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### **AIHA Launches Its First Twinning Center Partnership in the Caribbean Region**

#### **PEPFAR-funded project will develop new postgraduate infectious disease fellowship program at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica**

**WASHINGTON, DC, November 7, 2012** — The American International Health Alliance (AIHA) is pleased to announce the formation of a new partnership linking the University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica, with the University of South Carolina (USC) in Columbia. Together, partners will address the critical need to strengthen human resource capacity to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Caribbean by developing a Postgraduate Infectious Disease Fellowship Program.

Currently, there is only one infectious disease specialist in Jamaica, but this new program will help change that by training clinicians to provide improved treatment to people living with HIV, as well as those afflicted with other communicable diseases that pose a public health concern in the country and elsewhere in the region.

Established with support from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), this HIV/AIDS Twinning Center partnership is designed to support the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) by increasing human resources for health. The new partnership is AIHA's first twinning alliance in the Caribbean Region.

Speaking at the partnership launch ceremony held November 1 at UWI's Mona Campus, US Ambassador to Jamaica, the Honorable Pamela E. Bridgewater explained PEPFAR's key focus areas in the Caribbean: HIV prevention; improving access to strategic information; reducing stigma; strengthening laboratories; and strengthening health systems, including human capacity development.

"This new partnership will support the last target area by developing a sustainable mechanism for providing postgraduate level training for medical professionals in the field of infectious diseases," Bridgewater told those in attendance. "The beauty of this sort of institution-to-institution partnership is that it effectively leverages the knowledge, expertise, and voluntarism of the US health sector — in this case, the infectious disease specialists at the University of South Carolina — to strengthen both the human resources and organizational capacity of their counterparts at UWI," she said.

In the days prior to the launch, an expert team from USC traveled to Jamaica to meet with their UWI partners and conduct a joint needs assessment, which helped them develop a work plan for the coming year. Using their own experience of recently establishing a similar program, the South Carolina partners will collaborate with their colleagues in Jamaica to establish a Postgraduate Infectious Disease Fellowship at UWI.

“As the UWI and USC partners commence their work together, I am confident that their collaboration will result in the development of a strong HIV and infectious diseases curriculum tailored to the specific needs of UWI and the population its healthcare providers serve,” Ambassador Bridgewater, said, concluding: “The end result will provide a model program that can be replicated at other universities in the region.”

Funded by HRSA, the HIV/AIDS Twinning Center mobilizes and coordinates the resources of US healthcare providers to effectively build capacity to reduce HIV infection rates and provide care to those infected with, or affected by, HIV/AIDS in countries targeted for PEPFAR assistance.

For more information on the HIV/AIDS Twinning Center, visit [www.TwinningAgainstAIDS.org](http://www.TwinningAgainstAIDS.org).  
For more information about AIHA, visit our Web site at [www.aiha.com](http://www.aiha.com).

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