

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Visiting Nurse Association Health Group Form Partnership

Collaboration will Strengthen Education and Research for Health Professionals and Improve Community Health Practices

New Brunswick, NJ – Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and the Visiting Nurses Association Health Group (VNAHG) have signed an academic affiliation agreement to partner on education and research initiatives to improve health care for New Jersey residents. The medical school's Department of Family Medicine and Community Health will collaborate with the VNAHG, one of the largest non-profit home health, hospice and community-based organization in the country, to offer statewide learning opportunities for health professionals to train in community practices and in-home environments, and to expand research endeavors.

"To our knowledge, this is the first such comprehensive affiliation between a large VNA organization and a major research university in the U. S.," said Alfred Tallia, MD, MPH, professor and chair of the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. "Our shared goal is to improve care and access to care for everyone in New Jersey and we are proud to have already started working together to tackle major health services delivery issues confronting New Jersey during the COVID-19 pandemic."

"This new collaboration creates opportunities to enhance the education, knowledge-base, and career development of our incredible front-line care professionals," to better serve our New Jersey communities, " said Steve Landers, CEO of the Visiting Nurses Association Health Group. " VNAHG sees thousands of patients daily in the community and home settings throughout the State and these critical visits can help inform collaborative grant opportunities and research projects on health services improvement and quality, cultivating evidence-based care for our patients."

Medical school faculty in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health will conduct a needs assessment and provide continuing education services to health care providers and leadership of VNAHG that will focus on health systems and health systems change and other learning priorities. VNAHG providers will receive volunteer faculty appointments at the medical school and access to medical school learning sessions, libraries and electronic resources, allowing them to expand their knowledge base.

In turn, VNAHG will offer educational opportunities to Rutgers providers, including students, physicians, and fellows, that may include learning laboratories for in-home care and transitions of care, broadening knowledge in population health and community medicine. VNAHG care centers also will provide field learning opportunities for clinical care and in health care administration.

Together, the organizations will pursue research projects focused on community medicine, population health and patient care with opportunities to jointly obtain grant funding and publish research studies. The first collaborative study focuses on VNAHG provider experiences and the challenges of in-home services delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study will collect information using surveys, an online discussion forum and interviews of VNAHG staff. The objectives of the study are to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on changing the role of home healthcare professionals, understanding the challenges encountered and identifying innovations and strategies used to delivery care.

“Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and the Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey Community Health Centers have worked successfully together at the Freehold Family Health Center where Rutgers residents and providers deliver care to the Community Health Center patients,” said Dr. Tallia. “This new partnership expands the collaboration statewide, and strengthens the knowledge base for health professionals at both Rutgers and the VNA, ultimately improving health care for the people of New Jersey.

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About Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

As one of the nation’s leading comprehensive medical schools, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in education, research, health care delivery, and the promotion of community health. Part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School encompasses 20 basic science and clinical departments, and hosts centers and institutes including The Cardiovascular Institute, the Child Health Institute of New Jersey, and the Women’s Health Institute. The medical school has been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as among the top 100 medical schools in the nation for research and primary care.

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, an RWJBarnabas Health facility and the medical school’s principal affiliate, comprise one of the nation’s premier academic medical centers. Clinical services are provided by more than 500 faculty physicians in 200+ specialties and subspecialties as part of Rutgers Health, the clinical arm of Rutgers University. Rutgers Health is the most comprehensive academic health care provider

in New Jersey, offering a breadth of accessible clinical care throughout the state supported by the latest in medical research and education.

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School maintains educational programs at the undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels on its campuses in New Brunswick and Piscataway and provides continuing education courses for health care professionals and community education programs. With more than 5,500 alumni since the start of its first class in 1966, the medical school has expanded its comprehensive programming and educational opportunities and is at the forefront of innovative curriculum development and a visionary admissions program. To learn more about Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, visit rwjms.rutgers.edu.