

SPRING 2017 | VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2



VNSNY TODAY

NEWS FROM THE VISITING NURSE SERVICE OF NEW YORK



SPRING 2017 | VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2



VNSNY TODAY

NEWS FROM THE VISITING NURSE SERVICE OF NEW YORK

VNSNY's Mental Health Division Trains NYC Public School Staff



VNSNY's Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) has been awarded a three-year grant by New York City to provide behavioral health training to teachers and administrators in 40 public schools. In the program, CMHS social workers are coaching the staff of public schools in methods for managing children in crisis and enhancing their students' overall psychological health and academic performance.

"The city reached out to us based on the success of our Promise Zone program in the Bronx, where we work directly with children in public schools," says Devon Bandison,

Continued on page 2



In a new city-funded program, CMHS social workers are training public school teachers and administrators in methods that support children's psychological well-being. Above: VNSNY psychiatric social worker Yennis Colon, right, confers with Danielle Darby, principal of the Brooklyn Academy of Global Finance High School, one of the participating schools. Left photo: Yennis with Sarah McCoy, the assistant principal of the school.

VNSNY Board Members Are Among United Hospital Fund Honorees



VNSNY Board Members Carl Pforzheimer III and Anne Ehrenkranz were among the trustees honored by the United Hospital Fund (UHF) on May 1st at the fund's Distinguished Trustee Awards luncheon. The UHF awards are presented to trustees from health care organizations in the New York metropolitan area who have displayed extraordinary leadership and service.

Continued on page 2

Also in this issue:

- CHOICE Call Center Provides 24/7 Support
- Congressman Adriano Espaillat Visits VNSNY CHOICE MLTC Member



An Interview with VNSNY's Chief Information Officer

Robert Plaszczyk Discusses Moving to the Cloud and Other IT Initiatives

VNSNY's IT department has been working on quite a few projects. Can you tell us about some of them?

One of our latest projects is a new population health program launched earlier this year. Our IT team designed software that lets us transmit data from our current Provider Operations electronic medical records (EMR) system directly into Altruista GuidingCare, our care management platform. By integrating these records within GuidingCare, our population health coordinators can now get a full

360-degree picture of what's going on with each patient, allowing them to manage patients' care more effectively. This is especially important as we increasingly enter into Case Rate arrangements with private insurers, in which we are working to keep patients with complex conditions home and out of the hospital. This integrated platform makes it easier to quickly identify problems or issues with a given patient.

Are there other developments regarding care management software or EMR?

Continued on page 4

VNSNY Board Members Are Among United Hospital Fund Honorees

VNSNY Board Members Carl Pforzheimer III and Anne Ehrenkranz were among the trustees honored by the United Hospital Fund (UHF) on May 1st at the fund's Distinguished Trustee Awards luncheon. The UHF awards are presented to trustees from health care organizations in the New York metropolitan area who have displayed extraordinary leadership and service.

Pforzheimer was recognized for his 43 years on the VNSNY Board, while Ehrenkranz's award was presented in recognition of her work with the Hospital for Special Surgery, on whose board she also serves. This was the first year that the UHF has honored trustees from home care agencies and nursing homes in addition to hospital trustees.



Carl Pforzheimer III and Anne Ehrenkranz

In an open letter to the VNSNY staff, Pforzheimer noted that the organization's mission of helping the vulnerable "is why VNSNY was chosen to be the first home health care agency to be included in the United Hospital Fund event." He added, "As I also understand it, I was suggested by the staff of VNSNY as the person to accept the honor as a VNSNY trustee. That made it a double honor for me, since I know after many years on the VNSNY Board that the staff is the heart and soul of the agency."

VNSNY's Mental Health Division Trains NYC Public School Staff

VNSNY's Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) has been awarded a three-year grant by New York City to provide behavioral health training to teachers and administrators in 40 public schools. In the program, CMHS social workers are coaching the staff of public schools in methods for managing children in crisis and enhancing their students' overall psychological health and academic performance.

"The city reached out to us based on the success of our Promise Zone program in the Bronx, where we work directly with children in public schools," says Devon Bandison, Director of Children's Services for CMHS. The city-wide program, called "100 Schools," is providing coaches to 20 selected schools in each of the city's five boroughs. VNSNY will be servicing the initiative's 40 schools in Brooklyn and Queens, with ten coaches handling four schools each under the supervision of CMHS Program Coordinator Eric Schlothan.

Each coach will visit one school per day to work with small groups of teachers and administrators, teaching them everything from how to create an environment of positive reinforcement in the classroom to techniques for deescalating a child who is in emotional or psychological crisis. "Most public school teachers have never been trained in specific behavioral techniques," explains Bandison. "People talk about a difficult class or a difficult school, but in many cases it's just an issue of a few children who are struggling. Having our staff come in and explain how to handle and manage these behaviors by children really empowers educators. It gives them tools to work more effectively with their students, and teaches them how to create a more supportive environment where children can really thrive."



In a new city-funded program, CMHS social workers are training public school teachers and administrators in methods that support children's psychological well-being.

Above: VNSNY psychiatric social worker Yennis Colon, right, confers with Dannielle Darby, principal of the Brooklyn Academy of Global Finance High School, one of the participating schools.

Left photo: Colon with Sarah McCoy, the assistant principal of the school.

An Interview with VNSNY's Chief Information Officer

Robert Plaszcz Discusses Moving to the Cloud and Other IT Initiatives

VNSNY's IT department has been working on quite a few projects. Can you tell us about some of them?

One of our latest projects is a new population health program launched earlier this year. Our IT team designed software that lets us transmit data from our current Provider Operations electronic medical records (EMR) system directly into Altruista GuidingCare, our care management platform. By integrating these records within GuidingCare, our population health coordinators can now get a full 360-degree picture of what's going on with each patient, allowing them to manage patients' care more effectively. This is especially important as we increasingly enter into Case Rate arrangements with private insurers, in which we are working to keep patients with complex conditions home and out of the hospital. This integrated platform makes it easier to quickly identify problems or issues with a given patient.

Are there other developments regarding care management software or EMR?

Absolutely. We also incorporated a new, simpler patient risk stratification score into GuidingCare that our population health team developed. And throughout 2017, we'll be doing monthly releases of additional enhancements to GuidingCare. Additionally, on the Provider side of the organization, we are teaming with Operations to

evaluate options for our future EMR system. We're excited to be part of this effort, which will let us deliver care more effectively and provide enhanced administrative efficiencies.

What about VNSNY CHOICE-related projects?

CHOICE recently went live with a new grievance and appeals management system, called OnBase. It replaces our internally developed database, which has become outdated. The new system will help the CHOICE Grievance & Appeals team process cases in a more timely and efficient manner, and also improves the ability of their colleagues in Member Services and Utilization Management to know if and when an appeal has been filed.

Could you update us on the plans to move various VNSNY operations into the cloud?

Cloud services are nothing new at VNSNY. We're continually evaluating how and where to deliver the best service possible to those we serve. Currently we're using several platforms that are cloud-based and/or subscription-based. We're also moving VNSNY's email services into the cloud as part of the Microsoft 365 software solution we're implementing across the organization. That should be completed within the next three months. We'll be doing the same with SharePoint in the near future. This change will save on storage, because we won't have to maintain our own servers, and give us more flexibility in terms



"We're continually evaluating how and where to deliver the best service possible to those we serve," says Robert Plaszcz, VNSNY's Chief Information Officer.

of emergency preparedness. And it will allow us to provide services more quickly for the business. We also just completed moving all VNSNY's desk phones to a Verizon cloud service. Besides reducing costs, the Verizon cloud has a data backup that we can switch to if a problem arises. And if people have to move their office location, you can take your phone and plug it anywhere in the VNSNY system, and it will remember who you are. We hope to add Skype capabilities to the phones as well.

Are there any other IT projects coming down the pike?

There are. We'll also be rolling out new iPhones to all of our staff shortly. We're hoping to include some new apps for ride-sharing and traffic guidance, and some clinical apps that didn't exist on our old Windows platform. We don't have an exact date yet, but they'll be coming sometime this calendar year.

A Win for Everyone: Congressman Adriano Espaillat Visits VNSNY CHOICE MLTC Member

As Lorenzo Nieves sits in his wheelchair, Soraya Gomez, a VNSNY nurse, stands attentively by his side. A short time earlier, she had checked Nieves to make sure no worrisome symptoms had arisen since her previous visit. Now she keeps watch over her patient as he chats with his special guest: Congressman Adriano Espaillat, who represents New York's 13th District—an area stretching from Manhattan's Upper West Side and Harlem up through Washington Heights in northern Manhattan and a slice of the Bronx.

The fact that Rep. Espaillat can visit Nieves in his apartment is a win for everyone, since Nieves has multiple chronic conditions that place him at high risk for hospitalization. In July 2016, after yet another of his many inpatient stays, he was referred to VNSNY's Managed Long Term Care (MLTC) plan. Since then, his health has improved substantially thanks to the ongoing care coordination provided by nurse Gomez and other CHOICE staff, combined with the daily assistance provided by the personal care worker whose services are included in the CHOICE MLTC health plan's benefits.

Working together, the interdisciplinary care team has kept Nieves out of the hospital for almost a full year. "He used to go the hospital once a month," notes Gomez. "But since we took on his care, he hasn't had to go to the hospital once."

For Rep. Espaillat, this visit is a chance to thank VNSNY and Gomez for keeping his constituent safely at home and away from the emergency room. Last year, approximately 15,000 people in the 13th District received home care services through VNSNY. Another 1,000 of his constituents received VNSNY home hospice services in 2016.



U.S. Representative Adriano Espaillat (left) paying a visit to CHOICE MLTC member Lorenzo Nieves (center) and VNSNY nurse Soraya Gomez. "I'm grateful to VNSNY for the invaluable home health care services it provides," says Rep. Espaillat.

"I was delighted to visit," Rep. Espaillat said, as he bid goodbye to Mr. Nieves. "I'm grateful to VNSNY for the invaluable home health care services it provides to our residents, especially to our seniors and individuals in need. I'm committed to ensuring that we enact policies in Congress that continue to address and support the need for quality, cost-effective professional home care that benefits us all."

New Phone App for HHAs Saves Time and Enhances Medical Record-Keeping

When Shannon Reid, a home health aide (HHA) with VNSNY's private-pay division Partners in Care, was first enlisted to help pilot a new smartphone app designed to streamline her workflow, she felt a little daunted by the technology. Once she received training in the app's use and found out how easy and convenient it was to operate, however, her hesitancy quickly turned to appreciation.

"It saves me a lot of time," she says now. In addition to providing contact information and directions for each client, the new app also uses the phone's GPS function to inform Partners in Care automatically when Reid arrives at each client's home, and contains a plan-of-care checklist. "Before, I had to call in to my supervisor to say that I'd arrived, and then call back at the end of the shift to report on all the tasks I'd performed," she notes. "Now at the end of each shift, I can press one button on my phone to check off all the tasks I covered with my client, then hit send."

If Reid has any additional client notes she wants to submit, she can enter them electronically as well. "When I have to report something to my supervisor, I just write a little note on the app," she says.

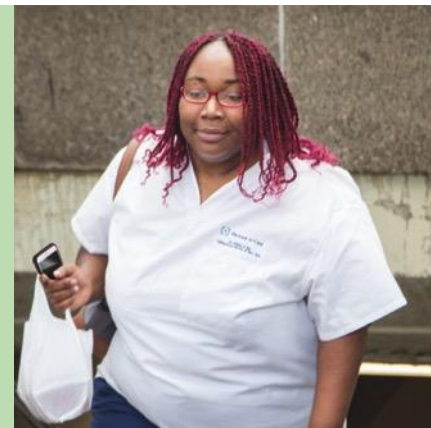
The convenient technology has reduced the time required for her pre- and post-shift reporting to just a few minutes, and also enables Reid's reports to be more comprehensive. This can be invaluable with a client like Lucy*, an octogenarian whose dementia and other conditions often give rise to minor but problematic symptoms during Reid's 12-hour shifts with her. When Lucy suffered

a recent episode of severe itching, for example, Reid could immediately place that information into Lucy's electronic medical record, alerting Lucy's medical providers to the problem.

The app has broader population health benefits as well. "In addition to making life easier for our HHAs and office staff, this app lets us compile and analyze information from each visit, which lets us spot trends and make sure patients are getting the right level of care," says Joseph Perry, Director of Private Care Services at Partners in Care. The VNSNY division is now evaluating the results of its pilot program, adds Perry, and hopes to roll the app out to its entire HHA workforce later this year.

** The client's name has been changed for privacy.*

*A new phone app allows Partners in Care, VNSNY's private-pay division, to compile and analyze information from each visit, enabling it to spot trends and make certain patients are receiving the right level of care.
Right: Partners in Care home health aide Shannon Reid.*



VNSNY CHOICE 24/7 Call Center Gives Support and Reassurance to Health Plan Members

It was the start of a long holiday weekend, and a sudden change of plans had left 85-year-old Matt* without the family caregiver he'd been counting on to keep him company and prepare his meals. As a member of the VNSNY CHOICE Managed Long Term Care (MLTC) health plan, however, he was able to pick up his phone on the spot and dial the 24/7 CHOICE Call Center to speak with a health plan representative. The representative immediately arranged for a home health aide to come to Matt's home the following day.

"This around-the-clock capability allows us to put services into place much faster," says Anthony Steffens, Manager, CHOICE Member Services, who supervises the after-hours Call Center program. "And knowing they can reach out any time to talk to someone at CHOICE is also very reassuring to our members."

With the new service, health plan members can reach a CHOICE representative by phone directly at any time outside normal business hours, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, including weekends and all holidays. Representatives handle basic requests right away, such as scheduling a home health aide visit, answering questions about medical supplies, or coordinating transportation to a medical appointment. If the call involves a clinical issue, the representative alerts a CHOICE nurse coordinator, who will contact the member on

VNSNY CHOICE MLTC members like the one at right can now speak directly to a VNSNY CHOICE Call Center representative 24/7, 365 days a year.



the next business day. For urgent problems, the representative will quickly contact a CHOICE manager who follows up from there.

"Providing 24/7 phone availability is an important part of our work to improve the member experience, and ensure timely access to care in order to prevent emergency department visits and hospital admissions," notes Dr. Hany Abdelaal, President of VNSNY CHOICE.

"Not a night goes by without at least several calls coming in from members," adds Tatiana Bedoya, one of the managers for CHOICE Member Services. "It's a real point of differentiation between CHOICE and other health plan providers."

** The member's name has been changed for privacy.*

Streamlined Intake System Speeds Patient Referrals



A new IT software integration is drastically reducing the time needed to complete intake referral forms while also eliminating any chance of data input errors.

Interoperable software is making manual data entry a thing of the past for VNSNY Home Care Intake staff. The new software, developed internally by the home health agency's IT Department, seamlessly integrates the VNSNY patient management platform, Salesforce, and the discharge-planning platform ECIN (Extended Care Information Network), which is used in about half the referrals made to VNSNY by its acute-care partners.

"Previously, all of the information from our referrals had to be manually input into Salesforce," says Jason Ficks, Vice President, Intake and Business Development Operations. "Now, whenever our referring partners send us a patient's information using the ECIN platform, all of that data is automatically transferred into the fields of the Salesforce document."

By drastically reducing the time needed to complete referral forms while eliminating any chance of errors in the data input, the new system will speed the referral process significantly. The new system has completed in-house testing, and the Intake Department expects it to be rolled out by the end of May.

"With the knowledge we've gained through this project, we're also focused on eventually integrating Salesforce with the platforms used by our other referring partners," adds Ficks. The organization's long-range goal is to expand the Intake platform integration even further so that VNSNY can "talk back" to the software of its referring partners, keeping them updated in real time on the status of patients who have been referred to VNSNY.

VNSNY Hospice Pilots New Online Medical Order Form

Leaving instructions for end-of-life care just became easier for a select group of VNSNY's hospice patients: This spring, VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care is piloting a convenient new online version of New York State's Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST)—the most comprehensive medical order form ever to be approved by the state's Department of Health.

The MOLST form, created by a New York physician, is submitted by the hospice patient's doctor in consultation with the patient and his or her family. The form details the patient's specific

choices regarding every type of intensive treatment option available, from being placed on a respirator or feeding tube to receiving CPR—allowing hospice patients and others with complex or advanced illnesses, together with their medical care providers, to spell out exactly what types of life-sustaining treatments they do or do not want to receive.

“The MOLST tool is designed to have legal validity in the patient's home as well as in hospitals or nursing homes, making it ideal for home hospice patients,” says Rivkah Brenenson, Quality Improvement Manager for VNSNY Hospice.

While the form is coming into wider use in the state's hospitals and nursing facilities, adds Brenenson, VNSNY is one of the first large home hospice programs to utilize it.

The VNSNY pilot is also breaking new ground by employing a new Internet-based version of the form, the e-MOLST Registry. In this electronic version, patients, families and physicians are guided through each step when filling out the MOLST form, ensuring that all legal requirements are met. The completed MOLST form is then stored digitally, where care providers can access it through a special online portal.

“This a tremendous tool, and the electronic version makes it even more effective and easy to implement,” notes Bonnie Lauder, Director of Quality Management Services. Starting this May, VNSNY Hospice will pilot the new form with its Queens South team, encouraging all newly enrolled hospice patients in that region to utilize the e-MOLST format. After pilot results have been reviewed, the division aims to extend the tool's use to all VNSNY Hospice patients in the near future.



To assist VNSNY Hospice patients and families in expressing exactly what type of end-of-life care they wish to receive, VNSNY is piloting an innovative online version of a medical order form called MOLST. MOLST is a document submitted by the patient's doctor that addresses all advanced care options.

Private YouTube Platform Offers On-Demand Access to VNSNY Educational Video Library

For VNSNY clinicians looking to brush up on their technical skills, VNSNY’s large in-house educational video library is now available on the agency’s own private YouTube channel—meaning that any employee can stream them on a laptop computer or smart phone. “Posting videos on YouTube lets our staff access them more quickly and in greater numbers, and is also much more cost-efficient,” says Elizer Cooper, Director of Education and Development for VNSNY’s Clinical Support Services.

“This same YouTube format is now being used by many local and national academic and healthcare institutions as a way to house their video libraries,” notes Rose Madden-Baer, Senior Vice President, Population Health and Clinical Support Services. Available on-demand to all VNSNY staff, the educational videos serve as a supplement to VNSNY’s extensive in-person training curriculum, including simulation labs—allowing employees to see training segments that they missed or wish to review. Specific topics range from clinical skills demonstrations such as how to change dressings



VNSNY’s training videos are on the same private YouTube format used by many organizations, including local and national academic and healthcare institutions.

and remove sutures, to discussions of reimbursement policies and tips for improving customer experience.

All of the videos feature VNSNY education managers and other staff. The proprietary training videos are not searchable on YouTube by the general public, and can only be reached via VNSNY’s Intranet or through specific links to each video’s YouTube page.

VNSNY Hospice Nurses Make National *Today Show* Appearance for Nurses Week

For a group of VNSNY nurses, this year's National Nurses Week celebration included a turn on national TV. When NBC's *Today Show* kicked off its Nurses Week coverage on a recent Monday morning in early May, a dozen members of the VNSNY Hospice and Palliative Care team gathered on the show's outdoor plaza to join co-host Hoda Kotb in giving a live televised shout-out to America's nurses.

VNSNY's spirited contingent was on set at the *Today Show* broadcast to help carry out a special surprise for VNSNY Hospice Nurse Madeline Hass. After enlisting Hass for a dance segment with Jennifer Lopez, the show's hosts informed her that in fact she'd been selected to receive a special Mother's Day salute as part of its "Thanks a Million, Mom" series. NBC then broadcast a moving video tribute from her three children, describing how Hass had raised them with loving care following their father's untimely death from cancer. Hass was then joined in the studio by her children and her current husband. "I'm honored," she said, dabbing tears from her eyes as a national TV audience looked on.

"It was such an exciting event!" says attendee Donna Nelis, Vice President, Operations for VNSNY Hospice. "We're proud that Madeline is part of our Hospice and Palliative Care team—and it was a privilege to have the opportunity to acknowledge the importance of all nurses in front of the entire country."



VNSNY Hospice Nurse Madeline Hass was honored with a special Mother's Day tribute on NBC's Today Show.

In addition to the full live coverage on the *Today Show* itself, the combined Nurses Week-Mother's Day tribute to Hass was also posted on the show's website, which gets about 30 million unique visitors a month, and was broadcast on Sirius XM Today Show Radio.