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Mind Your Meds: Safe Opioid Disposal Awareness

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MIND YOUR MEDS: SAFE OPIOID DISPOSAL AWARENESS

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PROJECT ABSTRACT

Driven by the effects of the opioid epidemic on friends, family members, students, and patients, members of the 2019 GEHLI Team “Mission Possible” are dedicated to bolstering educational awareness of safe leftover opioid disposal methods to decrease the supply of opioids in our community. On average, over 2/3 of opioid prescription medications are leftover and lead to later misuse or abuse (*JAMA Survey*). Despite a decrease in prescription writing for pain medication over the years, the mortality rate from overdose, and the rate of infants born to mothers with opioid abuse continues to steadily increase in Virginia (*VDH*). Team Mission Possible seeks to promote awareness of both the need and resources available for safe opioid disposal by educating prescribers in the VCU Health system and spreading knowledge to VCU patients, students, faculty, staff, and members of the surrounding community through: educational events on the Monroe Park and Medical campuses; teaming up with Miss Virginia’s “Mind your Meds campaign”; live Facebook interviews; and educational flyers.

QUEST 2025: TOGETHER WE TRANSFORM

Theme III: Collective Urban and Regional Transformation

Goal III.2: By utilizing VCU’s resources to promote awareness and education on safe opioid disposal, this collaboration between VCU and the community attempts to decrease the availability of opioids and the risk of opioid addiction in the greater Richmond area.

This aligns with the attempt to bridge the urban university with surrounding community needs.

PROJECT GOALS

1. To launch an educational campaign to help members of the VCU community understand the important role they play in properly disposing of leftover prescription opioids.
2. To improve awareness among prescribers and make materials available to educate their patients.
3. Raise awareness of the importance of limiting opioid exposure and risk of opioid addiction, morbidity and mortality.
4. To launch an educational campaign to help members of the VCU community understand the important role they play in properly disposing of leftover prescription opioids. In addition, improve awareness among prescribers and make materials available to educate their patients.

5. Provide information on how to dispose of leftover prescription medications safely.

PROJECT STRATEGIES

With team members representing different experiences and departments, the team name “Mission Possible” unified the group. Team Mission Possible sought to focus on impactful tasks that would be meaningful to each individual member, the Monroe Park and Medical Campuses, and the surrounding community. The goal of the team was to develop a project that could be achievable within the timeframe of the GEHLI program. Each member of team Mission Possible had been impacted in some way by the opioid epidemic, and they were able to utilize the direct mentorship of one of VCU’s and the Commonwealth’s preeminent experts in opioid prescription awareness. The team researched literature and supporting evidence of strategies to decrease the opioid epidemic, surveyed existing materials and efforts at VCU with the assistance of project stakeholders, and performed an environmental scan of safe disposal resources at VCU and the surrounding area. The team recognized the opportunity to focus on providing safe disposal education to prescribers and the greater community and chose “Mind Your Meds” as the platform. The team was able to perform site visits, discuss the issue with the VCU pharmacy and surrounding pharmacies, and identify sites of drop off boxes for leftover medications. The team sought ways to increase awareness about safe opioid disposal and identified sources for collaboration. Through developed relationships, the team decided to take the additional steps to distribute DisposalRx bags and to assess the knowledge gap amongst medical prescribers.

ACTION STEPS

- Researched the ongoing opioid epidemic and its impact on VCU, the VCU Health system and the greater community.
- Consulted with internal subject matter experts including *Dr. Omar Abubaker* from the VCU School of Dentistry, *Cynthia Schmidt* and *Katherine Poarch* from VCU Health Department of Strategy and Marketing, *Thomas Bannard* from Rams in Recovery, the Center for Integrative Pain Management, as well as *Rachel Neill*, Pharmacy Manager at the Walmart on Grace Street, *Erima Fobbs*, Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Behavioral Health and Wellness, and the Partnership for Success Opioid Prevention Grant.
- The team also researched prevalence of the issue and existing prevention outreach campaigns via the Center for Disease Control, Federal Drug Administration, Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association, and OpioidsSolutionsRVA.
- Peer-reviewed journal articles, public health research and statistics were included as a part of on-going research.
- Created partnerships with the VCU School of Dentistry, Center for Integrative Pain Management, VCU Health System, Walmart (formerly) on campus, Miss Virginia Camille Schrier (Pharm.D. ‘22) University Relations Marketing and Social Media.
- Reviewed the need for additional and/or updated materials from our contacts and gained insight from them on the current gaps they felt a short-term project could cover.
- Performed an environmental survey of resources at VCU and the surrounding community - evaluation of sites for prescription medication disposal bins at hospitals, pharmacies, and police departments.
- Developed prescriber survey to gauge confidence levels and need for education on this topic. The survey received IRB approval, was distributed via email to prescribers in the School of Dentistry, and the team evaluated results.
- Strategized as a team to identify target audiences and developed the main message.
- Created educational flyer to create awareness for community members and a separate flyer for provider education. This began as a broad message, but narrowed to focus on awareness and action steps.

- Considered holding a drug take back event but due to liability did not pursue.
- Explored option of VCU Stall Seat Journal to promote education.
- Held educational outreach events on the Monroe Park and Medical campuses in conjunction with Miss Virginia's Mind your meds campaign.
- Approval pending on the possible replacement of the existing "Opioid Education Brochure for Cerner Safe Use, Storage & Disposal" information in Patient Education with the Mind Your Meds flyer.
- Proposed distribution of the Mind Your Meds flyer electronically to all VCU Health providers.

OUTCOMES

The outcome of the project is an increase in awareness of the risks of leftover opioid medication and importance of safe disposal within VCU and the greater Richmond community. Team Mission Possible created educational flyers for prescribers and community members. These flyers are now available to be distributed on demand by stakeholders and will be available in both English and Spanish. Two educational outreach events, one held August 8 on the Medical Campus and one held August 26 on the Monroe Park Campus, and posts on social media helped raise awareness of the outreach campaign.

As team members engaged with students, staff, and doctors, recurring themes were found, highlighting the need for wide distribution of this information and continued efforts toward raising awareness factors leading to misuse and abuse.

Mission of Mercy Event

- Distributed 400 Mind Your Meds flyers

Two VCU education outreach events

- TelegRAMs events calendar total impressions: 55,560 (14,677 Faculty and Staff, 40,883 Students)
- Total Impressions from social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram): 35,867 and 300+ engagements
- 195 community outreach flyers
- 143 provider flyers
- 100 DisposeRx packets
- 200 DETERRA bags

Additionally, Team Mission Possible developed a survey that received IRB approval. It has been distributed to School of Dentistry residents and faculty dentists. This will assist the health system in understanding prescriber's knowledge base about opioid prescription and disposal methods. The intention is that this survey will continue to be administered by the VCU School of Dentistry to benchmark this information annually.

SUSTAINABILITY

Several of the partnerships developed during the research phase of the project led to networks for distributing the materials and maintaining their relevance. Sustainability was attained both in tangible items as well as human and social capital.

Team Mission Possible created an educational flyer PDF with the assistance of University Relations Marketing, which has been approved by the School of Dentistry. These flyers will continue to be distributed at the VCU School of Dentistry and at the VCU Little Clinics in Kroger. The Center for Integrative Pain Management at VCU Health System is sending provider prescribing recommendations and education letters to over 700 community providers, which will include the disposal site map, and the Center will continue updating and distributing the map with their annual letters. Several community prescribers have agreed to distribute the outreach flyer to

their private practice patients along with each narcotic prescription.

Team Mission Possible created posters from the provider flyers and have framed and distributed them for display in provider lounges at VCU Health System and VCU School of Dentistry, as well as our community sponsor's offices at Commonwealth Oral and Facial Surgery. These will serve as a fun reminder of the message and the need to proactively educate patients on safe opioid disposal methods.

FINANCING AND RESOURCES

Team Mission Possible's goals have been to build partnerships with VCU stakeholders that have current initiatives aligned with this project and will maintain the platform. As an educational institution that already houses and provides education to patients and providers, financing is not a barrier for distributing educational flyers. Each clinic will be responsible for printing flyers for their patient base. Team Mission Possible plans to provide the key stakeholders with PDF files of the flyers that they can store and either share electronically or print.

VCU Pharmacy Services states funding, storage of the bags and time limitations when interacting with patients are barriers to providing disposal bags with prescriptions. Team Mission Possible is working to connect the Richmond City Health District, who can provide disposal bags, with VCU Pharmacy Services to explore this relationship further.

The VCU School of Dentistry disseminated the team's survey on prescriber awareness. This survey requires no funding, simply a designated individual or team and time dedication. The School of Dentistry has committed to conducting this survey annually.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Team Mission Possible hopes the partnerships developed during this effort act as a continuum for the project initiatives. The Center for Integrative Pain Management, VCU Health confirms they will support the use of the disposal map and will own the material and keep it updated. Team Mission Possible is hopeful that the committee will reconsider the dissemination of the survey to their residents at VCU Health System.

Team Mission Possible promotes the use of the flyers to all prescribers and pharmacies at VCU and in the surrounding communities.

Finally, the team recommends that disposal bags and educational materials be distributed when an opioid prescription is filled at a VCU pharmacy.

FINAL PITCH

Misuse and abuse of leftover prescription medication affects the greater Richmond community and has touched countless lives including students, staff, faculty, family, and friends. The team's extensive research identified that awareness and resources are key to reducing the risk associated with misuse and abuse of opioids. Subject matter experts contributed to the content and design of two flyers, one for prescribers and one for community members. This flyer was distributed at several outreach events and will continue to be distributed in the community. Additionally the survey will allow VCU to benchmark prescriber awareness.

The opioid epidemic is a national issue requiring local awareness and action. Through its efforts, Team Mission Possible has contributed positively to VCU's efforts to address this crisis.

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- Drug Enforcement Agency. Controlled Substance Public Disposal Locations- Search Utility. Available at: <https://apps2.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e1s1>
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- VDH Opioid Addiction Dashboard. Available at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/data/opioid-overdose/>

Stats That Inspired Our Project

- ❖ **More than 2/3** of patients have leftover opioid medication after surgery and few safely store or dispose of them *(JAMA Survey)*
- ❖ **Approximately 50%** of people who misuse prescription opioids get them from a friend or family member
- ❖ Opioids are a gateway drug for **3 out of 4** heroin users
- ❖ Overdoses kill **more than 100 Americans a day**



The Stories Behind the Stats

"My dorm roommate shared prescription pills that were leftover from her mother's terminal illness. That was the first time I tried any type of opioid. This was the **first step on a long journey that 7 years later would manifest itself as full blown heroin addiction.**" - 30 yr old female, recovering heroin addict, dreams of becoming a social worker.

"I was prescribed percocet by my doctor 2 years ago after I hurt my back in a car accident. My back pain during my pregnancy was so bad. I didn't realize that once I took the leftover percocet I saved, how badly I needed it to get through the day. **It was so easy to find other sources to attain pain medication** to keep me going. I never realize the impact it would have on my developing baby. I never wanted to hurt my baby." - NICU mom of withdrawing infant



The Stories Behind the Stats

"I was 19 when I had my wisdom teeth removed. The doctor prescribed percocet. I was able to refill my script a couple more times. **I began to buy any kind of opiate I could find from my friends** and I became addicted. I always felt above heroin addicts but years later I would try it for the first time when I was sick and couldn't find any pills". -27 yr old male, college student, father of two. Aspiring paramedic.

"RIP Michael. When I read that post I thought, who would write something like this on his Facebook page? What a sick sense of humor. Well, as I stared at the computer screen a few more posts popped up saying similar things. I immediately googled my nephew's name and there it was, his funeral announcement. I was completely blind sighted. **My nephew was found dead in his home at age 30** from an overdose of heroin. I didn't know he had been in rehab and now clean one year. His substance abuse had started as an addition to prescription pills. My brother, his father, was deciding how they would break the news to family."- Aunt



Current Education at VCU Health

- ❖ Patient education brochure in Electronic Medical Records (Cerner)
- ❖ No formal education for prescribers specific to the topic of safe opioid disposal
- ❖ Brochure not routinely given to patients at hospital discharge nor from VCU pharmacy



Current Education VCU School of Dentistry

- ❖ Increased awareness of prescribing habits and patient education under the leadership of Dr. Abubaker
- ❖ Guidelines for opioid prescribing for acute postoperative pain
 - Procedure difficulty considerations
 - Patient risk considerations
- ❖ Guidelines to safely manage postoperative pain
 - Mild - moderate - severe pain
 - Proper medication disposal tips



Our Vision

To launch an educational campaign to help members of our community understand the important role they play in **properly disposing** of leftover prescription opioids from their homes

In addition, improve awareness among prescribers and make materials available to help **educate their patients**



Our Goals

- ❖ Raise awareness of the importance of limiting opioid exposure and the risk of opioid addiction, morbidity and mortality
- ❖ Provide information on how to dispose of leftover opioid prescription medications safely



Objectives for Each Audience

- ❖ Educate the broader **VCU community** including students, faculty and staff on safe disposal options
- ❖ Educate **prescribers** to in turn educate patients who are prescribed opioids
- ❖ Educate **pharmacists** to participate at time of dispensing

Communicate to all audiences:

- ❖ **why** they need to safely dispose
- ❖ **how** to safely dispose
- ❖ **where** they can take back their leftover medications



Our Strategy

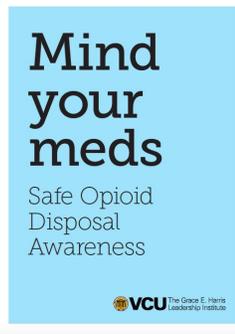
Demonstrate to the VCU community that a small contribution by everyone can make a big difference, captured in our theme line:

Mind your meds



Creating the Project Theme

- ❖ The theme is quick and memorable and reminds people that they can make a difference
- ❖ The safety of your medication is your **personal** responsibility
- ❖ Helping keep our community safe is a **process** you need to see through until the end



What is possible (in a few months!)

- ❖ Created partnerships
 - VCU School of Dentistry
 - Center for Integrative Pain Management, VCU Health
 - Walmart (formerly) on campus
 - Miss Virginia Camille Schrier (Pharm.D. '22)
- ❖ Developed educational flyer for distribution
- ❖ Held two campus outreach events
- ❖ Distributed educational materials at Mission of Mercy mission trip
- ❖ Developed and distributed survey to assess prescriber awareness



Mind your Meds: Action Steps

- ❖ Information gathering
- ❖ Developed flyer
 - Surveyed existing VCU literature
 - Researched and confirmed location of drop off boxes
 - Engaged VCU University Relations Marketing for design
- ❖ Consulted with VCU Health Marketing on protocols for flyer distribution at health fairs and The Little Clinics
- ❖ Met with committee from the Center for Integrative Pain Management, VCU Health about flyer distribution and survey
- ❖ Consulted with Stall Seat Journal



Community Outreach Flyer

Mind your meds
Practice safe disposal of opioid prescriptions

Why is safe disposal important?

- More than 7/10 of patients have leftover medication after surgery and how safely store or dispose of them
- Approximately 98% of people who misuse prescription opioids get them from a friend or family member
- Opioids are a gateway drug for 3 out of 4 heroin users
- Overdoses kill more than 500 Americans a day

What can you do?
Be responsible for your prescriptions!

- 1 Take as prescribed and NEVER give away or share
- 2 Store your prescription opioids in a secure place
- 3 Dispose of unused opioids safely and appropriately

How to dispose of excess opioids responsibly

Drop off boxes and take back events
Take advantage of programs that accept unused medications in your area. See map on back for drop off box locations. For information on take back events refer to takeback.vcu.edu.

Use what you have at home
Remove any of your personal information on the bottle. Combine medication with dirt, kitty litter or coffee grounds and place the mixture in a sealed plastic bag before discarding in the trash.

Prescription disposal bags or bottles
Ask your physician or pharmacist if they can provide you with a medication disposal bag or bottle.

For more information, please visit takeback.vcu.edu or www.vcu.edu

VCU School of Dentistry



Provider Flyer

Mind your meds
Practice safe disposal of opioid prescriptions

Why is safe disposal important?

- More than 7/10 of patients have leftover medication after surgery and how safely store or dispose of them
- Approximately 98% of people who misuse prescription opioids get them from a friend or family member
- Opioids are a gateway drug for 3 out of 4 heroin users
- Overdoses kill more than 500 Americans a day

What can you do as a provider?
Please print and share patient education materials. Search Patient Education in Center for "Opioid Education Brochure for Patient Safe Use, Storage & Disposal."

- 1 Take as prescribed and NEVER give away or share
- 2 Store your prescription opioids in a secure place
- 3 Dispose of unused opioids safely and appropriately

How to dispose of excess opioids responsibly

Drop off boxes and take back events
Take advantage of programs that accept unused medications in our area. See map on back for drop off box locations. There are also disposal bins on the VCU Health campus. For information on take back events refer to takeback.vcu.edu.

Use what you have at home
Remove any of your personal information on the bottle. Combine medication with dirt, kitty litter or coffee grounds and place the mixture in a sealed plastic bag before discarding in the trash.

Prescription disposal bags or bottles
Ask your physician or pharmacist if they can provide you with a medication disposal bag or bottle.

For more information, please visit takeback.vcu.edu or www.vcu.edu

VCU Health VCU School of Dentistry



Flyers included map of easily accessible drop off boxes

All locations checked out by our team!



Controlled Substance Public Disposal Locations

Look for easily accessible drop off boxes at the following locations:

- 1 VCU Student Health Services – 1300 W. Broad
- 2 Rite Aid Pharmacy – 520 W. Broad
- 3 RPD Headquarters – 200 W. Grace
- 4 VCU Health ACC Pharmacy – 417 N. 11th
- 5 Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU Children's Pavilion – 1000 E. Broad
- 6 RPD 3rd Precinct – 301 S. Meadow

To search more locations by zip code, please see <https://apps2.deadversion.usdoj.gov/pubdis/search>



Action Steps: Awareness Events

- ❖ Attended Mission of Mercy Dentistry mission trip on 7/12-7/13
- ❖ Held outreach events at Medical and Monroe Park Campuses on 8/8 and 8/26
- ❖ Promoted events in the VCU TelegRAM
- ❖ Leveraged social media opportunities (FB live event, Twitter, Instagram) with Miss Virginia to increase awareness of event and theme
- ❖ Broadcasted team interview and promo with Miss Virginia on FB live event
- ❖ Worked with DAR graphic designer to create team event t-shirts
- ❖ Shared information and distributed flyers and Rx bags at each event



Mission of Mercy Event

- There is a profound need for access to dental and medical care as well as a high incidence of substance abuse in Southwest Virginia
- Since 2000, 24,423 Southwest Virginia area patients have received free dental care valued at \$21.1 million through MOM events
- VCU School of Dentistry and community dentists treated over 1000 patients this year
- We distributed 400 Mind Your Meds flyers



MCV Campus Event





Monroe Park Campus Event



Event Quotes of the Day

Student: "This is making me think about this cabinet I have at home filled with old meds."

Student: "I didn't know a drug disposal bag existed. May I take 3 of these to my mom who has a lot of leftover pain medication?"

Student: "What if I have excruciating pain from something else later down the road?" Our team: "Well you should probably see a doctor to make sure that your new source of pain doesn't need a different form of medical attention."

Student: "Well I never thought about it that way!"



Education Provided

- ❖ 195 community outreach flyers
- ❖ 143 provider flyers
- ❖ 100 DisposeRx packets
- ❖ 200 DETERRA bags



Email and Social Media Metrics

VCU TelegRAMs events calendar total impressions: 55,560

TelegRAMs promoting event for Faculty and Staff: 14,677 opened mails

TelegRAMs promoting event to Students: 40,883 opened mails

Total Impressions from social media: 35,867

Facebook event: 7,332 impressions

Twitter: 7,154 impressions

Instagram Stories: 21,381 impressions

+300 engagements



Action Steps: The Survey

- ❖ Team meeting to identify our target audience and key information needed
- ❖ Meeting with Dr. Ellen Byrne and Ms. Meredith Baines to build survey content and “wordsmith” questions as well as to request approval to disseminate survey to School of Dentistry residents and faculty dentists
- ❖ Meeting with committee from the Center for Integrative Pain Management, VCU Health to propose project and request to disseminate survey to School of Medicine residents and faculty physicians
- ❖ IRB submission



Survey

Intended to assess exposure to training surrounding prescribing opioids, confidence level to safely prescribe opioids and educate patients about safe opioid disposal

Education on Proper Disposal of Opioid Prescriptions

Directions: A group from VCU's Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute is exploring the need for patient educational materials regarding disposal of unused prescription pain medications.

We would appreciate your responses to the following few questions in the development of this project. All answers are anonymous and this should take you less than 2 minutes to complete.

Thank you!

I have received training to prescribe opioids Yes No reset

I have received training on patient education regarding the safe disposal of leftover prescription opioids Yes No reset

I know where to find educational material about safe opioid disposal Yes No reset

For each of the following, please choose your level of confidence:

	1) Not at all confident	2) Moderately confident	3) Confident	4) Highly confident
Ability to safely prescribe opioids	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to educate patients on safe disposal of leftover prescription opioids	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My current department	<input type="text"/>			
My current level of education	<input type="text"/>			



Survey Outcomes

- ❖ IRB cleared on 9/12
- ❖ Survey disseminated to VCU School of Dentistry faculty, adjunct faculty and residents on 9/13
- ❖ We surveyed individuals with prescription privileges and those in training for these privileges in dentistry
- ❖ Outcomes appear in the appendix



Financing - Sponsorships

- ❖ 200 DisposeRx packets donated by Walmart
- ❖ \$250 donated from Commonwealth Oral and Facial Surgery for team event t-shirts
- ❖ 200 DETERRA drug deactivation bags from Richmond City Health District, VDH procured by Miss Virginia, Camille Shrier



Sustainability

Achieved

- ❖ Flyer PDF created with the assistance of University Relations Marketing and approved by the School of Dentistry
- ❖ Flyer distributed at the VCU School of Dentistry, VCU Little Clinics in Kroger
- ❖ Center for Integrative Pain Management, VCU Health sending provider prescribing recommendation and education letters to over 700 community providers, which will include our disposal site map
- ❖ The Center will continue updating and distributing the map with these annual letters
- ❖ Community prescribers have agreed to distribute the outreach flyer to their patients with each narcotic prescription



Sustainability

Pending

- ❖ Connecting Richmond City Health District DisposeRx bags source with VCU outpatient pharmacy and emergency department for distribution of disposal bags
- ❖ VCU Health Fair outreach
- ❖ Flyer posted on GEHLI website
- ❖ Flyer translated to Spanish

Swing and a miss

- ❖ Disseminate provider flyer to all VCU medical residents
- ❖ Survey broader group of prescribers at VCU Health
- ❖ Inclusion in the Stall Street Journal fall edition



Quest 2025 Alignment

The project aligns with VCU Quest 2025 – Together We Transform: Theme III: Collective Urban and Regional Transformation, Goal 111.2.

By utilizing VCU's resources to promote awareness and education on safe opioid disposal, this collaboration between VCU and the community attempts to decrease the availability of opioids and the risk of opioid addiction in the greater Richmond Commonwealth. This aligns with the attempt to bridge the urban university with the surrounding community.



Recommended Next Steps

- ❖ Identify opportunities from results of survey, including distributing the survey to other medical schools across the Commonwealth
- ❖ Distribute the flyer to all VCU prescribers electronically
- ❖ Replace the existing brochure in Cerner on Safe Use, Storage & Disposal with our provider flyer
- ❖ Provide sustainable resource for VCU outpatient pharmacy and VCU Emergency Department through connection to Richmond City Health Department so that DisposeRx bags are given out with new opioid prescriptions



What we learned while making it possible

- ❖ Substance abuse touches us all
- ❖ The dreamers meet brass tacks
- ❖ Find a mentor who has gone through GEHLI
- ❖ Clear your medicine cabinet!!!!



Special Thanks

Friends and colleagues who lent their support and expertise:

- ❖ Miss Virginia, Camille Schrier, VCU Pharmacy Student
- ❖ Gabriel Vernon, University Relations Graphic Designer
- ❖ Dr. Ellen Byrne, Senior Associate Dean, VCU School of Dentistry
- ❖ Kathy Sheehy, Clinical Program Director, Pain Management at VCU Health System
- ❖ Greg Zoghby, Commonwealth Oral and Facial Surgery
- ❖ And, of course, GEHLI



Thank you!

