



## Message from the Project Directors Celia I. Kaye, MD, PhD & Kathryn Hassell, MD

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March, 2012

### Greetings!

*\*\*This PD Message has the corrected dates for the 2012 Annual Meeting\*\**

We've had an early spring in the Mountain States, with daffodils and trees in blossom to cheer our days.

In the MSGRCC office, we've been preparing for the annual meeting of the American College of Medical Genetics (more next newsletter) and supporting our various projects. Telemedicine has become an increasingly important activity in the Mountain States. In 2007, there was only one known telegenetics project in the region. In 2010, MSGRCC began funding two small projects to improve access to genetic services using telemedicine, and has funded two additional projects in 2011 and 2012. One of the original projects, the Montana Telegenetics Project: Improving Access, Educating Providers and Consumers, will be completed in May 2012, and we are proud that the telemedicine services implemented using MSGRCC funds will be integrated into usual practice moving forward. This level of sustainability is exactly the outcome we like to see for our small projects, and this month we'd like to highlight their work.

The **Montana Telegenetics Project: Improving Access, Educating Providers and Consumers** is based at Billings Clinic in Montana and uses the existing Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network to provide genetic counseling to obstetric and oncology patients in a four state catchment area (Montana, eastern North and South Dakota, and Wyoming). The specific goals of the project are to:

- Provide timely, cost-effective access to genetic counseling services in region

- Provide education and supportive services regarding best practices in obstetric (OB) genetic screening to isolated OB providers
- Provide genetics education to consumers

The project lead, *Susan Landgren, MS, CGC*, has informed regional providers about the new project, developed patient scheduling and genetic counseling protocols, and developed provider and patient satisfaction tools. Over the past year, the project has provided 15 oncology and 11 prenatal genetic counseling visits, and seven obstetric consultations with specialists in Denver, Colorado. Patients have reported a high level of satisfaction with use of the telemedicine, and approximately half of the patients responding to the satisfaction surveys indicate that travel would have otherwise prevented them from receiving genetic counseling.

These clinical services are supplemented by educational efforts targeting providers and consumers. The educational programs are provided via distance education technology and offer information about the importance and availability of genetic counseling at Billings Clinic in Montana. To date, there have been four educational sessions, two focused on consumer education and two targeting providers. Feedback on these sessions has been positive, and the sessions are viewed as a useful tool for raising awareness about genetics and encouraging utilization of the telegenetic services.

Not only is this good work being recognized regionally, but our investment in telemedicine is beginning to gain national attention. On March 20, 2012, *Liza Creel* and *Susan Landgren* presented on MSGRCC telemedicine activities and the Montana Telegenetics Project at the **Northwest Regional Telehealth Resource Center Annual Meeting** in Billings, Montana. On March 27, 2012, the National Coordinating Center's Telegenetics Workgroup hosted a **Community Conversation on Telemedicine** at the 2012 ACMG Clinical Genetics Meeting in Charlotte, NC. *Dr. Mary Kukolich* presented on her telemedicine work at Cook Children's during the Community Conversation. Finally, *Liza Creel* presented on telemedicine activities of all Regional Collaboratives at the **HRSA Office for the Advancement of Telehealth Grantee Meeting** in Washington, DC on March 29, 2012. Our telemedicine activities were also cited in a blog article last year: <http://telemedicineneeds.blogspot.com/2011/02/genetic-info-for-mountainous-region.html>. We are so proud of the many accomplishments of our Telemedicine Workgroup, our telemedicine mini-projects, and our partners over the last several years.

We hope you avoid spring fever as March comes to a close, and please remember to let us know of your activities and needs. You are our Regional Collaborative, and we want to be sure that we're serving you and the families in our region. Please remember to mark your calendars for the MSGRCC 2012 Annual Meeting, June 28-30 in Denver, Colorado.

Warm regards,

*Celia I. Kaye*      *Kathryn Hassell*

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