**Project ECHO Holds Kick-off Event in Morgantown**

The West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute held a kick-off event to announce the West Virginia Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) in West Virginia. This program will utilize multipoint video conferencing to address hepatitis C screening in partnership with the WVPBRN.

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. The need to expand hepatitis C screening in areas where substance abuse treatment is available since patients are often forced to seek specialist treatment far from home.

"Project ECHO in West Virginia came about when Amber Crist and Craig Robinson at Cabin Creek Health Systems approached us about sharing the expertise of WVU. They saw a valuable opportunity to bring specialists far away." said Craig Robinson, executive director of Cabin Creek Health Systems. "We believe being able to treat patients in their communities is far better for patients than having to send them to specialists who are far away.”

The partnership has now expanded to include the WVPBRN and the West Virginia Primary Care Program. WVU Medicine is one of the primary care clinics that will be participating in the ECHO program.

The program provides an opportunity for primary care providers to receive specialized hepatitis C training. Utilizing a hub and spoke model, WVU Medicine specialists will work with rural clinics throughout the state. During weekly sessions, participating primary care providers will learn from WVU specialists about hepatitis C, its associated issues, and the latest treatments available.

If interested in participating, please contact Stacey Whanger (swhanger@hsc.wvu.edu), network coordinator, regarding the practice of routine suicide screening in partnership with the WVPBRN.

"Suicide is one of the top ten leading causes of death, and we need to ensure that primary care providers are properly screened for suicide risk. The West Virginia Practice-Based Research Network (WVPBRN) is collaborating to develop a statewide multipoint video conferencing system that will connect primary care providers from across the state with mental health experts at WVU Medicine. This system will allow for real-time consultation, education, and support for primary care providers, helping to reduce the number of suicide deaths in West Virginia." said Dr. Sally Hodder, director of the WVPBRN.

The West Virginia Practice-Based Research Network (WVPBRN) is a network of primary care practices throughout the state, with the goal of improving the delivery of community-based health care services. The network is supported by the West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute (WVCTSI) and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR). The WVCTSI is a part of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS).