

Appointments

RI Representatives join Pediatric and Adult Hydrocephalus Caucus

WASHINGTON, DC – The Hydrocephalus Association announced that Congressman **GABE AMO** (RI-01) and Congressman **SETH MAGAZINER** (RI-02) have joined the Congressional Pediatric and Adult Hydrocephalus Caucus.

Congressmen Amo and Magaziner will play an integral role in advocating for increased awareness, funding, and support for pediatric and adult hydrocephalus patients.

Their commitment not only amplifies the voice of their constituents who have the condition but also results in heightened advocacy and representation for their needs.

This will allow them to support issues that hit close to home for Rhode Island hydrocephalus patients. Among these constituents is Nikki Batsford, who has been living with hydrocephalus her whole life. Nikki was recently able to share her story with both members of Congress in their district offices.

“We’re thrilled to welcome both Congressmen Amo and Magaziner to the Pediatric and Adult Hydrocephalus Caucus,” said **DIANA GRAY**, President and CEO, Hydrocephalus Association. “It’s fantastic to see both Congressmen joining the Caucus, effectively representing the entire hydrocephalus community in Rhode Island and their need for critical research and improved treatments.”

Hydrocephalus affects over 1 million Americans. The only known treatment for hydrocephalus is brain surgery. Anyone at any time can develop the condition from a traumatic brain



Gabe Amo



Seth Magaziner

injury, brain infection, tumor, or, for unknown reasons, as part of the aging process. One in 770 babies develop hydrocephalus each year. Over 800,000 seniors in the U.S. are estimated to have normal pressure hydrocephalus, though the majority are undiagnosed or misdiagnosed as having Alzheimer’s or Parkinson’s.

“I am excited to join the Hydrocephalus Caucus and work with my colleagues to support research into

innovative treatments and a long-term cure,” said Congressman Amo. “Thank you to Nikki, a Rhode Islander from Johnston, for working with my office on this issue. I look forward to raising awareness of Hydrocephalus and working to support the over 1 million Americans living with the condition.”

“One million Americans live with hydrocephalus, and Congress must work together to help those facing this life-threatening condition,” said Rep. Magaziner. “I’m joining the Congressional Hydrocephalus Caucus to support research and advocate for Rhode Islanders and people across the country living with this condition.”

The Caucus serves to inform the congressional community about the needs of those living with hydrocephalus, their families, and caregivers. This includes funding for research from the National Institutes of Health and Department of Defense and other key health policy priorities impacting the community such as Medicare and Medicaid access, special education, and rehabilitation services. ❖

Clark Chen, MD, named Director of the Brain Tumor Program

PROVIDENCE – The Norman Prince Neurosciences Institute and the Lifespan Cancer Institute announced the addition of **CLARK CHEN, MD, PhD**, as the Director of the Brain Tumor Program.

Dr. Chen earned a medical degree and doctoral degree in genetics, both from Harvard Medical School. He completed a clinical fellowship in stereotactic neurosurgery at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and clinical fellowship in radiosurgery at Massachusetts General Hospital. His earlier neurosurgical training included the completion of an internship in surgery and residency in neurosurgery, also at Massachusetts General Hospital, with a post-doctoral fellowship at Dana Farber Cancer Institute.

In his nearly two decades of neurosurgery practice in prominent academic institutions, Dr. Chen rose through the ranks



and chaired the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Minnesota before joining Lifespan. In his new role, Dr. Chen will serve as the Director of the Brain Tumor Program within the Department of Neurosurgery at the Alpert Medical School as well as the Co-Director of the Stereotactic Radiosurgery Program. Dr. Chen is an NIH RO1-funded investigator whose research focuses on developing novel diagnostic and therapeutic approaches for brain tumor patients through DNA repair modulation and gene therapy.

Dr. Chen has published over 300 peer-reviewed manuscripts and is consistently recognized with awards, honors, and prizes by national and international organizations for his outstanding administrative leadership, innovative clinical care, and research excellence. ❖

Appointments



Cory King confirmed as Rhode Island Health Insurance Commissioner

PROVIDENCE – **CORY KING** is now the permanent head of Rhode Island's Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC), the Rhode Island Senate con-

firmed in a vote in early April. He has been serving as acting commissioner since December 2022.

He was nominated to the permanent post by Gov. **DAN MCKEE** on March 21. Before stepping up to fill the role of acting commissioner, King served as OHIC's Chief of Staff from 2021 to 2022 and also as Director of Policy from 2019 to 2021.

"Cory has proven to be a dedicated, highly capable leader who is committed to fighting every day to improve our state's health care system," said Governor Dan McKee "I'm thrilled to have Cory continue his work to ensure equitable access and comprehensive coverage for all Rhode Islanders."

During his time at OHIC, King was a key figure in implementing the McKee Administration's Health Spending Accountability and Transparency Program, which gives the state the ability to collect and analyze data on health care spending and quality to promote more affordable health insurance premiums for working Rhode Islanders.

King also helped launch OHIC's Data Hub [zk8ngbyab.cc.rs6.net], which gives the public analytic dashboards on health care spending, utilization, and payment. Additionally, he led the first comprehensive review of Medicaid reimbursement rates for behavioral health services, home and community-based services, and early intervention which resulted in recommendations by the McKee Administration to increase rates.

King completed his undergraduate degree at Tulane University before earning a master's degree in public policy from Brown University in 2013. He is an active member of the Coverage, Cost, and Value Steering Committee for the National Academy for State Health Policy.

"It is an honor to be nominated by Governor McKee to serve as Rhode Island's Health Insurance Commissioner," said King. "I look forward to working in collaboration with all stakeholders to improve Rhode Island's health care system." ❖

Recognition



CODAC's Linda E. Hurley honored with National Council's Lifetime Achievement Award

CRANSTON – The National Council for Mental Wellbeing presented **LINDA E. HURLEY, BA, MA, CAGS**, with its Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of her distinguished career. The award recognizes individuals for their tireless

efforts to improve the lives of those living with mental health and substance use challenges.

Hurley is the president and CEO of CODAC Behavioral Health Care, Rhode Island's oldest, largest and only nonprofit outpatient opioid treatment program. Under Hurley's leadership, CODAC has been a national leader in developing new paradigms for the treatment of opioid use disorder, including creating a national model for medication-assisted treatment services in carceral settings and deploying the first mobile unit to offer methadone services under the new DEA regulations.

Hurley is one of five National Council members who will be honored. The National Council will present two members with a Lifetime Achievement Award and two members with a Peer Specialist of the Year Award. One member will receive the inaugural National Council Legacy Award. All five recipients of the National Council's Awards of Excellence were honored during NatCon24 in St. Louis, Missouri, held April 15–17.

National Council President and CEO Chuck Ingoglia presented Hurley with the award.

"Linda Hurley is a trailblazer and a leader," Ingoglia said. "People in Rhode Island are better off because of her thoughtful leadership. The changes she has introduced have improved substance use treatment and care, and so many people have benefited as a result. She truly is a lifesaver."

In learning of the award, Hurley stated: "I am thrilled and honored to receive this prestigious national award, particularly at this time when CODAC is preparing to launch one of the most fully integrated health and wellness facilities in the country – a place where opioid treatment services will be offered under one roof with primary care, mental health services, dental care, and an onsite, full-service pharmacy. With the addition of a peer recovery community center and essential social services, CODAC will be able to deliver the full spectrum of health services needed by people suffering from addiction." ❖

Recognition



Seth F. Berkley, MD, to receive the 2024 Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Humanitarian Award

PROVIDENCE – **SETH F. BERKLEY, MD**, senior adviser at the Pandemic Center of Brown University, will receive the 2024 Jimmy

and Rosalynn Carter Humanitarian Award in recognition of his work as an innovative entrepreneur, a pioneer in global health, and a champion of equitable access to vaccines.

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) created the award to honor individuals whose outstanding humanitarian efforts and achievements have contributed significantly to improving global public health.

An infectious disease epidemiologist, Dr. Berkley led Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance for 12 years, raising \$33.3 billion and increasing coverage of routine immunization in lower-income countries. Gavi has vaccinated more than 1 billion children and introduced more than 600 new vaccines, reducing vaccine-preventable child deaths by 70%, and preventing more than 19.9 million deaths. While at Gavi, he co-created COVAX, a global multi-lateral solution that worked with partners and leaders of 193 economies to secure, ship, and help deliver nearly 2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine to 146 economies. He previously founded the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) to develop an AIDS vaccine for developing countries.

“Seth Berkley restlessly takes on and delivers on big challenges,” said **BRUCE G. GELLIN, MD, MPH**, of The Rockefeller Foundation in nominating Dr. Berkley. “Turning vaccines into vaccinations among the most vulnerable and ensuring that routine immunizations were indeed routine, he also played a pivotal role in changing the way the world prevents and responds to global health crises and epidemics.”

The award will be presented at the 2024 NFID Awards Gala in Washington, D.C., in September 2024. ❖



Yul D. Ejnes, MD, honored by American College of Physicians

BOSTON – One of Coastal Medical’s founding partners **YUL D. EJNES, MD, MACP**, of Garden City Primary Care, won the Alfred Stengel Memorial Award for Outstanding Service to the American College of Physicians (ACP). He accepted this honor at the ACP’s annual Convocation ceremony on April 18th in Boston.

This esteemed award, from the nation’s largest medical specialty organization, recognizes internal medicine physicians for their innovative, impactful, and sustained contributions to the field. Dr. Ejnes was selected based on his exceptional work as a Master of the ACP and his dedication to advancing the highest standards of medical education, medical practice, and clinical research.

Throughout his career, Dr. Ejnes has held many distinguished positions, received numerous accolades, and has been widely celebrated as a mentor and role model in the medical community. He is currently a member of Coastal’s Governance Committee, Immediate Past Chair of the Board of Directors of the American Board of Internal Medicine, and a Clinical Professor of Medicine at Brown Medical School. ❖

Trust in VA among Veteran patients in VA Providence rises to 93.6%

WASHINGTON, DC – In April the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that Veteran trust in VA Providence Healthcare System has risen to 93.6% – up from 91.7% in 2018 (the first year since VA began conducting this survey). Additionally, nationwide trust in VA outpatient care has increased to 91.8% – up from 85.6% in 2018.

This finding is based on a survey of Veteran patients who received VA health care in the past 90 days. Within one week of using VA services, these Veterans were asked whether they trusted VA for their health care needs across a variety of categories – including scheduling an appointment, health care visits, in-person pharmacy, mail-order pharmacy, labs/imaging, and Veteran safety.

This survey mirrors the findings of recent independent studies. According to Medicare’s latest nationwide survey of patients, VA hospitals outperformed non-VA hospitals on all 10 core patient satisfaction metrics – including overall hospital rating, communication with doctors, communication about medication, willingness to recommend the hospital, and more. VA health care has also consistently outperformed non-VA care in peer-reviewed studies, overall quality ratings, and affordability for Veterans.

“We have a great team here at VA Providence,” said **LAWRENCE CONNELL**, director, “everyone here puts Veterans first – resulting in outstanding care.” ❖

Recognition



Endowment created in memory of UOI Spine Surgeon, Dr. Mark Palumbo

EAST PROVIDENCE – After receiving a commitment of \$1.5 million from anonymous donors, University Orthopedics, Inc. announced the creation of an endowment in honor of the extraordinary legacy left by the late Dr. Mark Palumbo.

The Mark Palumbo, MD, Endowment for Spinal Surgery Research and Education will help ensure Dr. Palumbo's passion for medicine, teaching, and research will continue to flourish here in Rhode Island by providing financial support, in perpetuity, toward the clinical and academic mission of the Department of Orthopaedics at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University.

"Dr. Palumbo was not just a colleague; he was my friend and mentor. He dedicated his life to providing his patients with world-class, compassionate care, inspiring the surgeons and residents he taught, and advancing the art of spine surgery through research," said **DR. ALAN DANIELS**, Chief of The Center for Spine Health at University Orthopedics. "It is incredibly rewarding to know that the endeavors of this caring, thoughtful man and skilled surgeon will continue to thrive thanks to the creation of this endowment."

The endowment will support both translational research efforts by our staff and the educational initiatives of the University Orthopedic Spine Division.

"These funds will help identify new models of care delivery, building on the significant basic science advances championed by Dr. Palumbo, and ultimately influencing orthopedic innovations at the regional, national, and international level that improve the quality and outcomes of patient care," said Dr. Daniels, who also serves as Chief of Brown University's Orthopedic Spine Division.

Examples of activities impacting clinical outcomes include the development of:

- Novel clinical care models focused on optimizing patient safety and decreasing complications
- Innovative patient applications of new (and existing) technology
- Pioneering surgical procedures in the field of adult and pediatric spine surgery ❖

Kent receives Silver-Level 2 Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation

WARWICK – Kent Hospital has received the Silver-Level 2 Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation (GEDA) from the American College of Emergency Physicians for its dedication to providing quality emergency care for older adults. As the only Silver-Level 2 Geriatric Emergency Department in Rhode Island, Kent Hospital joins an exclusive group of less than 100 hospitals nationally to earn the prestigious designation.

The accreditation program was developed to ensure geriatric patients receive well-coordinated, high-quality care during the Emergency Department experience. Silver-Level 2 emergency departments, such as Kent Hospital, have demonstrated specific initiatives that elevate the level of care for seniors and staff trained and dedicated to implementing the hospital's efforts.

"I am proud of our dedicated team who worked tirelessly to earn this recognition, but more importantly, improve the care of our older adults. We know that growth in the over-65 population, in the next five years and beyond, is going to grow exponentially. Currently, geriatric patients account for 18% of our population with this segment growing 46% by 2050. At Kent Hospital, we have committed ourselves to care for our community presently and in the future. Designations such as this reaffirm our commitment to provide the highest quality care for our older patients," said **PAARI GOPALAKRISHNAN, MD, MBA**, president and COO, Kent Hospital.

"This Silver-Level 2 Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation builds on the strong commitment we have in caring for our older adults at Kent Hospital. For the last three years, we have operated the Acute Care for Elders (ACE) Inpatient Unit, of which there are only 43 nationally. It's just one specialized program in Kent Hospital's Healthy Aging and Serious Illness service line, meant to diagnose, treat, and manage many of the specific issues that are impacting the health and quality of life of our community's aging population. The average age of the 1,300 patients we discharge annually from this unit is 84-years-old and our quality outcomes are exceptional," Dr. Gopalakrishnan added.

Best practices for geriatric EDs include:

- Ensuring geriatric-focused education and interdisciplinary staffing
- Providing standardized approaches to care that address common geriatric issues
- Ensuring optimal transitions of care from the ED to other settings, such as inpatient, home, community-based care, rehabilitation or long-term care
- Promoting geriatric-focused quality improvement, and enhancements to the physical environment, equipment, and supplies

According to the American College of Emergency Physicians, the proportion of the United States population over 65 years of age is projected to nearly double from 43 million in 2012 to 83 million in 2050. Older adults have unique pre-hospital, ED, and inpatient healthcare needs that deserve specially designed care delivery processes. Older adults are more likely to be admitted to the hospital and to have longer ED lengths-of-stay. ❖