

# BROWN MEDICINE Insider

Summer  
2021

## COVID-19

### Brown Medicine Infectious Disease Expert Dr. Louis Rice answers the top most pressing questions

**W**hen the coronavirus pandemic hit, Brown Medicine's Division of Infectious Disease physicians and research scientist teams were front and center, leading the way on the COVID-19 response. From important vaccine trial research and antibody testing validation, to serving as the faces of public health nationwide and in our state, Brown Medicine doctors continue to be at the forefront of medicine.

"Addressing public and global health challenges is what our Division does, and the coronavirus pandemic was no exception," states Dr. Louis B. Rice, a renowned infectious disease expert and president of Brown Medicine. "It's exciting to know our research helps lead to the improvement of healthcare and medical treatments locally and around the world."

As with any public health crisis, communication is key. Shortly after the pandemic lockdown, Brown Medicine published online podcast interviews and short "Brown Medicine Minute" videos with physicians to help answer questions about viral transmission, vaccine efficacy, and how to determine whether symptoms were caused by a cold, allergies or the coronavirus. Today, COVID-19 vaccines are widely available and millions of people worldwide have been safely inoculated. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control has over 12 months of data upon which to base its guidance to limit the spread and impact of the coronavirus.

"The plethora of news sources available in these modern times is both a curse and a blessing," notes Dr. Rice. "Some sources are more credible than others and, coupled with a healthy dose of skepticism mixed with political bias, cause the general public to be polarized either for or against getting the vaccine and helping to do their part to end the pandemic. Lots of questions remain in the minds of even the most well-informed."

**Here, Dr. Rice answers the top most pressing questions that are most commonly asked:**

**Q: Do masks work in preventing the spread of the virus, or should we all just wash our hands more frequently?**

**A:** Evidence is clear at this point that masks work in preventing the spread from an infected person to an uninfected person. Perhaps more importantly, wearing a mask appears to lessen the chance that your infection will be symptomatic if it does occur. Without question, masks work. It's always a good idea to wash your hands, but the major route of transmission of this virus is through the air.

**Q: If I'm vaccinated, will this protect those who are unvaccinated?**

**A:** Vaccinated people can become infected, as no vaccine is 100% effective in preventing infection. Regarding whether vaccinated people can spread infection, it appears that if you're vaccinated, you will shed less virus so in that sense you will be less likely to spread the infection to others. Getting as many people as possible vaccinated is truly important for public health. Many vaccinated people have illnesses or therapies that compromise their immune system. The vaccine may not be as protective for them so we always need to be careful.

**Q: Is it safe for me to go back to work and be in crowds now that I'm vaccinated?**

**A:** It is safe to go back to work. It's reasonable for places of work to require unvaccinated employees to wear masks. Infection rates remain low in Rhode Island at this point, but they are rising. I would use common sense. In big, indoor crowds where ventilation isn't great, I recommend wearing a mask. Walking through a park, I would not wear a mask. In most

## Top Docs

*Rhode Island Monthly* magazine asked licensed medical doctors and doctors of osteopathic medicine throughout the state to vote for physicians they would trust to care for their own family and friends. A third party research firm conducted an online ballot survey for collecting, vetting and tallying the votes. *Rhode Island Monthly* then narrowed the list to doctors in the top 16% of vote getters who received at least nine votes in each category. The result is a list of the 235 best physicians in Rhode Island as voted by their peers, and 25 of them were from Brown Medicine.

1	Alice Bonitati	Pulmonary
2	Andrew Foderaro	Pulmonary/Critical Care
3	Andrew T. Levinson	Pulmonary/Critical Care
4	Anthony Mega	Hematology/Oncology
5	Ariel Birnbaum	Hematology/Oncology
6	Deepan S. Dalal	Rheumatology
7	Douglas Shemin	Kidney Disease and Hypertension – Nephrology
8	Fred J. Schiffman	Hematology/Oncology
9	Geetha Gopalakrishnan	Endocrinology
10	Gerardo Carino	Pulmonary/Critical Care
11	Howard Safran	Hematology/Oncology
12	James N. Butera	Hematology/Oncology

13	Jason Aliotta	Pulmonary
14	John Regan	Hematology/Oncology
15	John Ladetto	Pulmonary
16	John R. Lonks	Infectious Disease
17	Katherine Sharkey	Pulmonary
18	Kwame Dapaah-Afriyie	Hospital Med
19	Leonard A. Mermel	Infectious Disease
20	Lynn McNicoll	Geriatrics
21	Sean Fine	Gastroenterology
22	Stuart Schwartz	Rheumatology
23	Tony C. Wu	General Internal Med
24	Warren Licht	Physician Primary Care
25	Peter Barth	Hematology/Oncology

**Congratulations!**

## Boots on the Ground

This past Memorial Day weekend, Brown Medicine was proud to sponsor Operation Stand Down RI's Boots on the Ground for Heroes display at Fort Adams in Newport. Nearly 7,000 combat boots adorned with flags and placards each represented a life of a U.S. service member killed in action post 9-11 in the Global War on Terror.



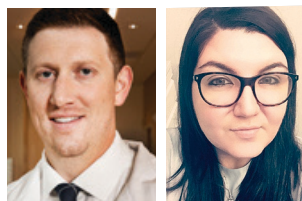
## Best Places to Work



Brown Medicine has once again won *Providence Business News'* "Best Places to Work" in the large companies category for 2021. Our dedicated physicians, practitioners and support staff completed an independent survey to identify employer practices, benefits, culture, engagement, satisfaction, and more. We appreciate the feedback and are pleased to be among RI's best.

## PBN 40 Under Forty

Congratulations to Brown Medicine Gastroenterologist Dr. Sean Fine and Quality Initiatives/Project Manager Jessica Savoca on being named to *Providence Business News'* 40 Under Forty list for 2021. Honorees were selected based on their career success and involvement within their communities, and recognized at an awards event.



## Advance Care Planning Event on August 10th

Learn about the types of decisions that need to be made in the event of a medical crisis. Join Brown Medicine's free Zoom session on Advance Directives on August 10, 2021 from 10:00 am to 11:00 am. Making plans now for your future health care will ensure that your wishes are carried out. To register and get the Zoom link, call 401-649-4020 and speak with Audrey (x2005), Erin (x2034) or Sara (x2039).



## INSIDER CALENDAR

Rhode Island's summer season offers a myriad of opportunities to get outside and enjoy everything the Ocean State has to offer. From Woonsocket to Westerly, there is plenty to explore and enjoy with family and friends. Here is a sampling of ideas to get you out and about:

**Save The Bay Aquarium**  
Interactive Marine Science Center  
Newport, RI  
Starting July 5, 2021

**East Bay Bike Path**  
Walk or bike this scenic route  
East Providence to Bristol

**Glocester Summer Concerts**  
Pavilion at Kent Field, Chepachet  
Wednesdays, 6:30 pm  
Through August 4th

**Washington County Fair**  
Richmond, RI  
August 11-15, 2021

**Trivia Nights on the Farm**  
(exercise your brain!)  
Ragged Island Farm, Portsmouth, RI  
Through September 2, 2021

**Optimism Walk for Parkinson's**  
Goddard State Park  
September 18, 2021

**Outdoor Community Yoga**  
Third Beach in Middletown  
Through September 19, 2021

**Roller Disco**  
Kennedy Plaza, Providence  
Through September 30, 2021

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outdoor venues it is safe to go maskless. On the other hand, in a crowded stadium with screaming fans, I would probably favor caution and wear a mask. The most important thing is to get vaccinated. If everyone was vaccinated, we'd be in a much better position. We're dealing with some who are and some who aren't and that creates problems in limiting the spread of this virus.

**Q: Will we face another surge of cases this Fall?**

**A:** The new Delta variant is highly infectious. I'm concerned we'll face another surge when we start spending more time indoors. Just as happened last summer, we are seeing significant flareups now in the South when people in these regions spend more time indoors. It is not likely to be a coincidence that the areas seeing spikes in cases are those with low vaccination rates. I think some type of new surge is likely to occur, but my hope is that high rates of vaccination in our area will limit the number of serious infections so that our healthcare system will not be overwhelmed.

**Q: Will the vaccine I had early on during the pandemic protect against variants?**

**A:** Thus far, yes. The Delta variant is now responsible for the majority of infections in this country. It's 50% more infectious than the original coronavirus, meaning any person who's infected is likely to infect more multiples of people. It's nothing to be trifled with. Pfizer and Moderna vaccines appear to be protective against this variant. We'll have to wait and see if the data supports the need for a booster shot, but thus far it appears as though protection lasts 6-8 months.

**Q: Are the vaccines safe?**

**A:** No one knows for sure the long-term impacts, but the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines appear to be safe in the short-term. It is true that they have not been fully approved by the Food and Drug Administration, but these vaccines have been given to billions of people now. While adverse effects occur, these are rare and the vaccines are remarkably safe. Well over 90% of all physicians in this country have been vaccinated for COVID-19. We in the medical field know how serious the disease can be. We have cared for many people who have died of COVID, and don't know anyone who has died from a vaccine. Moreover, long-COVID syndrome can result in symptoms like fatigue and difficulty breathing for many months. Many who suffer this syndrome didn't have a bad acute infection, yet still face the long-term symptoms. There's a lot about this disease we don't know, but we do know you should make every effort to avoid contracting it.

**Bryant Women's Summit**



Brown Medicine was a silver sponsor of the 24th Annual Bryant University Women's Summit, the largest and longest-running conference for women in RI and the region. Our Virtual Booth featured

five special-edition "Brown Medicine HealthTalk" podcasts on topics of interest, as follows:

**Dr. Kelly McGarry**  
"Finding a Primary Care Doctor That's Right for You"

**Dr. Maria Mileno**  
"Traveling with Chronic Health Conditions"

**Dr. Nadia Mujahid**  
"Healthcare for Women As They Age"

**Dr. Karen Tashima**  
"COVID-19 Vaccine Update"

**Dr. Katie Sharkey**  
"Sleep and Women's Health"

To listen to the podcasts, visit:  
<http://www.brownmed.org/healthtalk/>

**Upcoming Radio Show Interviews**

We are pleased to showcase the expertise of our Brown Medicine physicians on WPRV-AM790's "Southcoast Seniors Radio Show." Be sure to tune in "live" from 4pm - 5pm and listen to informational interviews on various health topics, as follows:

**August 19**  
Dr. Sean Fine and Dr. Abbas Rupawala discuss Inflammatory Bowel Disease, Crohn's, Colitis, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, and more

**September 23**  
Dr. Tony Wu on Lyme Disease

**October 7**  
Dr. Stephanie Graff on Breast Cancer

**November 11**  
TBD on Diabetes

**November 18**  
Dr. John Ladetto on COPD



*With tomatoes and basil being in their prime and readily available during the summer months, this Caprese Pasta Salad is a quick and easy vegetarian dish that will be a hit at dinner with the family or at your next BBQ. Pair it with a piece of grilled protein for a well-rounded nutritious meal. This recipe can be vegan-adaptable and gluten-free by using dairy-free "cheese" and substituting gluten-free pasta.*

**Caprese Pasta Salad**

Cook time: 20 minutes  
Servings: 6

**Vinaigrette Dressing**

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2-3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 clove minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

**Pasta Salad**

- ½ pound dried Farfalle or Orecchiette pasta
- 8 ounces fresh mozzarella pearls or cubed
- 2 cups grape tomatoes, sliced in half
- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves thinly sliced
- Salt and pepper to taste (optional)
- ¼ thinly sliced red onion (optional)

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- Cook pasta according to the instructions on the box and let it cool. \*Note: Pasta will keep cooking with heat, so make sure to take out al dente or rinse under cold water once cooked to your liking.
- Set pasta aside and chop up tomatoes, basil, and mozzarella. Mix ingredients together and then add the cooled pasta.
- In a separate bowl or container, whisk together vinegar, oil, lemon juice, herbs, garlic, salt, and pepper.
- Toss everything together and dig in! This dish is also a great "make ahead" meal.



Brown Medicine has expanded its practice into a new medical facility in Smithfield, RI to serve primary care and subspecialty patients.

## UPDATE

# Smithfield Location Opens

Brown Medicine has recently occupied 5,200 sq. ft. of Class A leased medical office space in the Smithfield Office Center located at 900 Douglas Pike in Smithfield, R.I. just off Route 295 and Route 7 with plenty of free parking. Build-out of the new location began late last year. In addition to Brown Medicine, other medical practices under the Brown Physicians, Inc. umbrella, such as Brown Dermatology and Brown Neurology, also opened offices in the new building. Lifespan Labs and Performance Physical Therapy will also be operational in the center.

## World Hepatitis Day

**H**epatitis C is an epidemic that affects our nation's health. An estimated 2.4 million people in the U.S. and almost 300 million worldwide have this viral infection that causes liver inflammation and damage.

"HCV" (hepatitis C virus) is spread when one's bloodstream comes into contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids - even very small amounts. One in 30 Baby Boomers in the U.S. (those born between 1945 and 1965) have HCV and most do not know they are infected.

Because HCV tends to be asymptomatic until late stages of disease, fewer than half of those with chronic HCV are aware of their status and remain at risk for serious liver disease cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer, and for transmitting

the virus to others. Symptoms are mild or chronic and may include bleeding or bruising easily, yellowish skin and eyes, dark urine, loss of appetite, extreme fatigue, and swelling in the legs, just to name a few.



Some risk factors are sharing needles, receiving contaminated blood products, getting piercings or tattoos with non-sterilized instruments, having HIV, or being a newborn whose mother is HCV-positive.

HCV is a curable infection. There are many highly effective antiviral pills that can safely cure HCV in 8-24 weeks, in most people, most of the time as long as they are taken as prescribed. By ramping up testing and treatment now, we can avoid increases in liver disease and related suffering.

*Contact your Brown Medicine Infectious Disease physician today to get tested.*

BROWN MEDICINE IS A NONPROFIT, ACADEMIC, MULTI-SPECIALTY MEDICAL GROUP WITH LOCATIONS TO SERVE PATIENTS THROUGHOUT RHODE ISLAND.



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