

the Health advisor

Florida Department
of Health

Mission: Promote and
protect the health and
safety of all Floridians.

June-July 1999

Secretary Brooks stresses importance of prevention and testing for

hepatitis



Viral hepatitis has become a major public health problem in Florida, but citizens' awareness of hepatitis prevention and testing remains low, according to comments made by Secretary Brooks during National Hepatitis Awareness Month.

"Prevention of viral hepatitis and identification of silent hepatitis infections are the first steps toward liver wellness in the state of Florida," said Secretary Brooks. "National Hepatitis Awareness Month provides an opportunity for people to find out more about their risks for these diseases and how they can stay healthy."

Hepatitis A and B are two of the 10 most commonly reported diseases to the Florida Department of Health, and hepatitis C reports are increasing dramatically as new testing technology gains acceptance. The hepatitis C situation is often referred to as the silent epidemic because so few of those who carry the virus are aware of their infection. It is believed that as many as 4 million Americans are infected with hepatitis C, four times the number of HIV infections nationally. This translates to more than 200,000 hepatitis C infections in Florida, with an additional 50,000 or more Floridians chronically infected with hepatitis B.

Hepatitis C is the most common blood-borne infection, the most common cause of chronic hepatitis, and the most common cause of liver transplants. Deaths from hepatitis C may soon overtake the number of AIDS-related deaths.

Secretary Brooks said those at greatest risk for hepatitis C and for whom testing is recommended include:

- ▶ Persons who received a blood transfusion or solid organ transplant before July 1992 when better testing of blood donors became available;
- ▶ Persons who were treated for clotting problems with a blood product made prior to 1987 and the development of more advanced methods for manufacturing the products;
- ▶ Persons who were notified that they received blood from a donor who later tested positive for hepatitis C;
- ▶ Long-term hemodialysis patients;
- ▶ Persons who ever injected illegal drugs, including those who injected once or a few times many years ago;
- ▶ Persons who have signs or symptoms of liver disease (e.g., abnormal liver enzyme tests);
- ▶ Healthcare workers after exposures (e.g., needle sticks or splashes to the eye) to hepatitis C virus-positive blood on the job; and
- ▶ Children born to hepatitis C virus-positive women.

According to Secretary Brooks, Florida has made great strides in protecting its youth through vaccinations for hepatitis A and B; however, many high risk adults still have not taken advantage of these safe and effective vaccines. He said the Department of Health is currently working to promote vaccination statewide.

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Helping others through United Way contributions

DOH EMPLOYEES CARE

The United Way of Florida announced that the 1998 Florida State Employees Charitable Campaign (FSEC) raised \$3.7 million with a 10-percent increase from the 1997 campaign. Department of Health contributed \$249,808 statewide and placed fifth in total contributions out of 41 state agencies. This was a 7.3-percent increase over the department's 1997 campaign.

This was a fantastic year for the Big Bend United Way FSEC Campaign! The Tallahassee area state employees raised \$1,713,443. This was the second largest amount of contributions of all of the cities participating in the United Way Campaign nationwide, trailing only Sacramento, Calif.

The Big Bend United Way held the 1998 Florida State Employees' Charitable Campaign Awards Luncheon on April 16 at Klemans Plaza in Tallahassee. The Big Bend Department of Health employees in the Big Bend area (Headquarters, Tallahassee CMS Clinic, Leon, Gadsden, Liberty, Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, Taylor and Wakulla county health departments) raised \$97,760 and received the following four awards:

GOVERNOR'S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE Agency with the Highest Percent Over Goal in the 1,000 Employees Category.

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD Agency with the Greatest Per Capita Contributions in the 1,000 Employees Category.

GOLD AWARD FOR GIVING Exceeding 100% of Goal (18% over goal).

BRONZE AWARD \$50 to \$74 Per Capita Giving.

All of the Department of Health FSEC Campaign Coordinators and employees across the state played a big part in the success of the department's 1998 FSEC Campaign by their generous donations of time and funds to help those less fortunate in Florida's communities. Once again, DOH employees showed they are generous and caring people, not only through the contributions you made to this campaign, but for all that each of you do year round to make the Department of Health shine brighter!

The Department of Health serves Floridians and visitors with integrity, teamwork, accountability, professionalism, quality, caring and community partnerships.

Dharamraj named outstanding woman in public health

PINELLAS CHD Claude M. Dharamraj, MD, FAAP, assistant director of the Pinellas County Health Department, has been named the 1999 Outstanding Woman in Public Health.

Dr. Dharamraj was recognized at

She has successfully developed partnerships between the health department and other community-based providers, private as well as public.

the USF College of Public Health's awards ceremony on April 8. The college bestows the award each year to a woman whose career accomplishments and leadership have contributed significantly to the field of public health in Florida.

A pediatrician, Dr. Dharamraj has worked at the Pinellas County Health Department for the last 13 years, eight of them as assistant director.

Dr. Dharamraj's initiatives to strengthen the maternal and child health services in Pinellas County

have been recognized locally and nationally. She has successfully developed partnerships between the health department and other community-based providers, private as well as public. Her comprehensive approaches to service planning, design and implementation are lauded by her peers.

She was instrumental in gaining additional funding for the federal Healthy Start Project in St. Petersburg, which she directs, and in expanding the Healthy Families Pinellas program.

She received spotlight awards for the best innovative programs in teen pregnancy prevention (1996) and men's services (1998) from City MatCH, a national network serving as a hub for data, programs and perspective on urban maternal and child health.

Dr. Dharamraj earned her MD degree in 1975 from Faculte de Medecine in Lille, France. She completed residencies in pediatrics and fellowships in neonatology and critical care medicine, and she is a student in USF's Executive MPH program.

— Carina Maffei, Pinellas CHD



Bureau of Radiation's Harlan Keaton receives Vice President Gore's Hammer Award

Harlan Keaton, an environmental administrator with the Bureau of Radiation Control's environmental radiation program in Orlando, is a member of a team that recently received Vice President Al Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government Hammer Award. This award recognizes groups whose work results in a government that works better and costs less.

The team, comprised of state, federal, and private sector partners, received the award for developing the Multi-Agency Radiation Survey and Site Investigation Manual or MARSSIM. This manual provides a nationally consistent guide to plan, conduct, evaluate, and document measurements showing that a radioactively contaminated site has been cleaned up. Before the team developed the manual, four federal agencies (Environmental Protection Agency, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Department of Energy, and Department of Defense) and each individual state were responsible for developing their own procedures.

Mr. Keaton and the other members of the team received the award on April 16 at a ceremony held in Washington, D.C.



Florida Safe Kids Coalition promotes safety across generations

To better educate grandparents and families about preventable injury — the leading

Improving neighborhood health

LEON CHD Today Americans enjoy better health, live in healthier conditions, know more about how to take care of their health, and live longer than at any time in the past. To a large extent, these trends are the result of the efforts and activities of Public Health. Public Health works ... and we Americans are the living proof.

In observance of National Public Health Week (April 5-11, 1999), on Monday, April 5, 1999, the Leon County Health Department and the Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) organization conducted a "Community Blitz." Monday was chosen as it is generally a slower media day, and staff had the energy and enthusiasm built up during the previous week as training was provided for all participants. Approximately 85 staff members took to the streets and went door to door leaving information packets which included services that the health department provides, as well as other health related information. Packets were placed in a stadium cup and/or door hanger bag imprinted with the Leon County Health Department and anti-tobacco information for distribution. Approximately 1,000 homes in a specified area were vis-

ited. The area selected for the "community blitz" was chosen based upon a retrospective study done by the Leon County Health Department's Immunization Program. Results of the study showed that this area had one of the lowest 2-year-old immunization completion rates in the county.

Several residents expressed appreciation for the health department's efforts on spreading the news about available services. The staff was very excited about the reception they received from residents in the community as well as the interest demonstrated by the media.

After receiving very positive feedback from those who participated in the blitz, the committee responsible for the planning and implementing of the activities considered it a GRAND success. Our goal of increasing community awareness of available health services in a target area was accomplished.

Not only did this event provide information for the community and good media for public health, but it was also a great morale booster as teams of staff mixed from all areas of the health department and created excellent camaraderie.

— Frankie Mathews, Leon CHD



So, that's what they do



TUBERCULOSIS (TB) CONTROL AND PREVENTION

▶ Reported TB cases decreased from 1832 in 1990 to 1400 in 1997.

▶ TB case rates per 100,000 population decreased from 14.1 in 1990 to 9.5 in 1997.

▶ These decreases in incidence and rates represent a significant achievement as Florida continues to have a large number of people at risk for tuberculosis — persons with HIV infection, foreign-born from developing countries, urban dwellers living in poverty or near poverty conditions, and migrant workers. The decreases are a direct result of active, effective TB Control and Prevention Programs in county health departments supported by increased state and federal funding initiatives beginning in the early 1990s.

▶ Currently, 88 percent of all identified TB cases in the state complete a recommended course of therapy. These improved TB case treatment completion rates are a direct result of the effective utilization of federal grant funds to county health departments facilitating the implementation of directly observed treatment (DOT) strategies.

▶ The percentage of TB cases with multiple drug resistant disease (MDR-TB) decreased from 3.1 percent in 1994 to .9 percent in 1997. MDR-TB presents a very significant public health threat and is very costly to manage.

▶ Almost 15,000 TB-infected individuals were placed on preventive therapy in Florida during calendar year 1997. Effective implementation of preventive therapy prevents TB infected individuals from developing active TB disease and further transmitting TB infection and disease to others.

▶ State and local TB Coalitions active throughout the state since 1993 continue to play a major role in assisting the Department of Health in the control and prevention of tuberculosis. These coalitions include, among others, representatives from the American Lung Association of Florida, Schools of Public Health, Department of Corrections, Veterans Administration Hospitals, and the private medical community.

News from TB & Refugee Health

New video produced

The Health Services-Mental Health Subcommittee of the Miami Task Force for Refugees has been involved with the writing and production of two videos. The *Health Prevention-Access to Health Care* film will assist the incoming refugee/parolee population by providing information about accessing needed health care services and establishing a life of preventive health as they resettle in Florida. The movie will help familiarize new arrivals with the various health care systems available (for the first 8 months and thereafter) and how to access their services. The Bureau of TB and Refugee Health, responsible for initiating the film, hopes to instill in these newcomers a sense of commitment to preventive health, starting with the domestic health assessment then moving on to health care programs such as Medicaid and Managed Care, and concluding with preventive health measures. All are necessary steps in establishing a life of preventive health.

The Health Prevention-Health Screening film assists the incoming refugee/parolee population by providing detailed information on the domestic health assessment (physical examination) they participate in during the first 90 days after arriving to the United States. The video also provides instructions and clarifies procedures for the self-administered tests. Fulfillment of this exam will assist the new arrivals in undertaking new challenges with a documented healthy start. Both videos are available in English, Spanish and Creole.

TB skin test "teaching arm"

"I'll give you a hand" is an expression most of us have heard, and many have used from time to time. On World TB Day, March 24, 1999, the Brevard County Health Department got both "a hand" and an arm too. Not just one, but two. The American Lung Association of Florida, Inc., Spaceport Region (ALA) presented Dr. Heidar Heshmati, director of the Brevard County Health Department

with two "See and Touch" Artificiaz TB Testing Arms. Presenting this valuable teaching tool to Dr. Heshmati and Carole Hamper RN, TB Coordinator for the County Health Department were Louise Blackwood RN, Advisory Board President, and Lois Hoffmann, program director for the Spaceport Region of the American Lung Association of Florida Inc.

The two "See and Touch" Testing Arms — one white one black — are excellent teaching tools for the correct reading and interpreting of the Mantoux Tuberculin Skin Tests. Ms. Blackwood, who works in the office of

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pulmonologists; and Dr. H. Phillips Stall and Dr. Theodore Amgott, both on the ALA Advisory Board; said these teaching arms will "enhance the reading of the results of the tuberculosis skin tests and enable more accurate diagnosis."

Said Carole Hamper R.N., "We already have a class scheduled for this week, so these wonderful additions will be put to the 'test' immediately."

Partnerships in health care are essential to raise the level of health care in any community. Tuberculosis today is a treatable disease once it's diagnosed. These "arms" would provide expertise in that diagnosis. The Brevard County Health Department expresses its sincerest thanks to the American Lung Association of Florida Inc., Spaceport Region and its Medical Advisory Board for their generous contribution.

Wellness at work in Hernando

Awareness is the first step and we are proud to be a community partner in the promotion of good nutrition and positive lifestyle changes.

HERNANDO CHD *Living Well In Hernando* was established as a part of Chronic Disease Community Intervention Program funding received in July, 1997. *Living Well* is a worksite screening and wellness education program implemented through the Hernando County Health Department, Nutrition and Preventive Services Department. The program goal is to develop, implement and evaluate a worksite screening and wellness education program to reduce the morbidity and mortality caused by heart disease in persons aged 18 to 64 in the workplaces of Hernando County.

As a part of *Living Well*, screening participants are invited to attend three different intervention classes designed to heighten awareness and motivate participants to improve health behaviors as it relates to cholesterol and blood pressure. Thus far, class topics have included:

Nutrition for a Healthy Heart

Getting Fit!

Weight Management Techniques

Stress Management

Following the intervention, screenings are conducted which include serum cholesterol with HDL profile, blood pressure, height, weight, body fat analysis, and health appraisal. Each program participant receives their results and an individual consultation with a health care professional regarding a personalized intervention strategy.

At the completion of each worksite program, company management is presented with aggregate data which reflects the "health" of the company. This report indicates the number and percent of individuals screened who had elevated blood work by each parameter checked and a comparison to baseline data gathered at screenings performed the previous year. *Living Well* staff utilize this information to assist company liaisons develop an on-going wellness strategy for their employees.

Since its inception, *Living Well* has screened close to 1500 individuals and had approximately 750 attend health and wellness classes. Although it is premature to report on the impact this program is having concerning the reduction of heart disease and stroke, participants are reporting that they are delighted with the service and find it both motivational as well as educational.

Naples' neighborhood health clinic

The Neighborhood Health Clinic is one of those grassroots volunteer programs that makes everyone connected with it feel good, as they should. It is terrific!

VOLUNTEER SERVICES, REGION 8 Until recently, uninsured, low-income adults in Naples were out of luck if they got sick. For the past few years they have had no access to primary health care except the emergency room. This situation greatly troubled the health department and a local dermatologist, but all efforts to remedy it hit a brick wall. Then the most wonderful thing happened ... the dermatologist retired!

Once Dr. William Lascheid had sufficient time on his hands, he and his wife, Nancy, rolled up their sleeves and made things happen. With their prompting, the local hospital donated space for a volunteer clinic in a nearby facility and agreed to accept the clinic's referrals without charge. The largest family practice group in the area signed on as volunteers, and a local pharmacy stocked the shelves with prescription medicine. Then the ball really started rolling!

The health department entered into an agreement with the clinic to provide oversight and sovereign immunity to its volunteers. Other take clinicians agreed to give time to the needy in the clinic and specialists agreed to take clinic referrals in their offices. The local newspaper took the clinic under its wing with a series of articles that brought out the best of the people in Naples. Donations arrived from med-

ical offices, businesses, and private individuals. Nurses, medical assistants, social workers and lay persons signed on to help staff the clinic. People began to "just show up" with ideas, materials, and elbow grease. One lady came in and painted a mural in the patients' bathroom.

Financial contributions came in various amounts from local citizens. One day Nancy Lascheid was in the grocery store and was recognized by a small, elderly lady. She explained that she lived on a fixed income, but really wanted to help, and donated 54 cents on the spot.

The clinic opened its doors on April 12, seeing eight patients its first night. It treats working adults without health insurance or access to government assistance whose income is within 150 percent of the federal poverty level. The clinic is open every Monday and Thursday evening and Saturday morning, making it more accessible for working patients as well as for working volunteers. It employs one coordinator; all other staff members are good volunteers. "One of the things that is very important to me is we have such a good response from the medical community," said Merlyn Comeriato, clinic coordinator.

— Wendy Wilderman

Getting ready for year 2000



Update on the Department of Health's technology compliance activities

For the past year, the Department of Health has been preparing its state-wide systems for Year 2000 compliance.

While all of our mission-critical, state-wide systems are now ready, each local site is examining all of the technology products in use for compliance.

Monthly reporting by the 112 sites puts the Department at 63% ready for year

2000. Efforts have increased on this project as the number of items being evaluated increased from 750 in December 1998 to 2110 in April 1999. In April, DOH system administrators began using a "Year 2000 Problem Report" to bring local mission-critical problems to the attention of the Y2K Executive Management Team. The Year 2000 Executive Management Team is overseeing actions to complete readiness by each of the headquarters and local sites. This group meets twice monthly for status updates and news about new issues.

Although it is an ambitious goal, by June 30, 1999, the Department of Health plans to have checked and replaced everything necessary to ensure compliance. Sites that have completed their readiness activities are being reviewed for completeness and their directors and system administrators are being contacted to close their reporting process. Check the Year 2000 web site on the DOH Intranet for more information and updates. Help assure that we can provide uninterrupted service to the public at the change of the millennium.

— Jo Ann Steele, Information Resource Management

Internet <http://www.doh.state.fl.us> Intranet <http://dohinvs.doh.state.fl.us>

Our web sites continue to be an efficient and effective way to inform DOH employees and the public about the changing world of DOH and public health. If you are interested in posting information on the websites, contact your Web Managers, Jill Schaeffer (Intranet) or Jo Ann Steele (Internet).

NEW SITES

Have you seen our new Intranet site? The new navigation menu now provides more news and bulletins at a glance on the homepage. Your comments and suggestions have resulted in a visually appealing and functional two-column listing of news for DOH employees.

In April, the new Florida Health Information Systems Council (Internet) was published including a strategic plan for 2000/2001 — 2004/2005 and links to the latest news on the Department of Health's Public Health Amendments Bill. The Correctional Medical Authority's site found a new home on the DOH Intranet. This section of the department monitors and evaluates the quality of the physical and mental health care services provided to inmates in Florida's state and privately operated correctional institutions. The Division of Disease Control re-vamped their AIDS site to provide easier access to all of the information on this notable subject, from community planning to trends and statistics and services available. On the Intranet, the Bureau of Human Resources Management provided us with news about the Employee Awards Program and has added the Service and Superior Accomplishment Awards Policy, information about Davis Productivity Awards, and forms, spreadsheets, and certificates.

The Office of Health Professional Recruitment now has a site that presents DOH programs that seeking to coordinate the placement of primary medical care professionals in Florida. The clearinghouse maintains a database where employers register their professional

staffing needs and have access to providers' curriculum vitae information. Check out the site at www.doh.state.fl.us/recruit.

WEB BULLETINS

Bulletins on the intranet informed Environmental Health staff about three new interactive manuals and gave DOH staff news of the Public Health Nursing Leadership Conference and the Purchasing and Disbursement Workshop. The Sick Leave Pool open enrollment information was also provided. DOH staff and the public were able to view the "Disaster Declaration" from the governor and news about wildfires in Florida thanks to bulletins posted by Emergency Operations and the Bureau of Epidemiology.

COMING SOON

Correctional Medical Authority (on the Intranet)
AG Holley TB Hospital
Health Professional Recruitment

TIRED OF VIRUSES?

The DOH web sites are scanned each evening for viruses. If any are identified, they are cleaned, and the appropriate Web Manager is contacted to avoid future occurrences. Thanks to our Network and Computing Services unit for establishing this service.

WEB MANAGER OF THE MONTH

Marek Pawlowicz, Bureau of Laboratory Services

This web site allows the Bureau of Laboratory Services to update testing methods and procedures for collection of specimens in a timely and efficient manner. The site also allows viewers to learn more about certain laboratory procedures and provides previously difficult to comprehend information in a format that is easier to understand. View this internet site by selecting "Laboratory Services."

the advisor

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Robert G. Brooks, MD, Secretary

Please send stories, preferably on disk or by e-mail to William Parizek by the first of each month.

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