring hours to days before suicidal ideation and behavior; e.g., momentary fluctuations in emotional reactivity, impulsivity; greater emotional lability; greater isolative tendencies), risk factors for suicide, and examine how these factors together proximally influence suicidal ideation and confer risk for future suicidal behavior.

For their study, Armeý and Bozzay intend to recruit 200 psychiatric inpatients at high risk for suicide and conduct a baseline assessment of sleep/wake functioning and trait risk factors and use laboratory-based tasks coupled with psychophysiology (i.e., event-related potentials, heart rate variability, and electrodermal activity) to phenotype risk processes linked to arousal and cognitive systems. This baseline assessment will be followed by four weeks of EMA and digital phenotyping coupled with actigraphy to characterize key state risk factors.

“We will conduct follow-up assessments at 1-, 3-, and 6-months post-hospital discharge to determine how our proximal model of risk prospectively predicts suicidal ideation and behavior. The proposed study aims to characterize proximal risk for suicide using intensive longitudinal methods and to identify “windows” of greatest risk for suicide, which may vary from person to person, that serve as markers for intensive intervention. Finally, we will leverage this extensive dataset to develop a model of the sleep-suicide relationship emphasizing the contribution of trait and state factors. The results of this study have the potential to greatly enhance our understanding of the phenomenology of suicide risk as it exists in the real world, with the potential to improve our ability to predict, prevent, and intervene using both traditional and technology-enhanced psychotherapies,” added Dr. Armeý. ❖

Lifespan Urgent Care opens 3rd location in Providence

PROVIDENCE – A new Lifespan Urgent Care facility has opened at 66 Branch Ave., the site of the former Benny's.

Lifespan Urgent Care opened the first location in September 2019 in Warwick (17 Airport Rd., at Hoxsie Four Corners) and the second location in November 2019 in Middletown (1360 West Main Rd., in the Stop & Shop plaza).

Visiting a Lifespan Urgent Care, a program of Lifespan Physician Group, has the added benefit of seamless access to a patient's electronic medical records on the MyLifespan patient portal as well as to Lifespan emergency services and specialists if needed.

Patients who need to visit Lifespan Urgent Care can just walk in, they can register online and reserve a time slot for a face-to-face appointment, or for patients with certain conditions, video visits are available.

All Lifespan Urgent Care facilities are under the supervision of medical director **OLIVIER GHERARDI, DO.** ❖



Developer closes on former Memorial Hospital site

Plans Set for Veterans Housing and Education Center

PAWTUCKET – Mayor **DONALD R. GREBIEN** and Lockwood Development Partners' President **CHARLES EVERHARDT** announced that they have finalized the closing of the former Memorial Hospital site from Care New England. Lockwood has proposed redeveloping the long-vacant property into a housing and education center for veterans.

"The City of Pawtucket has long supported the redevelopment of the underutilized former Memorial Hospital site to a project that benefits and meets the community's needs," said Mayor Donald R. Grebien, who introduced Lockwood to Care New England. "We thank Charles and his team for their transformational vision to bring a veterans' facility and the ancillary economic development that it will create to our community. The City will also continue to fiercely advocate for medical services for the community as a whole."

Lockwood and Veteran Services USA (VSUSA) are designing a revitalization plan with the view to transform the vacant Memorial Hospital into a safe, clean, and enjoyable place to live for Rhode Island's aging veteran community.

"For our senior veterans, our goal is to create affordable housing with therapeutic amenities. Our staff will strive to instill a positive spirit while aiming to enhance a better quality of life for every resident," said Charles Everhardt. "For our younger veterans, our goal is to provide training and education to carefully position them into the healthcare workforce, enabling each veteran to excel and shine with their passion to serve others."

Lockwood's purchase of the site, which includes the main hospital building, is the culmination of over 18 months

of work and thorough review, with the completion of an approval process by the Rhode Island Attorney General, using the "Cy Prés" doctrine.

Lockwood and VSUSA will develop the site into a 390,000 sq. ft. campus that will include over 200 apartments prioritized for senior veterans, an adult day healthcare facility for therapy and other social services, a career training and education program for newly-transitioned veterans intent on reskilling or upskilling for the civilian workforce, and medical and lab space to address veterans' as well as the community's whole health needs. The development will also include dormitory space for veterans participating in the career training and education program with an emphasis on medical careers.

This economic development project is expected to cost \$70 million and create up to 500 jobs during construction, which includes 3rd-party consultants and construction workers, and up to 60 permanent jobs in the community after the project is complete.

All buildings on the site will be retained and enhanced as part of this historic preservation project. Lockwood is committed to following sustainable practices in the redevelopment of this project and will include extensive landscaping and other amenities within the campus.

The zoning and permitting process is set to begin by mid-2021 with interior demolition anticipated for late-2021. Construction for the project is slated to commence in 2022 with completion in 2023. As part of a transparent process, the project will include opportunities for community input. ❖