



The Maryland State Medical Society

News: For Immediate Release

Additional Information Contact:

Gene M. Ransom, CEO

Office: 410-539-0872 x 3305

MEDCHI URGES UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND TO REQUIRE VACCINATION TO PROTECT STUDENTS FROM THREAT OF DEADLY MENINGITIS B VIRUS

Maryland Physicians Join Leading Advocates Nationwide to Urge Big Ten Schools to Update Requirements to Keep Students Safe

BALTIMORE, August 13, 2018 – MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society, urged the University of Maryland to expand its vaccination requirement for incoming students to also include the vaccine for meningitis B, a potentially life-threatening disease.

“Meningitis B is a life-threatening condition, and college campuses provide an ideal setting for an outbreak because the disease spreads quickly in dormitories, class rooms, and other close-quarters conditions,” said MedChi CEO Gene Ransom. “Too many Maryland college students may be at risk for meningitis B and not even know it because they assume – wrongly – that the vaccine they already received covers it. We were proud to join with other leading health care advocates in signing onto a letter urging the University of Maryland to improve student protection.”

Meningitis B is the meningococcal disease strain responsible for most meningitis outbreaks at colleges and universities across the country, including multiple outbreaks in the 2017-2018 schoolyear, [according to the CDC](#). In its early stage, the disease is often misdiagnosed as the flu because symptoms are similar but, for six-in-ten young adults, meningitis B results in death or long-term disability, including permanent brain damage and loss of limbs.

MedChi joined other health care advocates in sending a letter to colleges and universities in the Big Ten Conference urging them to require the meningitis B vaccination. This year, two Big Ten schools – Indiana University and Purdue University – unveiled new policies requiring incoming students to receive the meningitis B vaccination, the strain of meningococcal disease most common among college-aged Americans. The most widely administered vaccine against meningitis – the meningitis conjugate vaccine, which most universities require – only protects against the A, C, W and Y strains of the disease, not meningitis B.

“[B]eing vaccinated against [Meningitis A, C, W and Y] is not enough. The B strain accounts for 50 percent of all meningococcal cases in the U.S. and 100 percent of the college outbreaks since 2011,” pointed out advocates in their Big Ten letter. “We ask that you join together as a Conference to once again be a leader, this time in the field of your students’ health and safety, and require students on your campuses to be vaccinated against all strains of meningococcal disease by requiring the conjugate (MenACWY) and meningitis B immunizations.”

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. Formed in 1799, it is still the largest physician organization in Maryland today. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit www.medchi.org.