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FEATURES

VNSNY Therapists Honored for National Rehab Week

The New York City nonprofit home care agency distributed awards and heard from rehabilitation experts.

By Rita Ruel, PhD

Posted on: September 25, 2014

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NEW YORK CITY -- Hundreds of staff rehabilitation therapists of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) were honored at a special event marking National Rehab Week on Sept. 22 in midtown Manhattan.

The organization's 550 physical and occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists were invited from across the New York metropolitan area to celebrate their professions and their work with patients and colleagues at VNSNY, a nonprofit home health care agency founded in 1893.

Joseph Gallagher, PT, DPT, VNSNY's manager, rehab professional practice, served as emcee for the event, which featured a keynote speech by Jonathan Whiteson, MD, chief of cardiopulmonary rehab at Rusk Rehabilitation and an assistant professor of rehab medicine at New York University Medical Center.

"Nowadays, for so many of our patients, cardiovascular diseases have become chronic conditions, rather than a death sentence," said Whiteson, a British-born physician who also hosts a weekly medical radio program. "Many of our rehab patients are finding ways, with your help, to improve function and their quality of life."

Whiteson spoke on the history of rehabilitation medicine -- tracing its roots to injured servicemen who returned from World War II -- and also talked about the 121-year history of VNSNY. He noted that VNSNY rehab therapists play a significant role in the "continuum of care" that enables New Yorkers who suffer strokes, pulmonary or Alzheimer's disease to live safely at home in their communities.

The celebration also included talks by VNSNY staff therapists in all three disciplines and nurses with whom they collaborate, as well as remarks by VNSNY SVP and Chief of Provider Services Regina Hawkey, MPA, RN, NE-BC. Awards were presented to VNSNY's PT, OT, and SLP of the Year, and poster presentations and recently published articles by VNSNY rehab staff members were displayed at



Keynote speaker Jonathan Whiteson, MD, traced the roots of rehabilitation to injured World War II soldiers.

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the reception that followed the formal program.

Highlights of the 2014 VNSNY National Rehab Week event included:

-- Awards to VNSNY's PT of the Year Ibijoke Betty Ayetiwa, MS, PT, who works in Staten Island; OT of the Year Rudolf Yakutelov, OT, a Russian-speaking therapist in Brooklyn; and SLP of the Year Sharon Lopez, SLP, who specializes in pediatric care and works with patients and families in Westchester County;

-- Whiteson's speech on how home care rehab therapists support his work with outpatients at NYU Medical Center and Rusk Rehabilitation;

-- A presentation by a VNSNY PT, OT, and SLP on how they collaborate with one another to perform Medicare reassessments, and talks by two VNSNY nurses on how they work with rehab therapists on interdisciplinary care teams;

-- A slideshow showing the faces of many members of VNSNY's rehab therapy staff, set to the music of the song "Home," by popular singer and 2012 American Idol winner Phillip Phillips.

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Rita Ruel is communications manager for VNSNY.



SVP and Chief of Provider Services Regina Hawkey; Serena Berger, OT; VNSNY SLP of the Year Sharon Lopez; VNSNY OT of the Year Rudolf Yakutelov; Manesh Borkar, PT; and Joseph Gallagher, DPT.

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