

checkup

Bergen Volunteer Medical Initiative

DOING MORE FOR MORE PEOPLE

When someone goes out of their way to help, you say “Thank you.” You might even have a reason to say “Gamsahamnida.”

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DEAR FRIEND

Welcome to a new year at BVMI. We hope you like our newsletter makeover, starting with this issue. We want your catch-up time with us to be as enjoyable and informative as possible, so let us know what you think!

As we leave 2018 behind, please know how grateful we are for your support. You helped us do more for more people, by way of new programs, better community visibility, more volunteers, and a modest but much-needed increase in paid staff. We've settled in at our new facility, and now it really feels like home. Thank you for making it all happen.

For 2019, a lot more "new" has arrived. We're excited about our new Prevent Diabetes Program and expanded outreach to our Korean-speaking neighbors. At the same time, we're deeply saddened by the recent passing of Dr. Samuel Cassell, who founded BVMI with other like-minded colleagues. Sam's vision, kind heart, and tenacity are the main reasons BVMI exists today. There will always be a little bit of Sam in everything we do – and that's why we're proud to announce the Dr. Samuel A. Cassell Legacy Society. Read on for more on that.

This year's wish list at BVMI includes more volunteer nurses, so if you know a nurse who would like to enrich his or her life by joining our team, please tell them our story.

Come see us soon if you can, and know that we wish you the best of health in 2019 and well beyond!

Amanda

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“Dr. Machac is no ordinary doctor,” said Jong-Soo. “He really cares about his patients, and I am so thankful.”



Paying Attention Pays Off

Chest pain is a frightening experience for anyone. When you've previously had a heart attack and a stent implant, medical bills can begin piling up – and so can your stress levels.

“Jong-Soo” came to BVMI with his pain – and with his daughter, who served as his advocate and Korean language interpreter. We strongly suggested an Emergency Room visit. But a few days later, when BVMI's nurse manager Michelle Kaye took it upon herself to follow up on the results of that visit, she learned that it never took place. Jong-Soo had decided that the bills for his previous hospital stay were already piling up, and that was all he could handle.

Michelle scheduled another BVMI visit for Jong-Soo, this time with Dr. Josef Machac, who took an EKG and found abnormalities. Factoring in the chest pain and previous heart attack, Dr. Machac decided that an ER visit couldn't wait any longer. Our whole staff was involved in Jong-Soo's transfer. We brought him downstairs in a wheelchair and called the ER staff so that he would be escorted in immediately. His health history was also sent over right away.

ER lab work revealed that Jong-Soo was “spilling enzymes,” a sign of a pending heart attack. It was discovered that his stent had displaced, and a lesion (plaque buildup) was also found in his left anterior descending artery. This very serious occurrence is often referred to as a “Widow Maker.” Fortunately for Jong-Soo, early discovery led to successful treatment and a return home.

“Dr. Machac is no ordinary doctor,” said Jong-Soo. “He was extremely kind, and went above and beyond to make sure I went to the hospital. And he explained everything in detail. He really cares about his patients, and I am so thankful.”

Jong-Soo's pain is now gone, and the BVMI team is working with him on secondary prevention. “We're monitoring Jong-Soo's hypertension and cholesterol,” said Dr. Machac, “and he is learning how to live a healthier lifestyle.”

How does it feel to help save a life? Beyond great.

Heartfelt Thanks

Going the distance for BVMI

When someone goes out of their way to help, you say "Thank you."
You might even have a reason to say "Gamsahamnida."

BVMI has felt this way ever since now-retired thoracic surgeon Dr. Youngick Lee took it upon himself to become an advocate for the work we do. We first met Dr. Lee around the time our doors opened in 2009. He was already familiar with the concept of clinics such as BVMI's, having learned about this model at a national meeting of retired surgeons. When BVMI was getting ready to launch, Drs. Sam Cassell and Earl Wheaton approached Dr. Lee with a request: Would he be willing to provide his special medical skills for BVMI patients when the need arose?

That's how the story began. Dr. Lee has been a BVMI volunteer, friend, donor and advocate ever since. This former head of thoracic surgery at Harlem Hospital and member of the faculty at New York Medical College has continued to share his talent and genuinely good heart for the benefit of BVMI patients well beyond his official retirement.

While reading the newspaper a couple of years ago, Dr. Lee came upon a grant opportunity sponsored by the Korean American Community Foundation (KACF). Thinking about BVMI, he trekked over to the organization in New York City for more information. BVMI applied for the grant, and although we were not selected on the first go-round, the second time was the charm. KACF recently provided us with the funds we needed to create the Korean Healthcare Program at BVMI.

"This grant allowed us to hire Sarah Park as our Korean Healthcare Program Manager," said Amanda Missey, BVMI President/CEO. "Sarah will promote and explain BVMI to our Korean neighbors, so they will feel comfortable coming to us for medical care."

We asked Dr. Lee to tell us why he went above and beyond for us. He said, "I've lived in this area for a long time, and have met several Korean immigrants, many of whom are highly educated. Yet others are



Sarah Park, BVMI's Korean Healthcare Program Manager, meets with Dr. Youngick Lee, a true BVMI champion.

not educated enough for high-paying jobs, so they work hard in venues such as nail salons or restaurants. Very often, their employers can't afford to give them a healthcare plan. BVMI can help close that gap."

"If you look at the American healthcare system, there will always be 'leftover' people of all backgrounds who simply can't afford care," added Dr. Lee. "Those who don't qualify for Medicaid are caught in the middle. I went to KACF to advocate for BVMI itself, so they can continue to serve anyone who needs them."

Dr. Lee also says he would like to see more volunteers sign on at BVMI – and more donors to support them. "If I were to put on my recruiting hat, I would tell other retiring medical professionals that this is a wonderful way to ease the transition," he said. "Knowing how much you're helping patients at BVMI is just a wonderful feeling."

You make us feel pretty good too, Dr. Lee. *Gamsahamnida!*

did you know

BERGEN COUNTY: THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDE

- BERGEN COUNTY RANKS AMONG THE TOP 4 NJ COUNTIES IN TERMS OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND YET...
6.9% OF BERGEN COUNTY'S RESIDENTS LIVE BELOW THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL
- BERGEN COUNTY IS THE MOST POPULATED COUNTY IN NJ, BUT UNFORTUNATELY ...
8.5% OF BERGEN COUNTY RESIDENTS 65 YEARS AND YOUNGER DO NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE
- THE MEDIAN PROPERTY VALUE IN BERGEN COUNTY IS NEARLY \$463,000, HOWEVER ...
THE AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR A STUDIO APARTMENT IN BERGEN COUNTY IS MORE THAN \$1,400
- MANY OF BVMI'S PATIENTS WORK MULTIPLE JOBS JUST TO MAKE A LIVING WAGE

Diabetes: Not Welcome Here

Every day at BVMI, we treat patients with diabetes.

Of course, we'd much rather prevent this disease in the first place, so in 2019, we're ushering in a new approach. Thanks to a three-year grant from the Russell Berrie Foundation, BVMI has officially launched the Prevent Diabetes Program (PDP).

Over the course of a year, participants will attend 16 weeks of classes, followed by monthly refresher sessions. Gloria Jekic, RN, leads the class, providing the hows and whys of diabetes, and teaching participants how to delay or avoid the disease altogether. An accountability coach checks in with participants on a regular basis, to offer advice and support, and to make sure they're staying on track.

Motivation for the program is high. "Diabetes has run in my family," said one participant, "and I want to do everything I can for that to stop with me."

Those who successfully complete the program will receive a free three-month membership to the Hackensack YMCA. This summer, all participants will receive a weekly supply of fresh fruits and vegetables at BVMI's free farmers market — made possible through



Alma, Consuelo, Olga and Lucy are members of the first PDP class, which started in January. Stay tuned as we follow their journey over the next year.

our partnership with America's Grow-A-Row (AGAR). They'll visit AGAR's farm in Pittstown, to learn about where their fruits and veggies come from, and discover great ways to cook them at the farm's teaching kitchen. There's also a trip planned to ShopRite, where the in-house dietician will provide tips on how to shop healthy and on a budget.

BVMI is using the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) curriculum for the PDP, and we are working towards CDC recognition for the program as well. "Our fight to prevent diabetes is on, and the BVMI team intends to win," said Nurse Gloria. Gloves on!

SPREAD THE WORD ...

BVMI could use more champions like Dr. Youngjick Lee!
People in all corners of Bergen County need us,
so please spread the word about our services –
and our need for medical volunteers and donors. Thank you!

SAVE THE DATE!

BVMI 10th Anniversary Gala Celebration
Friday, September 13, 2019
Edgewood Country Club

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MISSION

Powered by passionate volunteers, BVMI meets the medical needs of low-income, working, uninsured adults in Bergen County by providing free, comprehensive, patient-centered primary healthcare.



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