



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Senator Murphy announces Hudson Valley's First Center of Excellence

TERRENCE MURPHY June 5, 2017

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Valhalla, NY - Chemical and biological terrorism is a real, ever-present threat. Rapid advances in genetic engineering have opened the door for small terrorism groups to tailor and easily turn biological viruses into weapons. Test tube terrorism has sadly become part of the norm. On March 20, 1995 in Japan, members of a cult movement released sarin in the Tokyo subway system during rush hour, killing 12 people, severely injuring 50 and causing temporary vision problems for nearly 5,000 others. On September 18, 2001, one week after the September

11 attacks, letters containing anthrax spores were mailed to several news offices and two U.S. Senators, killing five people and infecting 17 others with another 30,000 forced to undergo treatment.

One of Senator Terrence Murphy's many responsibilities is the safety and well-being of the more than 300,000 people he represents in the 40th Senate District. New York Medical College (NYMC) has answered the threat and taken a giant leap toward making the lives of New Yorkers safer by creating a new Center of Excellence in Precision Responses to Bioterrorism and Disasters. The Center is the first of its kind in the Mid-Hudson Region.

Senator Murphy, who led the way in securing funding for the Center, was among the speakers at the event announcing the Center's opening, which included Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino, Assemblyman Thomas Abinanti, and Keith Olson, President of the Affiliated Police Associations of Westchester County. Dean Robert Amler, M.D., MBA, Vice President of Government Affairs at NYMC, served as moderator. Staff and guests included Dr. Sherlita Amler, Commissioner of the Westchester County Department of Health; Jay P. Goldsmith, D.M.D., President and Dean of The Touro College of Dental Medicine (TCDM) at New York Medical College; Marsha Gordon, President and CEO of the Business Council of Westchester; and Amy Allen, Vice President of the Westchester County Association.

This unique center will combine New York Medical College's globally recognized assets in disaster medicine and medical countermeasures with individualized precision medical strategies against biological and chemical threats and seek to translate research findings in order to protect Americans from the threat of catastrophic bioterrorism and man-made disasters. The College's researchers and physicians contribute expertise and leadership in preventing, diagnosing and treating public health threats specific to biological and chemical terrorism, and public health emergencies.

"The breadth and reach of bioterrorism is terrifying. It is not if it is going to happen, but when. A bioterrorist can take something common that we come in contact with during the course of a day, such as the door handle of a cab, a fork, even a handshake, and turn it into a weapon," said Senator Murphy. "This Center gives us a vitally needed local resource to fight terrorism, and potentially protect the lives of first responders and our families."

Senate Majority Leader John J. Flanagan, a supporter of the project said, "New Yorkers recognize the importance of being vigilant and prepared in the evolving fight against terrorism, and this new Center of Excellence will be a valuable resource in addressing the emerging threats our communities face. Senator Murphy led the way to secure new state funding for the Center in this year's budget and I look forward to joining him, New York Medical College, and its many supporters in celebrating the opening of this critical addition to our nation's emergency preparedness efforts."

"We are very proud of our Westchester County Biodefense Laboratory -- one of only four of its kind in New York -- which serves seven counties in the Lower Hudson Valley in testing for chemical agents such as anthrax, plague and ricin," said Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino. "The Center for Excellence will be a great partner in keeping Westchester and the greater metropolitan area safe. Thanks to Senator Murphy and everyone involved for enhancing the fight against bio-terror."

Assemblyman Abinanti said, "Thank you New York Medical College for having the vision, and the perseverance to develop this program, and for having the common sense to ask the legislature for money. It just proves to us that government can be a partner. We are reminded every day that there are people who want to destroy our way of life. It is important that we have a Center of Excellence in the Hudson Valley region with trained

personnel who can respond to any potentially devastating threat to our communities."

"Since our founding in 1860, New York Medical College (NYMC) has educated women and men in the health professions to enable our graduates to help society respond to urgent community health-related threats. Contemporary threats include previously unexperienced bacterial and viral diseases, hurricanes, flooding, terrorist attacks, and toxic environmental pollution," said Edward C. Halperin, M.D., M.A., chancellor and chief executive officer of NYMC. "This Center of Excellence in Precision Responses to Bioterrorism and Disasters allows us to expand our research on preparedness planning, training, and response strategies for community-wide emergencies, and help protect us all against biological and chemical threats."

"For many of us, disaster medicine has been a focus since even before 9/11. The terrible murders this past weekend in London were an echo of countless attacks both here and abroad," said Dr. Amler. "We are always aware that here in New York we are in the cross-hairs of a target-rich environment. This new Center of Excellence in Precision Responses to Bioterrorism and Disasters is designed to intensify and solidify our preparedness as a state and as a nation, and to defend against all threats, whether intentional, accidental or natural."

Keith Olson, President of the Affiliated Police Association of Westchester County said, "When I started in the Police Academy twenty-eight years ago I never dreamed we would have to train for bioterrorism and chemical warfare in our backyards. Obviously, times have changed. In light of the attacks we saw in London this past weekend, there is an urgency for this type of training. So we are thankful to Senator Murphy, County Executive Astorino and our friends at New York Medical College for making this center a reality."

This Center will help bring more federal grants to New York. NYMC's Center for Disaster

Medicine (CDM) already has pilot funding from the Department of Defense (DOD) to translate emergency medical applications and lessons from the battlefield to civilian emergency medical and law enforcement agencies. Led by a post-911 veteran and former regional commanding officer in the National Response Framework's ESF-8, CDM has used this federal funding to equip first responders with the most current, evidence-based training and subject matter expertise to provide medical care in the most severe and dynamic environments. CDM has installed a unique "austere medicine" training facility that conducts sensory-immersion training to first responders - particularly SWAT teams and their medical components. Such training is unavailable anywhere in the United States outside of military facilities. This training specifically focuses on scenarios involving improvised explosive devices (IEDs) preparation and deployment. DOD is currently reviewing a next-phase application for \$1.5 million to expand this program.

New York State has established and currently supports 10 Centers of Excellence throughout the State. Three such centers exist in Rochester, two each in Buffalo and Long Island, and one in Syracuse, Albany and Binghamton. Prior to the opening of this Center in Valhalla, the Hudson Valley had no such designation.

New York Medical College has an established position in preparedness and response to bioterrorism and community-wide disasters. NYMC is world-renowned for its researchers - among them Drs. Diane E. Heck, Doris Bucher, David Markenson, Sherlita Amler, and Michael Reilly.

Founded in 1860, New York Medical College is one of the oldest and largest health sciences colleges in the country with more than 1,400 students, 1,300 residents and clinical fellows, nearly 3,000 faculty members, and 19,000 living alumni. The College, which joined the Touro College and University System in 2011, is located in Westchester County, New York, and

offers degrees from the School of Medicine, the Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences, the School of Health Sciences and Practice, a School of Dental Medicine and a School of Nursing. NYMC provides a wide variety of clinical training opportunities for students, residents, and practitioners.