Medical School, PA Program at JWU Seek to Collaborate

PROVIDENCE – Brown University and Johnson & Wales University (JWU) have signed a memorandum of understanding to explore collaborations between the Alpert Medical School and the new physician assistant program at JWU.

The agreement, signed in March, outlines several areas for potential cooperation including sharing training facilities, jointly arranging lectures, pursuing educational grants, and engaging in cost-sharing.

“The collaborative training of physicians, physician assistants, and other members of the interprofessional health care team is an evolving national educational initiative,” said Dr. George Bottomley, director of JWU’s Center for Physician Assistant Studies.

“The new model of health care is patient-focused, IT-driven, and team-based,” said Dr. Edward Wing, dean of medicine and biological science at Brown. “Alpert Medical School is fortunate to partner with JWU to explore interdisciplinary training opportunities with its physician assistant program. This new collaboration makes good sense as we work toward expanding the entire health care workforce in Rhode Island and beyond.”

The debut of the JWU PA program, the first in Rhode Island, comes amid greater recognition across the state that interprofessional education will better prepare health care workers for the future of care delivery.

Alpert Medical School, for example, holds interprofessional workshops twice a year that team its medical students with students from the University of Rhode Island’s nursing and pharmacy colleges, and Rhode Island College’s nursing and social work schools. Acting as a cohesive care team, the Brown, URI and RIC students diagnose and develop treatment plans for actors playing the role of patients in Alpert Medical School’s simulated doctors’ offices or “clinical skills suites.”

Recognizing the increasing patient care responsibilities being placed on physician assistants, Johnson & Wales has developed a curriculum that emphasizes academic and clinical excellence.

JWU is renovating an 18,000-square-foot building at 157 Clifford St. that it bought last year for the new PA program, a mere 1,000 feet from the medical school.

Rhode Island Hospital opens COBRE Center for Stem Cell Biology

PROVIDENCE – Rhode Island Hospital is expanding its research space in the city’s bio-med-focused Knowledge District with the opening of a new hematology-oncology laboratory, the COBRE Center for Stem Cell Biology in Lifespan’s Coro building.

The new 11,000-square-foot hematology-oncology research lab was made possible by a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NIH conferred more than $300,000 to Peter Quesenberry, MD, director of hematology oncology at Rhode Island and The Miriam hospitals, specifically for the construction of the new lab.

“Many of these projects will help us to further study the use of stem cells for the treatment of many illnesses – various forms of cancer, tissue and organ damage and much more,” Dr. Quesenberry said. “By working closely with the physicians, we are developing new studies that stem from the patient – essentially, creating research in reverse, from the bedside to the bench, in an effort to develop new treatments for all-too-common and debilitating illnesses.”

The cancer studies being conducted are directed toward revising drug resistance in prostate cancer, chronic myelocytic leukemia and breast cancer. Additionally, cutting-edge studies to develop better treatments for prostate and breast cancer are being conducted, as are studies of mesenchymal stem cells for their ability to reverse pulmonary hypertension. The laboratory also will support research in novel anti-cancer treatments for pediatric and adult malignancies, and will continue to examine therapeutic mechanisms underlying refractory leukemia and lymphoma.

The new lab space can accommodate 14 laboratory benches, and can accommodate 10 funded investigators, as well as their technicians and students.