

RIH, Brown researchers identify components in *C. difficile* that may lead to new diagnostic tools



BROWN

Leonard Mermel, DO

PROVIDENCE – Rhode Island Hospital researchers have identified components in *Clostridium difficile* (*C. diff*) that may lead to new diagnostic tools. The study is published online in advance of print in *The Journal of Molecular Diagnostics*.

“With the emergence of a more severe *C. diff* strain (NAP1/027/B1), there is an urgent need for a highly sensitive and rapid method of detection and strain typing,” said

LEONARD MERMEL, DO,

medical director of the department of epidemiology and infection control at Rhode Island Hospital. “The assay we have developed has the potential to quickly and accurately indicate the presence of specific markers of certain hypervirulent strains of *C. diff*. We believe that rapid identification of this bacterium will assist in timely initiation of antimicrobial therapy and admission to a setting where the patient is more appropriately observed based on his or her signs, symptoms and strain of bacteria causing the infection.”

The technology revealed in this study can be integrated as a point-of-care device to help quickly detect and identify *C. diff* strains that pose significant health threats in hospitals and other health care settings.

The funding was provided in part by the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. Other researchers involved in the study are Stephanie L. Angione and Anubhav Tripathi of the Center for Biomedical Engineering at Brown University, Aleksey Novikov, MD, and Jennifer Fieber, both of Brown University, and Aartik A. Sarma of Harvard Medical School. ❖

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Update

Appeals court directs UHC, CT. physicians to arbitration

NEW YORK, NY – On February 7, a three-judge panel on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit directed UnitedHealthcare and Connecticut physicians in the Hartford and Fairfield County Medical Associations to arbitration after an attempt at mediation failed.

The Court upheld an earlier district court injunction, with an amendment, keeping the physicians in the Medicare Advantage physician provider network and gave the physicians 30 days to initiate arbitration, at which time the preliminary injunction expires.

“This is a victory for our member physicians who have won another round in court to protect our patients and to let UnitedHealthcare know that we will not allow them to manipulate patient care,” said Dr. Robert D. Russo, chairman of the board, Fairfield County Medical Association.

“This once again reinforces the fact that big insurance companies can’t just come in the way of the doctor-patient relationship and do whatever they want derailing continuity of care. They are answerable to the law and to the public. Doctors and the associations that represent them will continue to demand accountability on the part of insurance companies like UnitedHealthcare that strayed from their expected mission of providing care through access, improving quality and cost effectiveness (to decrease premiums) but not just focus on their profits to fill their pockets,” said Dr. Bollepalli Subbarao, president of the Hartford County Medical Association. ❖

UHC drops Yale-New Haven

In a related matter, UnitedHealthcare recently notified customers that, effective April 1, 2014, Yale-New Haven Health System will no longer be a provider of the company’s Medicare Advantage plans.

In a statement, Conn. Gov. Daniel Malloy said that due to this change, beneficiaries enrolled in this plan will not be able to continue seeing their doctors in the Yale-New Haven network, unless they re-enroll in original Medicare by February 14, 2014.

State Department of Aging (SDA) Commissioner Edith Prague said, “I am extremely concerned that so little notice was given to Medicare Advantage beneficiaries about this change. This is not only a disruption in the lives of these seniors, but it also severs the relationships current beneficiaries have established with their trusted doctors.” ❖