

FrontLine FOCUS

A Newsletter from the Visiting Nurse Service of New York

FALL
2007

VNSNY's new TeleHealth program brings a sea change in patient monitoring

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Anna, a 90-year-old VNSNY patient requires frequent transfusions for anemia. In the past, she was unable to determine when she needed to get to the doctor, and as a result, she found herself in the emergency room often. Now Anna is able to monitor her own vital signs—the fluctuations in heart rate and blood pressure and drops in oxygen saturation—that let her know it is time to make an appointment with her physician. Now Anna receives transfusions in a more timely manner and is able to stay out of the hospital.

Anna is one of the first set of VNSNY patients to receive a TeleHealth monitor, an electronic device that is placed in patients' homes, allowing them to check their heart rate, temperature, oxygen saturation level, blood pressure, weight, and



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Access VNS New York

The results of the 2006 VNSNY employee opinion survey were clear: Staff want increased communication between and within programs and departments.

The result is **Access VNS New York**, a series of podcasts (brief audio files) that are available to listen to on the VNSNY Intranet.

"We realized that podcasting was a great way to reach a dispersed audience, raise the level of communication, and get people connected with the organization's strategic



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TeleHealth continued

glucose level. VNSNY established the TeleHealth monitoring program to identify patients at risk for re-hospitalization and emergent care and provide more timely interventions.

Each day, patients use the monitoring device to transmit their results through a telephone line to a VNSNY TeleHealth coordinator based in the Bronx. Patients have individualized monitoring parameters assigned to them, and if their results fall outside of the parameters, the TeleHealth coordinator is alerted to contact the patient for a follow-up telephone assessment. Based on that assessment, a nursing visit may be made, or the patient may be referred to the physician's office and/or emergent care as necessary.

"Our goal is to catch subtle changes, such as a pattern of increased blood pressure, so we can intervene early and the patient doesn't have to go to the hospital," says **Eileen Campbell**, Regional Administrator for the Bronx, emphasizing that the use of TeleHealth is a transformational change for VNSNY, one that will help avoid many hospitalizations in the future.

The adoption of TeleHealth grew out of a 500-patient pilot study that took place among two VNSNY teams in



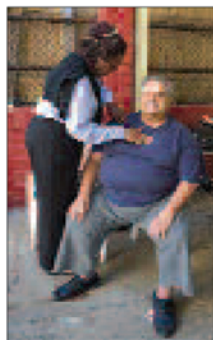
the Bronx from December 2004 to May 2007. All new patients regardless of diagnosis were

screened for TeleHealth. Data was then analyzed to determine what types of patients would benefit most from use of the technology. The pilot was phenomenally successful, yielding statistically significant results. It showed that some patients—those with hypertension and heart failure—benefited from reduced rates of re-hospitalization and emergency-room use, and also had a shorter length of stay when they did need to be hospitalized.

"Because of the success of the pilot in helping us achieve some very favorable outcomes, a decision was made to expand this to all acute-care patients in the Bronx and Westchester," says **Nancy Mellos**, organizational development specialist, who played a supporting role in the TeleHealth launch.

Rollout of the expanded TeleHealth program to the Bronx and Westchester began officially on June 19th, and by the end of July, 100 patients had received a monitor. A total of 400 monitors are being made available for use by both regions.

“Our goal is to catch subtle changes, such as a pattern of increased blood pressure, so we can intervene early and the patient doesn't have to go to the hospital.”



Our patients use the TeleHealth monitoring device to transmit their results through a telephone line daily.

“All new acute-care, non-managed-care patients in the Bronx will have their risk for hospitalization evaluated, and if they are deemed to have a certain level of risk and meet specific placement criteria, they are provided with TeleHealth so that we can more effectively monitor them and intervene promptly for early signs of clinical deterioration,” says **Mary Jo Vetter**, Director of Clinical Practice and Innovation. “For most patients in the Acute Care program, TeleHealth will be used on a short-term basis until clinical stability is achieved or the patient is able to self-manage.”

Because a risk-assessment tool proved effective in determining which types of patients would benefit most from TeleHealth, that model is being applied for all non-managed care admissions in the Bronx and Westchester Acute Care. The success of this approach will aid in determining how the benefits of telemonitoring may be expanded to other regions. In addition, a 30-person pilot study is under way among chronic care VNS CHOICE patients.



Although some older patients are resistant to the new technology, for them, once they learn how to use the equipment, it gives them a great sense of comfort in knowing there is a nurse at our Bronx location watching out for them.



“TeleHealth is actually very simple to use,” says Nancy. “Although some older patients can be resistant to technology, once they learn the basics, it gives them an extra sense of comfort knowing there is a nurse at a remote location watching out for them.”

“Nurses already are reporting a number of success stories where early detection of subtle changes in their patients’ conditions prevented the previously inevitable re-hospitalization.”



The TeleHealth software also creates trend reports based on data received, so a clinician can be alert to developing clinical patterns and watch a patient’s progress on a longer-term basis. Working with TeleHealth’s manufacturer, Viterion, VNSNY will be involved in the product’s continuous improvement.

Spearheaded by VNSNY Chief Operating Officer **Joan Marren**, TeleHealth is helping VNSNY to meet a series of important objectives. Among them, the system will help VNSNY to continually improve care in the growing era of “pay-for-performance.” Moreover, as technology-savvy baby boomers age, it will improve VNSNY’s ability to help them age in place and manage their own health care.

Telehealth continued

The role of the Telehealth coordinator

Currently, three nurse TeleHealth coordinators monitor patients seven days a week. The TeleHealth coordinator, explains **Christina Coons**, TeleHealth clinical nurse specialist, becomes an added member of the healthcare team, collaborating with a patient's direct care providers and serving as a clinical resource to coordinators of care in managing the patient's plan of care.

"The TeleHealth coordinator is the central person who receives a great deal of information and can access resources to improve outcomes," says Ms. Vetter. Because she receives information on a daily basis, the coordinator can assist the nurse or the therapist and take the opportunity to intervene before deterioration occurs."

While the adoption of a new modality of care can be challenging, Ms. Campbell says that nurses already are reporting a number of success stories where early detection of subtle changes in their patients' conditions prevented the previously inevitable rehospitalization.

Adds Christina Coons, "The great benefit is that, now, we can direct resources in a more efficient direction."

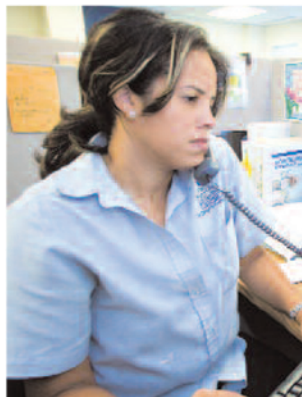
For VNSNY, which strives to be ahead of the curve in integrating electronic-care options, TeleHealth represents a significant advance.



The TeleHealth monitor is smaller than a laptop computer and prompts patients not only to check their vital signs but to answer a series of health-assessment questions, which can be programmed in a number of languages. Patients enter their answers right into the machine by pushing the appropriate buttons. The device then transmits not only vital signs but the answers to the questions back to the Central Station.

“As technology-savvy baby boomers age, it will improve VNSNY’s ability to help them age in place and manage their own health care.”

"The future vision is that it will be a virtual-care option offered to a generation of seniors who are going to want many options to remain at home as they age," says Ms. Vetter.



Telehealth coordinators monitor patients seven days a week. Above: Telehealth coordinators,

“Meet the Leaders,” features interviews with VNSNY senior leaders designed to help the larger VNSNY community better understand the roles of various programs/departments. The goal is to help people understand our leaders’ visions for the future and who they are as people,” ”

objectives” says **Cindy Morgan**, Director of Organizational Development, who created the podcasts and serves as the host of the premiere podcast series, “Meet the Leaders.” “Meet the Leaders” features interviews with VNSNY senior leaders designed to help the larger VNSNY community better understand the roles of various programs/departments.

“The goal is to help people understand our leaders’ visions for the future and who they are as people,” says Cindy.

Access VNS New York was launched across the agency on September 18th and featured Jeanne Dennis, execu-

tive director of the VNSNY Hospice Program, as the guest on Meet the Leaders.

A second podcast series, **Cutting Edge@VNS**, will be launched in October 2007. Each segment will highlight a key initiative at the agency, telling the story about how it will impact employees and patients, and keep VNSNY on the cutting edge of the health care industry. The first Cutting Edge podcast will feature the VNSNY Onboarding Tools and Process.

New content and additional series will be launched regularly. Be sure to check out the Access VNS Podcast tab at the top of the VNSNY Intranet home page.

Strategic Frontiers helps leaders to grow

In early September 2007, VNSNY launched Strategic Frontiers, a new executive development program for the agency’s senior leaders. Strategic Frontiers aims to support our senior leaders in being more effective in their current roles and also in enhancing their skills for future potential roles. In addition, it aims to facilitate social networking and cross-fertilization of ideas across the organization. Fifty staff members enrolled in the first set of offerings, according to **Cindy Morgan**, Director of Organizational Development.

“What is unique about this program, is that it is very flexible, enabling executive staff to enroll in the classes that meet their unique development needs,” Cindy explains.

This program targets nearly 200 senior leaders at the Assistant Director, Associate Director, Controller, Regional and Program Administrator, Executive Director, and Vice President level. The class offerings primarily focus on three critical leadership competencies: **1)** Strategic thinking and management, **2)** innovation, and **3)** interpersonal effectiveness. The offerings also support the development of other critical leadership competencies, such as communication skills, building a diverse high-performing team and customer focus.



Cindy Morgan,
Director of
Organizational
Development

Strategic Frontiers builds on the success of both the **VNS Leadership Forum**, a well-established speaker series on business and leadership topics, and the recently launched discussion series, **Leadership Study Group**, which covers a diverse set of leadership topics, including change management, staff retention and engagement, and leadership styles. Strategic Frontiers provides additional new offerings, such as one-day senior leader courses taught by outside experts on topics such as strategic thinking, organizational savvy, innovation and interpersonal leadership.

“ We are trying to create a culture of development here — growing yourself leads to growing your staff. ”

Participants who attend two VNSNY Leadership Forums, three Leadership Study Groups and three Senior Leader Course Offerings will be eligible for a certificate of completion.

“We are trying to create a culture of development here,” Cindy says. “Growing yourself leads to growing your staff; leaders’ participation in Strategic Frontiers models a commitment to personal growth and skill enhancement for their staff.”

“The great thing about the program is that, while we encourage people to earn their certificate, it’s also flexible enough that you can take just one offering and gain something valuable,” says **Jennifer Glueck Bezoza**, Talent Development Specialist in the Organizational Development Department.

In rolling out the program, VNSNY asked senior leaders to build a course based on the development plan that they’ve agreed upon. Cindy acknowledges that some managers are natural leaders, and those tend to be the people who want to enhance their leadership skills the most.

“So far, the reception to Strategic Frontiers has been very favorable from all levels of staff,” Cindy says.

Carol Odnoha: Our First Winner of *New York Times* Tribute to Nurses

This year, for the first time, a VNSNY nurse — **Carol Odnoha** — has won the highly competitive *New York Times* Tribute to Nurses competition. Carol, the Director of Maternity, Newborn, Pediatrics, and the Nurse-Family Partnership, will be profiled in a special section of *New York Times Magazine* on Sunday, December 9th and filmed for a video biography to be posted on the 2007 *New York Times* Tribute to Nurses website:



http://nytjobmarketonline.com/tribute_to_nurses/

A 750-word nomination, that was submitted by Ilaina Edison, Vice President of Operations, described how Carol Odnoha’s “professionalism, attentiveness, clinical skill, initiative and compassion have made a difference in someone’s life.” It began as follows: “When Carol Odnoha celebrated 25 years with Visiting Nurse Service of New York this year, our President and Chief Executive Officer, **Carol Raphael** called her a “role model for nurses in community service and a champion for children and families in need.” Ms. Raphael praised Carol’s “significant achievements in expanding and strengthening programs for children and improving the lives of many New York families.”

“Carol’s known and greatly admired by colleagues within VNSNY and our partners in government and the community,” Ms. Raphael added. “Nurses who report to Carol also sing her praises, viewing her more as mentor than supervisor.”

The fifth annual *New York Times* Tribute to Nurses honors “America’s most dedicated and indispensable professionals.” Three nurses and a nurse-educator who “have had an impact” were selected among thousands of candidates nominated by colleagues, patients and their families, students, and medical organizations in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. Winners were chosen by a committee of nursing professionals from major U.S. educational institutions and trade organizations. — by S. Rita Ruel, Communications Manager, Human Resources

VNSNY Club Keeps Former Patients Connected

VNSNY always hopes that once its patients have been discharged from home care, they will remain healthy for the long term. Yet in reality, many people with chronic illness will require care again, often following a hospitalization. Who decides which agency will provide them with home care?

"Patients usually follow the lead of the hospital discharge planner," explains **Peggy Taber**, Director of the Customer Care Center. "We want to make sure that if our patients have future home care needs, they will remain loyal to us."

To maintain its connection with former patients, VNSNY launched the VNSNY Club as a pilot program in June 2006. The brainchild of **Elaine Keane** and **Paul Roth**, Vice Presidents of Business Development and Operations, respectively, it is a combined outreach effort of the Customer Care Center, and Business Developments' **Dee Kelly** and **Adina Kolatch**.

By December 2006, the Club recruited 52 members, selected from among VNSNY's former patients in Washington Heights. Nurses invited them to join based on their likelihood of having another hospitalization or need for additional homecare. (Patients' predominant diagnoses are diabetes, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and congestive heart failure.) The neighborhood was targeted because VNSNY customers there had a lower rate of returning to the agency compared with those in other neighborhoods. Among the benefits of membership is a bi-weekly phone call from a customer service representative, who checks on members' health status and provides information about health-promotion activities in their communities such as blood pressure screenings. Members also receive a newsletter, birthday and get well cards.



"People love being members of the VNSNY Club, and some have become involved with other VNSNY programs," says **Janice Schiavone**, Manager of the Customer Care Center.

Jasmine Martinez, who is bilingual, makes the bi-weekly calls to members, 31 percent of whom speak Spanish. If any of the trigger questions are answered "yes," she asks follow-up questions. Often she encounters patients who are having problems but do not want to bother their doctors. Each patient has signed a consent form allowing Jasmine to contact the doctor and convey important information.

The club serves a dual purpose. The regular contact with VNSNY keeps the agency in the forefront of patients' minds. It also is an opportunity for the Customer Care Center to spot emerging problems, to keep people out of the hospital.

"When we've called patients, asking them how they are feeling and whether anything has changed, we've identified many who were deteriorating and have got them back on care," says Peggy. By the end of 2006 23% of the Club members had gone back to receiving VNSNY home care, avoiding emergency room visits and hospitalization.

As of May 2007, the pilot had expanded to 91 patients in the Bronx, Westchester, and Nassau County, and it aims to have 300 patients enrolled by the end of the year.

"Competition for home care in New York City is very fierce," says Peggy. "The VNSNY Club is something we've never tried before, and it is already showing a great deal of promise in keeping patients with us."

Diverse "Class of 2007" Completes VNSNY's BSN Internship Program

By S. Rita Ruel, Communications Manager, Human Resources

Twenty-one graduates of Visiting Nurse Service of New York's yearlong transition-to-practice internship program for recent BSN graduates were honored at a September 12th "commencement" ceremony at VNSNY headquarters in Manhattan.

This year's graduates were recruited from 12 nursing programs and are fluent in 10 languages. Ten are second-career professionals, coming to home care nursing from careers as diverse as civil engineering, environmental advocacy, and labor organizing. They have worked in locales as far away as Haiti and Peru's Amazon region. The group includes three male nurses: a former U.S. Air Force helicopter combat medic, a retired New York City Fire Department battalion chief, and a computer software programmer.

This fall, VNSNY launched an Associate Degree in Nursing Internship Program in Home Health Nursing with a grant from the Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence. In a highly competitive selection process, eight nurses who are entering professional practice with associate degrees in nursing were chosen to participate in the new year-long internship.

VNSNY's BSN Internship Program was established in 2001 to promote the successful transition of recent baccalaureate-degree graduates from student to professional home care nurse. BSN Interns are employed as VNSNY staff nurses, at full pay with full benefits, as they learn the



BSN Intern Christopher Frank and Manhattan Clinical Advisor Marion Marley. Christopher is a former U.S. Air Force helicopter combat medic, who also trained as an Army combat scuba diver and freefall parachutist.

specialty of home health nursing under the guidance of a dedicated clinical advisor. Interns are provided with one-on-one field supervision and complementary instruction that addresses the learning needs of the nursing novice, and they collaborate on a daily basis with experienced colleagues on interdisciplinary service teams. Earlier this year, the BSN Internship Program

curriculum was enhanced with the integration of evidence-based practice, related to the interns' patient populations, which encompasses a broad range of diagnoses, acuity levels, and healthcare needs.

The Visiting Nurse Service of New York congratulates the 21 BSN Interns who successfully completed the 2007 internship program



- Ingrid M. Andersson
Bronx Acute Care
- Tricia N. Best
Brooklyn Acute Care
- Ann Harper Campbell
Manhattan Visiting MD
- Kei Cheung Chow
Manhattan Acute Care
- Jessica DeFalco
Brooklyn Congregate Care
- Suhana DeLeon-Sanchez
Manhattan Acute Care
- Clarelle Dieuveuil
Brooklyn Acute Care
- Nicole Dittrick
Bronx Acute Care
- Marie Lutta G. Exantus
Bronx Acute Care
- Christopher Frank
Manhattan Visiting MD
- Parvaneh Gabbay
Bronx Acute Care
- Stacy Gale
Brooklyn Acute Care
- Alina Grineva
Manhattan Congregate Care
- Elizabeth Jones
Manhattan Visiting MD
- Yelena Kulish
Brooklyn Congregate Care
- Hinda Lemdani
Brooklyn Acute Care
- Edward P. Moriarty
Manhattan Visiting MD
- Maryse Pyram
Manhattan Congregate Care
- Tara Rahim
Brooklyn Acute Care
- Maife Santillan
Bronx Acute Care
- Leina Weisenfeld
Bronx Acute Care

VNSNY News

Congratulations to the Research Center — “Exploring the Utility of Automated Drug Alerts in Home Healthcare”, an article that was written by **Penny Feldman** (Vice President for Research and Evaluation), **Margaret McDonald** (Research Associate), **Robert J. Rosati** (Director Outcomes Analysis and Research), **Christopher Murtaugh** (Associate Director, Home Care Policy and Research), **Christine Kovner** (Associate Professor, Division of Nursing, NYU) **Judith D. Goldberg** (Professor and Director, Biostatistics, NYU School of Medicine) and **Lori King** (Research Analyst) and which appeared in the January/February issue of the Journal for Healthcare Quality, was selected as winner of the Journal’s 2007 Golden Pen Award. Robert Rosati accepted the award on behalf of the authors at the National Association for Healthcare Quality Education Conference in Boston on September 10.

Teaching — **Jacob Victory** (Director Operations, Rehabilitation Services) recently accepted an adjunct faculty position at NYU for the Fall Term in 2007. He is co-teaching a graduate level class on “Public Administration Management” at NYU’s Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service. Jacob has also written two business case studies on “accountability” and “integration” that have been accepted for publication in a health administration textbook.

Press-Ganey Quality Control “Success Stories” Award — In 2007, VNSNY was selected as one of only 20 national finalists nationwide in the 2008 “FORTUNE 100 Best Companies to Work For” competition and the “Best Places to Work in New York” competitions. Results will be announced early next year.

Published — **Dr. Lyla Correo**, the Hospice Team physician in the Bronx, and **Linda Santiago**, RN, Hospice Team Manager in the Bronx, co-authored a chapter in the book *Case Management Society of America Core Curriculum for Case Management: Second Edition* (Wolters Kluwer/ Lippincott). The title of their chapter: “Case Management in the Palliative Care and Hospice Settings”. The chapter outlines the difference between Palliative Care and Hospice. It also describes how case management is applied to hospice along with patient identification and criteria for palliative care versus hospice services.

Prize Photo — **Roni Chastain**, RN, had a photo that won first prize in *Newsday*’s annual photo contest, *Act 2*. Titled “Generations,” the photo is of Roni’s mother hand, holding her grandson’s feet when he was 3 days old. *Newsday* received 766 submissions for the contest.



News from Volunteer Services — This fall marks the sixth year of the Intergenerational Program at the VNS CHOICE Adult Day Center. Once a month during the school year, a fifth grade class from PS 229 visits the Center. The goals of the program are two-fold: (1) to educate and sensitize young people about the aging process; and (2) to bring visitors to our senior VNS CHOICE Adult Day Center patients who may be isolated or do not have the opportunity to spend time with children. The fifth graders and seniors participate in activities



The activities that the fifth graders and seniors participate in include art projects, word games, creative writing, charades, yoga, singing, dancing, and movement games



such as art projects, word games, creative writing, charades, yoga, singing, dancing, and movement games designed to encourage as much interaction as possible between the children and

seniors, including the last class which is a talent show put on by the class. The students sing, dance, tell jokes and recite original poems.

Three VNSNY Managers Are Among the First Graduates of the GNYHA/Baruch Health Care Leadership Institute



Health Care Leadership Institute graduates Patricia Wilson, Richard Akobi, & Jacqueline Gibbons

Patricia Wilson, Regional Account Director/Brooklyn, Business Development; **Jacqueline Gibbons**, Clinical Manager, Referral Services; and **Richard Akobi**, Clinical Director, Long Term Home Health Care Program/ Brooklyn, were among the 62 graduates of the first class of the Health Care Leadership Institute honored at a reception back on June 18.

The goal of the Institute, which is co-sponsored by the Greater New York Hospital Association (GNYHA) and CUNY's Baruch College School of Public Affairs, is to increase racial and ethnic diversity in health care leadership. During the 10-month pilot of the Institute's management development program, participants learned about subjects as diverse as healthcare finances, the regulatory environment, informatics and technology, organizational communication, workforce and patient cultural diversity, and strategic planning. Monthly lectures and discussions were led by local health care executives, academics, and other subject matter experts.



VNSNY *In the News*

Annelisa Purdie, a Brooklyn RN, was recently featured in a *New York Times* article about how VNSNY nurses continue to soldier on, despite our nation's squeezed healthcare system. *Forbes Magazine* reported on a new initiative by the **Center for Home Care Policy and Research** to develop a national framework for guiding geriatric home care practice. *The Wall Street Journal* featured a story on how nurses are accompanying people during leisure travel and quoted Partners in Care President **Marki Flannery**. And the *Times Ledger* ran a great story about our **Meals on Wheels** program in Queens. And all this was just in the month of August! Read these articles and check out all the latest stories about VNSNY that have appeared in magazines, newspapers and on television by visiting the VNSNY *In the News* section on the home page of our Intranet.

Carol Raphael Named One of New York City's 25 Most Powerful Women

Crain's New York Business, has named Carol Raphael, Chief Executive Officer and President of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, one of the 100 Most Influential Women in NYC Business. The Business weekly also named Ms. Raphael as one of the Power 25, an elite group of women who wield the most clout in their fields. The story appeared in the October 1st issue of the *New York Daily News*, which you can read by going to our *In the News* section.





Letters

to the Visiting Nurse Service of New York

Manhattan

A Wonderful Representative

I am writing about my nurse who is a member of Team 6. Her name is **Jessica Ruggiero**. Not only is she the most wonderful representative of your organization, she is also kind and considerate and respectful of her patients, especially when you tell her that you're in pain.

I find Ms. Ruggiero to be creative in her work and is no slave to convention. Nurse Ruggiero pays attention and is able to work within the parameters set forth by VNSNY. She is ever so careful to do her best work to accommodate her patient.

Although I know it is not necessarily a part of her job, Ms. Ruggiero is surprisingly and delightfully funny! What an unexpected treat for someone in my position.

Ms. Ruggiero is currently nursing me back to health, after I had a rather involved surgery which entailed my having a hysterectomy, an umbilical hernia repair, and a small bowel resection as well.

Needless to say, I was left confused, traumatized, and broken by the whole experience... I cannot tell you how it makes me feel to know that when these things happen in one's life, we can count on VNSNY to be there. I want you to know that my heart is so thankful that in my time of need Ms. Ruggiero was there to make my quality of life just a little better. My family and I extend our warmest wishes to Ms. Ruggiero. Thank you and the **Team 6 crew** for all the good and faithful services you provide for others like me all over.

*With the warmest regards,
Denise B., Manhattan*

The Best

I was so pleased to have **Atiola Barrow** as my nurse. She is truly a professional "hands on" nurse. I felt she had my interest at heart, and that is priceless for someone who needs medical follow-up care. Thank you for sending the best.

*Sincerely,
Beulah R., Manhattan*

Excellent Care

I would like to express our gratitude for the excellent care that my husband has been receiving through your agency. **Teresita Penaranda**, my husband's nurse, and other visiting team members have provided the best of care.

Regards,
Lydia B., Manhattan

Brooklyn

A Wonder

I am writing this letter to confirm something that you probably already know – your physical therapist, **Joanne Denisiuk**, is a wonder.

My 89-year-old mother had a mastectomy in June (the first major operation of her life), and I could see that my normally upbeat and optimistic mom was starting to doubt that she could ever manage on her own again. Then, one day, Joanne showed up and everything changed.

Joanne confidently told my mom that the goal was nothing less than getting back to full strength physically – maybe even better than before her surgery. She outlined her strategy and program for regaining arm strength and flexibility over coming weeks in such a focused and well-articulated way that I actually believed my mom had a fighting chance to regain her life. More importantly, mom believed.

Two to three times a week, Joanne would arrive and bring with her a unique blend of focus, knowledge, charm, humor and an absolute refusal to allow my mom to settle for less than the very best she could do that day. Joanne was able, over these weeks, to establish not only a bond based on trust and respect, but also on mutual caring and fondness. Joanne was always punctual, prepared and ready to work, and my mom responded big time.

After about a month of sessions, my mom's left arm functionality was just about where it was before the operation. In fact, I got a kick out of one moment in a movie theater when my mother, getting up from her seat, instinctively used her left arm to gain leverage!

During the last few weeks, up till the final session, Joanne focused exclusively on my mom's balance and leg

strength to better prepare her for a return to independent living – "A.J." (After Joanne). That, too, has been a great success, all the more impressive considering that Joanne did not have access to weights or equipment during in-home visits.

One last anecdote that says all you need to know about Joanne as a person. About two weeks ago, my mom had to cancel her session with Joanne due to a biopsy that had been set up for that day. A few days later, on a weekend, the phone rang at my mom's apartment. It was Joanne, just calling to inquire about the results of the biopsy. No other reason, just out of concern and care.

We are ever so thankful that Joanne entered my mother's life at the crucial and pivotal moment that she did.

Respectfully,
Gary S., New York, NY

Completely Satisfied

Wanted to thank the wonderful nurses **Valentina Mezheritskaya** and **Morcia West Celestine**, and physical therapist **Gunay Ardali**, who visited my husband. We were completely satisfied with their professionalism, care, concern and advice.

Thank you very much,
Mrs. M., Brooklyn

Goes the Extra Step

My RN, **Tengiz Epremashvili**, is the most competent and knowledgeable professional that I have ever met in the medical field.

He is compassionate and goes the extra step. I feel so lucky to have had him on my recovery. He is truly an asset to your organization.

Harry R., Brooklyn



Queens

Dramatic Progress

I am writing to thank the Visiting Nurse Service of New York for the wonderful, caring healthcare I am receiving. **Liew Eng Jim** is wonderful. I also want to rave about the physical therapy I received from **Faustino Paragas**. I had a total knee replacement at the end of July and through Faustino's wonderful and firm direction, I was off the walker nine days later and am now getting around great with my cane.

My progress has been so dramatic that my surgeon has moved the second knee replacement procedure forward 30 days. Thank you for your wonderful care and for Faustino. He was an unexpected gift which I am forever indebted to your services for.

Richard P., Queens, New York

Heartfelt Gratitude

I wish to convey my heartfelt gratitude to my wonderful nurse, **Annabelle Perri**. She came daily to change the packing and dressing on my wound. Her caring, expertise and skill eased not only my discomfort and anxiety, but also ensured that everything was taken care of. I am recuperating so well that I am allowed to return to work after one more week.

Thank you for having such a wonderful nurse on your staff.

*Sincerely,
Annette M., Queens*

Special Commendations

Special commendations to **Isabelita Flores**, an outstanding visiting nurse.

Isabelita is caring, kind, conscientious and a true professional. Isabelita represents what the word "nurse" means. She is an asset to your organization. From the first visit to the present, Isabelita has brought joy to me and my family. We are very pleased with what the Visiting Nurse Service of New York represents in every essence of the word. I thank God every day for Isabelita and your organization.

*Sincerely (with love),
Violet M., Queens*

Nassau

Above and Beyond

In the spring of 2005, following hip replacement surgery, our father was very fortunate to receive the services of **Tom Hurley** for his physical therapy needs. Tom's compassionate manner, encouraging words and professionalism went a long way to get our father back on his feet.

In January 2007, Dad suffered a setback with a strained back that left him bedridden. When we realized our efforts to get him mobile again were not working, and that the services of a therapist would be helpful, Dad would only agree to it if the therapist could be Tom. Our father was a very private and quiet man, and was not often comfortable accepting help from outside the family. However, Tom had impressed him so much back in 2005 that he readily agreed to therapy again on the condition of Tom being available. Fortunately for us, Tom was available and once again proved his dedication to his profession by his treatment of our father. On more than one occasion, Tom went above and beyond the role of a physical therapist to lend a hand.

*With sincere appreciation,
The M. Family, Nassau*

Wonderful and Professional Nurses

I can't thank you enough for sending such wonderful and professional nurses to our home.

From the moment **Lynette Hope** enters the door, we feel so comfortable knowing that my husband will get the utmost attention and care. It means so much to have an outstanding nurse like Lynette help us at such a difficult time in our lives. She examines my husband carefully and patiently answers all our questions. Not to mention that Lynette is always neat, clean and impeccably dressed.

When I first heard **Janet Harris** could no longer visit our home, I didn't know what I would do without her. She was an unbelievable caring nurse that would do anything she possibly could to help us cope with my husband's medical condition. If only there were more professional and caring nurses like Lynette and Janet!

*With sincere gratitude,
Ann M., Nassau*

Prompt, Professional and Therapeutic Care

Please accept my thank you for the prompt, professional and therapeutic care that my 7.5 cm. deep abdominal wound received from nurse **Anita Smith**. Her treatments sped me on the way to healing.

Henry G., Nassau

Staten Island

A Ray of Sunshine

A ray of sunshine walked into my home and my world is a brighter place because of her – her name is **Cherrisse Bunch**.

She exemplifies the professional qualities we search for in the nursing profession. Nothing is too much trouble – no question goes unanswered. Her soft voice, and kind, tender smile make all the difference in a world so unfamiliar to a patient. Even though I know she has many patients throughout the day, she has an uncanny way of making me feel not only that I am her only patient, but her most important one.

Cherrisse is a gift to all who are fortunate to know her, an extraordinary lady, wrapped in a sunshine smile.

Julia S., Staten Island

In Extremely Good Hands

In June, I had surgery which, subsequently, required the services of your group beginning the following day. It was my first experience with the Visiting Nurse Service of New York and **Betsy Clemente** was assigned to me. From the minute she walked into my home, I couldn't have felt more at ease and in extremely good hands.

Considering the nature of my surgical wound, I was unable to look at it for the first few weeks. But with Betsy's gentle and caring ways, along with her expertise, I immediately felt I could put my complete trust in her treatment of me. Betsy explained procedures as they changed, kept me informed of my progress and was so understanding of all my concerns. I told her that although I knew a nurse was coming to see me each day, I began to

feel like I was getting a visit from a special friend. Although I came to depend on her, at times, fill-ins were needed. I would be remiss if I didn't say that every one of the other nurses showed the same level of expertise and positive qualities, for which I am very grateful.

I know you are aware of the wonderful services your organization provides, however, it was, and is, so comforting to know that this kind of support is available to those in need. Again, my true gratitude to Betsy for all her help and many thanks to everyone at VNSNY who was involved in the outstanding care I was given.

*Sincerely,
Diane L., Staten Island*

Bronx

Superb Team

I am writing this letter as a commendation for the staff and nurses of **Team 11** of the Bronx regional program of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York.

I recently had surgery and when I left the hospital I went to stay with very dear friends in the Silver Beach area of the Bronx. Due to unforeseen complications, my surgery did not go according to plan, and I left the hospital with a colostomy, and open surgical wound, and feeling quite vulnerable. Needless to say, both my friends and I were very concerned about how we were going to handle this situation.

Not to worry—your visiting nurses were absolutely wonderful, from my assigned nurse, **Joanne White** to **Eileen Guzman** (who was a tremendous help in teaching me how to deal with the colostomy), to all the weekend nurses (**Arlotte Martinez**, **Raquel Swarton**, **Jim Angher**). They were all blessings and helped make a very difficult situation for me much more tolerable.

My compliments also to the staff that answered the phone when I called. They were unfailingly courteous and helpful. I include in this visiting nurse **Anita Wolfe**.



You really have a superb team and I wanted to tell you – and them – know how very much all their efforts and hard work is appreciated. I am scheduled for a reversal of the colostomy in October and I know that my concerns about recovery will be eased by the care of your team.

Sincerely,
Rosemarie W, Westchester

Sincere Gratitude

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to nurse **Allyson Johnson** for her diligent, caring, tender and humane approach as she guided us in the caring of our aged father.

We were greatly impressed by her professionalism. She kept checking his condition by phone when she was not here in person.

Yours truly,
Cynthia S., Bronx

Exemplary Care and Compassion

I recently had spinal surgery and I was extremely fortunate to receive care from the Visiting Nurse Service of New York.

I highly commend your staff nurse **Alma Rosado** and physical therapist **Narciso Sison** for their exemplary care and compassion. I would see the commercials on TV and wonder if the service is like the TV commercials. It's better! These two people gave me the best care possible. They went above and beyond what their job required as far as caring, compassion, listening, encouraging, extending hope – I can go on and on. Please continue to hire and train people of such character.

I thank God and the Visiting Nurse Service of New York for giving me this service. These people lifted my spirits, which were very low. I was brought to tears and can only thank you over and over again.

With humble heart and deep sincerity,
Zinailoa S., Bronx

Westchester County

Excellent in Everything She Does

For some time we have been receiving the services of Ms. **Tara Creighton**, who regularly comes by to look after my wife. She is excellent in everything she does, and a pleasure for our family to have her help. Clean, punctual and very pleasant...your group can be proud to have such a representative.

Sincerely,
James O., Westchester

A Joy to Have In My Home

Ilona Alexander was the nurse in charge of **Team 73** and I was the patient requiring help. She so impressed me that I thought you'd like to know. She managed problems that occurred with warmth and, always, understanding, which helped greatly to solve matters.

She is a joy to have in my home and I commend her to you.

Sincerely yours,
Joel T., Yonkers

Corrections – In the last issue of FrontLineFocus, we erroneously reported that Janice Goldhaar won first place at the Silvercrest 3rd Annual Gold Classic along with Chris Palmieri, Evie Morrow and Timothy Lyon. In fact, it was Janice Verga, a per diem PSM in Queens Acute Care, who won the event along with Chris, Evie and Timothy. Regrettably, we also misspelled the name of Marie Crosswell, RN, in one of the Queens letters.

FrontLineFocus

FrontLineFocus, which is published by the Marketing Communications and Development Office, welcomes your comments, letters and articles. Please contact Michael Delaney: mdelaney@vnsny.org

 Visiting Nurse Service of New York
We Bring The Caring Home™

1250 Broadway
New York, New York 10021