

### Karen's Corner



As West Virginians, we have all been touched in some way by the substance abuse epidemic. Last year, there were more than 700 overdose deaths in our state. This alarming statistic means that hundreds of people lost a family member, friend, neighbor or co-worker to addiction in 2015 alone.

Despite challenges of this widespread issue, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin has made great strides during his administration to combat substance abuse in West Virginia. Through the Governor's Advisory Council on Substance Abuse (GACSA), DHHR has created critical initiatives to support ongoing efforts in local communities to provide help to those struggling with addiction. This collaboration has resulted in a number of successes, including a decrease in marijuana use and prescription drugs, as well as a decline in the number of oxycodone and hydrocodone-related deaths.

This improvement comes after Governor Tomblin introduced legislation in 2012 to implement stricter oversight of methadone and pain clinics to close those described as pill mills. To date, our Office of Inspector General has completed numerous surveys of Chronic Pain Management Clinics, revoked the license of one clinic, and denied licensure to 19 clinics.

Additional legislation was passed to ensure safe and appropriate holistic care for substance use disorders and addiction when treated with medication. As a result, clinics that use medication-assisted treatment must be licensed by the state, provide counseling in conjunction with treatment and test their patients to ensure that they are using the medication as intended.

To provide overdose victims with the opportunity to overcome addiction, DHHR's Bureau for Public Health has trained first responders in naloxone administration. In 2015, 3,351 doses were administered by EMS agencies across West Virginia. There has also been an increase in syringe exchange programs occurring at the community level in West Virginia.

Those looking for individualized services and resources can find assistance at 1-844-HELP4WV. Administered through a collaborative partnership between DHHR and First Choice Health Systems, the first-ever 24-hour substance abuse and mental health hotline has provided support to thousands of West Virginians seeking help and recovery services.

Currently, we have 132 medically monitored, Crisis – Detoxification and Residential Treatment beds statewide. We're also addressing drug misuse with grants from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). These awards will allow our Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities to focus on preventing overdose deaths and hospitalizations, addressing prescription drug misuse among youth ages 12-17 and adults and expanding treatment services for the homeless.

Moreover, we are focusing on substance abuse in pregnancy to decrease the number of babies born with drug withdrawal. Effective October 1, 2016, the Bureau for Public Health will identify infants with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome through the West Virginia Birth Score Instrument. Our Bureau for Public Health and Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities also continues to work with the West Virginia Perinatal Partnership, which is responsible for implementation of the Drug Free Moms and Babies Project, a comprehensive and integrated medical and behavioral health program for pregnant and postpartum women.

Given what has been accomplished in a few short years, I am confident that we will continue winning the small battles in this fight against substance abuse, and ultimately come out victorious. We're strong. We're resilient. We're West Virginians – and together, we can.

### DHHR Public Service Announcement Urges Residents to Get a Flu Shot

DHHR officials are reminding residents to take steps to prepare for the upcoming flu season. In a newly launched public service announcement, Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling and Dr. Rahul Gupta, Bureau for Public Health Commissioner and State Health Officer, urge West Virginians to get a flu shot to help prevent the spread of the virus.

The 60-second video features Secretary Bowling and Dr. Gupta discussing the importance of the vaccine for everyone, especially those at high risk for flu complications. The public service announcement was filmed at Saint Francis First Urgent Care and Wellness Center in Charleston, where Secretary Bowling received her flu shot.

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## Flu, continued

“We all need to make a commitment to do everything we can to protect ourselves and our loved ones from the flu this season,” said Secretary Bowling. “Now is the opportune time to consider basic preventive measures such as the flu vaccine, and I hope this public service announcement encourages someone to take action today.”

Dr. Gupta underscores the importance of not waiting until the middle of the flu season to get a shot.

“The flu shot not only helps protect you and your family, but also residents among our most vulnerable population, including young children, pregnant women, adults 65 years and older, as well as those with chronic health conditions,” said Dr. Gupta.

In addition to getting a flu shot, Dr. Gupta said there are several preventive steps you can take to fight the flu:

- Wash your hands frequently, cover your cough and sneeze into your sleeve if you do not have a tissue.
- Wipe down frequently touched surfaces with a disinfectant.
- Stay home when you are sick.

Flu symptoms include quick onset of fever, body aches, extreme tiredness and dry cough. Persons who may be suffering from influenza-like symptoms should see a medical provider right away. For more information about the flu, please visit [www.dide.wv.gov](http://www.dide.wv.gov) and click on “Influenza.”

To watch and share the public service announcement, visit: <https://youtu.be/At9fRf5IHdI>



## Welch Community Hospital Employee Promotes Early Breast Cancer Detection



October’s designation as Breast Cancer Awareness Month provides an opportunity to promote awareness of this disease. While most people are aware of breast cancer, many forget to take the steps to detect the disease in its early stages and encourage others to do the same. Ruth Brown, Radiology Manager at Welch Community Hospital, is not one of those people.

The radiology department sees between 20-50 patients on a typical day, with an average of 4-5 seeking mammograms, and Ruth actively promotes and encourages regular mammograms and self-breast exams. “Unfortunately I was not performing the self-exams on a routine basis,” she explains. “My cancer was discovered one morning after a shower. There was no family history of breast cancer when I was diagnosed with invasive duct carcinoma, grade 3. I share this story with my patients hoping it will make a difference in their health and survival.”

The mass was small in size, but aggressive. Ruth had a lumpectomy to remove the tumor, and tests showed a high probability that the cancer would return without treatment. She received four chemotherapy treatments and 33 radiation treatments, and currently takes tamoxifen, a drug to prevent reoccurrence.

Ruth transitioned from being a healthcare provider to patient with relative ease, but it was an eye opening experience. “I never realized all of the tests and exams I would have to have once I was diagnosed. I was apprehensive about the chemotherapy treatments because of all of the negative comments I heard in the past.” She was able to receive all of her treatments locally and continued to work throughout chemotherapy and radiation.

Ruth credits many sources of support during this time including the American Cancer Society and the many “families” that wrapped around her – including her husband, daughter, son and sisters, her Welch Community Hospital radiology family, and her church family. “In my cancer journey, I learned the importance of realizing that we have a role in determining our health. I have seen many cases where an early diagnosis through self-exams and mammograms has saved lives. I also learned the importance of remaining positive and prayerful through the experience.”

With the passage of the Affordable Care Act, mammograms for breast cancer screening are now required to be covered without a co-pay or deductible in health insurance plans that started after August 1, 2012, and they are also covered by Medicare and Medicaid. However, access is still an issue for some women. The West Virginia Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program (BCCSP) helps uninsured or underinsured women between the ages of 25 and 64 by providing free breast and cervical cancer screenings. To learn more about BCCSP and to see if you qualify, call 1-800-642-8522. Funding is also available through BCCSP to assist qualifying women with diagnostic or treatment services.