

The Valley Fever Corridor Project

The goals are twofold—to teach health care professionals in south-central Arizona, especially in Maricopa County, essential information about Valley Fever and to develop within Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima Counties a medical network skilled in the management of Valley Fever. These activities will be coordinated at the Valley Fever Center for Excellence and extended to the University of Arizona College of Medicine Phoenix Campus. We wish to identify first-year funding for the project to begin July 1, 2009 and to continue for a five-year evaluation period.

BACKGROUND

There are 50,000 new illnesses each year in the United States due to Valley Fever. Two-thirds of these originate in Maricopa, Pinal and Pima Counties. Valley Fever is the cause of one third of pneumonias in this area. Most commonly, illnesses last many weeks to many months. Some patients have long-term, even life-long disability requiring extensive medical treatment. Valley Fever kills approximately 30 Arizonans annually. Valley Fever is common and equally debilitating in companion animals.

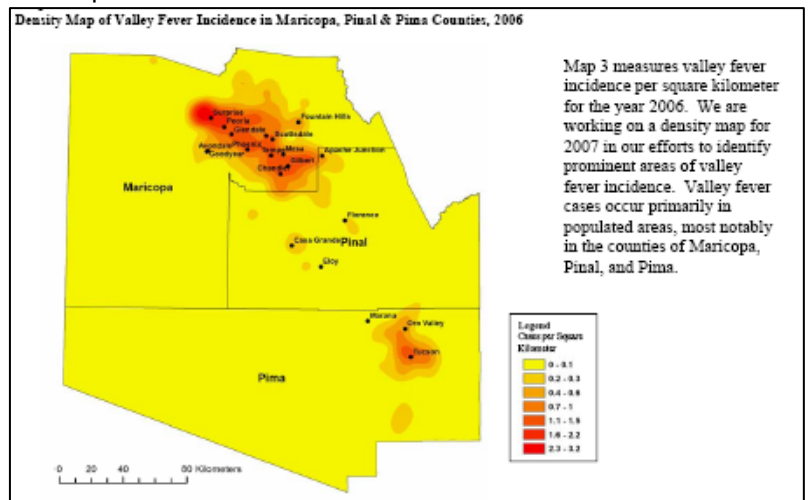
The Valley Fever Center for Excellence (VFCE) was established in 1996 by the Arizona Board of Regents for the benefit of the entire state. Based at The University of Arizona College of Medicine, the

VFCE has developed a research base involving all three of the state's universities, an information program for both the general public and health professionals, and a Valley Fever Evaluation and Management Program at the University Physicians Health Hospital in Tucson.

In 2007, the UA College of Medicine began teaching medical students at its new Phoenix campus, thereby creating the opportunity for the VFCE to develop a clinical presence for Maricopa County. The Valley Fever Corridor Project will develop as one component of a state-wide planning process for all infectious diseases.

THE NEED

Over 80% of patients suffering from Valley Fever go undiagnosed by Phoenix clinicians. The diagnosis of Valley Fever is typically delayed (half of patients have three or more doctor visits before a diagnosis). Many physicians are unsure of what to tell patients or how to manage even uncomplicated coccidioidal infections. Many patients travel from Maricopa County to the VFCE Evaluation and Management Program in Tucson because they are unable to receive the help they need closer to home.



STEPS TO DEVELOPMENT

1. We need to raise the necessary funds to support the infrastructure for a network of primary and specialty health-care professionals, both hospital and office-based, within the Valley Fever Corridor (Maricopa, Pinal and Pima Counties).

Approaches to medical management will be developed to improve the knowledge of network members and overall patient care. Parallel initiatives to attend to the needs of companion animals will also be developed.



2. Subsequently, the network will become a referral resource for treating patients with Valley Fever. The network will also serve as a conduit for patients wishing to participate in research programs designed to advance our

understanding of Valley Fever and its management. For example, the VFCE is developing a drug (nikkomycin Z) as a possible cure for Valley Fever.

A PARTNERSHIP

Both the Phoenix and Tucson campuses of the College of Medicine will participate in the education project. Medical Centers within the Valley Fever Corridor will be invited to collaborate. A registry of

physicians trained and skilled in the management of both primary and complicated Valley Fever infections will be developed to assist in patient referrals.

FUNDING

Because it has the major population, Maricopa County will receive the greatest benefit of the Valley Fever Corridor Project. Although support is welcome for any contributors, we are initially seeking donations from residents of Maricopa County

donors. Funds raised thus far total over \$37,000 and will be applied to the project starting July 1, 2009. The projected five-year budget is shown in the table below.

| Description | Cost |
|--|----------------------------|
| For 2009-10 | |
| Valley Fever Corridor Project Director, Physician-Faculty salary plus related xpenses (10%) | \$15,000 |
| Program Coordinator salary plus related (50%) | \$30,000 |
| Information management and office supplies | \$10,000 |
| Conference support | \$5,000 |
| | First Year Total: \$60,000 |
| For 2010-11* | \$75,000 |
| For 2011-12* | \$80,000 |
| For 2012-13* | \$85,000 |
| For 2013-14* | \$90,000 |
| * Increases in years 2-5 are estimated expansion of the program for faculty time from 10% to 30% commitment. | |

SUSTAINABILITY

St. Luke’s Health initiatives granted the VFCE \$8,220 to assist in establishing a community advisory board to promote Valley Fever awareness in Maricopa County. An initial organizational meeting to discuss this program was held April 19th

2008 in Scottsdale and several meetings have occurred since. The group that has evolved from those discussions is holding an awareness and fundraising walk to benefit the Valley Fever Corridor Project on November 1, 2009.

HOW TO HELP

Contributions should be made payable to:

The University of Arizona Foundation

(indicate your gift is to support the Valley Fever Corridor Project).

Mail checks to:

The Valley Fever Center for Excellence
 1656 E. Mabel Street
 PO Box 245215
 Tucson, AZ 85724

or, donate on-line at www.vfce.arizona.edu

