

Helping the Rikers Island Community Stay Healthy



Four NYU Langone Hospital—Brooklyn staffers—(from left) Polina Meyman, trauma injury prevention coordinator and administrator; Helen Poracky, BSN, RN, trauma program manager; Joanna Marmo, MSN, MBA, RN, stroke program coordinator; and Karina Cusumano, BSN, RN-BC, critical care float nurse—spent June 18 at Rikers Island offering stroke prevention education and trauma instruction to employees and inmates' family members.

Four staffers from NYU Langone Hospital—Brooklyn's stroke and trauma departments provided blood pressure screenings, "Stop the Bleed" training, and other instruction to corrections officers and inmates' family members at the annual event at New York City's largest jail.

A team of four NYU Langone Hospital—Brooklyn staffers hosted a table at the Rikers Island Annual Health Fair on June 18, a day focused on health and safety services not only for the more than 150 employees at New York City's largest jail but also for the families of the inmates.

NYU Langone Hospital—Brooklyn's stroke team has participated for many years in the annual gathering, hosted by the New York City Department of Correction and the Correction Assistance Response for Employees (CARE) Unit, where they talk about ways to reduce the risk of strokes such as diet, exercise, and medication management. The stroke team has had so much success at past Rikers Island events that the group was expanded this year to include trauma department representatives as well.

The four staffers—Helen Poracky, BSN, RN, trauma program manager; Joanna Marmo, MSN, MBA, RN, stroke program coordinator; Polina Meyman, trauma injury prevention coordinator and administrator; and Karina Cusumano, BSN, RN-BC, critical care float nurse—spoke to dozens of participants during the day.

Poracky offered instruction on fall prevention and pedestrian and motor vehicle safety, along with "Stop the Bleed" demonstrations, which are techniques used to apply pressure to an injured person's wounds. "A lot of people, especially the young adults, had no idea how to use tourniquets and packing methods to stop hemorrhaging," she says. "Many people also wanted information on how to help elderly family members they take care of, like how to make homes safer and prevent falls in the bathtub."

Marmo, who provided stroke education to the participants, points out that the Rikers Island correction officers are primarily men aged 25 to 50 in high-stress positions and at risk for co-morbidities such as high blood pressure.

For her, the health fair is personal. "My dad was a corrections officer at the Nassau County Correctional Center and had a hemorrhagic stroke at work at the age of 37," she says. "If his colleagues hadn't recognized the symptoms, he might not have had a positive outcome. So it's important to me to give back in the hopes that others will be as lucky as my dad."