

Dear Editor:

Today is National Doctors' Day! There are many exceptional doctors in New York State and National Doctors' Day, celebrated annually on March 30, is an opportune time to recognize the unsung contributions physicians make to the health of our communities.

Dr. Daren Wu, Chief Medical Officer at Open Door Family Medical Centers, headquartered in Westchester County, is an exceptional physician. In addition to overseeing a clinical team responsible for serving 40,000 patients annually and maintaining a thriving practice as a family physician, Dr. Wu participates in several initiatives aimed at ensuring the provision of evidence-based preventive care to all patients. Dr. Wu has embraced health information technology and how it can work to improve the quality of care delivered to patients, championing the standardization of screening for tobacco use and the provision of on-site, evidence-based tobacco dependence treatment to all patients, regardless of the reason for their visit. This practice ultimately will ensure that every tobacco user seeking medical care is offered the resources they need to quit, including medication and counseling.

Dr. Wu's work aligns with the aggressive course of action set by the New York State Department of Health Bureau of Tobacco Control's Health Systems for a Tobacco-Free New York program, which promotes large-scale systems changes to support the universal provision of evidence-based tobacco dependence treatment services, with a focus on populations for which tobacco use prevalence rates have not decreased in recent years (i.e., adults with low incomes, individuals with serious mental illness). This is precisely why the Center of Excellence for Health Systems Improvement (COE for HSI) for a Tobacco-Free New York invited Dr. Wu to serve on our Advisory Committee--an invitation he gladly accepted. Dr. Wu has also worked with Bureau of Tobacco Control contractors for many years, first with POW'R Tobacco Center and currently with the Center for a Tobacco-Free Hudson Valley.

Championing such initiatives is not an easy task given competing priorities, but physicians like Dr. Wu understand the need to address tobacco use and dependence given that it places users at greater risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, as well as the necessity of doing so on the systems level. On National Doctors' Day, the COE for HSI salutes the work of our many exceptional doctors--especially Dr. Wu.

  
Elizabeth Jones, Director

Center of Excellence for Health Systems Improvement for a Tobacco-Free New York  
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