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

SPOTLIGHT: WVCTSI engages communities in health discussion

The West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute (WVCTSI) recently held two public town hall meetings in the Greenbrier Valley, New River Valley, and the Mid-Ohio Valley. These public forums provided community members with an opportunity to discuss the health concerns they feel are most important in their communities and the role research can play in addressing those concerns.

At each of the events, attendees spoke to the many health disparities affecting West Virginia. Common challenges raised by community members were cancer, drug abuse and chronic pain management, access to healthcare, and geographic isolation.

"At WVCTSI, we have a responsibility to foster research that directly impacts the people of West Virginia," said Sally Hodder, M.D., director of WVCTSI. "Engaging people with diverse perspectives from these communities is essential to determining how we can perform this duty." 

"We already had, in this first meeting, quite a few sectors represented," said Melanie Besset, executive director of Active Southern West Virginia. "That’s what we need: everybody at the same table working towards the same mission of improving the community’s health." 

Several community members believe this type of inclusive approach is necessary to bring about positive change across W.Va.

"We gained from engaging these diverse voices is invaluable as we continue to support research that can truly help the people of this state," said Hostler.

After the success of these events, WVCTSI will continue to create more ongoing conversations and partnerships throughout the state.

The healthcare climate in the US is changing dramatically. These practice transformation initiatives will provide the opportunity to improve health outcomes, enhance access and quality, and reduce healthcare costs. As many providers are adapting to the new climate, it can be difficult to incorporate new education and experiences given to medical residents.

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The survey results showed 76% of primary care residents in the network residency program sites felt that quality improvement projects are beneficial to clinical practice. However, only 40% were moderately satisfied with their program’s current research/quality improvement training.

If anything major is going to be changed in West Virginia, it’s going to happen in these communities. It’s those champions who know the culture of the community and can be their advocates," said Stamatiki “Matina” Clapsis, youth activity coordinator with the Family Refuge Advocates. 

During the Mid-Ohio Valley Town Hall event, Drema Mace, Ph. D., M.S.P., executive director of the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, shared the outcomes of her recent needs assessment survey and implementation plan to provide more background for the network meeting.

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