



For Immediate Release

August 24, 2007

Contact: Terri Wright, Director of Nursing
(540) 743-4561

Luray, VA –

Whether it's an outbreak of strep throat or a threat from a bio-terrorist agent such as anthrax, protecting the health of the community is a job Page Memorial Hospital takes very seriously. Thanks to a \$33,000.00 grant awarded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for the purchase of a new microbial identification system, that job just got a little bit easier.

“Though the grant money received will pay to replace an identification system already in service, the value of this piece of equipment to the citizens of Page County can't be overstated,” says Portia Brown, director of ancillary services. “It can identify a bacterial agent within 24 to 48 hours and then assess the drug susceptibility of that pathogen. Simply put, it helps our physicians both confirm diagnoses and select the most effective medications available for their patients.”

The Health Resources and Services Administration grant is a federally funded program to assist sentinel laboratories in preparing to serve state hospitals during a biological emergency. The funds are made available to support activities which enhance the early detection of infectious agents that have public health consequences such as those associated with terrorism.

“Hospitals are the front line for any kind of biological incident,” says Brown. “And we want the community to know that Page Memorial has the ability to respond.”

Due to budgetary concerns, Brown reports that the Commonwealth of Virginia awarded very few HRSA grants this year. “It's testament to value of this system that we were awarded such a large sum to update our equipment.”

Brown stresses, however, that the update is much more than a high priced “just in case” system that would only be utilized in the unlikely event of a bioterrorist attack. “In a hospital setting, we are required to identify and treat bacterial infections everyday. A system like this may operate behind the scenes but it is, nonetheless, a work horse for our community.”

###