

ROSARY HALL DONOR ESTABLISHES NAMED ENDOWMENT to help support uninsured and under-insured patients



Gary Storch

Gary Storch freely admits that he would not be alive today if it wasn't for Rosary Hall at St. Vincent Charity Medical Center. He started drinking at the age of 15 and came to Rosary Hall in the late 1970s at the age of 18. He was without health insurance and without money to pay for much-needed alcohol addiction treatment—and without hope.

At the time, he couldn't hold a job because he could not stop drinking. He would wake up shaking and throwing up, before heading to the store to get more liquor and repeat the cycle all over.

"I was hopeless in my own heart. I did not know what to do. I thought alcohol was what I needed to feel better. I needed help to stop," said Gary.

His realization led him to seek help at a treatment facility on Cleveland's near west side, but they were full. An employee there made a call to Rosary Hall, who accepted him despite his inability to pay. While at Rosary Hall for intensive inpatient treatment, he went through detox, attended group sessions, and discovered the power of prayer and spirituality.

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— Gary Storch

A Seed of Faith

"As a faith-based facility, Rosary Hall planted a seed of faith in me that a higher power would sustain me. Before, I would tell God how big my problems were. With the seed of faith planted, I started telling my problems how big my God is," Gary said.

After successfully completing the program, he started attending regular Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. He joined the U.S. Army about a year later and was stationed in Germany. A work-related injury led him back to self-medicating with alcohol. He eventually left the Army and again had trouble holding a job. He went back to AA meetings and returned to his faith.

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ROSARY HALL DONOR

Continued from front cover

On a trip to Nevada, Gary met his future wife Patty. He returned home, but they kept in touch and a year later, he returned to Nevada. Gary and Patty both shared a strong faith in God and were married in Las Vegas in 1992, where they lived for more than 20 years. Unfortunately, Patty passed away in 2013 from complications from diabetes. Gary returned to Cleveland not long after. He is now retired from the Army with a service-connected disability. In 2017, he wrote and published a book about addiction and AA, and chose to donate the proceeds to Rosary Hall. He recently wrote a check to Rosary Hall for \$2,000.

Gary, now 58, decided he wanted to do more to show his gratitude and approached Rosary Hall about giving half of his life savings to the program upon his death for patients that cannot afford the inpatient detoxification program or don't have insurance. Rather than waiting, he was moved to write a \$50,000 check a few days later to establish the Gary and Patty Storch Endowment at Rosary Hall.

Creating a Lasting Impact

The endowment creates a legacy that will last beyond Gary's lifetime, with investment income supporting uninsured and under-insured patients to help them get treatment.

“Gary’s gift to establish an endowment leaves a permanent legacy for both Gary and his late wife, Patty, and it will also have a tremendous impact on the patients we serve for many years to come.” — Mark Cotleur, Senior Vice President, Fund Development

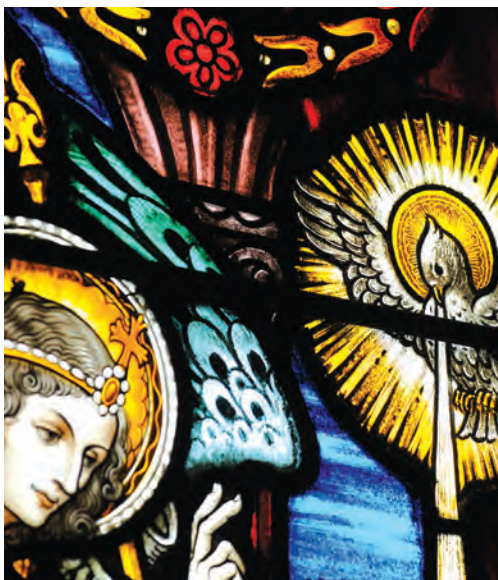
“Gary’s gift to establish an endowment leaves a permanent legacy for both Gary and his late wife, Patty, and it will also have a tremendous impact on the patients we serve for many years to come,” said Mark Cotleur, senior vice president, fund development, Sisters of Charity Health System. “St. Vincent Charity and Rosary Hall are worthy of generous philanthropic support. The legacy of caring and compassion at St. Vincent Charity extends back nearly 155 years, and the legacy of Rosary Hall extends more than 65 years. Through the establishment of the Gary and Patty Storch Endowment, they are now truly part of that wonderful legacy.”

Orlando Howard, director of outpatient treatment services/quality improvement at Rosary Hall, said Gary’s generosity reminds him of the parable of a man who had fallen in a hole and couldn’t get out. “People would walk by and say, ‘I’ll be right back with help.’ Finally one passerby jumped in the hole. The man in the hole asks, ‘Why did you jump in?

Now we’re both in trouble.’ The man who jumped in turns and says, ‘Because I’ve been here before and know how to get out,’” related Orlando. “Gary is a man who really remembers where he came from and where he was on that terrible day when he needed help. He knows his generous gift will help others get out of the same hole he was once in.”

Gary acknowledged that he has had missteps along the way, but he said Rosary Hall laid the foundation for where he is today, which is sober for more than four years, attending regular AA meetings and being able to leave a lasting legacy at the program that showed him much love many years ago.

“At Rosary Hall, I began working on what was wrong. I wouldn’t have freedom or be alive without it. The program does work and it starts with one step every day,” said Gary. “This gift is pure gratitude for the demonstration of charity and love that was shown to me and continues to be shown to the most vulnerable.” ■



About Rosary Hall

Rosary Hall at St. Vincent Charity Medical Center in Cleveland has been at the forefront of treating alcoholism and drug dependency for more than 65 years. At Rosary Hall, patients and their families find the road to freedom in a recovery process that's compassionate, comprehensive and one of the best in the country. In fact, Rosary Hall is the only addiction treatment center in the region to provide a full spectrum of the most current treatment options, from hospital detoxification to community-based rehabilitation to the latest medication-assisted treatments.

To reach Rosary Hall, call 216.363.2580 and press 4 to speak with a caregiver immediately.



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

During the coronavirus pandemic, we are guided by our long-held mission to treat every patient with clinical excellence and compassionate care. With your health as our priority, we assure you that St. Vincent Charity Medical Center facilities provide a safe place for you to receive care.

We understand the fears you may have of exposure to the coronavirus and urge you to follow CDC recommendations, including the use of face coverings and frequent hand washing, to help keep you safe. However, we urge you to not ignore your overall health during this pandemic.

Your health and that of your loved ones is too important to postpone regular preventative care, diagnostic tests and follow-up visits. In-person appointments are necessary in many cases for our doctors and caregivers to manage your health or diagnose and treat your condition. You can enter our facilities and physician offices with the confidence we at St. Vincent Charity are taking every precaution to keep you safe.

For your safety, we have implemented the following procedures:

- Providing caregivers with essential personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Screening all patients and caregivers, including temperature scan, as they arrive at our facilities
- Encouraging patients to wear face coverings throughout their visit
- Setting up offices and facilities to allow for proper social distancing
- Disinfecting all surfaces thoroughly and frequently
- Limiting the number of visitors to our facilities
- Implementing the use of telehealth appointments when appropriate
- Testing for the coronavirus for patients undergoing procedures

If your appointment or procedure was postponed due to this pandemic, you will be contacted in the near future by your physician's office, or hospital staff, to reschedule. In addition, our emergency department and psychiatric emergency department have remained open throughout this crisis and are adhering to our safety protocols to care for you during a medical emergency or mental health crisis. **Visit our website www.stvincentcharity.com for more information on how we are prepared to keep you and our caregivers safe.**

Our commitment to providing the highest quality patient care and treating each patient with dignity and respect has been the foundation of St. Vincent Charity throughout our history. These same principles, set forth by the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, are what guide us today as we navigate the challenges of this pandemic to provide you a safe, trusted environment to receive care.

We welcome you back and look forward to seeing you soon.

Many blessings,

Janice G. Murphy, MSN, RN, FACHE
President & CEO

YOUR HEALTH IS OUR PRIORITY

Let's get back on track – together

Your health is too important to ignore. Routine check-ups, tests and follow-up visits should not be postponed for an extended period of time. There are simple, proven ways to protect ourselves from the coronavirus: hand washing, face coverings and staying six feet apart. With these three things as our guiding principles, it's time to get back to what matters most—your health.

AVAILABLE SERVICES

St. Vincent Charity Medical Center is providing the following services:

- Surgeries and procedures requiring an overnight stay that are deemed medically necessary
- Surgeries and procedures that do not require a hospital stay
- Routine doctor visits and follow-ups (in-person or via telehealth)
- Diagnostic tests such as colonoscopies, endoscopies and more
- Imaging tests like CT scans and X-Rays
- Outpatient lab services
- Behavioral health and addiction treatment

If you had a surgery postponed or have been waiting to schedule your surgery, talk to your doctor.

KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE

- Providing all caregivers with essential personal protective equipment
- Screening all patients and caregivers for COVID-19 symptoms, including a temperature scan, before entering the facilities
- Providing patients with masks to wear throughout their visit
- Setting up physician offices and facilities to allow for social distancing
- Disinfecting all surfaces thoroughly and frequently
- Limiting the number of visitors to one person during procedures only

EMERGENCIES STILL HAPPEN AND NEED TO BE TREATED

Our emergency department and psychiatric emergency department continue to be open 24-hours a day, every day, to treat patients with urgent medical symptoms or mental health crises. All patients entering the emergency department are screened upon arrival, provided a

mask and triaged. Any patient who presents with respiratory symptoms is taken to a separate, private negative air pressure room. Our facilities are following enhanced cleaning and sanitizing processes dictated by the CDC, and waiting rooms have been rearranged to ensure proper social distancing.

APPOINTMENTS

Our caregivers will work with you to decide if an in-person appointment is necessary to diagnose and treat your condition or if the visit can be done via telehealth. If an in-person appointment is best for you, we assure you we are implementing extra precautions to keep you safe. **We want to see you.** For scheduled appointments, please contact your physician's office to discuss appropriate options.

If you have a fever, cough, diarrhea, shortness of breath or have been exposed to someone with confirmed COVID-19, we ask that you do not attend an in-person appointment and instead contact your primary care physician.

We welcome you back and look forward to seeing you soon.



ST. VINCENT CHARITY
MEDICAL CENTER

A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System

stvincentcharity.com

FEEL THE BURN?

St. Vincent Charity's new Center for Heartburn Can Help



St. Vincent Charity Medical Center recently opened the new Center for Heartburn and Swallowing Disorders. The center marks a careful coordination of often-related medical conditions—heartburn and swallowing disorders—and treats the disorders in one convenient location at St. Vincent's downtown Cleveland campus.

Heartburn is a painful, burning feeling in the chest caused by stomach acid that escapes the stomach and flows back into the esophagus, literally refluxing (flowing back) from the stomach back up into the esophagus. It can sometimes be mistaken for a heart attack, and some people experience acid reflux as a sensation of food sticking as they try to swallow. Other symptoms include chronic cough, hoarseness of voice and regurgitation.

"Heartburn or, as some refer to it, acid indigestion can range from very mild to quite serious and be indicative of a more serious problem," said Leslie Pristas, DO, medical director of the Center for Heartburn and Swallowing Disorders. "We are set up to diagnose and treat the condition quickly and effectively, no matter its severity."

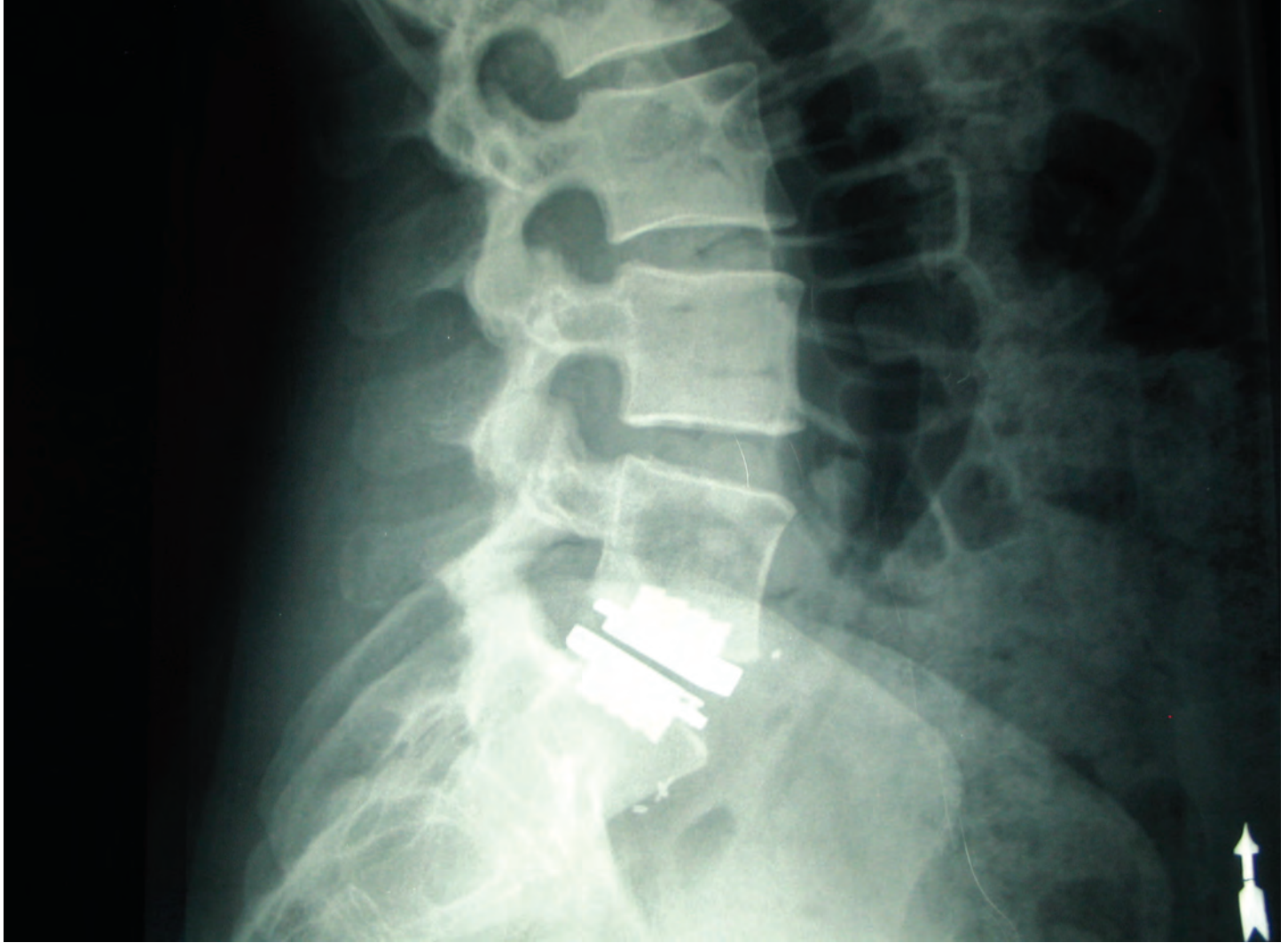
If the heartburn symptoms are severe and happening frequently, the medical condition may, in fact, be gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), which is estimated to afflict some 60 million people throughout the United States.

"Some reflux occurs normally, but the lining of the esophagus is not built to tolerate long or repeated exposure to this acid. When reflux becomes a problem—a disease—is when it begins to cause symptoms or damage to the esophagus," noted Roshni Venugopal, MD, a minimally invasive general and bariatric surgeon with the center.

Inflammation and erosion to the lining of the esophagus that occur over time can cause changes to the esophagus. The esophagus may scar and narrow, making the natural act of swallowing much more difficult. It may also cause damage that can progress to abnormal cells such as Barrett's esophagus or, even worse, esophageal cancer.

"We offer three very effective, minimally invasive laparoscopic surgical options for serious reflux. These surgeries, in fact, are proving to be more effective, long-term solutions when compared to taking antacid medications for the rest of your life and without the side effects of those medications," added Dr. Pristas.

Patients interested in learning more about the new center or in scheduling a consultation with one of the Center for Heartburn and Swallowing Disorder physicians may call 216.241.8102.



SPECIALIZED LUMBAR DISK REPLACEMENT

Relieves Back Pain, Preserves Mobility

Nearly 80 percent of American adults experience lower back pain at some point in their lives. While most will recover utilizing nonsurgical treatments, those with degenerative disk disease, spinal stenosis and other related conditions find spinal fusion surgery, which essentially welds the problematic disks into one bone, eliminates painful motion and restores stability in the spine. However, St. Vincent Charity Medical Center offers an effective alternative—lumbar disk replacement—for younger, healthy patients seeking to maintain mobility after surgery.

While spinal fusion permanently joins two vertebrae together, lumbar disk replacement substitutes a worn or degenerated disk in the lower part of the spine with an artificial disk made of metal or a combination of metal and plastic. The goal of the procedure is to relieve

lower back pain while, at the same time, maintain normal motion for patients.

St. Vincent Charity's Robert F. McLain, M.D., who worked with investigators in the first FDA trials on the procedure, is the recognized expert on lumbar disk replacement surgery in Northeast Ohio. Although the surgery was approved by the FDA for use in the United States in 2004, few surgeons provide lumbar disk replacement as an alternative because of the training and expertise required to successfully complete the surgery. In fact, Dr. McLain is the only surgeon in Northeast Ohio currently providing this innovative alternative to patients.

Lumbar disk replacement was the solution Steve Arce, a 38-year old local firefighter, was seeking for relief from lower back pain

so intense he could barely walk, forcing him to move from heavy duty on his job. While spinal fusion had been recommended to Steve, he knew he needed to maintain his mobility to be able to meet the physical demands as a firefighter. Steve's internet search for someone with the expertise to perform this specialized surgery brought him to Dr. McLain for a lumbar disk replacement.



Robert F. McLain, M.D.

“I feel healthy, excited to run every day and improve my eating habits—which then impacts my mood and behavior. “He laughed and, then added, “That makes my wife happier, too.” — Steve Arce



Firefighter Steve Arce with his children.

“When I found all of the papers and research he had developed on disk replacement surgery and saw all his credentials, I knew I had found the person with the right expertise,” Steve said. “Then, I met him and knew this was the right match. Dr. McLain spent 40 minutes with me at the first appointment, explaining everything in detail. He was very honest about expectations and he stressed that, in order for the surgery to be successful, I needed to do my part after surgery following through with therapy.”

Steve was thrilled to learn from Dr. McLain that he was the perfect candidate for lumbar disk replacement.

“It is important to look at each patient to determine which surgery is appropriate for that individual person,” Dr. McLain said. “For a patient like Steve, who is young, healthy and without severe arthritis, lumbar disk replacement is an excellent option to help them return to normal activities in a shorter amount of time. For older patients with more

degeneration of the spine, traditional fusion is the better option to relieve pain.”

In addition to age, ideal candidates for lumbar disk replacement include:

- Those with pain caused by only 1 or 2 disks in the lower spine;
- Those with a healthy weight;
- Those without previous spinal surgery; and
- Those without another spinal deformity, such as scoliosis.

To place the artificial disk, Dr. McLain approaches the spinal column from the front, through an incision in the abdomen, allowing access to the spine without moving the nerves. For added safety to the patient, Dr. McLain works in partnership with a vascular surgeon highly experienced with the procedure to navigate the organs and blood vessels to expose the disk space. He then removes the problematic disk and inserts the artificial implant into the disk space, which ultimately allows the vertebrae to rotate and move without the bones rubbing against each other.

Another benefit to disk replacement surgery is a shorter recovery and faster return to normal activity.

“Typically, spinal fusion patients have to wait 6 to 12 weeks—wearing a brace the entire time—before they can start bending. Sometimes they can’t go back to work for 3 months because they have to wait for the fusion to take,” Dr. McLain said. “With lumbar disk replacement, we have the patients up walking, moving and twisting—a little bit—right away and they don’t have to wear a brace. I have had disk replacement patients riding a bike 20 miles per day just weeks after surgery.”

For Steve, the results from the surgery have exceeded his expectations. When he woke up after surgery, the pain (which had been directly centered on his tailbone and extending down to his foot) was gone. Six months after surgery, he was back to full, heavy duty as a firefighter and able to lift and play with his children. He feels so strong that it has taken him back to his younger days in the military.

“This surgery has rekindled my feeling as a young private coming out of basic training, wanting to get after it every day,” Steve said. “I feel healthy, excited to run every day and improve my eating habits—which then impacts my mood and behavior. “He laughed and, then added, “That makes my wife happier, too.” ■



Steve Arce, back at work post-procedure, with his team.

The Spine & Orthopedic Institute at St. Vincent has helped thousands of people renew their lives and move beyond debilitating back, neck and joint conditions. We recently re-opened qualifying elective services on-site, and continue to offer telehealth. Learn more on page 3 and at stvincentcharity.com/spine-ortho. Your health and safety are our priority.

ST. VINCENT CHARITY

Begins Path to Integrated Care



St. Vincent Charity Medical Center welcomed Michael J. Biscaro, Psy.D., ABPP (Forensic) to the newly created post of chief of behavioral health. In this position since January, Dr. Biscaro serves an integral role in improving access for Rosary Hall detoxification and outpatient programs, inpatient adult and geropsychiatry, and psychiatric emergency department. Furthermore, he leads the clinical teams currently providing behavioral health and addiction services in a transformational effort to create an integrated and expanded continuum of services that addresses the holistic needs of patients.

“By welcoming Dr. Biscaro to St. Vincent, we’re gaining a national expert in the field of modernizing, innovating and integrating behavioral health practices,” said Janice G. Murphy, president & CEO, St. Vincent Charity Medical Center. “His experiences make him uniquely qualified to lead our program into the future and continue building on our successes in quality, evidence-based services.”

Dr. Biscaro has served at the VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System since 2009 in the roles of program director and team leader for the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC), and clinical



Michael J. Biscaro, Psy.D., ABPP (Forensic)

psychologist. He took on the expanded role of service line manager for peer support services in 2019 after completing leadership training through a multi-state Veteran Integrated Service Network Leadership Development Institute training program.

Dr. Biscaro has a special interest improving program access, most notably by implementing one of the first PRRC telehealth programs offering the full complement of services to Veterans in the Akron area. Dr. Biscaro now co-leads a national workgroup focused on developing standards for PRRC telehealth implementation. Through the implementation of telehealth programming, but also enhanced services for people with co-occurring addictions, the PRRC has more than doubled in its capacity and size.

“The VA is at the forefront of transformational, integrated health strategies. There, I have gained a great deal of experience and training in several evidenced-based therapies and program models, and have worked in almost every level of care with an extraordinarily wide-range of diverse individuals,” said Dr. Biscaro. “I’m excited to continue to grow. Like St. Vincent, I pride myself on developing quality, effective and innovative programs and services. I believe in the importance of building a sustainable organization; one that integrates services,

develops networks of care, and aims to implement policies, procedures and practices that strive to improve health outcomes.”

Dr. Biscaro holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology from John Carroll University, and a master’s degree and doctorate in clinical psychology from Xavier University. He completed his internship and post-doctoral residency in clinical psychology at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center.

In 2017, Joseph’s Home, the only homeless service provider in Northeast Ohio exclusively focused on medical respite care, named Dr. Biscaro as behavioral health director. Also,

“I have spent my entire career working with under-served populations because I believe they deserve the best, most effective and integrated treatments.”

— Michael J. Biscaro, Psy.D., ABPP (Forensic)

Dr. Biscaro consults with various behavioral health programs throughout the community to extend best practices and improve training.

“I have spent my entire career working with under-served populations because I believe they deserve the best, most effective and integrated treatments,” said Dr. Biscaro. “I look forward to continuing to serve our community through St. Vincent, where our tradition is rooted in the healing mission of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, and where we strive toward service excellence in managing the whole health needs of people struggling with addictions, mental health and complex medical challenges.” ■

About Behavioral Health & Addiction Treatment (Rosary Hall) at St. Vincent:

St. Vincent Charity Medical Center has been at the forefront of providing acute behavioral health and addiction care for more than half of a century. Rosary Hall offers convenient access to inpatient detoxification services and intensive outpatient addiction care for those living and working in the city, as well as surrounding suburbs.

Our psychiatric emergency department is one of only two in the state of Ohio, offering psychiatric care 24-hours a day. Staffed by a team of psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, social workers, peer recovery supporters and mental health technicians, the facility is known throughout the region for expertise in rapid assessment and triage of behavioral health conditions.

Additionally, inpatient psychiatry units offer safe and supportive environments for patients dealing with mental distress. Through a multidisciplinary approach, the behavioral health team of caregivers treats each person with respect while working together to provide the care and assistance needed for each individual to achieve treatment goals.



WE ARE PROUD TO

**WELCOME
NEW CAREGIVERS**

**TO OUR BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH TEAM,
INCLUDING:**

**Linda M. Cunningham, CNP
Annie Farris, CNP
Stephen R. Pessefall, CNP**

LOSING WEIGHT BEGINS WITH Understanding All Your Needs

We've all been there.

You're sitting in your doctor's office, perhaps for an annual physical, perhaps to have an illness or injury checked out by a specialist. You're already a little nervous as your "white coat syndrome" has already kicked-in and your blood pressure reading a few minutes earlier shows you borderline hypertensive.

But what you're really anxious about is the news that will soon come directly from your physician. You know it's coming and you ready yourself with an army of excuses.

"(Insert your name here), I'm getting a little concerned about your weight. I think you should be, too."

There it is. Like a ton of bricks being dropped on you from above, it hits you. *"I need to lose weight and I need to now!"*

But how do you do that when it seems that everything you've tried in the past has failed? Well, consider the following:

A February 1, 2020, article published in *Scientific American* made the argument that in many cases doctors need to focus less on a patient's weight and look more individually at things such as personal physiology and behavior. The article further states that one report discovered that a higher body mass index (BMI, the ratio of height to weight) "only moderately increased the risks for diabetes among healthy subjects" and that unhealthy thin people were twice as likely to get diabetes as healthy overweight people.

The editors also point out that, despite such findings, physicians routinely recommend



Leslie Pristas, DO, medical director, Center for Bariatric Surgery at St. Vincent Charity Medical Center

dieting for weight loss as means to address issues such as high cholesterol and insomnia in obese patients. They argue that doctors should stop pressuring all patients to lose weight and shift the focus away from weight because, unfortunately, as millions of American know, very few diets actually work in the long term.

"But just because diets don't work, doesn't mean we should ignore the significant effects of obesity," stressed Leslie Pristas, DO, medical director of the Center for Bariatric Surgery at St. Vincent Charity Medical Center in Cleveland, "Rather, we should be educating people about ways to lose weight successfully. Not only is obesity associated with a much higher risk of premature death, the overall cost to our economy is staggering."

In fact, a study completed by the Society of Actuaries showed that obesity costs the U.S. economy some \$270 billion per year. Further, obese individuals spend 42 percent more on



medical expenses and 77 percent more on medications per year than individuals of normal weight.

"No question, we need to closely examine the overall health of our patients, not simply body weight, when prescribing changes in their lifestyle," emphasized Dr. Pristas. Dr. Pristas, a surgeon who performs hundreds of bariatric procedures annually that drastically improve lives permanently, understands that looking at the overall health of the patient is vital before recommending bariatric surgery or a medical weight loss program.



“Bariatric surgery is not for everyone,” said Dr. Pristas. “But if we holistically examine each individual and completely understand their health needs, we can make a real, lasting difference. We are fortunate at St. Vincent’s to have several surgical and non-surgical weight loss options available for our patients.”

“The bottom line is that obesity is a significant problem throughout our society, but we can help...now,” concluded Dr. Pristas. “Our surgical options for those who qualify can prevent or cure numerous maladies,

including diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and sleep apnea. Our Bariatric Surgery program can also significantly

decrease the risk of certain cancers and, without question, add quality years to our patients’ lives.” ■

St. Vincent Charity Medical Center has been helping people lose weight for more than 20 years. The first nationally accredited Center of Excellence in Bariatric Surgery in Northeast Ohio, St. Vincent has helped more than 8,000 people achieve healthier lives through weight loss. To schedule a consultation with Dr. Pristas or one of our other highly skilled weight loss surgeons, call 216.592.2801.



15 YEARS AFTER DEGENERATED DISC REMOVAL, Patient keeps unfilled pain prescription in frame

Veronica Ringholz' journey began with a car accident in 2004. While she felt fine after the accident, months later she began passing out and losing strength in her arms and hands. The young, single parent struggled with daily activities at home to care for her son. And, she feared she wouldn't be able to continue

her job, which required regular travel across the country.

Living near Sandusky, Veronica sought the advice of a local surgeon, who identified a herniated—or bulging—disc that was preventing proper blood flow through the

spinal cord and placing pressure on her spinal nerves. Due to the severity of her condition, Veronica was scheduled for emergency surgery to trim the portion of the disc that was protruding into the spinal canal. Veronica was hopeful this was the solution she was looking for.



“I can never repay Dr. Collis for what he has done for me and words cannot express my gratitude. What he has done means more than he will ever know.”

— Veronica Ringholz

by looking at her that she was still suffering from tremendous pain.

They all said, “Veronica, something is wrong. This isn’t like you.” They suggested she needed to “go see this Dr. Collis in Cleveland.” Veronica later learned that St. Vincent Charity Medical Center Neurosurgeon Dr. John Collis has a strong, loyal following among her church family because of the positive results they or family and friends have had had with him. Some refer to it as the “Collis Club.”

The next day, Veronica called Dr. Collis’ office and quickly got in for an appointment. After a physical evaluation and an examination of the x-rays and MRIs, Dr. Collis told her, “Your pain is not in your head.”

“My parents were with me at that appointment and as soon as we heard Dr. Collis say there was something wrong and it was not in my head, we were filled with emotion and began to cry. Finally, we found someone who believed me and understood my pain,” Veronica said. “Dr. Collis took out his marker and began to draw for me what he saw was the problem. Then, he said he could fix it.”

While the degenerated disc with the herniation had been appropriately trimmed and fused in Veronica’s first surgery, Dr. Collis identified an additional degenerated disc, with no herniation, that had been overlooked and was the source of her continued suffering.

As soon as Veronica woke up from surgery to remove the degenerated disc, she no longer felt pain. And, even though Dr. Collis wrote her a prescription for any post-surgical pain,

Veronica never filled it. Remaining pain-free even 15 years later, Veronica had the prescription framed, where it hangs on her office wall as a reminder that her symptoms “were not all in my head.” Her condition was real and Dr. Collis took the time to listen to her and fix her problem.

To demonstrate her gratitude, Veronica now serves on a leadership board at St. Vincent Charity to help spread the word of the expertise at the hospital’s Spine and Orthopedic Institute, where Dr. Collis serves as the co-medical director with Dr. Louis Kepler. She even took Dr. Collis to church with her, where he was met with a long line of former patients and family and friends of patients who waited to hug and thank him for saving their lives or those of the ones they love.

“In the bible, it says that King Solomon was the wisest man to ever live. However, I joke that I think Dr. Collis could be a close second,” she shared. “I can never repay Dr. Collis for what he has done for me and words cannot express my gratitude. What he has done means more than he will ever know.” ■

Her hopes were shattered, however, when she continued to experience weakness and pain in her arms and numbness in her hands. An even more devastating blow came when she went back to her surgeon and was told, “It’s all in your head.” The doctor didn’t believe her that there was something still wrong.

Even today, 15 years later, Veronica becomes emotional sharing the devastation she felt at that moment. Fortunately, that is not where Veronica’s journey ends.

Shortly after that unfortunate appointment, Veronica arrived early for church one Sunday morning. Four friends separately approached her asking how she was doing. They could tell

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THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

Since the coronavirus began impacting Ohio, St. Vincent Charity Medical Center has received an amazing outpouring of generosity from our friends and supporters:

- In-kind gifts of food, hotel rooms and personal protective equipment (PPE) for caregivers
- Financial contributions to bolster our Employee Assistance Fund and to purchase PPE
- Many kind and encouraging messages, as well as countless prayers

Each and every gift has helped to ensure the wellbeing of our caregivers as they continue to serve bravely on the front lines of this pandemic.

More than \$75,000 has been given so far—not including the value of in-kind contributions. THANK YOU!

The board of directors and caregivers of St. Vincent Charity and the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine are extremely grateful to everyone who has helped us to weather this storm. May you be blessed by God for your thoughtful generosity!

WHY I GAVE TO THE ST. VINCENT CHARITY COVID-19 RESPONSE

“St. Vincent Charity takes care of those people in need of medical attention that other institutions turn away. St. Vincent is the last line of healing in the Cleveland area.” — Lou Duchez

“Our family could not be more proud to support one of the great hospitals in the city of Cleveland, St. Vincent Charity. We will continue to support this FIRST CLASS hospital.” — Robert “Bobby” DiGeronimo



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Ohioans have succeeded in flattening the curve. That's great news! However, St. Vincent Charity caregivers continue to experience an unprecedented level of challenge and hardship as we seek to provide our community with high quality, faith-based health care. Needs are high. Resources are low.

Please consider supporting us in our mission to care for our community in the spirit of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine.

Financial gifts and in-kind contributions of items such as PPE are welcome and will make a difference for a caregiver and their patients.

To find out how you can help or to make your gift today, visit stvincentcharity.com/giving. Or mail your check payable to St. Vincent Charity Development Foundation to: 2351 E 22nd Street, Cleveland, OH 44115.

To discuss the various ways to make a difference through philanthropy, contact Mark Cotleur, senior vice president of fund development, at **216.696.8401** or **MCotleur@Sistersofcharityhealth.org**.

SVC TODAY

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