For Immediate Release

MCHD announces new epidemiologist, Diane K. Gross, DVM, Ph.D.

MORGANTOWN, WV (May 16, 2018) — Severe influenza seasons, a state with a high rate of obesity and diabetes and the ongoing opioid crisis are just a few conditions that help highlight the importance of epidemiology.

Based at Monongalia County Health Department, Diane K. Gross, DVM, Ph.D., will serve as regional epidemiologist for a seven-county area: Monongalia, Preston, Marion, Harrison, Doddridge, Taylor and Barbour. Dr. Gross will take over for Bob White, who retired in October after 40 years with MCHD.

A Morgantown native, a graduate of West Virginia University and a former epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Dr. Gross arrives at MCHD from her most recent assignment as senior epidemiologist in High Threat Pathogens for the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen, Denmark.

“I’m very happy to be back in Morgantown,” Dr. Gross said. “I’m looking forward to working with the folks here as well as in the different regions.”

As regional epidemiologist, Dr. Gross will perform a variety of duties, including tracking several diseases that are considered reportable by the CDC. These include influenza, HIV, pertussis, Lyme disease, meningitis, tuberculosis and Hepatitis A, B and C.

Dr. Gross will be available to help coordinate the region’s response to the opioid crisis, which is also attributed to a recent rise in the number of cases of HIV and Hepatitis B.

She will also be available to respond to disease outbreaks, including those transmitted through food and water, as well as any cases of uncommon diseases such as hantavirus,
legionella, malaria or plague that could be diagnosed in the area. Dr. Gross will also have
the opportunity to weigh in on chronic conditions in West Virginia such as obesity and
diabetes.

After earning her bachelor of science degree in Animal and Veterinary Sciences, Dr.
Gross received her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from The Ohio State University
in Columbus. Dr. Gross worked as a veterinarian for six years and then returned to Ohio
State for a Ph.D. in Veterinary Epidemiology. Following that, Dr. Gross performed
postdoctoral work at the University of California at Davis, studying injuries in racehorses.

She began her career at the CDC in 2004 as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer in
the Meningitis and Special Pathogens Branch. From 2006 to 2018, she served as a senior
epidemiologist in the CDC’s Influenza Division. In 2012, the CDC sent Dr. Gross to
Copenhagen to work as a senior epidemiologist with WHO.

In 2015, Dr. Gross spent two months in Sierra Leone, Africa, helping to coordinate
WHO’s response to the Ebola outbreak.

Dr. Gross’s experience with zoonotic diseases will be of service to the goals of public
health, said Dr. Lee B. Smith, MCHD’s executive director and county health officer.

“Many of today’s emerging infectious diseases begin as animal diseases that cross over
into human populations,” Dr. Smith said. “A doctorate in veterinary medicine and a Ph.D.
in epidemiology is a combination that is critically important to public health.”

He added, “Monongalia County Health Department is thrilled to have as our regional
epidemiologist an individual with her skill set and experience.”

While working as regional epidemiologist for MCHD, Dr. Gross will simultaneously
serve an associate professor for West Virginia University’s School of Public Health. This
will fortify MCHD’s symbiotic relationship with the SPH, whose students often serve as
interns at the health department.

“We will be training master’s students in the practical field of epidemiology, giving them
experience by working in coordination with us,” Dr. Gross said. “This will benefit the
university and students, and also increase what we can do at the county health
department.”

For more information on MCHD, check out monchd.org and follow us on Facebook and
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