



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 15, 2022

**Lovell FHCC Investigators Named Semifinalists in 2022 VHA Shark Tank Competition**

NORTH CHICAGO, Ill. – The Chicago Association for Research and Education in Science (CARES) and the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center (Lovell FHCC) are proud to recognize the following Lovell-affiliated professionals recognized as semifinalists in the Veterans Health Administration 2022 “Shark Tank Competition.”

**Semifinalist Site:** Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, North Chicago, Ill.

**Project Title:** *Improving Quality Metrics in Electrodiagnostic (EMG) Testing in Veterans*

**Project Team:** Project Lead EMG Fellow Dr. Anthony Savino, Fellowship Director and Chief of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PMR) Dr. Bharathi Swaminathan, and Dr. Mark Trelka, Dr. Aaron Stachowiak, Dr. Jane Hwang, DO Joseph Lagattuta, Dr. Neha Kohi, DO Julia Win, DO Jason Andrade, DO Brant Smith, Dr. Beau Bigalow, Dr. John Peters, Dr. Aman Saini.

**Project Goal:** Implement “Practice Parameters” during routine electrodiagnostic assessments to improve patient safety, outcomes, and overall testing measures.

Project Lead Dr. Anthony Savino said, “We established the ‘Practice Parameter’ to measure the patient’s skin temperature with an infrared thermometer to ensure the peripheral limb or area being tested was within the desired or specified range.”

Savino added, “Perhaps most importantly, we forged lines of communication across staff and resident physicians to emphasize the importance of reviewing full patient history and documenting relative risk factors anti-coagulation (bleeding risk) and implantable devices pose. We knew some patients were getting the wrong diagnosis.”

Lovell FHCC EMG Fellowship Director Dr. Bharathi Swaminathan, project co-leader, said, “EMG testing provides significant diagnostic and clinical utility for our polytrauma patients, many of whom have ongoing chronic pain, paresthesia and weakness.”

The doctors found that patients who are too cold when they are tested could needlessly suffer. “For example, electrodiagnostic testing in cold limbs may lead to false positive studies, incorrect diagnoses, and unnecessary procedures,” Swaminathan said. “Patients can be wrongly diagnosed as having carpal tunnel syndrome, or pinched nerve in the neck or the lower back, which will directly affect the alignment of their prescribed treatments, as well as their clinical outcomes.”

As the Advanced Practice Fellow funded by the Office of Academic Affiliation, Savino said he felt he could leverage his opportunity during his Lovell FHCC residency to make a meaningful change. He was encouraged to apply for support from the EQUITY Fund, and he succeeded in getting it.

“The EQUITY Fund award gave me the confidence I had people behind me for the expenses involved,” Savino said. “I knew the incredible team from Lovell FHCC was behind me to actually do the work. I couldn’t have achieved the project’s completion without all that support.”

Lovell FHCC Assistant Chief Medical Executive for Academic Affairs Dr. William Cotter said, “This is a great example of the VA’s academic mission having a direct impact on the quality of patient care. Kudos to Dr. Swaminathan for her successful mentorship and to Dr. Savino for completing a project that will likely be shared across the VA as a best practice.”

Patients will benefit, Swaminathan said. “The template from this quality improvement project will likely be implemented in Lovell FHCC’s future rollout of a new electronic health record system,” Swaminathan said. “Our ultimate goal is to improve the quality of our electrodiagnostic testing, leading to proper diagnosis and better clinical outcomes for each and every patient we serve.”

The team’s abstract was selected for poster presentation at the American Association of Neuromuscular and Electrodiagnostic Medicine (AANEM) Annual Meeting at the Gaylord Opry in Nashville, Tennessee, Sept. 21-24, 2022. The abstract is prepared for publication in *Muscle & Nerve*.

For an FAQ and Toolkit, please visit the [VHA Shark Tank Competition](#) page on the VHA Diffusion Marketplace.

### **About the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center**

The Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center is the nation’s first fully integrated medical facility between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense. It serves active duty military personnel, their families and veterans. Lovell FHCC, which is located in North Chicago, operates four Naval Station Great Lakes clinics and three community-based outpatient clinics in McHenry and Evanston, Ill. and Kenosha, Wis.

### **About CARES**

The Chicago Association for Research and Education in Science is the Non Profit Corporation (NPC) created by Congress to serve as the “flexible funding mechanism” for the conduct of VA-approved projects in Research and Education. CARES is proud to support these Physician-Scientists through our EQUITY Fund initiative, made possible through grant from the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. CARES has served as the NPC for the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center since 2005. More about CARES can be found at [www.CARES-Research.org](http://www.CARES-Research.org). ###