

THE MONTH'S TOP STORIES

ESSENTIA HEALTH TO OFFER ONE-STEP MOLECULAR-BASED STREP AND FLU TESTING

Essentia Health is rolling out a large-scale rapid result testing system for Influenza A and B, strep, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in most of the communities it serves. It is one of the first health care systems to do so—though hospitals have had the molecular-based testing equipment for years, this year the Food and Drug Administration waived regulations to allow outpatient facilities, like convenient care and community clinics, to offer the advanced diagnostic system.

The systems are created by Cepheid, a molecular diagnostics company that develops, manufactures, and markets fully integrated, accurate, easy-to-use molecular systems and tests to enable medical providers to identify and treat diseases early, increasing opportunities to improve patients' survival and quality of life.

"The Cepheid analyzers are molecular-based systems that detect the DNA or RNA of infectious bacteria or viruses in patient samples," said David Carter, MD, pathologist at Essentia Health. "The tests are more sensitive than the traditional culture most people are familiar with."

Essentia is the first health care system to implement the complete line of Cepheid's systems at one time, including Infinity, GX, and Xpress analyzers. Once it begins using the new analyzers in its outpatient facilities in early November, patients will be able to get accurate results within half an hour, rather than waiting for a hospital laboratory to confirm the initial diagnosis.

"Diagnosis of infections traditionally has required a screening test followed by a confirmatory test, delaying diagnosis and patient care," said Jodie DeMenge, a technical manager for the laboratory at St. Mary's Medical Center. "With this testing, we can provide complete results in one test. Faster results not only will help our patients get the care they need without having to wait for a hospital to confirm test results, it will also reduce the use of unnecessary antibiotics."

Last year, Essentia performed more than 40,000 strep tests on patients in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and Idaho. It invested \$2 million to purchase 60 Cepheid analyzers to place in hospitals and clinics across its service area.

SHRINERS, GILLETTE EXPAND COLLABORATION

Shriners Hospitals for Children—Twin Cities and Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare are expanding their collaboration for treatment of children with orthopedic and neuromuscular conditions. The two organizations, which will remain

IN BRIEF

SEVENTH MINNESOTA CHILD DIAGNOSED WITH ACUTE FLACCID MYELITIS

A seventh case of acute flaccid myelitis (AFM), a rare but serious condition that affects the nervous system, causing muscles to weaken, has been diagnosed in a Minnesota child in mid-October. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there have been at least 62 cases of the disease in the U.S. this year, mostly in children, spanning 22 states.

AFM mainly affects children, for reasons not yet fully understood. All the clinical diagnoses in Minnesota have come since mid-September and each has involved a child age 10 or younger. Cases have been reported in the metro area as well as central and northeastern Minnesota.

Though the condition is rare, numbers are on the rise nationally as they were in 2014. Investigators believe that uptick was linked to an outbreak of a respiratory illness in children that was caused by a virus known as enterovirus D68. There were three AMF cases in Minnesota in 2014, and since then, the state has typically had less than one case diagnosed a year.

Disease investigators at the Minnesota Department of Health are working aggressively with health care providers to gather information about the cases and partnering with the CDC to share

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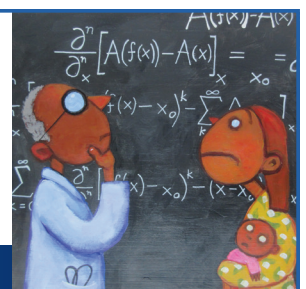
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independent, have worked together since the 1920s and are now expanding the collaboration into surgery and inpatient care.

Beginning in November, Shriners Hospitals for Children–Twin Cities will perform the majority of their surgeries and inpatient stays at Gillette. Patients of Shriners Hospitals for Children–Twin Cities will continue to receive outpatient services including physician visits, child life, radiology exams, rehabilitation, orthotics, and prosthetics at the Shriners location in Minneapolis.

The move follows nationwide trends away from inpatient care. Shriners will eliminate 35 full time positions and will no longer be a full-service hospital after the change goes into effect.

PRETERM INFANTS AT HIGHER RISK FOR MALTREATMENT, STUDY SHOWS

A study from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health has shown that compared to infants born at term, infants who were born preterm (before 37 weeks) had 1.6 times the risk of being readmitted to the hospital within the first year of life for an injury suggestive of maltreatment.

“It is clear that maltreatment is a significant public health issue and prevention should be a major priority, yet we currently have little public health infrastructure or research focused on maltreatment prevention,” said Susan Mason, PhD, MPH, assistant professor in the School of Public Health. “A crucial starting point is to do a better job of measuring maltreatment so that we know who is at risk and why, and ultimately find ways to prevent it.”

Mason used data on infants who were hospitalized for injuries that are common in instances of physical abuse and neglect. Specifically, she looked at birth certificates and discharge data from all hospital births of New York City residents from 1995 to 2004 and any subsequent infant hospitalizations within 12 months after delivery. Probable cases of infant maltreatment were identified by scanning patient records for 33 injury diagnosis codes highly correlated with abuse or neglect.

Along with showing the increased risk for preterm infants, the results also showed that infants with long neonatal intensive care unit stays had 1.8 times the risk of being readmitted to the hospital within the first year of life for an injury suggestive of maltreatment compared to infants with no neonatal intensive care unit stay. Mason says the results suggest that families who experience these challenges at birth might benefit from targeted supports.

“It is possible that these early challenges at birth contribute to the risk of later maltreatment because they are highly stressful and/or may disrupt normal parent-child attachment,” said Mason. “If this is the case, then intervening to reduce stress and focus on bonding in these families may be important.”

Mason noted that other possible explanations for why preterm infants may be more likely to be maltreated include being born to parents with certain problems, including drug abuse disorders, who may face both challenges at birth and difficulties parenting.

IN BRIEF continued...

information. They are recommending if parents see any potential symptoms of AFM, to contact their health care provider as soon as possible. While there is no specific treatment, doctors may recommend certain interventions on a case-by-case basis.

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON PROJECT TO HOUSE ELDERLY ADULTS WITH HISTORY OF HOMELESSNESS

Touchstone Mental Health is partnering with Alliance Housing on a new project to house elderly adults who are low income and have a history of homelessness. The facility, called Minnehaha Commons, will be located at 301 East Lake Street in Minneapolis.

Minnehaha Commons will house 44 adults ages 55 and older. All residents will be very low income, and most will have experienced homelessness and may have been screened out by other landlords due to their housing, credit, or criminal histories. Research has shown that adults over the age of 55 are the fastest growing homeless population in Minnesota. This will be the first housing program in the state for older adults who are homeless.

Alliance Housing owns the facility and Hayes-Gibson will manage the property. Alliance also currently owns and/or manages similar facilities in South and North Minneapolis. Touchstone Mental Health will provide 24-hour onsite staff and services at Minnehaha Commons, where they will assist tenants in accessing physical and mental health services.



TOP STORIES continued...

Full results of the study were published in The Annals of Epidemiology. Mason is continuing her research on health impacts of childhood abuse and neglect as well as the risk factors for child abuse and neglect with the goal of advancing maltreatment prevention by informing policies, education, or targeted supports for families.

NEW TOOL WILL PROVIDE REAL-TIME INFORMATION TO IMPROVE OPIOID OVERDOSE PREVENTION EFFORTS

A new initiative has launched in Hennepin County that will link first responders on scene to a mapping tool in which they can enter real-time information about suspected overdoses. The tool, called OD MAP, will make this information available to analysts and other response personnel so they can track suspected overdoses more accurately, detect spikes in geographical areas, and create strategic response plans.

The tool allows first responders to quickly enter important data into the system by identifying whether or not an incident was fatal or non-fatal, and whether or not naloxone was administered. No personal identifying information is entered, and the data is not meant to be used for investigations. The goal is to use it as a prevention and education tool that will allow first responders to focus drug prevention outreach in areas that are being most affected by the opioid epidemic.

COLLABORATION BRINGS EXPANDED CARDIAC SERVICES TO BRAINERD LAKES AREA

Essentia Health is partnering with the Minneapolis Heart Institute to expand cardiac care in the Brainerd lakes area. Specialists from the Minneapolis Heart Institute have begun working at the Marilyn Covey Heart & Vascular Center at Essentia Health-St. Joseph's Medical Center in Brainerd.

In addition, the Minneapolis Heart Institute will be adding to existing Essentia Health services through in-person and telecare consultations at Essentia Health St. Joseph's-Brainerd Clinic. Patients will be able to consult with subspecialties in areas such as electrophysiology, advanced heart failure, cardiothoracic surgery, vascular disease, and valve and structural heart disease. They can begin making appointments at the Brainerd clinic in late October.

"We are proud to say that the collaborative effort between the Minneapolis Heart Institute and Essentia Health have always been driven by the shared vision of bringing the highest level of care closer to home," said Raed H. Abdelhadi, MD, vice president of business development and strategic implementation at Minneapolis Heart Institute.

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The organizations broke ground on the project in September. The \$10.8 million development is expected to be completed and fully operational by September 2019.

HUMANA INTRODUCES MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLAN TRANSPORTATION BENEFIT IN MINNESOTA

Humana Inc. is launching a transportation benefit within certain 2019 Humana Medicare Advantage plans in Minnesota that will provide members with rides to plan-approved locations for non-emergency medical services. This is the first time the benefit will be available in such plans in the state.

The benefit will allow members to secure transportation at no additional cost to locations including medical, dental, and dialysis appointments, as well as Silver-Sneakers fitness centers. Members will be entitled to 12 one-way trips per year of up to 25 miles each, and can reserve transportation by car or van in advance by calling a toll-free reservation line. Wheelchair-accessible vehicles will also be available.

Medicare beneficiaries in Minnesota will be able to select a 2019 Humana Medicare Advantage plan during this year's Medicare Advantage and Prescription Drug Plan Annual Election period, which runs from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7. Coverage will take effect Jan. 1, 2019, for those that enroll during this period.

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