



Rhode Island Hospital
A Lifespan Partner

Highlights

FALL 2009

A newsletter for friends and supporters of Rhode Island Hospital

“Be Prepared”

Rhode Island Hospital’s flu expert offers tips to keep you and your family healthy

Each year it catches us off guard. Cold weather comes, and with it the sniffles, aches, chills, and coughs of the common cold and the seasonal flu. But this year we face a new and potentially more serious challenge: pandemic H1N1 influenza, or swine flu.

“In a pandemic, many people could be sick at the same time. Worksites, schools and daycare centers could all be affected,” says Leonard A. Mermel, DO, ScM, medical director of Rhode Island Hospital’s department of epidemiology and infection control.

“Families should have plans in place for how they will carry out their responsibilities and maintain their work status if someone becomes ill,” says Mermel. “Ask yourself: ‘Who is responsible for child or elder care? Are there necessary medications or supplies I could obtain in advance? How can I assist my neighbors and those with special needs?’ Don’t wait until you get sick; you need to make plans now.”

Local business owners should also develop contingency plans. “Employers might need to revise their sick-leave or work-from-home policies, stagger shifts, and even move workspaces to six feet apart to reduce the spread of the virus,” says Mermel.

As the state’s largest hospital, Rhode Island Hospital will undoubtedly see an influx of patients with the flu or flu-like illness. But we do even more than treat

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— Leonard A. Mermel, DO, ScM

patients. Our physicians are on the front lines of pandemic planning, advising state agencies, conducting workshops and mock drills, and educating the public.

Continued on page 3



In My Own Words...



Matt Capone, his son Matt, and wife Evelyn

In December 2006, at age 50, I had a standard colonoscopy, but when I woke up from sedation, my life had changed. My doctor explained that there was a problem and advised me to follow up with a colorectal cancer specialist.

I researched specialists and discovered Dr. Victor Pricolo, chief of colorectal surgery at Rhode Island Hospital's Comprehensive Cancer Center, who diagnosed me with advanced colon cancer.

In January 2007, I had surgery to remove the cancer. My type was particularly aggressive, so the decision was made to have six months of chemotherapy to make sure that all of the cancer had been eradicated. I began treatment with Dr. Howard Safran in February of that year.

Dr. Safran understood that, although I was sick, I still had a family and life to maintain. My son was getting ready to graduate from high school that spring, and Dr. Safran tailored my treatments as we got closer to the date to make sure that I was physically able to attend. This meant a lot to my family and me.

It's wonderful to have the Comprehensive Cancer Center right here in our backyard. The quality of care I received there was tremendous. The doctors, nurses and other support staff made an awful experience manageable—even fun at times. I always felt they understood what I was going through, and anticipated what I needed.

Thanks to all of the people who were involved in my care, I am now two years cancer free. I even received the great news this June that I would not need to return for an entire year!



Save the Date

Rhode Island Hospital is excited to announce the second annual *President's Pursuit of Excellence Dinner*. As part of this special evening, we will recognize champions of the hospital who have shown extraordinary support and commitment to Rhode Island Hospital and the lifesaving treatments, programs and services we provide to the community.

Proceeds from this event will support the academic mission of the hospital and our pursuit of excellence in research, education and patient care.

For ticket and sponsorship information, please contact Guy Abelson at 401-444-6412 or cabelson@lifespan.org.

Wednesday,
June 16, 2010 • 6 p.m.
Westin Hotel
Providence, Rhode Island

“Be Prepared” *Continued from cover*

Infectious diseases research is also central to the hospital’s mission. Mermel, a professor of medicine at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University and an international expert on infectious diseases and hospital-acquired infections, recently co-authored two papers dealing with the new H1N1 virus. The first, published in *The Lancet*, helps explain why so many children and young adults are getting sick and suggests that people age 60 or older may have some protection from having been exposed to prior flu viruses and flu vaccines. The second paper examines whether or not flu can be transmitted before symptoms begin or by people without symptoms.

“While we may not be able to avoid the flu,” says Mermel, “we at Rhode Island Hospital have a detailed plan that has been under development for months and will continue to be refined as the need arises. We are working with the Rhode Island Department of Health and other hospitals throughout the state to coordinate our response to the return of the new H1N1 virus this fall.”



USEFUL LINKS

Lifespan

www.lifespan.org/services/infectious/diseases/swineflu

Rhode Island Department of Health

www.health.ri.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu

World Health Organization

www.who.int/en

How Can You Avoid Getting or Spreading the Flu?

1. Wash your hands with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand hygiene product
2. Sneeze and cough into your sleeve or into a disposable tissue
3. Stay home if you are sick
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
5. Practice other good health habits
6. Get the seasonal flu shot, and the new H1N1 vaccine, when each becomes available (“You can’t get the flu from the standard flu shot, as it uses a dead virus,” says Leonard Mermel, DO, ScM.)

What Are the Signs of the Flu?

Although the H1N1 virus may change or mutate at any time, the symptoms of H1N1, at present, are similar to those of the seasonal flu—primarily a temperature higher than 100.4° F, along with cough and/or sore throat. Patients may also have a headache, chills, stuffy nose and body aches.

When Should You Seek Treatment?

If you have moderate to severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed.

News of Note

Suzanne de la Monte, MD, MPH and her team of researchers at Rhode Island Hospital find a substantial link between increased levels of nitrates and nitrites in our environment and food with a higher mortality rate from Alzheimer's disease,



diabetes mellitus and Parkinson's disease. The researchers call for reducing nitrate and nitrites in fertilizer and food processing and detoxifying water for human consumption.

Rhode Island Hospital is one of only three hospitals in New England, and the first in Rhode Island, to receive accreditation from the Society of Chest Pain Centers. Heart attacks are the leading cause of death in the United States; 600,000 people die annually of heart disease and more than 5 million Americans visit hospitals each year with chest pain. This accreditation is a marker of achievement for the hospital's ability to provide high-quality care for chest pain patients.

A Rhode Island Hospital research study is testing an intervention to manage treatment-resistant depression. Between 25 and 40 percent of patients diagnosed with depression are resistant to treatments

currently available. This study seeks to test ways of managing depression in order to improve the quality of life for these patients.

The Comprehensive Cancer Centers at Rhode Island Hospital and The Miriam Hospital are two of only three teaching hospitals in New England to receive accreditation from the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC). This accreditation recognizes the hospitals' standards of treating the whole patient through a multidisciplinary approach that ensures patients are receiving the highest quality care from compassionate clinicians and staff.



Suriya Jeyapalan, MD, is appointed the director of Rhode Island Hospital's new neuro-oncology division. Currently, Rhode Island leads the nation in the number of brain tumors, per capita.

This new division will bridge neurology and oncology to provide specialized treatment for brain tumor patients.

For more information about these stories, please visit www.lifespan.org/rih/news.