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Peace on Earth— and in the Streets

This is the time of year when we wish for peace for our country and the world. I join in those wishes — and want to share my thoughts about peace a little closer to home: on the streets in our Contra Costa communities.

For more than a year, we've been exploring what the role of a local health department is in containing and preventing street violence. Our Cross Divisional Violence Prevention Team has looked at a wide variety of best practices, talked to local leaders and proposed a number of strategies. During that process, I have been more than ever convinced that street violence is most definitely a public health issue and should be addressed in the same way we do tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and many other diseases — except that we must partner with many agencies to address this very complex problem.

Partnering with Richmond

Alex Kotlowitz, a Northwestern University professor, wrote about this in *The New York Times* earlier this year. Describing a project in Chicago called CeaseFire, he said the idea is to initially try to halt the spread of the disease (violence) by minimizing transmission. This requires treating the most infectious people first to prevent them from infecting others. A number of our partners are using that approach to reduce street violence in West County — focusing on the hard-core, angriest, most uncontrollable individuals. Unfortunately, unlike communicable diseases, street violence is a complex issue with a number of causes so the solutions are much more difficult to come by.

We've struggled in the last year with the unique challenge of defining a local health department's role in this critical effort. We've decided there are some very specific things we can offer. First — concentrating on Richmond where the homicide rate is the highest — we've committed to working with the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS). ONS was created by the Richmond City Council to put change

agents on the streets. These local residents do violence interruption, outreach, community mobilization, public education, involvement with the faith community and other local leaders, and criminal justice interface. Our Mental Health Division has been meeting with ONS Director Devone Boggan to identify specific support we can provide to his staff.

A number of our physicians, including resident Dr. Gina Perez-Baron, have been participating in Frontline Richmond, a support group for providers and other community agencies that are out in the community working with violence victims and their families.

Working with John Muir

We are very excited that the John Muir Community Health Alliance has made violence prevention one of its priorities and is willing to work with us and ONS to launch a pilot test of a successful program called Caught in the Crossfire. It's been in place at Highland Hospital in Oakland for a number of years and operated on a smaller scope at John Muir. Credited with reducing the rate of retaliation by violence victims, the program uses local residents as interventionists to begin working immediately with trauma victims in the hospital to provide support and services. We hope that



Dr. Walker

Continued next page

DID YOU KNOW

Homicide is the second leading cause of death among Contra Costa residents ages 15–34 years old

if the pilot with Richmond victims has good outcomes, John Muir will be willing to expand it to all patients seen in its Trauma Department.

Other efforts

Of course, street violence isn't just a West County problem. Supervisor Federal Glover recently convened a meeting of the East County Gang Task Force to look at disturbing data related to gunshot and other penetrating injuries in Antioch and other cities. We participated in that event and will continue to assist in any efforts that are appropriate for a health department.

Another area identified by our Cross Divisional Team deals with Contra Costa residents being released from state prison on parole. We are very concerned that these people, called re-entrants, get connected with health care services as quickly as possible. We are working with the State Parole agents to identify the best way to make that happen. A number of these parolees will enter residential alcohol and drug treatment programs, competing with other Contra Costa residents for the limited slots available. Our Alcohol and Other Drugs Division is concerned about that.

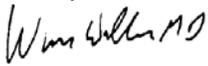
It takes time

Like many of the efforts CCHS is involved with, violence prevention is a very long process. We know that the efforts we have prioritized — no matter how successful they are — won't end street violence in the near term. It will take many strategies and many partners. And as hopeful as I am about the Obama administration, the downturn in the economy and the increase in unemployment rates aren't going to help.

So as we wish for peace this month, I ask you to commit yourselves to supporting each other. Acknowledge the impact street violence has not only in our community but also on our staff. Take precautions if you travel around the county performing your job. Be compassionate with each other and our patients/consumers/clients/customers as they come to us for services, recognizing that street violence has a profound impact on all of us.

The New York Times article is available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/04/magazine/04health-t.html>

Sincerely,



William B. Walker, MD

The Budget: Future Uncertain

I know economic issues are on everyone's mind. And at the federal, state and local level, the news is not good. I wish I had a crystal ball and could tell you that everything will be fine. I can't and it probably won't be. We knew that when the County budget was adopted in May, there would be additional hearings to address further cuts. That happened last month. Most of those cuts will be in Employment and Human Services (EHSD) and I sympathize with staff and clients. A few of those EHSD reductions do impact us, but nearly all employees in the affected positions are being assigned to vacancies elsewhere. If you are following the news, you know that at the state and county level, more cuts are virtually inevitable. At a recent Board of Supervisors meeting, County Administrator David Twa pointed out predictions are that the economy won't improve until the last quarter of 2011. That will no doubt mean more people unemployed and losing their health insurance, more demand on our services and fewer resources to respond. We'll do the best we can to fulfill our mission and maintain quality. And as usual, I'll keep you posted.—WW

The Director's Report is published monthly. Deadline for the January edition is December 12. 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.

Emergency Department Reports Dramatic Changes

Across the country, health systems are grappling with the issue of how to handle staggering increases in emergency department visits, and recently our Board of Supervisors heard how our Emergency Department Flow Team at CCRMC is dealing with the issue. Dr. David Goldstein, Chief of Emergency Medicine, and Interim ED Nurse Manager Peter Fromm described an approach they've been developing for several years that is now the standard operating procedure: no waiting room, immediate brief triage by a nurse and rapid access to a physician. This new flow model has resulted in marked improvement in the time from door to doctor evaluation, shorter Emergency Department stays, and a significant reduction in the number of people who leave without being seen. Supervisor Federal Glover, Board Chair, said the improvements are happening because "we have leaders with vision and people on the floors are helping."



Dr. David Goldstein, Peter Fromm, Jenne Gossett, consultant Dee Pete, and Patient Registration Supervisor Lorena Garcia (left to right).



For a copy of the presentation to the Board, visit *iSite* or contact Dr.

Goldstein at dgoldstein@bsd.cccounty.us or Constance Donovan at cdonovan@bsd.cccounty.us or 925-370-5171.



County Employee Flu Clinics Still Available in Martinez

It's not too late to get vaccinated against the flu. County employees can still get flu shots or the nasal spray at ongoing employee clinics from 8 to 11 a.m. Friday mornings at Vista Oaks Occupational Medicine, 10 Douglas Drive, Suite 110 in Martinez. The vaccinations are free for Contra Costa Health Plan members (bring your CCHP card) and \$25 for others. The flu nasal spray vaccine is available to people who are healthy, not pregnant and under 50 years of age. Flu vaccine will not be given to those with an allergy to eggs.

Photo at left: Dr. Steve Tremain,, Director of System Redesign at CCRMC, gets his flu shot every year. He receives his vaccination this year from Infection Control Nurse Kathy Ferris (left).

Free Drive-through Flu Clinic Doubles as Emergency Response Drill

Our Public Health Division will hold a free drive-through flu clinic from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, December 6 at Hilltop Mall in Richmond. Both shots and the nasal flu spray will be available and everyone is welcome. The clinic is our first ever drive-through clinic and also is serving as a drill to practice alternative methods of dispensing medication during a health emergency. The clinic will be an opportunity to exercise the vaccination capabilities for use of the Strategic National Stockpile and will help our county be more prepared for a health emergency, said our Emergency Services Manager Kim Cox, referring to the stockpile of emergency medication distributed by the federal government. Flu vaccination is recommended for anyone who wants to protect themselves, their families, their co-workers and their community — especially all children, pregnant women, people over 50 years old, health care workers and those with a chronic disease of the heart, lung or liver. The clinic is sponsored by CCHS and Hilltop Mall in conjunction with JCPenney, Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services, City of Richmond and the Richmond Police Department.



For more information about seasonal flu, visit our website (cchealth.org). For more information about the drill, contact Kim Cox at kcox@bsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6648.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Honor Roll

David Goldstein, MD
Front End Trial Team
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center

For an inspired team effort to redesign the Emergency Department patient flow to focus on patient-centered care and improved outcomes, reducing the number of patients leaving without being seen and reducing the length of stay for discharged patients.

—Nominated by William Walker, MD

Iris Holland
Clerk – Senior Level

Annamarie Lombardo
Clerk – Experienced Level
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center

For providing outstanding service, going out of their way to help and for being very professional and friendly.

—Nominated by a patient

Lynn King, LVN
Martinez Health Center

For ongoing quality help and support with a patient's many health questions and needs.

—Nominated by a patient

Debbie Wolfe
Account Clerk – Advanced Level
Personnel Division

For ensuring timesheets are processed on time by helping co-workers while still carrying her full load of work, and for volunteering to process timesheets for a colleague on leave.

—Nominated by Barbara Barton

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.

Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Mary K. McCaslin, Carla J. Wilson, Harkanwal K. Gill, Edith D. Mendoza, Dana A. Colomb, Elizabeth A. Kroll, Lara M. Wright, Paula R. Gray, Thomas Scogland (10 years); Kelley Taylor, Michael Borenstadt (15 years); Karen J. Mingus, Christopher Trujillo, Diane M. Ringue (20 years); Barbara Borbon (25 years); Laura E. Garcia (30 years); and Frances E. Wise (35 years).

iSITE Users' Group Formed to Improve CCHS Intranet

The iSITE Users' Group recently held its first meeting to explore ways to improve CCHS' intranet. The group, which is comprised of iSITE users from various CCHS divisions, is intended to assist Information Systems (IS) in making iSITE a more effective tool and more user-friendly. Group chair and IS Information Architect Marc Miyashiro announced at the meeting that his division hopes to redesign the look and usability of iSITE and that the process will closely involve members of the Users' Group. Marc also announced a new feature on iSITE called "Edit-in-Place." This feature allows a user who has been granted permission to edit a specific document in iSITE without needing to download and re-upload the file. Interested employees are encouraged to join the group. The next Users' Group meeting will be held from 11 a.m. to noon Tuesday, December 9 in the IS Conference Room, 595 Center Avenue, Suite 200, Martinez. The meeting will include a demonstration on another new feature, titled "Desktop Publishing," which allows quick and easy publishing to iSITE.



For more information about iSITE, the Users' Group or any of the new features, contact Marc Miyashiro at 925-313-6420 or mmiyashiro@hsd.cccounty.us



Dr. Neil Jayasekera

Healthy Outlook Column Covers Brain Injuries

Traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) — a major killer of people younger than 45 — was the topic of one of our recent Healthy Outlook columns that run in the Contra Costa Times chain. Dr. Neil Jayasekera, who works in the Emergency Department at our Regional Medical Center, talked about the two types of TBIs, penetrating and blunt, and how they can become fatal if ignored. Both of these injuries also have the potential to cause permanent brain and nerve damage. Many of these types of injuries are preventable by taking proper safety measures, such as wearing a seat belt while driving or a helmet while biking. If a person has problems with balance, using an assistive device or installing a handrail can prevent falls.



To read more of this and other Healthy Outlook columns, visit cchealth.org and click on the Healthy Outlook link in Items of Interest or on the Publications page.

Contra Costa in Holiday Food Fight with Solano

CCHS employees have until December 24 to join the annual "Food Fight" holiday food drive competition between Contra Costa and Solano counties. Last year, Contra Costa County raised \$7.66 per employee, and Solano County raised \$8.58 per employee, raising a grand total of \$117,027. Solano County won the "Big Apple" trophy by averaging more per employee. This year Contra Costa's goal is to raise \$9 per employee. The Food Bank serves some 98,000 people in the two counties each month. Of clients surveyed, 48.8% of clients reported having to choose between paying for utilities and buying food. About 66% of people receiving emergency food have incomes less than \$15,000 a year. For as little as \$1, the Food Bank can provide up to three meals for your neighbors in need. Checks should be made out to Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano County, with "food drive" on the memo line, and can be given to your division coordinator.



For more information, contact Jackie Peterson at jpeters2@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-957-5420. A list of contact numbers for each division's food drive coordinator is on iSITE, our intranet.

Volunteers Needed for Annual Free Tax Assistance Program

Volunteers are being recruited for the 2009 Contra Costa "Earn It! Keep It! Save It!" (EKS) program, a Contra Costa partnership. Last tax season, EKS helped more than 2,449 low to moderate-income families receive more than \$2.7 million in tax refunds and credits. The free tax preparation service is made possible only through the many volunteers who give their time to help hard-working families and individuals claim the refunds owed to them. Health Services employees are encouraged to volunteer on their own time. No experience is needed to volunteer. Greeters, screeners, tax preparers, and reviewers are all needed. Volunteer tax preparers will receive free training and volunteers with tax preparation experience can certify online. The deadline for submitting volunteer applications is December 10.



For more information or an application, visit the www.uwba.org/eks/get_involved_volunteer.html or contact EKS Program Manager Carol Perez with Community Housing Development Corporation of North Richmond at cperez@chdcnr.com or 510-412-9290 ext. 17.

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



Spotlight
RHD

The Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP) is a Division of CCHS that serves more than 80,000 people in Contra Costa County and continues to be at the forefront of offering comprehensive, quality health coverage. CCHP members choose from an extensive network of County-operated Health Centers, the Regional Medical Center in Martinez or the plan's Community Physicians Network of private doctors and community hospitals.

Collaboration improves Outcomes for African American Children

CCHP has achieved small but encouraging improvements in two areas of health disparities by collaborating with other CCHS Divisions to improve immunization rates and increase well child visits. Data indicated only 60% of African American children were current on their immunization rates — 20% less than other child members of the same age — and 28% of African American children were current on their well child visits, 32% less than other child members of same age.

To improve those rates, Lenell Anderson, Supervisor of CCHP's Good Health Check-Up Program, Dr. Dianne Dooley, Ambulatory Care, Erika Jossen, Public Health's Immunization Coordinator/Immunization Registry, Reducing Health Disparities Unit staff Connie James and Dawna Vann, and Bay Point/Pittsburg African American Health Conductors LeAndra Turner and



Lenell Anderson, Chris Johnson, and Case Management Manager Laurie Crider (left to right).

Evelyn Dodson, worked together to develop a plan. Their strategies included providing immunization education to the Health Conductors, who work with the community to raise health awareness, and creating a culturally appropriate phone script and letter for families. Chris Johnson, CCHP Good Health Program Care Management Associate, also conducted outreach to 93 families in Bay Point and Pittsburg with children ages 15 months to 2 years old who were not current with their immunizations. The Health Conductors made home visits and additional phone calls to families who did not respond to the first round of calls. As a result of the intervention, the percentage of African American children current with their immunizations rose to 65%, well child visits for toddlers age 0-15 months increased by 12%, for children age 3-6 the increase was 6% and well care visits went up 3% for adolescents.





The Advice Nurse Unit is dedicated to providing quality linguistically appropriate care to their callers and they have many success stories to share.

Reducing Health Care Disparities One Call at a Time

One of the great services offered by Contra Costa Health Plan to its members is the 24-hour Advice Nurse phone line. Every month, 16,000 calls are made to the Advice Nurse line, which provides CCHP patients with health resources, support and solutions to prevent unnecessary emergency room visits. The Advice Nurses have very limited access to patient records and often must play the role of health detective with patients who are often unaware of their health conditions and chronic diseases. Patricia Munoz, Advice Nurse Manager, notes that the Advice Nurse unit has 36 nurses who work day, evening and weekend shifts. Patricia says, “Forty percent of the calls we receive are from Spanish speakers and about 5% of the calls are from patients who speak Farsi. So given that we do a lot of problem solving with our callers, it is essential that we provide appropriate linguistic access to these non-English callers.” Among the strategies CCHP uses is that a caller identification screen indicates whether there’s a Spanish speaker on the line and all nurses are trained to say in Spanish, “Un momento necesito un interprete” (One moment – I need an interpreter). The Advice Nurse unit phone lines have speed dialing to the Health Care Interpreter Network to make getting the interpreter a faster process.



Otilia Tiutin and Patricia Sanchez (left to right)

Dynamic Duo Working to Reduce Disparities

For more than seven years, Otilia Tiutin, Manager of Cultural & Linguistic Services, has pioneered the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate services for the Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP). She has been responsible for developing and implementing cultural humility/sensitivity training with all CCHP staff, and linguistic access resource development. She and Patricia Sanchez, CCHP’s Senior Health Education Specialist, have also conducted two group needs assessments of CCHP Medi-Cal and Healthy Family members to better understand their health needs. Patricia is also focusing on obesity among Latinos and is developing childhood obesity health education classes targeted at this population. To reduce the high rate of avoidable visits to the Emergency Department by Latinos, Patricia is working with a team to develop culturally appropriate posters and brochures. The educational material will educate parents on hand washing to prevent the flu and colds, when and how to use the CCHP Advice Nurse, and appropriate use of their primary care doctor to reduce emergency room visits.

Needs Assessment

CCHP conducted a needs assessment with some plan members. Here are some highlights: 39% of Limited English Proficiency Medi-Cal respondents preferred the Emergency Room to a primary care physician (for Healthy Families it was 13%); 26% said they prefer services be served in Spanish; 82% said their medical providers provided their preferred language. For the 375 Healthy Family respondents, 24% of surveyed parents were concerned about their child’s weight and 53% of parents said sometimes they have difficulty understanding information they receive from the health plan. Providers serving the Healthy Family members were also surveyed. 38% of them thought they could reasonably accommodate their non-English speaking patients, but 19% said they often have difficulty communicating with their non-English speaking patients and 31% said patients appeared “often” to have difficulty reading written instructions and educational materials. Another 47% said “sometimes” the patients had trouble.



For more info, contact Otilia Tiutin at otitutin@bsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6063.



Senior Health Educator Shannon Ladner-Beasley (left) and Project Manager Nancy Baer are working on the SRTS program.

West County Awarded \$500K to Identify Safe Routes to School

CCHS will begin working with West County agencies to identify and develop safe routes to school for children in West County. Caltrans recently awarded \$500,000 in Federal Safe Routes to School (SRTS) funds to implement the West County SRTS effort over the next three years. The program will target nine schools in Richmond, San Pablo, El Cerrito, Pinole, Hercules and El Sobrante. Working in teams, the effort will conduct walkability workshops to assess how safe it is for elementary and middle school students to walk or bike to school. CCHS' Injury Prevention and Physical Activity Promotion Projects will take the lead in planning, conducting and evaluating project activities. In addition to walkability workshops, these activities include parent meetings, assemblies, classroom presentations, walking

events and bicycle safety training. The goal is not only to increase the number of children who walk or bike to school, but also promote healthy habits at a young age.

 For more information about the West County Safe Routes to School program, contact Nancy Baer at 925-313-6837 or nbaer@hsd.cccounty.us

Homeless Program Works on Permanent Connections for Youths

Homeless youths with disabilities will soon have additional housing options in Contra Costa through our Homeless Program's youth continuum of services. The Homeless Program received funding through the HUD Supportive Housing Program to add 10 permanent supportive housing units to its continuum of services for runaway and homeless youths. The new Permanent Connections program also will offer subsidized housing with supportive services for youths who are homeless with disabilities. Each year, more than 150 youths ages 14-24 access the Homeless Program's youth services, which includes outreach, emergency shelter and transitional housing. Many of these youths have mental health challenges, chronic illnesses, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse issues that pose barriers to them accessing and retaining long-term housing. Permanent Connections will offer permanent subsidies for apartments in the community to make them more affordable and incorporate case management and other services to assist them in maintaining their housing.

 For more information about Permanent Connections or to donate items to the adult and youth shelter programs during the holidays, contact the Homeless Program at 925-313-6124.

Thirty Years Plus of Service

The Board of Supervisors recently recognized Darrell Williams, manager of the Diagnostic Imaging Department at our Regional Medical Center, for his 35 years of service. Darrell graduated from the hospital's radiology program in 1973 and has been the manager since 1983. Darrell said the highlight of his career has been being able to provide state-of-the-art imaging equipment for the organization and the patients of Contra Costa County.

 Videos of board meetings are available on the county website, www.co.contra-costa.ca.us



Darrell Williams (second from right) at the October 28 board meeting with Ambulatory Care Services Director Dianne Dunn-Bowie, Supervisor Federal Glover and CCRMC Executive Director Dr. Jeff Smith (left to right).