Responding to a Tragic Event

The recent tragedy of the Boston Marathon bombing that resulted in loss of life and many injuries reminds us once again how essential it is for health care communities to stay prepared and ready to respond to emergencies.

It is remarkable that there were not more lives lost. This is due in large part to Boston’s quick emergency response. The area hospitals began preparing their emergency departments and operating rooms within minutes of the bombings to receive victims. This level of preparedness saved lives.

Several of the Boston hospitals responding to this emergency belong to the same organization that we do, the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (NAPH). As a fellow member of NAPH, we are proud of their quick and effective response. It has been pointed out that such an effective response from hospitals would not have happened prior to 9/11.

How We Are Preparing Locally

As many of you may know, we and other public hospitals around the country, state and local communities have been preparing since 9/11 to ensure that we are able to respond quickly to any local event. Federal funding has been available to support staff training and emergency equipment purchases. The Health Department’s Emergency Management Team meets regularly to plan and prepare our system’s response, and our EMS agency meets regularly with hospitals in the county including our Regional Medical Center to be sure that we are prepared to respond as a community to local emergencies. We also are far along in developing local volunteers including doctors, nurses and other paraprofessionals to be ready to respond to a multi-casualty incident (MCI). We all, as county employees, also are designated disaster service workers during an event.

Major Progress

I have seen major progress in recent years to counties’ ability to respond to MCIs. I am reminded of an accident in the late 1970s on a Martinez freeway ramp involving a school bus in which many children were killed and others injured. That event pointed out the need for a
close relationships with the other nine hospitals in the county to prepare for a community response. Our communities rely upon us for this response and it is our public responsibility to be prepared to respond to any event.

**Diminishing Preparedness Funding**

My greatest concern is the diminishing federal funding used for disaster preparedness. I am hopeful that attention to the responses at the Boston Marathon will stimulate federal and state legislators to support continued funding.

Sincerely,

William Walker, M.D.

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**May 9 is Bike to Work Day**

County employees are encouraged to ride their bikes to work on Thursday, May 9 as part of Bike to Work Day in the Bay Area. There will be 37 “energizer stations” with refreshments in Contra Costa including one at the Martinez Amtrak Train Station. Pictured here are three of Health Services’ cycling enthusiasts: Hospital volunteer Josh Pepper, Dr. Alice Lin and Dr. David Pepper. For more information about Bike to Work Day, visit 511contracosta.org.
TB Testing at High School in Antioch

Health Services staff will return to Deer Valley High School in Antioch for follow-up screening after a student was diagnosed with active tuberculosis in late March. Staff from our Public Health, Behavioral Health, Emergency Medical Services, Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Environmental Health divisions worked together along with volunteers from the Medical Reserve Corp on April 11 to test 126 people who shared classes or were in a club with the student. The response, led by Public Health’s Communicable Disease Program, included working with the school to identify those who were exposed and setting up the clinic, communicating with families and the public, and processing and testing blood samples. Staff will return to the school May 22 to retest students because it may take eight to 10 weeks before an infection becomes detectable following exposure to tuberculosis. We also will offer to test any potentially exposed people who were not screened at our clinic in April, and work to obtain results of TB tests done by other medical providers. The investigation by the TB Control Program is still ongoing to determine whether or not there was likely transmission at the school.

HazMat Reviews New Safety Recommendations for Refinery

The Hazardous Materials Division is reviewing a report submitted last month by one of the agencies investigating the August 2012 fire at Chevron’s oil refinery in Richmond as it continues to probe the causes and how to prevent similar incidents in the future. An interim report from the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board recommends changes to how Chevron operates and how regulators oversee those operations in order to improve safety at the refinery. Hazardous Materials Program staff will work with the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and Richmond City Council to incorporate the recommendations, which include proposed amendments to the Industrial Safety Ordinances of both Richmond and the county, HazMat Director Randy Sawyer said. The report identifies inspection and documentation shortcomings that led to the leak of petroleum from a pipe section last Aug. 6, and recommends improved training, inspection protocol and on-site safety policies. HazMat will continue its work investigating the incident along with teams from several regulatory agencies. Chevron also submitted its “root-cause” report to HazMat last month, a requirement of Richmond’s Industrial Safety Ordinance.

For more information about the situation at Deer Valley High School, visit cchealth.org/tb

To view reports related to the Chevron fire, visit cchealth.org/hazmat/about-us.php
Farmers’ Market Returns to CCRMC
Looking for a convenient place to get locally grown produce or buy a tasty lunchtime treat? Then you’ll be glad to hear that the weekly Farmers’ Market is returning to Contra Costa Regional Medical Center. The Farmers’ Market will take place noon to 4 p.m. Tuesdays in front of the hospital starting on May 7. The weekly market, a joint venture between CCRMC and Contra Costa Certified Farmers’ Markets, Inc., features locally grown seasonal produce, including organics, from small family farms. There will also be delicious prepared foods, fresh popped kettle corn, gourmet coffee and an array specialty items throughout the season. There will be an ATM onsite if you need to get some cash. Cal Fresh EBT cards are welcome and can be redeemed for vendor-accepted tokens at the Information Booth. Stop by the market information booth and ask about the new “Stamps for Salad” program, which rewards frequent shoppers with a 40% discount at the hospital café on non-market days. Since May 7 is also World Asthma Day, we will also be offering free asthma screenings that day at the market.

If you would like more information, please call the Contra Costa Certified Farmers’ Market at 925-431-8361 or visit www.cccfm.org

Positive Progress in Appointment System Redesign
The average amount of time patients are spending on hold to make medical appointments has dropped dramatically since the implementation of the redesigned appointment system in February. From the end of January to the end of March, the average amount of time patients spent on hold when calling the Appointment Unit went down from 14 minutes to about three minutes. At the same time, we now consistently have same- or next-day appointments at our health centers available throughout the day. Before the system redesign, we usually ran out of those appointments by 9 a.m. Dr. Chris Farnitano, Ambulatory Care Medical Director, said while it’s premature to declare the new system a complete success, the early results are extremely promising. The redesigned system expanded the amount of available appointments by requiring that most return appointments must be made within two weeks of the visit. Previously, providers were scheduling follow-ups for patients that were several weeks and sometimes months away. This practice resulted in appointments being reserved for people more likely to miss their office visits, so-called “no shows.” The appointment system redesign is part of our ongoing efforts to improve patient access to care and and reduce no-show rates.
County Moves to Regulate Electronic Cigarettes

The County Board of Supervisors recently voted to ban the use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and other electronic nicotine delivery devices at all places where smoking is prohibited and to require a County tobacco retailer license for retailers of e-cigarettes in unincorporated Contra Costa County. Electronic cigarettes, hookahs and pipes are battery-operated products designed to deliver nicotine, flavor and other chemicals. They often resemble the “look” of real tobacco products and are currently unregulated by the federal government. They turn nicotine, which is highly addictive, and other chemicals into a vapor that is inhaled by the user. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has analyzed e-cigarette samples and found they contained carcinogens and toxic chemicals to which users and bystanders could potentially be exposed. Public health advocates are also concerned that e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery devices can increase nicotine addiction among young people and may lead them to try other tobacco products. The new law covers all buildings, vehicles and other areas occupied by county employees, including the grounds of the Regional Medical Center and health clinics.

For more information, contact Denice Dennis, Tobacco Prevention Project Manager, at 925-313-6825 or denice.dennis@hsd.cccounty.us

EMS Educating Community about Strokes, CPR in May

Our Contra Costa Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division will be doing community outreach and trainings later this month to inform the public about strokes and CPR. On May 7, National Stroke Alert Day, EMS staff will participate in a Bay Area effort to distribute 5,000 flyers that identify the signs of a stroke at designated BART stations throughout Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco and San Mateo counties. EMS, staff from American Medical Response (AMR), hospital stroke centers in the region, and fire personnel will be at the BART stations from 7 to 8 a.m. in Pittsburg/Bay Point, Walnut Creek and Richmond. May 19-25 is National EMS Week and from 8 a.m to 8 p.m on May 22 EMS will participate in AMR’s National CPR Challenge by offering compressions-only CPR trainings at the Streets of Brentwood shopping center, the Hilltop Mall in Richmond, and on the Concord campus of California State University, East Bay. Members of the public are invited to come and learn CPR.

For more information about these events, contact Pam Dodson at 925-646-4690 or pam.dodson@hsd.cccounty.us

Column Offers Tips on How to Talk to the Dying

When loved ones become terminally ill, it can be difficult to know what to say or do. In a recent Healthy Outlook column, Linda Russell, a medical social worker with our palliative care program, offers some advice on how to communicate with the dying. Linda suggests that people don’t get hung up on what they’re going to say. In fact, she says, just go and be with your loved one and listen to what he or she has to say. Talk about what they want to talk about. Linda also advises friends and family to be specific when offering help. Don’t just say “let us know if you need anything.” Instead, offer to do errands, watch the kids, cook dinner, or drive the sick person to a medical appointment.

To read Linda’s entire piece and other Healthy Outlook columns, visit www.cchealth.org/column/
Eyes on iSITE

One year ago, CCHS launched the new version of iSITE, the department’s intranet. On any given weekday, about 700 people visit iSITE to read news from around the department, download forms or documents, find phone numbers for colleagues, or share information with other employees. In March, iSITE attracted more than 160,000 page views with many of those hits coming from return visitors. Marc Miyashiro, an information architect in the IT unit, said the steady usage shows that CCHS staff is recognizing iSITE’s capabilities. IT regularly offers iSITE training workshops where CCHS employees are taught how to post stories, upload documents and get better search results.

“I was having some issues and doubts with iSITE when I signed up for the training, but it was great and now I see how iSITE can be a true asset to our division,” said Roberto Rodriguez with Environmental Health.

If you have feedback about the new website, contact web designer Aldrin Bernabeo at 925-313-6114 or aldrin.bernabeo@hsd.cccounty.us

New Look for Health Services’ Website

You may have noticed the new look on our website at cchealth.org. The revamped site is more colorful, features larger photos and is easier to navigate. The website is being redesigned by our communications unit, Community Education & Information, which has already completed the department’s home page and most division pages.

If you have feedback about the new website, contact web designer Aldrin Bernabeo at 925-313-6114 or aldrin.bernabeo@hsd.cccounty.us
Mario Arias  
Clerk—Senior Level  
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers

For always going the extra mile to help his patients and co-workers and resolving an issue with a fax machine with his usual friendly attitude.

♦Nominated by Esther Gutierrez

Floris Mendoza  
Mental Health Clinical Specialist  
Behavioral Health Services

For being consistently helpful, thoughtful, professional and courteous to her clients and colleagues and for demonstrating exemplary skills in following up and following through on tasks.

♦Nominated by Debbie Raphael

Robert Freeman  
Mental Health Community Support Worker II  
Behavioral Health Services

For his positive attitude and for going above and beyond to help a client resolve a pharmacy bill discrepancy.

♦Nominated by Victoria Vorpagel

Angelica Matamoros  
Community Health Worker II  
Public Health

For making a difference in the lives of students and their families by connecting them to and helping them navigate the health services system to obtain needed health care.

♦Nominated by Jeff Varner, Principal, Parkside Elementary, Pittsburg

For her knowledge, professionalism with patients, and for her excellent linguistic skills used to effectively communicate with Spanish-speaking patients.

♦Nominated by Tatiana Marek

May Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Tiombe F. Mashama, Joshua A. Slattengren, Frances G.T. Tolentino, Joyce D. Henkel, Maria I. Trujillo, Chantelle E. Stroman, Larry A. Roesch, Michael F. Elder, Sylvia Y. Rodriguez, Crystal G. Grayson (10 years); Judy T. Pearl, Rachael M. Bailey, Catherine A. Brandt, Steven P. Garcia, Elio R. Bracho, Linda B. Stevens, Jonathan E. San Juan (15 years); Cynthia J. Sook, Fowzia Younos, Sandra Gholson, Suzzette C. Johnson (20 years); Araceli L. Cruz, Korinne Ternes, Kathleen C. Ferris (25 years); and Mary C. Matteson (30 years).
Service Excellence
You are a GEM for Going the Extra Mile

Mike Dickson
Information Technology Supervisor
Marc Miyashiro
Information Architect/Documentation Manager
Ben Shaver
Dave Woodhouse
Information Systems Programmer/Analyst
William Harper
Information Technology
Communications Specialist
Community Education and Information Unit

For developing and launching an app that enables residents and visitors to quickly access information about the food inspection history of more than 4,000 restaurants and food facilities in Contra Costa County.

Maria Guerrero
Mental Health Community Support Worker II
Behavioral Health Services

For going above and beyond to find low or no cost community resources to benefit the youth and families she serves.

Dalene Deluca
Clerk—Senior Level
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers

For her kindness and compassion, for taking the time to provide me with information and for “inspiring me to keep trying and not throw in the towel and give up.”

Do you know someone going the extra mile?
To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the commendation form by email to wanda.session@hsd.cccounty.us or fax to 925-957-5401. Forms are on our website (www.cchealth.org on About Us page) or iSITE, our intranet, at http://cchs/ Nominations are subject to approval by Division Directors.