

Monitoring and Treatment



WTC Health Program

# Responder News

Winter 2018

Dear Responders,

Happy New Year! All of us at the Long Island Clinical Center of Excellence wish you and your families a healthful and peaceful year.

We have much to be grateful here at the Long Island CCE. Most noteworthy, we have settled into our new home in Commack and this month will be opening additional clinical space at our Mineola location. With these expansions, we are better poised to see the growing number of responders that need monitoring and treatment services on Long Island.

At your next visit, you may also notice several new faces as we have hired additional providers, nurses, case managers and advocates. In September, two pharmacists joined our team: Drs. Amanda Eloma and Shannon Tellier. We are very excited to have their expertise to review your medications and answer your questions about dosage, effectiveness, side effects and interactions.

Looking to the year ahead, we are very happy to announce that we are planning our next annual WTC Family picnic in collaboration with the FeelGood Foundation. We will keep you posted as summer approaches.

Our member services teams are also planning a variety of group sessions for you to attend with your spouse or partner. These groups will focus on health-related topics relevant to the 9/11 responder community. Keep an eye out in your inbox or our Facebook page for announcements.

In closing, we sincerely wish you and your family an enjoyable winter. We look forward to seeing you at your next visit and thank you for your continued support of our Program.

Warmly,

Benjamin J. Luft, MD  
Director and Principal Investigator

# Long Island Clinical Center Honors those who Laid Foundation at Commack Clinic Open House

First responders to the 9/11 World Trade Center disaster, Stony Brook Medicine staff and community members gathered on November 28th for the grand opening of the new World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program Long Island Clinical Center of Excellence in Commack.

The grand opening also honored K. Melodie Guerrero, WTC Wellness Program's Deputy Director, who retired after 16 years of dedicated service.



Dr. Benjamin Luft, Director of the WTC Wellness Program, told the audience at the event how he and Guerrero began the program from the ground up. "Establishing a clinic from nothing requires absolute conviction that you're doing the right thing," he said, describing Guerrero as the right person for the job of shepherding the program's growth. "Thank you, Melodie," Dr. Luft said. "You have done an extraordinary job and leave a rich legacy. Many thousands of responders are better off as a result of your efforts."



*Photos courtesy of Stony Brook Medicine*

Carol Paukner, a police officer who retired after injuries sustained on 9/11, described Guerrero as "wonderful. She's always been just a phone call away. She'll be missed."

The grand opening ceremony also served as an unveiling of framed photographs, to hang in the WTC Health Program's waiting room, of those who have been strong supporters of the program. In addition to a portrait of Guerrero, the photo subjects included: former presiding officer of the Suffolk County Legislature William J. Lindsay; former president of the

Nassau-Suffolk Building and Construction Trades Council Jack Kennedy; Stony Brook Medicine's David Parkinson, MD; and first responder, patient and healthcare advocate John Feal.

**The event was featured in several different news publications:**



**One-stop clinic for 9/11 first responders opens in Commack**



**LONG ISLAND**  
**Long Island and New York City's top photos**



**Clinic in Commack opens for first responders with 9/11-related health issues**

*Stony Brook WTC Wellness Program provides patients with a large array of treatments under one roof*



**Stony Brook WTC Wellness Program expands**

## WTC Program partners with Department of Surgery to Offer Free Vascular Screenings

On October 28th, we were very excited to host a free vascular screening event for the 9/11 community at our new Commack clinic location.

This first event was extremely successful with more than fifty members and their spouses attending.

Vascular screening is important for detecting vascular disease and recommended for people over 60 years or at risk for stroke.

Unfortunately, we could not accommodate all who called to register and so we are planning another event for spring. Look for more details in your inbox, Facebook, or the next newsletter.



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## Responders speak live to students nationwide

On September 11th, we hosted our first live interactive broadcast in conjunction with Streamable Learning and Stony Brook University to share with students nationwide. This 45 minute interactive course featured the first hand accounts of two of our LI-CCE members and allowed participating students to ask questions and learn more about the 9/11 disaster.

The Remembering 9/11 teaching unit was created to give educators a resource for incorporating this essential part of history into their lesson plans, whether through language arts, history, political science, or other subject matters.

To learn more about this free curriculum, please visit:  
<https://sharemylesson.com/teaching-resource/teaching-911-comprehensive-unit-high-schoolstudents-277585>



# Research Highlights



## We would like to introduce to you...

*Sean Clouston, Ph.D., Assistant Professor,  
Department of Family, Population and Preventive Medicine*

*Dr. Clouston works closely with Dr. Luft on a number of projects related to aging and its impact on the responder community. We all grow older, and hopefully wiser, but as we age our bodies just don't function as they used to. We get forgetful or perhaps, have trouble sleeping. If we are sick, our illnesses may take more of a toll on us. Sometimes, the changes we notice are just a normal part of aging, but sometimes they are not.*

*With the research that we are doing now, we are preparing for the future of the WTC Program. We want to understand how the normal aging process impacts responders and their current health issues. This is really important work. As we set benchmarks and expectations, we can start to develop ways to improve the lives of our patients as they get older.*

We took a few minutes to sit down with Dr. Clouston.  
Here are a few comments from our interview:

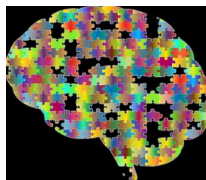
**Q:** What do you hope some of the long-term impacts will be of the research that you are currently conducting?

**A:** One of the things is that I'm hopeful about it. My field of study is looking at aging to see when it starts and why it starts. What we are trying to do is identify when we could be doing something and when we should be doing it.

The hope is that we can create an intervention to help with the aging process to make peoples' overall lives better. We're trying to identify aging early enough to do something about it and then figure out how we could treat some of these aging processes. I'm hopeful that if we're able to start treating it when it starts we will have the ability to make it end better.

The WTC events are an unprecedented shock to the bodies of responders. With the responder population we are trying to catch things earlier and identify unique WTC related causes. Our goal is to figure out which exposures result in faster aging. We think this research will help to improve treatment and care for all responders.





## Responders Participate In Brain Imaging Study

We are very excited to share with you important research underway at Stony Brook. Dr. Luft and his colleagues are collaborating with WTC Health Program scientists at Mount Sinai to understand the impact of 9/11 exposure on the brain.

**WHY?** Our brains are the command center for our experiences—how we think and feel. Our brains also regulate our nervous system which affects the rest of the body. Just like the rest of the organs in our body, our brain can be susceptible to the toxic exposures, such as those responders experienced at Ground Zero.

Although we know a lot about our brain and how its functioning can impact our mental health, there has not been much research looking at how WTC exposures may have impacted the brains of responders. That is why this research is so important.

**HOW?** One way to understand how 9/11 exposures may have impacted the brain is to look at pictures of the brain. We are using 3 tools to do this:

MRI, or Magnetic Resonance Image, uses magnets to create pictures of the brain.

MRI, or functional MRI, shows blood flow in the brain to help understand which parts of the brain are being used either over time or for specific tasks.

PET, or Positron Emission Tomography, uses a small amount of radioactive “tracer” to show active areas of the brain through a picture.

These methods are FDA approved and supply different information to researchers about how a person’s brain is functioning and details about the brain’s structure. For decades, scientists have used these imaging techniques to help understand the differences in the way people think and feel and also to understand a variety of mental health conditions.

Currently, we are reaching out to responders who may be eligible for this study and plan on utilizing these advanced technologies in future studies.



On October 21st, The WTC Health Program hosted a Research to Care Community Engagement event . It was held at NYU Langone Health Medical Center’s Farkas Auditorium and provided a unique opportunity for responders to hear about new developments in 9/11 health research. This free event provided an update from WTC Program Administrator Dr. John Howard and leading researchers from our CCE and others about the health effects of 9/11.

If you weren't able to attend, head over to our Facebook page ([@stonybrookwtc](#)) to view the taped event. We hope to have similar events in the future here on Long Island!



# MEET OUR NEW DOCTORS



**Mariam Chelagiri, M.D.**

*Provider in Mineola Clinic*

*"I am very honored and privileged to have the opportunity to be part of the WTC Wellness Program team. Looking back into my life I can say that I would have never been a doctor today if not for the US Armed Forces who intervened to save my family's life after being taken as hostages in Kuwait by Iraq during the Gulf war. Today, I stand grateful and believe it is my time to give back my expertise and time to the community and first responders of 9/11."*

*It is inspiring to care for the first responders and volunteers who sacrificially and bravely served us on 9/11 and beyond. As a Board certified physician in Internal medicine and Palliative medicine it is my priority to provide patient centered care and be my patients advocate for their health and total well-being. I will always treat my patients with compassion, kindness, empathy and respect and will provide them with the highest possible standard of care they richly deserve."*

*"I joined the program out of medical interest for the first-responder population. I was previously working at Mount Sinai Hospital in hematology and hospital medicine where I also provided hematology consultations to the World Trade Center Health Program there. I became familiar with the WTC program and the health conditions of the first responders."*

*I grew up in New York and enjoy New York and family. I also lived and worked in the past in Los Angeles and in Boston as a physician teaching in hospitals and in research."*



**Judith C. Lin, M.D.**

*Provider in Mineola Clinic*

## DID YOU KNOW...

### *How do I get my WTC medical records for a VCF claim?*

We recently received numerous requests from responders for their WTC medical records to support a VCF claim. We want to remind you that you can sign a release and your attorney can request these records directly from us. This will help you avoid unwanted charges from us for processing these requests.

### *How do I know if I am eligible for treatment?*

Many WTC responders come in for annual health monitoring appointments, but do not receive medications or other treatment services. In order to be eligible for the treatment part of the WTC Program, you must have a certified WTC condition. Getting a condition certified first starts with your clinic provider's exam when a possible WTC condition can be diagnosed. The certification process requires specific documentation to show the relationship between your exposure and the diagnosis. The WTC Program's Medical Review team at NIOSH reviews all cases and makes a decision based on whether or not the documentation meets established rules.

### *Can I bring someone with me to my appointments?*

You are welcome to bring your spouse or a friend with you to your appointment. There is a lot of important information given to you throughout your visit and sometimes it helps to have another set of eyes and ears.

Do you have questions about the Program?  
Send your questions to [911respondersremember@gmail.com](mailto:911respondersremember@gmail.com)

## *Now is the Time ...*

Have you been thinking about documenting your 9/11 experience for the Remembering 9/11 archive?

This is your opportunity.  
We are interviewing responders, their spouses, and adult children  
to complete our comprehensive collection of 9/11 stories.

For more information, please contact the Program Coordinator:  
Megan Cook at 631-638-0733.

# Flu Season Has Arrived



Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that can lead to mild or severe illness. The flu can be especially dangerous for people who already have respiratory diseases. Here are some important things to remember to ensure that you have a happy and healthy winter:

1. **Get vaccinated-** The flu vaccination causes antibodies to develop in the body about two weeks after vaccination. The antibodies in the vaccine can prevent infection from the virus itself.
2. **Avoid close contact-** If you know that someone is sick make sure that you are avoiding close contact. The same goes if you are sick, make sure to keep your distance from others.
3. **Cover your mouth and nose-** Use a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If you do not have a tissue readily available use your upper sleeve, not your hands.
4. **Clean your hands-** Washing your hands frequently will help protect you from germs. If you are not near a sink, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
5. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth-** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated. Be cautious to not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth throughout the day.
6. **Practice good health habits-** Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school. Make sure to get plenty of sleep, remain physically active, and drink water. Also, make sure that you are maintaining a healthy diet and managing your stress levels.



Information from: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**Call (631) 855-1200 to schedule your flu shot today!**

## REMINDER

The WTC Health Program now covers routine cancer screenings:  
Mammography, colonoscopy, lung cancer screening and cervical cancer screenings.

If you received a referral from us for one of these services, that means that you are eligible and should make your screening appointment as soon as possible!



# COOK'S CORNER

## Salisbury Steak Meatballs with Gravy and Mashed Potatoes

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour

Servings: 8

### Ingredients:

#### For Meatballs

- 1 1/2 lb. lean ground beef
- 1/2 cup breadcrumbs
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup coarse grain mustard
- 1 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. seasoning salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 2 tbsp. olive oil for frying

#### For Gravy

- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 cup beef broth
- 2 tbsp. cornstarch
- 1/2 tsp. seasoning salt
- 1 tbsp. ketchup

#### For Mashed Potatoes

- 5 large potatoes peeled and chopped into cubes
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter (1/2 stick)
- 1/4 cup skim milk, add more if needed
- 1/4 cup light cream cheese
- salt and pepper to taste



### Directions:

1. Add all the meatball ingredients (excluding the olive oil) to a large bowl and mix well, use your hands. Shape into 1 inch meatballs. You should get about 40 meatballs.
2. Add the olive oil to a large skillet and heat over medium to high heat. Add meatballs and cook. You might have to fry them in batches, cook the meatballs on all sides. Remove meatballs from skillet and set aside.
3. To the same skillet add butter and melt. Add onion, cook until onion is soft and translucent. In a bowl add the cornstarch and broth and whisk. Add broth and remaining gravy ingredients to skillet. Cook for about 3 to 5 minutes. If the sauce is too thick add a bit more broth.
4. When the gravy is done add the meatballs back to the skillet and toss them around so they're covered in the gravy.

#### For Mashed Potatoes

1. Peel the potatoes and cut them in 1 inch cubes. Boil them on medium heat until potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes, then drain.
2. In a medium bowl add the potatoes, milk, butter, cream cheese and salt and pepper. Mash the potatoes until desired consistency, adding additional milk as necessary.
3. Serve meatballs and gravy over mashed potatoes.

Monitoring and Treatment



WTC Health Program

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Visit us at: [WTCwellnessprogram.org](http://WTCwellnessprogram.org)  
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## Providing Excellent Care in Suffolk and Nassau Counties



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