

## Aquidneck Medical Associates Merge with University Medicine Foundation

*University Medicine also in discussions with other RI physician groups*

PROVIDENCE – Aquidneck Medical Associates and University Medicine Foundation merged operations effective January 1, 2014. The new medical group will include 185 physicians and 200 staff who will serve more than 100,000 patients throughout most of Rhode Island.

**KEIVAN ETTEFAGH, MD**, president of Aquidneck Medical Associates, said, “We expect that in the near future this merger to bring high quality specialty care closer to the residents of Newport and Portsmouth. It will allow us to expand on our 50-year tradition of great service, and soon patients will no longer have to cross two bridges and drive 30 miles to reach many specialists.” Aquidneck Medical Associates is comprised of 11 primary care physicians and 38 support staff.

University Medicine has 15 locations throughout the state that offer primary care and 10 different medical specialties. University Medicine is an independent group which is affiliated with Brown University and Lifespan Health System. **Lou Rice, MD**, president of University Medicine Foundation, said, “The combined operations will allow us to expand services to more patients, participate in new programs with insurers, enhance our technology and improve administrative services.”

Joining University Medicine will enable Aquidneck to offer innovative clinical care such as their patient-centered medical homes (PCMHs); and will enhance its ability to participate in new health-care models under the Affordable Care Act, such as accountable care organizations (ACOs).

University Medicine also has made it a priority to add more primary care physicians, which is critical given the current and projected shortage of access to primary care providers. Dr. Rice said, “The opportunity to affiliate with a high quality group like Aquidneck comes at the right time. We’ll be better able to participate in new models of care that will give patients better service and access to care while keeping healthcare costs under control.”

University Medicine is also in discussions with other physician groups in Rhode Island. Dr. Rice commented, “Our flexible approach makes us attractive to medical groups who want the administrative and support services we can provide, but who also want to maintain some autonomy in their operations, staffing, and clinical care delivery.” ❖

## Cigna adds Kent to network

WARWICK – Cigna and Kent Hospital have entered into a multi-year contract that adds the hospital and its employed physicians to Cigna’s network of participating hospitals and doctors in Rhode Island. The agreement became effective December 1, 2013.

Cigna customers who receive health care services from Kent Hospital or its doctors will now be covered at the in-network benefit level, according to the terms of their health care benefits plan. ❖



Philip Chan, MD, with patient.

## Miriam Hospital launches new HIV prevention program

*PrEP program offers daily pill that can help prevent HIV infection*

PROVIDENCE – The Miriam Hospital Immunology Clinic has launched the pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP program, which offers a single, daily pill to Rhode Islanders at higher risk for HIV exposure.

**PHILIP CHAN, MD**, of The Miriam Hospital’s Division of Infectious Diseases, is leading the PrEP program, one of the first clinical programs in the country to offer PrEP to at-risk patients in a clinical setting.

“The Miriam’s PrEP program is designed to address the ongoing HIV epidemic in the state,” said Dr. Chan. “Given that Rhode Island is a small state with a relatively close community, PrEP in combination with other available HIV prevention strategies, offers the chance to reduce the number of new HIV diagnoses to near zero in the future.”

For Rhode Islanders who are HIV-negative and at higher risk, PrEP can help prevent them from becoming infected. Higher risk groups include gay, bisexual, and other men who have unprotected sex with one or more men a year, and both HIV-negative men and women in a relationship with an HIV-positive person.

“While PrEP does offer an additional layer of protection, it’s not 100 percent effective. Condoms, the easiest prevention mechanism, should still always be used,” said Dr. Chan. “The PrEP program is part of our larger HIV/STD prevention program, which offers free testing to avoid the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.” ❖