

WVPBRN & COMMUNITY NEWS

A monthly newsletter brought to you by the Community Engagement Core of the West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute

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SAVE THE DATE: WVPBRN Retreat Announcement

The fourth Annual West Virginia Practice-Based Research Network (WVPBRN) Retreat will be held in conjunction with the West Virginia Rural Health Conference again this year. The Rural Health Conference will be held Oct. 19-21, 2016 at Chief Logan Resort in Logan, W.Va. The WVPBRN activities are slated to take place the evening of Oct. 20 and continue on the afternoon of Oct. 21st.

More information will be coming in May.

SPOTLIGHT: Project ECHO Holds Kick-off Event in Morgantown

The West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute held a kickoff event to showcase the upcoming Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) in West Virginia. This program will utilize multipoint video conferencing to address hepatitis C cases that have risen steadily in recent years in West Virginia largely due to the increase in intravenous drug use.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, West Virginia has one of the highest rates of hepatitis C in the country. This health disparity is strongly linked to the current opioid abuse crisis that is gripping the state. Between 2009 and 2013, West Virginia experienced an 82 percent increase in reported rates of acute hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is an even greater problem in rural areas, since patients are often forced to seek specialist treatment far from home.



Pictured left to right: Dr. Clay Marsh, Amber Crist, Craig Robinson, Dr. Sally Hodder

“Project ECHO in West Virginia came about when Amber Crist and Craig Robinson at Cabin Creek Health Systems came to us and requested a partnership to launch an ECHO program providing specialized hepatitis C expertise to community providers,” said Sally Hodder, M.D., director of the WVCTSI.

Project ECHO addresses this health disparity by providing rural primary care providers with specialized hepatitis C training. Utilizing a hub and spoke knowledge-sharing network, ECHO will establish West Virginia University as the central hub, connecting hepatitis C specialists with rural clinics throughout the state. During weekly sessions, participating clinics will present patients to the expert panel that includes infectious diseases experts as well as an addiction expert, a pharmacist, and a nurse.

To participate in Project ECHO for hepatitis C, all a clinic needs is an Internet connection and a webcam. Cabin Creek Health Systems is one of the primary care clinics that will be participating in the ECHO program.

“We had to rethink the way West Virginians were treated for hepatitis C,” said Craig Robinson, executive director of Cabin Creek Health Systems. “We believe being able to treat people in their communities is far better for patients than having to send them to specialists far away.”

The partnership has now expanded to include the WVPBRN and the West Virginia Primary Care Association. The University of New Mexico developed the ECHO platform to be a nationwide resource to address various health needs in individual states.

Project ECHO is recruiting clinics to participate in this new educational program. For information on how to participate in Project ECHO in West Virginia, contact Jay Mason (jdmason@hsc.wvu.edu).

New Study Seeking Primary Care Providers’ Opinions about Universal Suicide Screening

Mary LeCloux, PhD, an assistant professor in the WVU School of Social Work, is seeking primary care providers to participate in a study regarding the practice of routine suicide screening in partnership with the WVPBRN.

While new universal screening protocols in primary care are being tested, few studies have sought the opinions of the providers themselves regarding the value and feasibility of this practice. Primary care providers from any discipline are invited to meet with Dr. LeCloux for a 30-45 minute interview regarding current suicide screening practices at WVPBRN sites, potential barriers to implementing universal suicide screenings, and policy/resource interventions that might make this practice more feasible. Interviews will be conducted at the providers’ sites at a time that is convenient to them.



All participating sites will be eligible to participate in a follow-up training webinar that will discuss suicide risk assessment, screening, and management in primary care. Additionally, all sites who participate will receive a resource packet with links to additional resources regarding suicide prevention and management practices in primary care.

If interested in participating, please contact Stacey Whanger (swhanger@hsc.wvu.edu) at 304-581-1821. IRB approval for this study is on file at the West Virginia University Office of Research Integrity and Compliance.

Treah Haggerty named WVCTSI Research Scholar

WVPBRN Member, Treah Haggerty, MD, has been selected to the WVCTSI Research Scholar program. She is a clinician and assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine at WVU, and the director of the Family Medicine Rural Scholars Program, and a member of the WVCTSI’s Community Engagement and Outreach Core.

Dr. Haggerty has been an investigator for several WVPBRN projects in addition to serving on the Network Planning Committee since 2013. She has partnered with WVPBRN sites and state organizations to target obesity and wellness education in West Virginia.

The research scholar program is designed to support career development to become an independent investigator and academic scientist. As a Research Scholar, Dr. Haggerty plans to continue those efforts and lead to improved health outcomes in primary care and the communities they serve.



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