



For more information contact:  
Toby D. Wagoner, Public Information Officer  
Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services  
Telephone: (304) 356-4042

November 15, 2011

For immediate release.

### **Symposium will feature award-winning NY Times senior writer on obesity**

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services will host a Public Health Symposium: *Protecting the Health of the Community We Serve* on Thursday and Friday (November 17 and 18) at the Charleston Town Center Marriott. The conference features New York Times senior health writer Gina Kolota, a two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist, who will deliver the keynote on obesity in a presentation called "Rethinking Thin." Kolota will share the science of obesity and the history of diets and dieting.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Loretta Haddy said, "Obesity is a growing concern across the country. Here in West Virginia, where our obesity rate is 32.5 percent, we have to realize that obesity is a public health issue and its effects can lead to increases in chronic diseases. We need to focus on preventive health measures and wellness activities."

The conference will also feature other topics of interest including hepatitis, emerging STDs, rabies, HPV, outbreaks in WV, immunization policy, tuberculosis, and an overview of data from the state's Cancer Registry. Another issue on the agenda is "Meaningful Use" and how electronic health record technology will affect public health. Meaningful Use allows medical providers to set goals that are about healthcare. Learn how Meaningful Use can improve the quality, safety and efficiency of patient care; engage patients and families; improve care coordination; and improve general population and public health.

Bureau for Public Health Commissioner and State Health Officer Dr. Marian Swinker will present opening remarks at the symposium that gets underway at 8:30 a.m. Thursday. Registration for the symposium is \$150 and includes continuing education credits.

More information is available online at [www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps](http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps).