Who Is at the Hepatitis Helm?

January 21, 2019 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Tomorrow there will be a new leader at the helm of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH). Carolyn Wester, MD, MPH, is the new Director of DVH beginning January 22, 2019. Dr. Wester was the Medical Director for HIV, STDs, and Viral Hepatitis at the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH), a position she held since 2008.

Here is what Jonathan Mermin, MD, MPH has to say about Dr. Wester. Dr. Mermin is the Director of the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC).

> "Over the last ten years, Dr. Wester has led the daily operations for the TDH section tasked with the prevention and control of HIV, STDs, and viral hepatitis throughout Tennessee. Under her leadership, this section has successfully expanded partnerships and executed cross-program strategic plans. In particular, Dr. Wester launched and expanded the Viral Hepatitis program, integrating it with the HIV/STD section; doubled funding and tripled staff levels; expanded viral hepatitis surveillance, testing, prevention and treatment capacity across the state; and established an HIV/HCV outbreak response plan. Prior to this role, she has held positions as a Research Associate at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the Director of Urogynecology and Pelvic Reconstructive Surgery section at Cook County Hospital in Chicago, and an attending physician at the Rush Center for Women's Medicine, Chicago.
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> Dr. Wester has conducted research, serving as the principal investigator or co-investigator of several NIH-funded research studies in Botswana, including a prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV study, the country's first randomized controlled trial. She has authored or co-authored a myriad of articles and given numerous presentations on HIV, viral hepatitis, STDs, and TB and on such topics as syringe services, women's and minority health, and opioids. She received her Medical Degree from Dartmouth Geisel School of Medicine, and a Master of Public Health, Qualitative Methods, from Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health. She holds an adjunct faculty appointment in the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine Department of Medicine."

Why is this important? This is a key person who fights for funding for services related to viral hepatitis. As taxpayers, we pay Dr. Wester's salary and in turn, she works for us. Although there are many people who are vital in the goal to eliminate hepatitis B and C, Dr. Wester is at the helm of this essential (and underfunded) division of the CDC.

Now we get to see where this ship goes next.

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