

Introducing NEMSQA's 1st EMS Agency Member:
RWJBarnabas Health EMS,
Represented by Dr. Bill Wang and Steve Cohen

RWJBarnabas Health is a network of 13 acute-care hospitals. Their Mobile Health Services provide 911 ALS, BLS, Air Medical, Specialty-Care Transport, call screening, dispatch, and EMS training to about 40% of New Jersey's population.

Medical Director Bill Wang (MD, FACEP), and Director of Quality Steve Cohen (MBA, NRP, FACPE) represent RWJBarnabas Health EMS on NEMSQA's Measure Development Committee, lending over 50 years of expertise!

"Sharing data and collaborating improves not only our service, but patient care across the entire EMS system," Steve said.



What's something unique about RWJBarnabas Health EMS?

Steve: We're hospital-based, so that really keeps the focus on the patient, the quality, and the outcomes. It truly makes us more of a patient care-based organization than a public safety organization. Everybody on the team is focused on quality patient care. It's about the medicine and the patients.

Bill: It leads to more translational integration with the rest of that patient care experience - from EMS to the Emergency Department, to the ICU and floors. Similarly on the discharge side, too, there's that plan for integration. So often, EMS is just an afterthought, but being hospital-based, we are represented at the table. The more they see us – the more they see our ability to impact patient care – the earlier they bring us into the conversation and the bigger impact we can have.

What quality improvement project have you taken on that you're particularly proud of?

Steve: Following the merger of our multiple EMS agencies into one, we noticed that there were different levels of training, different types of equipment, different protocols, and our performance levels had dropped. In order to standardize all of these we first rewrote our policies involving all of the various medical directors from each site under the leadership of the new system medical director, Dr. Wang. We standardized our equipment and protocols across the board, including moving to the McGrath Video Laryngoscope. We then developed job aids for all of the units. Once all of this was completed, we began retraining all of our ALS staff on RSI and advanced airway management, using the best practices from each of the previous agencies and the Difficult Airway Course™. Following the training and implementation we were able to increase our RSI 1st Pass success rates, which had fallen to 75%, to 90% and are now maintaining above 95% since April 2022.

Why did RWJBarnabas Health EMS become a NEMSQA Agency Member?

Steve: We use almost all of the NEMSQA Measures as part of our KPIs, so why not have a voice as to how the new ones are being developed? Now we get to be involved in the measure development process and help guide development of new NEMSQA Measures.

Bill: While we didn't consider this when the agency joined as a member, we quickly learned that it also provides the opportunity to be involved in other national projects that NEMSQA may not be leading but is a part of. RSI has been an area of interest and focus for me and we've done a number of

quality improvement projects in this area. I am now serving as a NEMSQA representative, along with Jeff Jarvis, to the NASEMSO-led Pre-Hospital Airway Management EBG project. It's a perfect fit and I am looking forward to being part of this important work.

Why is quality improvement important to RWJBarnabas Health EMS?

Bill: These are the communities that we live in. The people using 911 EMS services are my neighbors, my colleagues. It's really important for us to be able to see our staff and our services out there giving the community the highest quality care. We want people to not see QA as something punitive, but as something to really improve our care. And I know our providers care about our patients and about their own practice. They have a sense of personal and professional pride that they want to do a good job. I think that's why so much of our focus is on changing that "punitive" culture and encouraging people to come forward when they do make a mistake, to learn from it so we can pass those lessons on to everyone.

What are you particularly passionate about in EMS?

Steve: Quality improvement in general has always been a focus of mine. One of the projects I'm working on now is standardizing trauma activation. We bring patients to 8 different trauma centers, and they all have different activation level criteria. We're trying to standardize that across the board so that our staff doesn't have to remember 8 different sets of protocols. We've developed an app for our crews to use that has all the protocols and trauma center criteria. It's a tool to make their jobs easier so that we can reduce the number of errors and increase patient safety.

What would your dream job be, if you could do anything in the world?

Steve: Professional poker player. If I could do that and get health benefits and everything else, I would love it.

Bill: I would love to be a stay-at-home dad (though my wife won't let me.) Otherwise, a doctor on a cruise ship. I did that during residency, and I would love to do that.