



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Terrorists Beware: Local Lawmakers' \$750K Grant Funds Expansion Of Training Programs For MYMC's Center Of Excellence

TERRENCE MURPHY July 11, 2018

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Valhalla, NY - The largest bioterrorism attack in the U.S. occurred in September 1984, when followers of Baghwan Shree Rajneesh contaminated salad bars at ten restaurants in Dalles, Oregon with salmonella. Seven hundred and fifty-one people fell ill, proving that terrorists don't have to strike at military targets to wreak havoc. Since then, we have seen unnerving acts such as anthrax mailed to unsuspecting victims, planes deliberately flown into

skyscrapers, and children used as human bombs.

To combat the threat of terrorism, New York Medical College (NYMC) founded the Center of Excellence in Precision Responses to Bioterrorism and Disasters in 2017. The Center is the first of its kind in the Mid-Hudson Region.

On July 10, Senator Terrence Murphy announced that he had obtained a grant of \$750,000 to support the expansion of the Center's training program at a press conference held at the Center of Excellence. The sum marks a major increase in funding for the Center, which had received \$500,000 from the State in 2017.



"Bioterrorism poses distinctive challenges for preparedness, protection, and response," said Senator Murphy. "New Yorkers are very much aware that we are targets for acts of

terrorism. The Center allows us to be proactive. It is critical to our region's preparedness to have trained personnel who can respond to any life-threatening incident within our communities. I am proud to have secured \$750,000 in funding to allow the Center to expand their mission to protect our families from catastrophic bio-terrorism and man-made disasters."

Edward C. Halperin, M.D., M.A., Chancellor and CEO of NYMC said, "I experienced the tragedy of 9/11 differently than most of you here today. I was not living in New York at the time. I lived in the safest place anyone could envision. A few days after the attack I was driving with my daughter in our car. She said 'Daddy is everything alright?' 'Are we going to be okay?' For the first time in my life, I was experiencing domestic terrorism. It was difficult to explain to her what we as a country were going through. The lesson I tried to convey was that if you attack America, the fight is not over until we say it is over. The Center of Excellence will provide first responders and health care providers with the training they will need to respond to all types of disasters that will help keep our families safe. No one should ever have the type of conversation that I had with my daughter ever again."

"This 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," noted Dean Robert Amler, M.D., MBA, Vice President of Government Affairs, NYMC. "The increase in funding we received this year has made it possible to provide more in-depth training, including preparing in real time for incidents of terrorism that are all too common in today's world."

Michael Reilly, DR. P.H., M.P.H, Director of the Center of Excellence in Precision Responses to Bioterrorism and Disasters for NYMC added, "It's one thing to teach someone in a well-lit,

quiet room where the temperature is a comfortable seventy degrees, and another situation altogether when you're trying to work in the dark in the sweltering heat with music blaring and distraught people are all screaming at once. We train medical personnel and first responders to work under the most adverse conditions; because that is the situation they are most often going to find themselves in. We are looking forward to expanding our services and hope that with continued State support we can deliver critically needed state-of-the-art training programs."



The Center combines 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 seeks to translate research findings in order to protect Americans from the threat of catastrophic bioterrorism and man-made disasters. The increased financial support will allow NYMC to expand its training programs for

hospitals, health systems, and first responders throughout the State. The school had committed funding for the renovation of a new state-of-the-art dedicated training facility on its Valhalla campus that will provide additional classroom space, disaster simulation and real-world scenario-based training for first responders.

"I am pleased that we were able to increase New York's contribution to the Center of Excellence. The Center will continue to bring together the best and the brightest to develop innovative tools to shield our community from those who would destroy our way of life," said Assemblyman Tom Abinanti. "I applaud the medical college's vision and perseverance in fashioning this unique program to prepare first responders at a time when bioterrorism is a significant international concern and disasters are becoming more commonplace."

Mt. Pleasant Town Councilman Anthony Amiano commented, "Thank you to State Senator Terrence Murphy for securing these important funds that will directly assist preparation efforts for public safety and health care responses during critical times of need. We are fortunate to have this Center of Excellence at New York Medical College in the Town of Mount Pleasant."

"I was working on 9/11. It was a quiet day. Someone called and said a plane had struck the World Trade Center. Then another plane hit. All of the sudden the world changed in an instant and was never the same," remembered John Hodges, Chief Inspector for the Westchester County Police. "Training is the vital element that allows us to respond efficiently. The Center of Excellence is a tremendous asset that allows us to prepare under austere, real-life conditions."

Michael Hagan, President, Westchester County Police Benevolent Association stated, "The programs and training provided by the Center of Excellence ensure we will have the tools we

need to protect our lives and the lives of those we serve. On behalf of law enforcement, we appreciate the efforts of New York Medical College and Senator Murphy and look forward to continuing to work together."

"We live in a region that is high risk," said Jenna Mandel-Ricci, Vice President, Regulatory & Professional Affairs, Greater New York Hospital Association. "Improving responsiveness is the key to minimizing any incident during a crisis situation. We have been working with the Center to develop training for emergency departments on the management of large mass casualty events. This critical funding increase will ultimately help save lives."

Sherlita Amler, M.D., Commissioner of Health at Westchester County was on hand to represent Westchester County Executive George Latimer. Among the many other guests in attendance were Alonzo West, President of the Westchester Correction Officers Benevolent Association, Peter Dickiarra, Westchester County Correction Superior Officers Association, and Brian Gates Senior Vice President, Hudson Valley Development Corporation.

New York State has established and currently supports 11 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.

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.