Marshall University, West Virginia University to establish statewide infection prevention network

3/25/2021

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) has awarded grants to the schools of medicine at both Marshall University and West Virginia University (WVU) to facilitate the creation of a statewide infection prevention network.

Led by infectious disease experts at both institutions, the two-year, $1 million project will foster partnerships among academic medical centers and schools of public health to develop regional centers for infection prevention and control consultation and support services. The network will also build expertise in infection prevention and control throughout the state by creating training curriculums for epidemiologists and a variety of health care personnel related to infectious disease and epidemiology.

“With a focus on infection prevention, this project will further enable the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources and its valuable partners to promote the health and well-being of our residents,” said Dr. Ayne Amjad, State Health Officer and Commissioner of DHHR’s Bureau for Public Health. “As a state, we must help our healthcare facilities implement infection control protocols and procedures that work to stop the spread of infectious disease and protect every patient, in every activity, during every healthcare interaction.”

Other major components of the network include:

- creating a team of experts to support infection prevention and control in health care settings, starting with long-term care facilities.
- working closely with local health departments to provide education and support for infection prevention and control.
- conducting a learning needs assessment of the health care workforce.
- developing training/learning platforms to deliver free infection prevention education.

“The unparalleled challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the importance of infection prevention as a necessary measure of public health safety,” said Peimei He, M.D. (https://www.marshallhealth.org/find-a-provider/provider-details/?ID=447), an assistant professor of infectious disease at the Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine and the principal investigator at Marshall for the project. “As infectious disease clinicians, we champion this crucial cause and a collaborative initiative that will make evidence-based infection prevention education and resources in infection prevention accessible throughout West Virginia.”

In addition to promoting patient safety, West Virginia will benefit from increased knowledge and awareness for infection prevention and control; improved access to training and infection prevention experts; and increased number of training opportunities on a variety of platforms.

"West Virginia University, in collaboration with DHHR, has spearheaded the COVID-19 response in West Virginia, including the vaccination program,” said Shipra Gupta, M.D. (https://directory.hsc.wvu.edu/Profile/56688), assistant professor of pediatrics specializing in pediatric infectious diseases at WVU School of Medicine and WVU’s principal investigator for the project. “The statewide infection control network will provide wide access to infectious disease consultants with expertise in infection control and prevention. We envision this will support and guide practices in organizations especially long-term care facilities that are not affiliated with an academic center. In coordination with local health departments and epidemiologists, the network will strengthen and support infrastructure for surveillance of emerging pathogens as well as continue education and training, so we are prepared to tackle infection outbreaks."

Contact Information

Sheanna M. Spence, Dir. of Ext. Affairs, Marshall Univ. School of Medicine/Marshall Health 304-691-1639; Tara Scatterday, Exec. Dir. Communications & Institutional Relations, WVU Health Sciences 304-293-0630; Allison Adler, Dir. of Com., DHHR 304-558-0684

Privacy, Security and Accessibility (https://www.wv.gov/policies/Pages/default.aspx) | WV.gov (https://www.wv.gov) | USA.gov (https://www.usa.gov) | © 2022 State of West Virginia