



**Volume 5 / Fall 2009**

**Partners**

*Rhode Island Alliance  
for Retired Americans*

*Our Lady of Fatima Hospital*

*Boston University*

*New England Association  
of Labor Retirees*

*Addresses*

*Rhode Island Alliance  
for Retired Americans  
341 Simmonsville Ave. # 310  
Johnston, RI 02919  
401-275-0726*

*Boston University  
c/o Dr. Joseph Boffa  
560 Harrison Ave. Room 344  
Boston, Mass. 02118  
617-638-4673*

*Web Site  
www.newenglandsenior.com*

*E-Mail  
japernorio\_riara@hotmail.com*

**Message from Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy (D-RI)**

I am very pleased about the new partnership between Our Lady of Fatima Hospital and the Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans to develop and administer the HealthLink Wellness Program. Since its creation in 2000 as a community based health promotion and disease prevention program, the HealthLink Wellness Program has a proven track record of producing better health care outcomes. From 2001 to 2009, HealthLink Wellness members with normal cholesterol values increased from 48% to 78%, while members with blood pressure levels representing hypertension decreased from 61% to 46%.

These positive HealthLink results have come through regular medical screening and feedback, but HealthLink has never had a formal association with primary care providers. That is why this new partnership with Our Lady of Fatima Hospital is so exciting; it has the potential to usher in a new era of community service. The information obtained by HealthLink’s regular screenings can be placed in the hands of primary care physicians who are best positioned to tailor a treatment plan to reduce the member’s risk of heart disease.

These principals being implemented by Fatima Hospital and the HealthLink Wellness program serve as a shining example for those of us helping to craft health care reform. As HealthLink has demonstrated, there is demonstrable evidence that supports regular screening as a means of early diagnosis and prevention. Wellness and prevention play a significant role in health care reform, promising reduced long-term costs while producing better health outcomes. Additionally, the new partnership shows the value of greater coordination between health care providers, highlighting the importance of the integration of Health Information Technology, a proposal I have continued to advocate for as a co-chair of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Health Care Caucus.

I applaud Fatima Hospital and HealthLink for the work they currently do, and commend them for embarking on this partnership to extend their potential to do even greater good for the people of Rhode Island.

**Inside This Issue**

**Page**

<b>Dr. Joseph Boffa Dr. Mark Schwager</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Our Lady of Fatima Hospital</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>John A. Pernorio RI ARA</b>	<b>4</b>

## **Our Lady of Fatima / RI ARA Partnership - Opportunity for Primary Care Providers**

**Dr. Joseph Boffa- Director, HealthLink Wellness Program**

**Dr. Mark Schwager, HealthLink Wellness Medical Director**

With new resources from Congress, HealthLink Wellness in concert with Our Lady of Fatima Hospital can now help bridge the gap between today's medical practice which focuses on the treatment of disease once it occurs to a full realization of the wellness agenda. It has long been our view that there should not be two separate systems, one at your doctor's office and another at HealthLink's community based screening sessions. The two systems should work in concert with each other because wellness is a personal journey that requires making difficult lifestyle changes (i.e., physical exercise, nutrition, smoking cessation, etc.) that took years to develop. HealthLink members who must make those difficult choices deserve the coordination of all key players in their personal health care system.

HealthLink Wellness and Fatima have a great opportunity to minimize gaps between the community, the doctor's office and the hospital. HealthLink Wellness started in 2000 as a community based health promotion and disease prevention program. Its mission is to work with Rhode Island seniors to promote healthy behaviors and build a culture of prevention. One of its specific goals is to establish a health promotion and early detection program that provides information, opportunity, and a supportive environment where individuals can begin to learn ways to change their lifestyle and commit to prevention and early detection of disease.

### **Fatima Hospital's Leadership Role**

The mission of Our Lady of Fatima Hospital is to preserve, restore and enhance the health of individuals and families it serves within its communities guided by its core values of respect, compassion, responsibility, teamwork and patient safety, consistent with the healing ministry of the Catholic Church. Over the years it has sought partnerships and affiliations that assist in continuing its mission and meeting the changing needs of the community. The current partnership with the Rhode Island ARA combines the efforts of two health resources that have a long history of commitment to community service.

HealthLink has demonstrated an overall improvement in health among its members. Over the years many HealthLink members brought HealthLink screening and educational materials to their primary care physicians. Up to now, HealthLink has not had a formal association with the primary care provider. It will be the role of Fatima Hospital to usher in a new era of community service. The next step in improving HealthLink's wellness approach is to take the information collected at the health screenings and make it easily available to its members' primary care physician. Fatima's community of Physicians will be able to lead the way in building this bridge between the community and the doctor's office. The primary care physician is in the best position to use HealthLink Wellness information to tailor a treatment plan to reduce the risk of heart disease and other chronic conditions based on each individual's screening results. Physicians who participate in this new partnership will receive compensation from HealthLink for any office screening the physician feels is appropriate to complement the community screenings.

Modern healthcare will require that patients, physicians and community resources work together to develop new models of delivering health care. Preventive care programs such as HealthLink in partnership with a leading healthcare resource such as Our Lady of Fatima Hospital can help bring community based resources and experience in preventive medicine into the physician's office. Through this team approach, HealthLink and Fatima can continue to improve the health of Rhode Island seniors. Ultimately this brings several separate systems together as one team to greatly enhance each retiree's ability to take control of their health.

## Welcoming HealthLink Wellness to Our Lady of Fatima Hospital

**Otis Brown, Vice President of St. Joseph's Health Services**

On behalf of St. Joseph Health Services of RI, we are truly pleased to partner with the HealthLink Wellness Program and Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans to expand efforts to improve health outcomes for Rhode Island retirees.

Established in 1954, Our Lady of Fatima Hospital has provided state-of-the art, comprehensive health care to generations of Rhode Islanders. Located in North Providence, RI, Fatima Hospital has evolved into a leading community medical center providing care to more than 200,000 patients annually.

We think you'll be surprised by how many ways Fatima Hospital can be your partner in health. As one of the busiest surgery programs in the area, our capabilities range from complex neurosurgery, orthopedic and urological procedures to more common but advanced treatment for podiatry, ophthalmology, gastroenterology and ENT related issues. Over the years, our surgeons have been pioneers in introducing new and innovative techniques to our patients, including laser and laparoscopic surgery. We also have one of the largest endoscopy centers south of Boston and handle a number of outpatient procedures on a regular basis.

Fully accredited by The Joint Commission and Medicare, Fatima has invested significantly over the last few years to modernize the campus, enhance the patient experience and stay current with the latest medical equipment. Our outstanding nursing and patient care capabilities and a host of diagnostic and treatment services – plus our proven commitment to quality – make Fatima the hospital of choice for physician specialists and patients alike.

Through the newly formed partnership with HealthLink, and our focus on prevention and education, we hope to widen our reach throughout the community and meet the growing and unique needs of our citizens. We encourage you to learn more about us online at [www.fatimahospital.com](http://www.fatimahospital.com) but here is a sample of some of the exciting things Fatima has to offer:

- ✦ We have the state's third busiest emergency room. We have recently renovated the treatment areas to provide better care and comfort to our patients and we offer PatientFirst, which is designed to fast track patients with minor, less critical injuries and illnesses
- ✦ Our Breast Care Center is recognized for providing state of the art treatment in a caring and confidential environment. We recently added digital mammography and our program was re-accredited and recognized for its advanced care and protocols. This is all part of our advanced diagnostic imaging services which includes MRI, vascular studies and a range of easily accessible modalities.
- ✦ We have one of the region's most sophisticated clinical laboratories, providing private, prompt and accurate technology and a state-of-the-art endoscopy center for non-invasive treatment of gastroenterological and other conditions. Fatima's Emergency Department is the busiest in the northern region of the state, treating approximately 33,000 patients annually.
- ✦ Our Wound Healing Center is one of RI's most established programs with a proven track record of treating hard to heal wounds. Supported by one of the state's only hyperbaric oxygen treatment services, our patients and their results have been outstanding.
- ✦ Fatima houses one of the busiest mental health programs in our area including a dedicated geriatric psychiatry unit as well as both adult inpatient and outpatient services.
- ✦ We are also in the process of relocating our regionally recognized medical rehabilitation center from our St. Joseph campus to Fatima. We are simply the state's foremost program for rehabilitating patients who have experienced a stroke, spinal chord or head injury, orthopedic injury or related problem. Our staff has put thousands of patients back on the road to recovery over the last 20 years.
- ✦ Our diabetes self management education program was recently certified by the American Diabetes Association as meeting national standards for excellence, one of only a handful of such designations in RI.

Again, these are just some of the programs and services available from Fatima Hospital. For more information, please contact Kathy Locarno, HealthLink Site Coordinator at the Hospital at 401.456.3850

## *RI ARA HealthLink Wellness Progressive Partnership*

*John A. Pernorio, RI ARA President*

The global landscape of preventive health and wellness is changing rapidly. Every nation worldwide is affected by obesity, chronic disease, the threat of pandemics, aging populations, the rising cost of healthcare, advancements in medical/information technologies and the development of e-health technology and services.

Studies show that older individuals benefit from adhering to preventive health care guidelines. Recommendations for health maintenance depend not only on personal expectations, but on population dynamics as well. Aging baby boomers want to remain healthy as they look toward retirement and beyond. Guidelines for maintaining optimal health in geriatric populations can help.

HealthLink Wellness is a partnership between the Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans, Inc, Our Lady of Fatima Hospital, Boston University School of Public Health and the New England Association of Labor Retirees. We have brought together these four organizations devoted to health and community service. That's good news for seniors in our region.

Our goal was to establish and continue a health promotion and early detection program that provides information, opportunity, and a supportive environment where individuals can begin to learn ways to change their lifestyle and commit themselves to prevention and early detection to disease.

The groundwork has been laid. HealthLink Wellness members are provided with the opportunity to participate in a progressive prevention and early detection program. We have provided our members with preventive strategies that include; tobacco cessation, improved nutrition, exercise programs, cholesterol reduction, immunizations, blood pressure, blood glucose & body mass indexing. Members can clearly see from their screening results, that these strategies are working.

As the health care reform debate continues, we are doing our part to afford our members with the information they need to live a healthier lifestyle. Programs like HealthLink Wellness must be incorporated into Medicare as part of the reform. Medicare Part D prescription coverage must be overhauled so that retirees can afford the medications they need with **NO DONUT HOLE**.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy for providing the funding, insight and support since 2000 to see the importance of the HealthLink Wellness program. Our Lady of Fatima Hospital for becoming a HealthLink Wellness partner, Dr. Ana Karina Mascarenhas of the Boston University School of Dental Medicine, who provided the oral cancer screenings, Dr. Joseph Boffa, Program Director, Dr. Mark Schwager, Program Medical Director, George Nee, President of the RI AFL-CIO, the RI ARA retiree member organizations that also support HealthLink Wellness. To the members that continue to participate and bring new members into the program, the volunteers who give their time to help our members and the venues that are provided free of charge to hold our screenings.

The HealthLink Wellness partners look forward to working with and helping members in the future.