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## It's Your Best Shot

National Adult Immunization Week was celebrated recently, with the slogan: It's Your Best Shot. Although there's a good deal of discussion about the need to immunize children against infectious disease like chicken pox and measles, I think we've gotten complacent about what vaccines adults need. We shouldn't be, because each year in the United States, up to 50,000 adults die from vaccine-preventable diseases or their complications. In fact, it's the sixth leading cause of death. This month, as we move into the flu season, I want to talk about our special obligation as health care workers to be sure we are immunized and particularly to get our annual flu shots and encourage our families, friends, patients and neighbors to get theirs.

### Changing the message

I've seen an evolution over the years in immunization efforts. Several decades ago, we focused primarily on those who were most at risk – the frail elderly and those with compromised immune systems, for example. More recently, we've encouraged a much broader group of people to get the annual flu vaccine. In fact, it's become more a matter of who shouldn't get it – people with egg certain allergies, for example. Our message has been somewhat complicated by an unpredictable supply of vaccine, requiring us in some years to set priorities and ration the distribution. Fortunately this year, we're expecting more than an ample supply.

In my practice, I've also observed a change in patients' attitudes. Years ago, I had to twist people's arms (figuratively speaking of course) to get flu shots. Now people are requesting them and are much more willing. There are still people who are reluctant. They worry that they'll get sick from the shot. I have patients who say they know someone who got the flu from the vaccine. Since the flu vaccine is not made from a live virus, that is not possible. Any potential side effects from the shot – a low-grade fever, soreness in the arm and aches – are much less severe than the illness from the influenza viruses we are seeing now.

As we continue to talk on the federal, state and local level about planning for a possible global outbreak of influenza – a pandemic – it becomes more important that we emphasize the need for adult immunizations and advocate for the federal government to ensure that flu vaccine for both seasonal flu and a possible pandemic flu event can be supplied in sufficient quantity to protect all of us.

### Preparing for a global outbreak

As a department we are working hard on our pandemic flu planning efforts. The second draft of our Pandemic Flu Plan is in its final stages and will soon be ready for discussion and review by our partners and community residents. We've worked with the Contra Costa County Office of Education to produce a Pandemic Action Kit for Schools. This practical guide has become a model across the country. I encourage those of you with school-age children to check with their schools to be sure they are using the Kit to begin their pandemic flu planning. We are working on a similar project for childcare providers across the county.

Emergency Medical Services Director Art Lathrop is developing a plan that addresses how hospitals, other health providers and volunteers will deal with the thousands of residents who may become critically ill during a pandemic. With the County's General Services Department, our Public Health Division recently participated in a drill to test how effectively we can receive,



Dr. Walker

Continued next page

## DID YOU KNOW

**25,509** people received flu  
shots from CCHS last year.

stage and store the Strategic National Stockpile, a federal cache of medication and supplies we could request during an outbreak. Public Health Director Dr. Wendel Brunner, Communicable Disease Programs Chief Francie Wise and Health Emergency Response Coordinator Kim Cox have been making presentations at town hall and city council meetings and other events to explain the difference between seasonal flu and pandemic flu and encourage individual and agency planning efforts. Much more work remains to be done to prepare for a pandemic flu outbreak.

#### **Each of us can act now**

As we all go through the pandemic flu preparation, we don't know when or if a global outbreak will occur. We do know we'll be faced with annual seasonal flu cases that sometimes turn into a major communitywide health issue. Every year we experience limitations on available intensive care beds and our Emergency Department is overwhelmed by people with the flu, many of whom have no primary care providers.

Each of us can do one very important thing to respond to this annual challenge: We can get a flu shot. There are some compelling reasons to do it. First, as workers in a health care agency, many of us are at high risk for getting the flu – and spreading it to our patients and others. Because we are all Disaster Services Workers, we should be getting the flu vaccine so we are healthy and ready to respond to any emergency that may occur.

Last February, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued recommendations focusing on health care workers in acute care hospitals, nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, physician's offices, urgent care centers and outpatient clinics, and to persons who provide home health care and emergency medical services. The recommendation is that all health care professionals receive the annual flu vaccine to protect themselves, their patients and family members, and decrease absenteeism. The report describes studies that show a relationship between outbreaks of influenza in hospitals and low rates of vaccination among health care workers. It points out that decreasing transmission of influenza from caregivers to persons at high risk might reduce influenza-related deaths among persons at high risk for complications from influenza.

#### **It's a moral obligation**

During a pandemic, we may not have a vaccine immediately available that can protect us from a new type of virus. Even if we have a vaccine, we will face enormous challenges in administering it to the entire population. We do have a vaccine for the seasonal flu – and for other adult communicable diseases. We have flu clinics that provide low-cost vaccines. We also provide employees with access to low-cost vaccines.

We have a medical, moral and ethical obligation to take advantage of these opportunities and protect our patients and ourselves. Last year, only 36% of American health care workers were vaccinated against influenza. I hope you will join me in getting a flu shot this year and making our percentage close to 100%.

Information about public flu clinics in Contra Costa, how to prevent the flu and what other immunizations adults should get is available on our website ([cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org)). Pandemic flu information, including the Pandemic Action Kit for Schools, is also available online.

Sincerely,



William Walker, MD

### **Employee Flu Shots**

Flu shots will be offered to county employees for \$10 – free to CCHP members who present their cards – on November 6, 8 and 9. Locations and times are listed on iSite, the CCHS Intranet (type cchs in your browser address from a county computer.) CCRMC/HC employees can get the shots free at the Medical Center for the next two months. Call the CCRMC Infection Control Coordinator at 925-370-5079 for more information about CCRMC shots.

### **State Commission Comes to Contra Costa**

The Little Hoover Commission, a bipartisan, independent advisory group that makes recommendations to the Governor, came to Contra Costa last month at the invitation of CCHS Director William Walker, MD. The Commission's Health Care Subcommittee's goal was to explore the operations of publicly-funded health care and discuss how well the service delivery system meets community needs. The commissioners visited Pittsburg Health Center, La Clinica and the Contra Costa Regional Medical Center. They also heard comments from about our Health Plan and our unusual Basic Care Program, and they were impressed. "You and your team really made it happen for the commissioners," wrote Stuart Drown, Executive Director of the Commission, to Dr. Walker. "It was a valuable day and I am deeply appreciative."

## **Mental Health Division Seeks Proposals for Prop. 63 Funds**

The Mental Health Division was busy last month getting out Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and accepting proposals for new services funded by the Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63). Three RFPs for a total of approximately \$4 million were issued in August and September for new services for Children, Transition-Age Youth and Adults, respectively. Awards will be made later this fall with startup in early 2007. This represents the first major infusion of dollars from Prop. 63, passed by voters in November 2004. The Mental Health Division will also be one of the host counties for the annual statewide Cultural Competence & Mental Health Summit in November, sponsored by the California Institute for Mental Health.



For more information contact Kimberly Mayer at [kmayer@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:kmayer@hsd.cccounty.us) or 925-957-5132.

## **Staff Meets National Training Requirements**

Our staff continues to prepare to respond to health emergencies, most recently through completion of training in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). On the fifth anniversary of 9/11, 39 members of the Emergency Management Team took part in this training, which is required by the Department of Homeland Security. The federal government requires all emergency response personnel nationwide to meet this training requirement as a condition for receipt of Homeland Security funds, of which California receives about \$230 million. Many other EMT members have completed the training online (available at <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/crslist.asp>). Kim Cox, our Health Emergency Response Coordinator, said the goal is to have all leads, managers and supervisors trained in the next year. She reminds employees who train online to be sure and send a copy of their completion certificate to Fran Trant in Personnel.



For more information about NIMS and other health emergency training, contact Kim

## **CCHS Employee Chosen for National Council**

Padmini Parthasarathy, a Senior Health Education Specialist in our Family, Maternal and Child Health Program, has been invited to become a founding member of the March of Dimes (MOD) National Volunteer Leadership Council. The Council provides direction and oversight for a new Volunteer Leadership Institute being launched by the March of Dimes, helping to create a pipeline of volunteers to serve the March of Dimes. Padmini, who will serve a 3-year term, began volunteering with the MOD in high school and over the years has held various volunteer positions. Currently, she represents CCHS - FMCH Programs at the March of Dimes' Bay Area Division Board and Bay Area Program Services - Grant Review Committee.



*Padmini Parthasarathy*

## **One-Day, One-Stop Shop Planned for Project Homeless Connect**

A "one-day, one-stop shop" is the short version of what our Homeless Program plans to accomplish on December 7, the day of the countywide Project Homeless Connect. The goal is to provide clothing, supplies and services to the more than 4,800 people who are homeless on any given day in Contra Costa, said Cynthia Belon, Director of the Homeless Program. The event is planned at Richmond Auditorium, 403 Civic Center Plaza. Project Homeless Connect is being conducted in conjunction with the City of Richmond and the Greater Richmond Interfaith Program, and other partners are being sought along with individual volunteers and donations of clothing, blankets and other items.



More information about what donations and volunteer services that are needed is on the CCHS website ([cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org)). Arrangements to volunteer or donate something can be made there or by calling CCHS Homeless Programs at 925-313-6124. Checks can be mailed to Great Richmond Interfaith Program/Project Homeless Connect, 597 Center Ave., Suite 325, Martinez, CA 94553. The Project also has its own email address ([projecthomelessconnect@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:projecthomelessconnect@hsd.cccounty.us)).

## **Combined Charities Campaign Runs Through October 31**

October is the month for the Contra Costa County 2006 Combined Charities Campaign, which runs through October 31. In a letter to all staff from our Director, Dr. William Walker, he asks employees to seriously consider donating a payroll deduction or one-time contribution to any of the participating charity federations. Accompanying the letter is a pledge form, a campaign booklet listing the federations and a flier listing the agencies that benefit County programs, including Health Services Programs. Donations can be made to any non-profit organization.



For more information contact your Division's Campaign Coordinator or call JoAnn Bishop, Health Services Campaign Coordinator, at 925-957-5423.

# GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

## *Honor Roll*

### **Dr. Aneela Ahmed**

*Geriatrics  
CCRMC*

For personifying the most meaningful and compassionate aspects of our health care system, being a superb clinician, a highly regarded teacher and a physician who will work tirelessly to prevent unnecessary transfers of elderly patients.

—Nominated by Dr. Jeremy Fish

### **Kim Cox and Christye McQueen**

*Public Health*

### **Diane Shouse**

*Contra Costa Health Plan*

For presenting National Incident Management Systems Training to CCHS' Emergency Management Team, condensing a huge amount of training materials into succinct information that will help CCHS to respond in emergency situations.

—Nominated by Dr. William Walker

### **Dedicated and Caring CCHS staff**

For helping me in a crisis. We may have lost a house (in a fire), but this has let us gain the knowledge of just how blessed we are with the wealth of family, friends and genuinely good people in our lives.

—Nominated by Sharon Eriksen

### **CCHS Conservator's Office**

For seven years of taking time to help me, always paying my rent and sending me checks. You are a wonderful organization

—Nominated by a client

### **Franca De Paoli MFT**

*Counselor/Case Manager  
Pittsburg Mental Health Clinic.*

For outstanding work in moving clients to a facility in the County and for supporting her clients and others, making sure they received personal belongings and medication. Clients were satisfied with her intervention.

—Nominated by Salvatore Morales

### **Sharon Eriksen**

*Account Clerk – Advanced Level  
Personnel*

For showing up to help at New Employee Orientation four days after her family home burned down and she lost everything. Her performance consistently exceeds our expectations.

—Nominated by Barbara Barton

### **Lorena Martinez-Ochoa**

*Program Manager  
Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health*

For arranging a very success visit by the State's Little Hoover Commission to review strategies to address health care needs. Your coordination provided the Commission with a comprehensive picture of the County health care system and contributed to an outstanding experience for the Commissioners.

—Nominated by Dr. William Walker

## **Photos of Divisions' Activities Sought**

They say a picture is worth a thousand words and with that in mind, the Director's Office is collecting photos that show typical activities of our Divisions and programs. The photos will be used at CCHS' Administrative Offices at 50 Douglas Drive in Martinez to show the broad range of services provided by our department, and on our website ([cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org)) to create a more dynamic look on the popular home page and division pages. All photos should be submitted to the appropriate Division Director. Photo release forms are available online at iSite, CCHS Intranet (type cchs in your browser address to get to the home page and then visit the Communications site).



For more information or to be emailed a photo release form, call Julie Freestone at 925-313-6268 or email [jfreestone@bsd.cccounty.us](mailto:jfreestone@bsd.cccounty.us)

# GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

## *Honor Roll*

### **Perinatal Nurses** CCRMC

For outstanding service throughout the summer months, willingly working overtime and extra shifts to give excellent care to mothers and babies. The number of women delivering has risen from 150 births per month to an all time high of 201 in July.

—Nominated by Michelle Bushong

### **Billie Jo Wilson** Public Health Nurse Brentwood Health Center

For being willing to help with health insurance documentation and for health education that helps patients understand their illnesses and thus be more compliant and do better.

—Nominated by the Medical Staff

### **Ron Russo, Ladino Lugtu and Yashar Abdelnaby** General Services

For outstanding, friendly and helpful assistance with a rush copy job that presented several challenges, including a very short deadline and for being diligent and going the extra mile to produce the material for a required federal NIMS training in a very timely manner. You are amazing.

—Nominated by Christye McQueen and Kim Cox

### **Alicia Tinnirello** Mental Health Clinical Specialist East County Adult Mental Health

For taking the extra time with her monolingual (Spanish) clients to write their partnership/treatment plans in Spanish and English. She is truly dedicated to providing excellent, linguistically accessible services.

—Nominated by Cheryl M. Bryan

## **Do you know someone who's going the extra mile?**

To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the "Going the Extra Mile" commendation form, available from every CCHS Division Director, or email your commendation to [ServiceEX@hds.co.contra-costa.ca.us](mailto:ServiceEX@hds.co.contra-costa.ca.us) or fax it to 925-313-6219. The form can also be downloaded from the Internet (About Us page) or iSite, our Intranet.

## **Employee Milestones**

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Kristi A. Hendrickson, Erma M. Matthews, Tammy S. Ochoa, Barbara L. Hughey, Angela S. Aquino, Lea Mostella, Laura G. Miller, Rhoda Rumbaoa, Dawna L. Vann, Lucille W. Valentine, Franca De Paoli, Shelley J. Okey, Carolyn S. Fernandez, Marvin McGregor (10 years); Bruce H. Kenagy, Vonda S. Nolan, Karen K. Lowe, Jeffrey A. Bockser, Frank K. Chooi, Margarieta V. Hernandez, Joanne Brekle, Maria P. Duazo, Sue A. Loyd, Farnaz S. Noori, Maria Tesolin, Steven T. Morioka (15 years); Melanie E. Lawrence, Raphael D. Peck (20 years); Elena R. Wristen, Tichi Gutierrez, Lenell R. Anderson (25 years); Linda Black (30 years) and Carol L. Araki (35 years). (We know there are lots of other dedicated employees with long years of service. Because of space limitations, we are only reporting those with 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35.)

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the November edition is October 11. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Julie Freestone at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, email: [jfreestone@hds.cccounty.us](mailto:jfreestone@hds.cccounty.us). The Director's Report is available online at [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) and on iSite, our Intranet, at [cchs](http://cchs).

As part of our Reducing Health Disparities Initiative (RHDI), our divisions have been working on three key areas: improving linguistic access, implementing educational activities on diversity and cultural and linguistic competence, and developing an organizational climate that values patient, customer and employee diversity. Each month, this page highlights what CCHS is doing to address a specific health disparity and what still needs to be done.

## Reducing Health

# Disparities



## African-American Adults and Children Have Lower Rates of Immunization

Immunization is among the most effective disease prevention measures known, yet immunization rates for African-American toddlers and adults are lower when compared to the rest of the population. An annual survey conducted by the State of California found that only 69% of African-American 2-year-olds met the recommended immunization schedule. Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP) found a significant immunization deficit for African-American two-year-olds.

Among CCHP members the disparity is most pronounced for those with Contra Costa Regional Medical Center Primary Care Providers. In 2002, African-Americans in the United States aged 65 and older were 30% less likely to have received the influenza (flu) shot in the past 12 months, and 40% less likely to have ever received the pneumonia shot, compared to non-Hispanic White adults of the same age group. (Data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health) Lower vaccination rates appear to be caused by lack of reminders for shots and appointments, frequent changes of telephone numbers and addresses, difficulty with transportation and childcare, and mistrust of the health care system. CCHS is working to address these issues.

# Immunization Registry Seeks to Centralize Immunization Records

## Increasing Immunizations for African-Americans

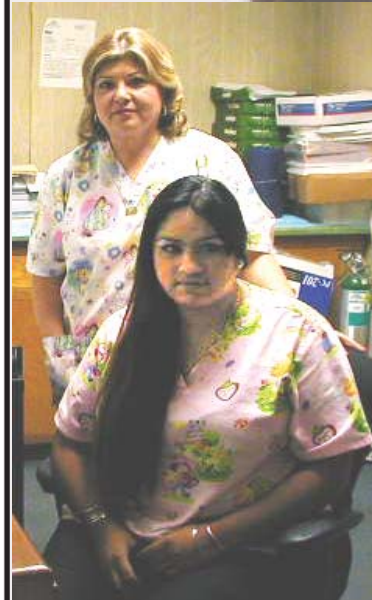
To reduce barriers for immunizations, especially for African-Americans, CCHP and the Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers initiated the Good Health Check-Up Program to increase well-visits and immunizations for infants and toddlers. Staff members identify children who are behind on well-visits and call to schedule a make-up appointment. CCHP members receive a follow-up letter and a reminder phone call and are offered a \$10 gift certificate for keeping the appointment.

“The Good Health Check-up Program makes about 250 phone calls a month and about 75% of appointments made through this program are kept,” said Ken Tilly, Director of Quality Management for the Health Plan.

Because trust and transportation issues were among the barriers, we are also collaborating with senior centers all over Contra Costa to host flu clinics and enlisting African-American churches to help with educational efforts. “People age 65 and older are at risk of dying from the flu, and getting a flu vaccine is the best way to prevent it. We want to reach all who are at increased risk,” said Erika Jenssen, Immunization Registry Coordinator. Specialized posters and cling-on decals are being sent to Public Health clinics, churches, senior centers and community-based organizations to help get the word out about the importance of flu vaccination.



*Erika Jenssen, Immunization Registry Coordinator*



*Guillermina Flores and Pati Delgado, staff at Dr. Jenkins' office, use the Immunization Registry.*

Many children receive shots from multiple providers, making it difficult for providers and parents to track immunizations. The 10-year-old Contra Costa Automated Immunization Registry (CCAIR) is a computerized system that tracks immunization records for adults and children in Contra Costa. Last year 90,828 immunizations for 30,874 patients were logged into CCAIR by our staff. Schools,

community clinics and health care providers are being encouraged to join the registry.

Because West Contra Costa historically has lower immunization rates than the rest of the county, efforts are being made to include the West Contra Costa Unified School District and MediCal providers in West County in the system. Our Child Health and Disability Prevention Program and CCHP are also working to reach MediCal providers to increase participation in the system.

WIC staff, along with Public Health, work with clients to verify that children are up-to-date on immunizations; they update the Immunization Registry and refer clients to providers if shots are missing. The system began as a pilot in Concord and, due to the dramatic improvement in immunization rates, has been expanded to all WIC sites.

“The Registry is a great system and it works both during emergencies and on a day-to-day basis,” said Erika Jenssen, Immunization Registry Coordinator. “After Hurricane Katrina, many Louisiana children came to our county. We were granted access to Louisiana’s Immunization Registry and were able to get children into school right away.”

## Hazardous Materials Response Team Strikes Gold in Sacramento

Our Hazardous Materials Programs capped a remarkable performance of skills by nearly sweeping the gold medals awarded last month at the 17th Annual Continuing Challenge Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Workshop in Sacramento. Known regionally as the HazMat Olympics, the event is the premier HazMat conference on the West Coast with over 100 courses to improve the capability of HazMat response personnel (online at [hazmat.org](http://hazmat.org)). The three-day event followed a day of classes, including one taught by our Maria Duazo. Our Hazardous Materials Specialists Tod Hickman, Paul Andrews, Steve Morioka and Mike Wedl formed the team that won four of the competition's five events, gaining a silver medal in the other event and scoring 41 out of a possible 42 points. In the prestigious HazCat (Hazardous Materials Categorization) event, the team identified 10 unknown substances and beat out teams from Ventura, Napa and Sonoma counties as well as the Coast Guard and Genentech. That competition featured a \$100 donation to a charity of the winning team's choice, and they chose We Care in honor of a coworker's mother who recently passed away.



*Hazardous Materials Programs' gold medal winning team was, from left, Steve Morioka, Paul Andrews, Tod Hickman and Mike Wedl.*

## Chief Nursing Officer Selected for Prestigious National Fellowship

Lisa Massarweh, Chief Nursing Officer for CCRMC and Health Centers, has been selected as a Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellow. She is one of only 20 nurses in leadership roles nationwide that were selected as the latest group of fellows in the 3-year program, which is designed to include the voice of nursing in efforts to improve the country's health care system. As part of the fellowship, Lisa will have the opportunity to undertake a leadership project to benefit CCRMC/HC with funding support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and CCHS. Lisa has 20 years of nursing experience and previously worked as Nurse Program Manager of the Critical Care Unit.



*Lisa Massarweh*



## AODS Promotes Recovery Month Activities

Staff from our Alcohol and Other Drugs Services program and substance abuse recovery advocates appeared before the Board of Supervisors in September to promote National Recovery Month activities. Activities included the Recovery Walk and Celebration on September 30 at John Muir Medical Pavilion's Center for Recovery in Concord. The event was organized by AODS, the Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board and John Muir.



*For more information about the Recovery Walk, contact Fatima Matal Sol at 925-313-6311 or [fmatalso@bsd.cccounty.us](mailto:fmatalso@bsd.cccounty.us)*

## Red Ribbon Week to be Recognized with Proclamation, Activities

Fresh from an appearance before the Board of Supervisors in September to promote National Recovery Month Activities, Alcohol and Other Drug Services (AODS) advocates and staff also are looking forward to accepting a Red Ribbon Week proclamation from the Board on October 10. Red Ribbon Week is recognized during the last week of October each year in memory of Enrique Camarena, a DEA Special Agent murdered by drug traffickers. It is a chance for communities across the nation to take a visible stand against drugs and to show their personal commitment to a drug-free lifestyle by wearing or displaying red ribbons. As in previous years, AODS will be distributing red ribbons and brochures highlighting October events in Contra Costa County. The Board of Supervisors heard reports on the topic October 10 from the Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board and a group of youth from Asian Pacific Psychological Services, an AODS-funded, community-based organization.



*For more information about Red Ribbon Week activities, visit [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) or call 925-313-6311.*