

## Appointments



### Mouhanad M. El Othmani, MD, joins Joint Replacement Center at University Orthopedics

EAST PROVIDENCE – University Orthopedics recently announced the addition of **MOUHANAD M. EL OTHMANI, MD**, to The Joint Replacement Center.

Fellowship-trained in adult reconstruction, Dr. El Othmani specializes in robotic joint replacement, both inpatient

and outpatient; hip and knee arthritis; total and partial hip replacement; direct anterior hip replacement for complex primaries and revisions; total and partial knee replacement; total joint revisions following infection, fracture, dislocation, loosening, and other failure modalities; and lower extremity trauma.

Dr. El Othmani, who will see patients in Newport and at the practice's location in Westerly, completed the Frank E. Stinchfield Adult Reconstruction fellowship at Columbia University. Prior to that, he earned his medical degree at American University of Beirut in Lebanon and completed his residency at Wayne State University and Detroit Medical Center. He is particularly interested in a holistic approach to joint replacement, with a focus on nutritional and functional peri-operative optimization, and enhanced recovery post-joint replacement.

"I don't just treat specific joints. I treat the whole person. When a patient is in my care, it is a true partnership that continues long after they're wheeled out of the operating room," Dr. El Othmani said. "As they embark on a journey toward restored mobility, it's my job to guide them on a path toward a pain-free and active life while providing them with exceptional, compassionate care that is also cutting-edge."

Beyond his clinical practice, Dr. El Othmani has published more than 80 peer-reviewed articles, a book, and numerous book chapters, showcasing his commitment to advancing medical knowledge and improving patient outcomes. He actively participates in national and international conferences, where he shares his expertise and presents his pioneering research. ❖

## Recognition

### BCBSRI earns 4.5 out of 5 rating from National Committee for Quality Assurance

PROVIDENCE – Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island (BCBSRI) has attained a rating of 4.5 out of 5 from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), placing it among the top 4% of Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plans in the country.

No health plans achieved the top rating of 5.0 in this category and only 14 out of 339 PPO plans joined BCBSRI with a 4.5 score in NCQA's commercial Health Plan Ratings for 2023.

NCQA evaluates health plans on the quality of care that patients receive, how happy patients are with their care and health plans' efforts to keep improving.

"We take great pride in receiving such an exemplary rating and being among a relatively small number of high performing plans across the country to do so. We're able to score so highly because of our collaborative relationship with providers, who help ensure that our members are getting the right care, at the right time and in the right place," said **DR. FARAH SHAFI**, chief medical officer for BCBSRI.

NCQA sent additional good news recently when it granted BCBSRI Health Plan accreditation for another three years, for the period 2023 through 2026. Accreditation is required to offer health plans to the Federal Employees Program and to healthcare insurance exchanges.

NCQA is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving health care quality. NCQA accredits and certifies a wide range of health care organizations and recognizes clinicians in key clinical areas. NCQA's HEDIS® (Health Care Effectiveness Data and Information Set) is the most widely used performance measurement tool in health care. NCQA's website ([www.ncqa.org](http://www.ncqa.org)) contains information to help consumers, employers and others make informed health care choices. ❖

## Recognition

### RIMS Honorees recognized at 2023 member Convivium

*AMA Immediate Past President Dr. Jack Resneck, Jr., featured speaker*

EAST PROVIDENCE – The Rhode Island Medical Society hosted its 211th Member Convivium – an annual meeting and awards dinner – on September 28th at the Squantum Association in East Providence.

The annual event is an opportunity for physicians, physician assistants and medical students to celebrate their profession; learn about health care issues critical to meeting the evolving challenges of medical practice and quality patient care; and recognize Rhode Island physicians who have made outstanding contributions to the health and well-being of patients in Rhode Island and beyond.

The keynote speaker was American Medical Association Immediate Past President **JACK RESNECK, Jr., MD**, who received his BA in public policy from Brown University.

“I’m excited to return to Providence and honored to join my Rhode Island physician colleagues, medical students and physician assistants at this year’s Convivium,” said Dr. Resneck. “Being a part of organized medicine is more important now than ever. We each know first-hand how physicians have put everything into our nation’s response to COVID-19. Now it’s time the nation renews its commitment to physicians and to shoring up our health system. That’s why the AMA launched the AMA Recovery Plan for America’s Physicians – aimed at reforming Medicare payments to physicians, improving telehealth, and reducing stigma around mental health care and burnout. We will continue to make this our top priority and advocate for changes that will improve the health of everyone in the U.S.”

#### Honorees

The Society’s 2023 honorees include:

##### **Jonathan Cahill, MD | Humanism in Medicine Award**

Associate Professor of Neurology at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University and staff neurologist at the Multiple Sclerosis Center of Rhode Island

##### **Sybil Cineas, MD | Recognition of Outstanding Medical Volunteerism – Halifax Award**

Associate Professor of Medicine, Pediatrics, and Medical Science for the Brown Med-Peds Residency Program, and longtime volunteer attending physician and Medical Advisory Committee member for the Rhode Island Free Clinic

##### **Andrew Saal, MD | Recognition of Leadership and Service – Dr. Charles L. Hill Award**

Former Chief Medical Officer, Providence Community Health Centers

##### **Jane Sharp, MD | Recognition for Exemplary Professionalism and/or Humanitarian Service – Dr. Herbert Rakatansky Award**

Partner at Center for Obstetrics & Gynecology – a division of SNE Women’s Health, Clinical Assistant Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, and attending physician at Women & Infants Hospital

##### **Recognition of Commitment to the Profession – 5 Under 40 Award:**

###### **Fahad Ali, MD**

Emergency Medicine Resident (PGY4) and first-ever Chief Resident of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Brown Emergency Medicine

###### **Allison Heinly, MD**

Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, Associate Program Director of Brown Pediatric Residency Program, and general pediatrician at Hasbro Children’s Hospital Primary Care

###### **Anita Knopov, MD**

Medical Education Fellow at Brown Emergency Medicine, Research Fellow at *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, practicing physician at The Miriam Hospital, and advocate of firearm injury prevention and education

###### **Vincent LaBarbera, MD**

Assistant Professor of Neurology at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University and Medical Director of the Louise Wilcox ALS Clinic at Rhode Island Hospital

###### **Katelyn Moretti, MD**

Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, co-founder of the Rhode Island Medical Society Climate Change and Health Committee, and co-investigator on the 3CRS project – Community-driven Coastal Climate Research and Solutions

Additionally, the inauguration of 2023–2024 officers, included the ‘passing of the torch’ of the presidency of the Board of Directors from **THOMAS BLEDSOE, MD**, to **HEATHER A. SMITH, MD**.

“Dr. Smith brings a wealth of experience from her work on the national stage with the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists,” said Dr. Bledsoe. “The Medical Society is very fortunate to have her step into the leadership role at this time. I look forward to seeing her in action but also to being on hand to support her and the other incoming officers over the coming year. ❖

## Recognition

### South County Hospital receives 5-Star rating from CMS

WAKEFIELD – South County Hospital was recently awarded a prestigious 5-Star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for 2023. This is the highest possible achievement of CMS's Overall Hospital Quality Star Ratings, and places South County in the top 10% of all hospitals nationwide. South County Hospital is one of only two hospitals in Rhode Island with a 5-Star rating.

The overall star rating for hospitals nationwide is based on how well a hospital performs across quality-of-care measures compared to other hospitals in the U.S, and provides a single-star rating for each hospital. The overall rating, between one and five stars, summarizes a variety of measures across five areas of quality: mortality, safety of care, readmission, patient experience, and timely and effective care.

“The 5-Star rating is a testament to the exceptional level of quality and care provided by our incredible providers and clinical staff who always put the care, safety, and experience of our patients first,” said **AARON ROBINSON**, President and CEO of South County Health. ❖

### Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island certifies 37 new LGBTQ Safe Zones

PROVIDENCE – Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island (BCBSRI) has designated an additional 37 healthcare sites as LGBTQ Safe Zones, certifying that they have demonstrated care designed to meet the specific needs of LGBTQ patients. With these additions, the number of BCBSRI Safe Zones spread out across Rhode Island has topped 100.

This large class of certified providers was bolstered by the commitment of Rhode Island Medical Imaging (RIMI), with all 17 of its sites now deemed Safe Zones. All six locations of Tides Family Services were also certified as Safe Zones. Also achieving the designation was East Bay Community Action Program, the first community action agency to become a BCBSRI Safe Zone. The 37 new sites represent a broad range of adult and pediatric services, including mental health, medical imaging, physical therapy, and obstetrics and gynecology.

“We applaud all of these providers for taking the initiative to join our Safe Zone program and are so pleased to welcome multi-site practices in their entirety, including all locations of RIMI and Tides Family Services,” said **FARAH SHAFI, MD, MBA**, executive vice president and chief medical officer for BCBSRI. “Being responsive to the unique needs of this community isn’t just respectful, it’s essential to quality and equitable healthcare. It encourages LGBTQ patients to seek the care they need when they might otherwise put off getting help due to feelings of alienation, fear and stress.”

Since BCBSRI launched the program in 2016, 117 healthcare sites have achieved BCBSRI Safe Zone designation.

**SCOTT GOWRIE**, Safe Zone program lead for BCBSRI, said, “We’re so grateful that providers all across Rhode Island and representing so many different types of programs and services, have joined us in this campaign to better serve our long and historically underserved LGBTQ community. The fact that in such a short period of time so many providers have come to us and demonstrated they are truly welcoming of this population speaks to its success and growing popularity.”

The following facilities have sites newly designated as Safe Zones:

- Wood River Health
- Cultivating Minds Counseling Services
- Rhode Island Medical Imaging
- Thrive Behavioral Health
- Hasbro Children’s Hospital rehabilitation services
- Pappas OPT Middletown (occupational and physical therapy)
- The Miriam Hospital Outpatient Rehab Clinic
- The Holistic Heart (therapy services)
- East Bay Community Action Program (four locations)
- Tides Family Services (cognitive behavioral therapy, structured recreation, afterschool programming and more)
- Woman & Infants Hospital OGCC (obstetrics and gynecology)

Certification requirements for BCBSRI LGBTQ Safe Zones include staff training specific to the care of LGBTQ patients, protection for patients and staff from discrimination based on gender identity or expression, gender neutral bathrooms, inclusive forms and procedures, and a public commitment to connecting with and serving the LGBTQ community.

BCBSRI solicits applications and designates new LGBTQ Safe Zones twice a year. To learn more about the program, or if you are a provider or practice looking to become certified, visit <https://www.bcsri.com/safezones>. ❖

## Recognition

### VNA of Care New England–Hospice earns superior performer award

WARWICK – VNA of Care New England–Hospice has earned the Strategic Healthcare Programs (SHP) Best Hospice Superior Performer Caregiver Satisfaction Award for the calendar year 2022.

The annual SHP Best™ program was created to acknowledge hospice providers that consistently provide high-quality service to families and caregivers of patients receiving hospice care. With one of the largest CAHPS Hospice benchmarks in the nation, SHP is in a unique position to identify and recognize organizations that have made family and caregiver satisfaction a priority and have been rewarded for their efforts with high marks on the CAHPS Hospice survey. SHP Best award recipients are determined by ranking the overall score for all SHP CAHPS Hospice clients. Providers that rank in the top 20% receive the Superior Performer award. ❖

### Brown Surgical, Miriam gain national accreditation from American College of Surgeons for rectal cancer care

PROVIDENCE – Brown Surgical Associates and The Miriam Hospital have received accreditation under the American College of Surgeons (ACS) National Accreditation Program for Rectal Cancer (NAPRC).

During the last 20 years, rectal cancer outcomes highly contingent upon specialization, training, and volume – have repeatedly been shown to vary greatly. To standardize best practices, the ACS developed the NAPRC to facilitate a multi-disciplinary, holistic approach to improving rectal cancer care and outcomes.

“At a time when younger Americans are developing rectal cancer at an alarming rate, the designation of The Miriam Hospital as a Center of Excellence for the treatment of this disease is not only an impressive and welcome achievement for our team but, more importantly, it means we are positioned to provide world-class care to the growing number of people who need our services,” said **DR. STEVEN SCHECHTER**, Chief of Colorectal Surgery at both Brown Surgical Associates and Lifespan.

This NAPRC is based on international models that lead to better outcomes for patients, including a reduction in recurrence rates, better quality of life, improved function, and increased survival, as well as other nationally recognized ACS quality improvement programs. ACS Quality Programs have measurably improved surgical quality and have prevented complications, reduced costs, and saved lives.

“This prestigious designation means Rhode Island residents who need treatment for rectal cancer are receiving the very best care right here, close to home, without having to travel to Boston or other cities,” said **DR. HOWARD SAFRAN**, director of hematology/oncology at the Lifespan Cancer Institute. “Not only is the colorectal team at The Miriam Hospital the best in Rhode Island, it’s now recognized as one of the best in the world.” ❖

### Northeast Orthotics & Prosthetics Donates Prosthetics to TSA Cares Training Program at TF Green

*Appliances will be used to train TSA agents to better support amputees during screening*

PROVIDENCE– The U.S. Transportation Security Administration recently recognized Northeast Orthotics and Prosthetics for its donation of two prosthetics to the agency’s TSA Cares Passenger Support Program.

Through the TSA Cares program, travelers with a disability or medical condition can request the support of a TSA Passenger Support Specialist, or PSS. This summer, NEOP donated an above-the-knee prosthesis and a below-the-knee prosthesis that will be used to train PSS agents at T.F. Green Airport.

“We understand the importance of providing exceptional security measures while ensuring the utmost care and respect for all individuals, including those with prosthetic devices,” Federal Security Director **DANIEL BURCHE** wrote in a letter to NEOP. “Your contribution will significantly aid to our ongoing commitment to professionalism, proficiency, and customer service. By providing our officers with the opportunity to train using authentic prosthetic devices, we can simulate real-world situations, ultimately enhancing



our ability to deliver a safe and efficient screening process for all travelers.”

“No one likes to go through airport security. But, for an amputee, the process can be even more stressful and uncomfortable,” said NEOP Founder and CEO **MARK MARRICH**, who himself is an amputee. “So, when we heard the TSA was training its agents to better support those traveling with a prosthesis, we jumped at the chance to help.”

In addition to sending a letter of recognition, the TSA provided NEOP with information cards to give to patients who are planning to travel, so they will know how to request support if needed. Passengers who need screening assistance should make a request online 72 hours

before traveling and the TSA will arrange for a specialist at the airport to contact you. To speak with someone, travelers can call TSA Cares at 855-787-2227 from 8am to 11pm, Monday through Friday, and from 9am to 8pm on weekends and holidays. ❖

## Places

### Meals on Wheels of RI teams with Point32Health to provide no cost, healthy meals for expectant mothers at W&I

PROVIDENCE – Point32Health, the parent company of Tufts Health Plan and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, and Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island, are collaborating to broaden access to healthy and nutritious meals for pregnant women who are patients at Women & Infants Hospital.

“Health care providers understand the importance of nutrition for women during pregnancy and it is critical to find a way to meet families where they are – not only by addressing cost barriers, but also hurdles of transportation or even cultural dietary needs,” said **MICHELE WOLFSBERG**, director of clinical strategy for commercial products at Point32Health. “Our program with Meals on Wheel of RI and Women & Infants Hospital has helped to provide thousands of healthy meals to households in Rhode Island to support maternal wellness and healthy baby development.”

Launched in 2022 and funded by Point32Health, the program utilizes clinical social workers at Women & Infants Hospital to identify patients who could benefit from no-cost, weekly home-delivered meals. The initiative supports expecting mothers with high-risk prenatal medical conditions, such as gestational diabetes, and those whose income may be a barrier to consistent, nutritional meals.

“Providing healthy, nourishing food is essential to help close the gap in health disparities and improve outcomes for pregnant and postpartum mothers. The simple act of delivering a meal can change the lives of vulnerable members of our community,” said **METHIDIUS G. TUULI, MD, MPH, MBA**, chief of obstetrics and gynecology, Women & Infants Hospital; executive chief of obstetrics and gynecology, Care New England Health System.

The program provides a weekly delivery of meals to each participant and their household for the duration of their pregnancy, and a weekly meal for two weeks during the postpartum period. In addition to an array of healthy meal selections, designated Latin, Asian, and Kosher menus are also available.

“Meals on Wheels of RI is proud to collaborate on this expansion of our ‘More Than A Meal’ model, which aligns with our 2025 strategic plan,” said Meals on Wheels of RI executive director **MEGHAN GRADY**. “We are very pleased with the results to date and grateful for the important opportunity to serve this in-need population.”

In a survey, 100 percent of the respondents reported enjoying the food and reported that the meals made them feel healthier. More than half of respondents reported using WIC program information included with meal deliveries. ❖

### The Substance Use and Mental Health Leadership Council of RI host ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate new office location

WARWICK – The Substance Use and Mental Health Leadership Council (SUMHLC) recently announced that the office is relocating to 15 Messenger Drive in Warwick. To celebrate this occasion, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on September 27th.

At a time of a deepening crisis surrounding both addiction and behavioral health, the new location will help better serve the most vulnerable in our communities. Opioid overdose deaths along with suicides have continued to steadily rise over the last several years. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, opioid-related deaths are estimated to have increased to nearly 90,000, almost double the previous year, according to a Washington Post report. In Rhode Island, accidental drug overdose deaths went up by 25 percent, according to official state estimates.

In addition to the new office location, SUMHLC will also unveil a new logo. Both illustrate the new direction of the organization, to better support the nonprofits helping treat opioid addiction, as well as mental health and other addiction illnesses.

In addition to the new office space, the new organizational model will also allow for remote training, which provides for access to both local and national industry experts as well as medical professionals. About the Substance Use and Mental Health Leadership Council of R.I.

The Council was formed in 2015 through a merger of The Drug and Alcohol Treatment Association (DATA) and the Rhode Island Council of Community Mental Health Organizations (RICCMHO), two agencies which had been the voices for mental health and substance abuse treatment and prevention services in RI for over 30 years. The Leadership Council advocates and supports its member agencies at the R.I. state legislature and works closely with all state and federal agencies on their behalf.

To learn more about SUMHLC, please visit [www.sumhlc.org](http://www.sumhlc.org). ❖