Why Wouldn’t You Do It?

I heard a surprising statistic recently: More than 70% of health care workers, including physicians and nurses, apparently believe that receiving a flu shot can cause influenza. I’ve always known that some people in the community believe this myth. I thought that health care personnel (HCP) would know that the inactivated flu shots are not manufactured with live viruses.

Why don’t they do it?

Maybe this survey explains why across the country every year, fewer than half of all HCP get the flu vaccine. In Contra Costa last year, only 43% of county health care workers got vaccinated against the flu. A recent study describes some of the reasons why HCP are reluctant to get immunized. Besides their mistaken belief that they can get the flu from the shot, they also worry about side effects; claim they never get the flu even without the vaccine; find it inconvenient to get the vaccine; and say they just plain forgot to get it. I suspect some people may be shy about confessing they don’t like shots, but that excuse doesn’t work anymore as people under 50 years old who do not like shots are already vaccinated.

A national campaign

The dismal number of HCP being vaccinated is why the federal government this year has launched an initiative aimed at increasing vaccination levels among HCP. The campaign is based on recommendations of the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). One recommendation the committees make is to use the level of HCP influenza vaccination coverage as one measure of a patient safety quality program. In fact, in California those who work in hospitals must either get the flu vaccine or sign a declination form if they choose not to.

Prevention — namely the flu vaccine — is the most effective protection.

Focus on children

As a physician, to protect the patients in my practice, I’ve always made sure that I received my own vaccine every year. In the past, I’ve encouraged my high-risk patients to also have the vaccine. But now many more categories of people—including all children six months to 19 years old—are advised to have the vaccine. Children are an especially important group because the rate of infection is highest among them. They are also a very clear disease source—transmitting the influenza to younger, more vulnerable siblings or grandparents. And the risk of complications, hospitalization and death are higher among those 65 years old and older who are ill, appointments are cancelled. And there is perhaps a more compelling argument for why HCP vaccination levels are related to patient safety. Research shows that adults can shed the virus one day before they have visible influenza symptoms, such as coughing, fever, sneezing, or aches. So you can pass on the flu to someone else before you even know you are sick, and you are still contagious for five days after you first felt sick.

So no matter how hard you work to protect your patients, family, coworkers and community once you know you have the flu — covering your cough or sneeze, staying three to six feet away and staying home — it may be too late. Prevention — namely the flu vaccine — is the most effective protection.

Continued next page
Director’s Message Continued...

older. Healthy children two years and older can be vaccinated with the nasal spray flu vaccine – imagine giving a vaccine where the child is smiling afterward.

**More groups urged to be vaccinated**

In my role as the Health Officer for the County, I also advocate a community-wide campaign. Every year, the CDC makes recommendations for who should get the vaccine. It seems to me that every year, the list is more inclusive. Now, there are very few categories of people who don’t need the vaccine.

There’s an added benefit to our annual efforts to encourage the community to get vaccinated. I think it creates an atmosphere of acceptance that will be critical when we are faced with pandemic influenza. We will need to vaccinate thousands of people in a very short time to contain the disease and reduce the number of deaths. The annual flu vaccine will prepare people for that process.

**Making it available**

Another federal recommendation is to make the vaccine available to HCP and the public. Fortunately, there is no shortage of vaccine and we will be doing that. Our public flu clinics will begin on October 14. CCRMC/Health Centers Division employees will be offered vaccine at their locations beginning mid-October and other employee flu clinics will be conducted during November.

So let’s get serious, folks. I can’t order you to be vaccinated against influenza. But doesn’t it make good sense to take this small step to protect our patients, families and neighbors? The vaccine is safe, it can’t give you influenza and we’re trying to make it as convenient as possible.

*Information about where flu vaccinations are available is online at: www.cchealth.org/topics/flu/*

Sincerely,

William B. Walker, MD

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**Join me**

It’s open enrollment (until October 24) for county employee health benefits and I hope you’ll consider joining me as a Contra Costa Health Plan member. The Health Plan manages health services for 87,000 Contra Costa residents, including more than 9,000 County employees. CCHP’s Plans have no or low co-payments, 24-hour advice nurses, worldwide emergency health coverage, and access to more than 2,000 health care providers through our Health Centers, Regional Medical Center, and CCHP’s contracted community provider network – *WW*

*For more information on CCHP, call 1-800-211-8040.*

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**Annual Combined Charity Campaign**

The annual Contra Costa County Combined Charities Campaign runs through October 31, and employees can chose from a variety of nonprofit organizations that provide assistance to those in need. For more info and contacts for Health Services Division Coordinators, visit iSITE (type cchs in any CCHS computer browser).

The Director’s Report is published monthly. Deadline for the November edition is October 14. Publicize your upcoming events and successes by sending information to Kate Fowlie at 597 Center Avenue, Suite 255, Martinez 94553, fax 925-313-6219, or email: kfowlie@hsd.cccounty.us The Director’s Report is available online at cchealth.org and on iSITE, our intranet, at cchs.
EMS Launches Nationally Recognized Heart Attack System

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) launched last month the STEMI (ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction) System, which allows paramedics to rapidly identify and transport high-risk heart attack victims to specially equipped hospitals designated as STEMI Centers. The new system sets a new standard of cardiac care and could save hundreds of lives in our county. Contra Costa now has five STEMI Centers, which can activate their cardiac catheterization teams in under 60 minutes when they partner with pre-hospital providers. The STEMI Centers are: Doctors San Pablo, John Muir Medical Center – Walnut Creek, John Muir Medical Center – Concord, Kaiser Walnut Creek and San Ramon Regional Medical Center. As other hospitals develop their cardiac programs, they will be eligible to join. EMS’ next step is to work with the STEMI Centers to launch a public information campaign encouraging the public to call 911 at the first sign of heart attack symptoms.

For information, contact STEMI Program Manager Patricia Frost at pfrost@hsd.cccounty.us or visit EMS at cccems.org

Third Annual Project Homeless Connect Huge Success

This year’s Project Homeless Connect was the most successful event yet with services provided to 621 people, up by more than 200 people from last year. Held at the Contra Costa County Fairgrounds in Antioch, the one-day, one-stop shop event on September 10 provided people who are homeless with food, information on housing opportunities and medical, dental and other services they otherwise might not receive. Every year, the event is held in a different location. An estimated 114 volunteers and 85 different service providers participated in this year’s event, which was sponsored by the Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) Homeless Program, Greater Richmond Interfaith Program and City of Antioch.

See more Homeless Connect photos on iSITE.

Clinical Services Unveils New Mobile Health Clinics

Our Public Health Clinical Services program has three new mobile clinics to serve middle, elementary and high school students throughout the County. The 46-foot clinics, which come equipped with a waiting area, nurses area, two exam rooms and pharmacy areas, will provide pediatric and adolescent preventative care to our most disadvantaged communities. Clinical Services has worked closely with the TeenAge Program, Ambulatory Care and school districts to identify locations and increase access to healthcare.

For information on the mobile clinic schedules, contact Susan Nairn at 925-313-6278 or snairn@hsd.cccounty.us

ED Temporarily Eliminates Waiting Room

Contra Costa Regional Medical Center has temporarily replaced its Emergency Department (ED) waiting room with a triage area as part of an innovative new service improvement pilot. In the triage area, patients are immediately greeted by a nurse and also possibly seen right away by a physician for prescreening. This out-of-the-box thinking has improved patient flow and reduced wait time to under an hour for minor illnesses and has accelerated first contact with a physician for the majority of patients so some of our sickest patients get seen and treated immediately. Previously, five to 10% of patients waiting in the ED left before seeing a physician. That number has dropped to less than 2%. The success of the short-term trial is due largely to the hard work of ED, Registration, IT, Lab and Radiology staff and their willingness to make dramatic changes to their workflow. ED Director Dr. David Goldstein and ED Interim Nurse Program Manager Peter Fromm have led the effort.

For more information about the trial, contact Peter Fromm at 925-307-5171 or PFromm@hsd.cccounty.us
The Directors Report RHD Page showcases 2008-09 Division strategies and activities to address four CCHS Reducing Health Disparities goals. The goals are: Improving consumer/client/patient/customer experience; Engaging and Partnering with community and public entities; Improving staff respect, responsiveness and cultural sensitivity; and Creating systems that support and promote access and respectful delivery of services. The complete CCHS RHD plan is available online at cchealth.org.

Reducing Health Disparities

Transforming Staff and Patient Relations at CCRMC

When Carolyn Billings, Nursing Program Manager at Contra Costa Regional Medical Center, began her nursing career in the late 1960s, she felt her ideas were rarely valued. She was sometimes even the victim of what is now called lateral violence - non-verbal innuendos, snide remarks, and abrupt responses. (Read more about lateral violence on iSITE).

Carolyn committed herself to transforming the hospital culture and more recently found support from Dr. Mitch Applegate, CCRMC Director of Critical Care and Peri Operative Services, and Fran Trant, Personnel Analyst III. They spent hours developing and refining a course, “Connecting With Your Team.” The curriculum includes communication guidelines, collaborative behaviors, awareness of lateral violence behaviors, crucial conversations, appreciating other people’s viewpoint and more. With more than 150 CCRMC staff having completed the eight-hour course, CCRMC is a pioneer in providing this education to medical staff. No other area hospitals are engaged in this work.

“Our mission is to stop lateral violence and build lateral support, collaboration and appreciation among CCRMC staff. Since much lateral violence results from poor communication, the tool we have to navigate this new world is ‘mutually respectful communication,’” Dr. Applegate said. He points out that the Joint Commission for Hospital Accreditation is aware of the impact that poor communication has on patient health outcomes, including health disparities.

“We hope CCRMC will become the “employer of choice” for area doctors and nurses who want to work in an environment where every team member and patient is heard, respected and valued,” he said.

For more information, contact: Fran Trant at frant@bsd.cccounty.us or 925-957–5245. Please share your communication success stories with Reducing Health Disparities staff via Lauren Stoddard at lstoddard@bsd.cccounty.us or by calling 925-957-5422.

Partnering with Kaiser

Health Services is working with Kaiser Permanente to test an online and phone interactive tool to assess language competency. Involvement in this testing won’t impact current CMI or bi-lingual status. Medical staff who participate (during non-working hours) in the approximately one-hour process will receive a $50 stipend. Contact Connie James at 925-957-5410 or cjames@bsd.cccounty.us for more information.
Interpretation Services:
Making a Difference in Health Outcomes

When a hearing impaired patient delivered her baby at CCRMC recently, one thing she didn’t have to worry about was how she and the medical staff would communicate. By her side was a video interpreting unit providing American Sign Language interpretation. In fact, Marcia Allen, CCRMC Staff and Patient Care Coordinator, and Peter Delafiorentino, LVN—part of the team managing interpretation services for CCRMC—expect all 11 CCRMC units will have new video interpretation units available by the end of this month. Peter and Marcia have worked closely with Sally McFalone, Manager of CCHS Language Services, and Francie Wise, who has recently assumed responsibility for department-wide language services issues, to provide the new video units to the hospital. County-wide training will be beginning soon on the use of these devices that are also currently available at the Health Centers throughout CCHS. Peter and Marcia will provide more than 700 CCRMC employees with a 30-minute class on how to become certified medical interpreters, how to use the video/phone interpretation equipment and how to access other hospital interpretation resources. Marcia is also working on a brochure to educate hospital and Health Center patients about the interpretation services available to them at CCRMC and Health Centers.

For information on language interpretation services, contact Sally McFalone at smcfalon@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6242.

Improving Perinatal Systems Reduces Disparities

To ensure that every patient served in CCRMC’s Perinatal Department gets care with equal quality, safety and patient centeredness, the Perinatal Safety Team has a goal of improving perinatal system processes and health outcomes for patients. They recently used mannequins to involve 100 medical staff in simulating real medical scenarios. Staff were videotaped to learn what they did well and what needed improvement. With more than 200 live births a month, staff must “do the right thing” for every patient regardless of race, ethnicity, language, etc. Besides the simulation, there’s been training, daily team communication protocols, policy development and standardized clinical guidelines. Safety Team members include Michelle Bushong, Perinatal Clinical Nurse Educator, Margee Dean, Nurse Program Manager, Dr. Francine Jolton, Director of the Nursery, and Dr. Judy Bliss. Since the Institute of Medicine report Unequal Treatment notes that “promoting the consistency and equity of care through the use of evidence-based guidelines is one strategy for reducing healthcare disparities,” these efforts contribute to CCHS’ department wide RHD commitment.

Read more about all these CCRMC efforts to address health disparities on iSITE.

If you are planning a meeting, don’t forget that:

The CCHS Cultural Awareness Calendar—posted on iSITE—includes occasions that might result in a work conflict for employees due to cultural or religious obligations. To the extent possible, non-regularly scheduled CCHS meetings/events should be scheduled to avoid such conflicts where the employee would otherwise not be at work. If you would like to suggest a cultural event be added to the calendar, contact Connie James at cjames@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5421.
Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Imtiaz A. Ghorì, Leticia L. Ballesteros, Julie A. Vasquez, Gloria V. Asuncion, Rosario B. Abella, Laurie A. Terranova, Akiko Rodriguez, Jana L. Aloo, Penny K. Hewitson (10 years); Ronnie Marquez, Gary E. Stater, Carolyn D. Rangel, Trent Tate, Cindy Field, Jessica Glasky, Anthony Pizzo, Charlotte I. Adams, Elena Wagnon, Maza Webb (15 years); Rosemary E. Frazier, Lynn B. Morgan, Pamela G. Calley, Grace Hagopian, Jill Miller, Cynthia J. Proctor, Susan Allen, Alan Scoggins (20 years); Thomas J. Lee (25 years); Linda J. Schaefer, David H. Shaw, Julia H. Machado (30 years); Raymond A. Gonzalez and Darrell T. Williams (35 years).
**GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

**Honor Roll**

**Beckie Gomez**  
*Perinatal Substance Abuse Counselor*  
*Alcohol & Other Drug Services*  
For her personal sacrifice and unselfish commitment of time, energy and other valuable resources to the treatment and recovery of substance abusing women and their children.  
—Nominated by Haven Fearn

**Patty Halter**  
*Pharmacy Department*  
*Contra Costa Regional Medical Center*  
For tirelessly, graciously and professionally managing hundreds of prescription rewrites for Martinez patients.  
—Nominated by Family Practice Building One & Two

**Mary Serb**  
*Certified Nursing Assistant*  
*Contra Costa Regional Medical Center*  
For being an exceptional and caring person whose extra effort helps patients feel comfortable while hospitalized and for always having a smile on her face and a soft, calming voice.  
—Nominated by Holly Longmuir

**Nalini Singh**  
*Medical Records Technician*  
*Contra Costa Regional Medical Center*  
For going the extra mile every day, always being responsive, resourceful and helping out with difficult pharmacy questions.  
—Nominated by Debbie Nix

**Fran Trant**  
*Personnel Services Assistant III*  
*Personnel*

**Dawna Vann**  
*Senior Health Education Specialist*  
*Office of the Director*

**Jeanne Walker-Johnson**  
*Education and Training Specialist*  
*Contra Costa Regional Medical Center*  
For ongoing efforts and commitment to Service Excellence and for creating and implementing professional development courses for Contra Costa Health Services staff.  
—Nominated by Connie James

* Nominated previously in this quarter

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**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 ServicEX@hsd.cccounty.us or fax it to 925-957-5401. The form can also be downloaded from the Internet (About Us page) or iSITE, our intranet. Nominations are subject to approval by Division Directors.

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**Time for Staff to Update Emergency Contact Info**

During disasters and health emergencies it will be vital for CCHS to be able to reach employees so all staff are urged to make sure their emergency contact info is up to date. Our Personnel Division will soon conduct a test of our new employee emergency notification system, which is used only during emergencies to notify CCHS employees about when, where, and how to report to work. If your contact information has changed this year, fill out the Change of Address/Name Form and interoffice, fax or walk it over to the CCHS Personnel office as soon as possible. Forms can be found on iSITE. Health Services Personnel is located at 1320 Arnold Drive Suite 261 in Martinez 94553, Fax: 925-957-5260.
Staff Retreat Includes Celebration and Mass Dispensing Tabletop

Our Communicable Diseases Program held its annual all staff retreat last month with both serious activities and rejuvenating workshops. The all-day event celebrated program successes over the past year and included staff skits highlighting major accomplishments. The more than 90 employees who attended also watched the “In Sickness and in Wealth” segment of the Unnatural Causes documentary on health disparities, which was facilitated by RHD Resource Coordinator Dawna Vann. CCHS staff were then joined by representatives from other agencies and departments, including the Sheriff’s Office and local law enforcement, for a virtual tabletop exercise on the logistics of running a Super Point of Dispensing (SPOD) site to provide mass antibiotics. The exercise featured a model SPOD in Second Life, a virtual online world.

For information on the SPOD tabletop, contact Emergency Services Manager Kim Cox at kcox@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6648.

HazMat Staff Participate in Oil Spill Drill

Our Hazardous Materials Program participated in an oil spill drill in September at the Chevron Refinery in Richmond. It was the first time a local agency was invited to play a role at the unified command level, a direct result of the Cosco Busan spill last year in the Bay. That incident underscored the need for local involvement in responding to spills in areas that fall under state jurisdiction. Our HazMat Director Randy Sawyer said it was an excellent opportunity to practice working with other agencies on a spill scenario at the command level, which is where decisions get made. “We as the local agency were able to have a say in the response, which will be crucial in the event of a real spill,” Randy said. Hazardous Materials Specialists Eric Jonsson, Paul Andrews, Tod Hickman, Devra Lewis, Trisha Asuncion and Lacey Friedman also participated.

Pastoral Care Volunteers Bring Comfort to Hospital Patients

Volunteers with the pastoral care program at the Regional Medical Center provide much needed spiritual and emotional support to our patients. Sister Moira Macpherson and retired nurse Lorna Aylard are among the 14 people who donate their time to visit patients and their family members at the hospital. Sister Moira has been doing it for almost 20 years and Lorna for 13. Both described the work as very rewarding. Volunteer Services Coordinator Louise Lawson said pastoral care is a very important service, especially in the case of a severe illness or death involving children. More pastoral volunteers of all faiths are needed, in particular those who can speak Spanish or Tagalog. Pastoral care volunteers are required to undergo the same process as employees, including patient confidentiality training, TB shots, and background checks.

For information, contact Volunteer Services Coordinator Louise Lawson at llawson@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-370-5440.

AODS Promotes Recovery Month Activities

Staff from our Alcohol and Other Drugs Services (AODS) program and substance abuse recovery advocates appeared before the Board of Supervisors in September to promote National Recovery Month. This year’s activities included picnics, car washes and Contra Costa’s 4th Annual Recovery Walk on September 27 at the Martinez Waterfront Park. The walk was organized by Support 4 Recovery and the Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board, and sponsored by AODS and John Muir Behavioral Health Center for Recovery in partnership with Diablo Valley Ranch Alumni Association, 3%ers Motorcycle Club, Alano Club County East, Clean Living Facility, Frederic Ozanam Center, Kinder’s Meats, Recovery Management Services, Ujima Family Recovery Services, and Wollam House.

For more information, contact Fatima Matal Sol at fmatalso@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6311.