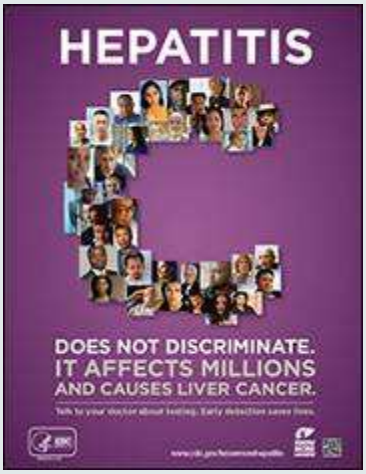
Florida HEALTH

Hepatitis Health

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2 MARCH 2013



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Florida Invited to Participate in CDC Hepatitis C Screening Consultation

By April Crowley

The Division of Viral Hepatitis at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) invited Phil Reichert, Florida's viral hepatitis prevention coordinator and supervisor of Florida's hepatitis program, to a consultation in Atlanta on February 11, 2013. Over forty experts from around the country were invited to participate. Three additional hepatitis coordinators from Massachusetts, Minnesota and Washington made presentations, along with Phil, about how their state hepatitis programs screen for hepatitis C.

The purpose of this consultation was to 1) Look at current hepatitis C epidemiology and screening recommendations in the U.S., 2) Discuss lessons learned from the implementation of routine hepatitis C screening, 3) Share best practices from several state viral hepatitis prevention programs, 4) Identify barriers and how to better implement CDC's recent hepatitis C screening recommendations and, 5) Identify tools needed to support implementation.

In August 2012, CDC released recommendations for screening Americans born from 1945 to 1965 for hepatitis C. Over 75% of the people infected in the U.S. are in that age group. And, most do not know they are infected because it can take decades for hepatitis C to cause cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), liver cancer or death. For more information on these recommendations, see the report at: http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6104a1.htm?s_cid=rr6104a1_w

From left: Geoff Beckett (CDC), Anne Brenner (Washington State), Phil Reichert (Florida), Cheri Booth (Minnesota), Dan Church (Massachusetts), Maria Courogen (Washington State) and Chris Taylor (NASTAD)

CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis expects to write a white paper based on the discussions from this meeting that will be available in the coming months.

Hepatitis Prevention
Florida Department of Health

Division of Disease Control & Health Protection

Hepatitis Highlights in 2012

By Phil Reichert

Phil Reichert

What follows is a recap of *some* of the accomplishments, milestones and interesting events and activities that took place related to viral hepatitis and the Florida Department of Health, HIV/AIDS & Hepatitis Section last year. Some highlights listed have an indirect effect on hepatitis prevention in Florida.

January 5: Representative Mack Bernard of West Palm Beach introduced House Bill 1271, titled the "Viral Hepatitis Testing Act of 2012" into Florida's House of Representatives. A companion bill was introduced in the Senate. The bill was discussed and voted through subcommittees and committees, but did not make it to the floor of either chamber for consideration. We are delighted that viral hepatitis made it onto the agendas of both houses for consideration.

January through December: April Crowley, the hepatitis education coordinator, provided eight Hepatitis 101 conference call trainings for 219 nurses and other health care professionals (public and private).

January and February: We held two serology workshops for 36 public and private health care professionals. These webinar-based interactive workshops are offered to assist with the interpretation of hepatitis A, B and C antibody and antigen tests.

January 27: *Guidelines for County Health Departments that Provide Hepatitis Prevention Services* (AKA, the "tri-fold") was published and distributed after an extensive updating of information from the *Hepatitis 09 Service Manual.*

February 15: Hepatitis Prevention hosted "Hepatitis Day at the Capitol," which included public and private hepatitis and other public health related displays that provided information to legislators and other Capitol staff.

March 9: Dr. Frank Farmer resigned as surgeon general and secretary of the Department of Health.

March 31: After 38 years of public service, Tom Liberti retired as chief of the Bureau of HIV/AIDS & Hepatitis.

April 27-28: April Crowley and I participated in a two-topic Florida Public Health Association regional meeting in Ft. Lauderdale. The subjects were immunization and viral hepatitis. Staff of the Hepatitis Prevention Program also participated in the planning and execution of the conference. Over 250 health workers attended.

May: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Viral Hepatitis introduced the "Know More Hepatitis" media campaign to encourage baby boomers born from 1945 to 1965 to get tested for hepatitis C. For more information on this campaign, check out their website: **http://www.cdc.gov/KnowMoreHepatitis**

May 9: April Crowley spent the day in Jacksonville conducting a quality improvement (QI) review of the Hepatitis Program at the Duval County Health Department (CHD).

May 14: Donna Wheeler joined the Hepatitis Prevention Program as the new field services coordinator.

May 19: Several CHDs participated in the first annual National Hepatitis Testing Day by hosting events to enhance testing in at-risk populations.

Continued on page 3

2012 Highlights Continued….

May 23: Dr. John Armstrong joined the Department of Health as the new surgeon general and secretary.

July 1: As part of the reorganization of the Department of Health, Immunization, STD, TB and the HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Program are now part of the Bureau of Communicable Diseases, which falls under the Division of Disease Control and Health Protection.

July 28: Several CHDs and the state hepatitis prevention office participated in World Hepatitis Day events around the state.

July and August: Several staff of the CHD hepatitis programs as well as Donna Wheeler, Jessi Embleton and I in Tallahassee, were deployed to Jacksonville to assist with the enhanced TB testing initiative. Some of us served one-week tours, and others were there for two weeks or more.

August 15-17: Donna Wheeler and I made a whirlwind tour by providing technical assistance and training site visits to the Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach CHDs. Much thanks to the hepatitis health care professionals who allowed us to disrupt their routines for a few hours.

August 17: CDC released the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) titled, *Recommendations for the Identification of Chronic Hepatitis C Virus Infection Among Persons Born During 1945-1965.* About 75 % of all Americans infected with hepatitis C are in that age group and most are not aware of their infection because they have not been tested or had noticeable symptoms. CDC is recommending that health care professionals offer the test to individuals born during that time period. See the complete report at: **http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6104a1.htm**

October 22: The Hepatitis Prevention Program was notified by the CDC that Florida was awarded funding for the Viral Hepatitis and Surveillance grant for which we applied in July. This funding is for a three-year cycle, with an annual award of $108,287 for hepatitis prevention and $542,112 for surveillance initiatives. This funding provides us with a great opportunity to collaborate with the Bureau of Epidemiology.

November: The updated *Hepatitis 09 Service Manual* was distributed to the CHDs.

November 7: April Crowley and Donna Wheeler conducted a QI review at the Escambia CHD in Pensacola.

November 15: Hepatitis Foundation International partnered with the Hepatitis Prevention Section to hold their second viral hepatitis summit in Florida in the past twenty months. It was held in Orlando, and more than 40 nurses and other public and private health care professionals participated.

December 4 & 5: There was a meeting of the hepatitis coordinators from the 15 funded CHDs in Orlando. This was the first opportunity for a face-to-face meeting of this group since September of 2009 and an ideal occasion for each coordinator to share best practices with their colleagues.

In general: One of the worst hepatitis C outbreaks ever was perpetrated by a traveling medical technician, David Kwiatkowski, who stole syringes filled with powerful pain medication, injected himself and refilled the syringes with saline. These used syringes transmitted HCV to over 30 patients in hospitals located in eight states. Kwiatkowski is in custody pending trial.

Publications throughout the latter part of 2012 stated the success of several drug trials at providing up to a 100% cure rate for hepatitis C. Some of these upcoming medications do not require multi-drug treatment with pegalated interferon, which often causes severe side effects in people who take it. Researchers predict at least two to three new treatments available for hepatitis C by mid-2014.

Facts About Hepatitis C

- Hepatitis C is a contagious liver disease caused by a virus estimated to infect up to four million Americans.
- About 150 million people worldwide are chronically infected, and more than 350,000 die annually from hepatitis C-related liver disease.
- The hepatitis C virus is transmitted by contact with blood, including through sharing drug needles.
- It was commonly spread through blood transfusions before screening of the blood supply began in 1992.
- The CDC recommends people born between 1945 and 1965 be screened for hepatitis C, because this age group has the highest rate of infections and many don't know they're infected.
- Hepatitis C can be cured in some patients with antiviral therapy, but the treatment can be difficult to tolerate.
- Several drug companies are developing new drugs that could improve upon the current standard.

Sources: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization

Hepatitis Trainings & Materials from CDC

Two new webinars by H. Nina Kim, MD, MSc, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Harborview Hepatitis and Liver Clinic, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington are now available:

Hepatitis C Therapy: Welcome to the Era of Direct-acting Antivirals, http://www.knowhepatitis.org/hepctherapy

Hepatitis C Screening: An Urgent Priority, http://www.knowhepatitis.org/hepcscreening

The CDC still offers the **Viral Hepatitis Serology Training: A—E**. This online training is comprised of six animated tutorials with voiceovers and eight case studies. The tutorials and case studies combine to teach the course objectives. Below is the link:
http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/Resources/Professionals/TrainingResources.htm#CDC.

To order or download educational materials, visit:
http://wwwn.cdc.gov/pubs/hepa.aspx

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

By Ronald Henderson, Statewide Minority AIDS Coordinator
HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Section

Ronald Henderson

The Florida Department of Health and the HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Section recognized February 7th as National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. This day is organized to encourage blacks to get educated about HIV/AIDS, get tested and know their HIV status and get involved in advocating for the resources necessary to fight the disease.

There are an estimated 1.1 million Americans living with HIV/AIDS today. Of the 1.1 million Americans, over 500,000 are black.

Florida has been heavily impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The Sunshine State ranks third in the nation behind New York and California in the cumulative number of AIDS cases, with over 125,000 cases reported among adults through 2012.

In 2011, the HIV infection case rate among adult black men was five times higher than that for white men, and 14 times higher for adult black women than that among white women.

In adults, one in 40 black men and one in 60 black women were living with HIV/AIDS in 2011; compared to one in 195 white men and one in 1,085 white women.

Here is some encouraging news: from 2002 to 2011, there was a 49% decrease in the rate of newly diagnosed cases of HIV infection among blacks statewide. For the first time since 1988, HIV/AIDS is no longer the leading cause of death for blacks ages 25-44.

Last year, there were more than 418,000 HIV tests done in the state of Florida.

Hepatitis 101

On Friday, April 19, 2013, from noon-1:00 pm Eastern Time, the Hepatitis Prevention Section will offer "**Hepatitis 101**: **for Nurses, Counselors and Outreach Workers."** This telephone conference call is a one-hour training and provides an introduction to hepatitis A, B and C. Prior to the course, the conference call phone number, along with the PowerPoint Presentation, is emailed to all registrants. Any healthcare or social worker can participate in Hepatitis 101. Continuing education credit of one (1) contact hour is available for all licensed nurses in the state of Florida.

Learning Objectives: After participating in Hepatitis 101, you will be able to:

- Describe hepatitis A (HAV), hepatitis B (HBV), and hepatitis C (HCV)
- Identify clients who should be referred for hepatitis vaccination and testing
- Understand information needed to counsel clients about viral hepatitis
- Understand the basics on laboratory test results
- Describe the risk factors for co-infection with hepatitis and HIV

To register, please complete the form found on the following link:
http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/aids/hep/Hep101/101regform.htm

Upcoming Hepatitis Prevention Activities and Initiatives

By Phil Reichert

There are several hepatitis prevention initiatives that will take place in 2013, two of which will happen based on CDC grants awarded to the Department of Health (DOH) in late 2012. The first is the CDC Hepatitis Vaccine Grant. Florida was awarded funding for a two-year project that will provide up to 15,670 doses of hepatitis B vaccine to individuals at risk. Because of limited infrastructure funding, six county health departments will participate in this initiative. Several factors will be tracked for evaluation purposes. The HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Section will work closely with the Immunization Section throughout this two-year project period.

The CDC Division of Viral Hepatitis provided a grant award of $625,000 per year for three years to develop and maintain viral hepatitis prevention and surveillance program initiatives. The HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Section and the Bureau of Epidemiology will work together on this collaborative effort. In August of 2012, CDC released guidance on the screening of people born between 1945 and 1965 for hepatitis C. The surveillance portion of this grant allows for the tracking and reporting of chronic and acute HCV. It also allows for the Bureau of Epidemiology to continue looking at the burden of chronic HCV in young people 18-24 years old.

As a statewide program, viral hepatitis prevention efforts have yielded an average of over 26,000 hepatitis panel tests performed by the state Bureau of Laboratories annually from January 2008 through December 2012. During this same five-year period, the Hepatitis 09 Program initiative provided an average of about 30,000 hepatitis A, B and combination A/B vaccines per year at the 67 county health departments. Additionally, an average of 22,500 cases of chronic hepatitis C was reported into Merlin from 2008 through 2012. These case reports include both the state lab reports and those from private laboratories. This represents excellent viral hepatitis prevention work on the part of the county health department health care providers. Due to decreases in funding, we expect that the number of tests and vaccines provided in 2013 will be slightly lower, while the number of reported cases of chronic hepatitis C will increase a little.

In 2013, we hope to convene our first Viral Hepatitis Council (VHC) meeting in nearly four years to update the 2011-2015 Florida Hepatitis Prevention Comprehensive Plan. The VHC is made up of DOH, other state agency and non-governmental members. The council by-laws allow for up to 20 members, and there are currently fifteen that represent several public and private health disciplines. We intend to fill all or some of these membership slots in 2013. The VHC works in partnership with the HIV Prevention Planning Group and the HIV Patient Care Planning Group.

By late 2013 or early 2014, the HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Section plans to work with Hepatitis Foundation International to hold a viral hepatitis educational summit in Florida. The past two (in 2011 and 2012) were successful in providing continuing education to Florida nurses and other health care professionals.

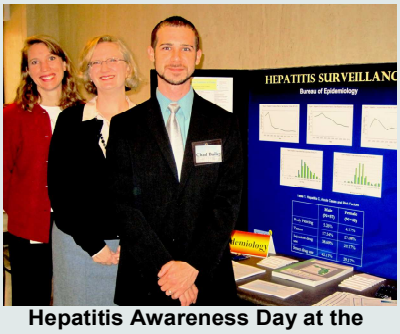
During 2013, our hepatitis prevention program will provide several “Hepatitis 101” training conference calls where licensed nurses in the state of Florida are offered one continuing education credit and other participants are awarded a certificate of participation once a post-test is submitted. More details are on page six of this newsletter. Additionally, we will give updated trainings for the CHD Hepatitis 09 Program providers.

Opportunities to promote viral hepatitis testing (especially in the population born from 1945 to 1965) and viral hepatitis prevention will occur during National Hepatitis Testing Day (May 19) and World Hepatitis Day (July 28).

All of these activities are tied to the goals stated in the hepatitis comprehensive plan, which are aligned with the federal Department of Health and Human Services hepatitis action plan released in 2011.

We look forward to serving you, our public and private health providers, during the coming year.

Florida Hepatitis Prevention YEAR IN PICTURES - 2012



Hepatitis Awareness Day at the Capitol, Feb. 15 (Janet Hamilton, Mary Hilton & Chad Bailey from the Bureau of Epidemiology with display)

Florida Public Health Association Meeting in Ft. Lauderdale, Apr. 26-27 (Phil, with poster Dena Hall created for the meeting)

Donna Wheeler started as the Field Services Coordinator, May 14

National Hepatitis Testing Day at the Bay CHD, May 18 (Pam Langford & her display)

World Hepatitis Day in Tallahassee, July 28 (Theme: See, Hear, Speak No Evil)

TB Deployment in Jacksonville, July & Aug. (Enid Santiago-Cruz, 2nd from right)

Technical Assistance Visit to Monroe CHD Aug 15 (Jean Barber on right)

Site visits to Miami-Dade, Broward & Palm Beach CHDs, Aug 16 & 17 (Miami skyline on left – Donna Wheeler & Allen Salton on right)

New York quality improvement consultation, Oct 17-18 (Gov't Center in downtown Albany)

Viral Hepatitis Summit in Orlando, Nov 16 (Lori Theisen, &Thelma King Thiel of Hepatitis Foundation Internat'l)

Hepatitis Coordinator Meeting in Orlando, Dec 4-5

Your Tallahassee hepatitis staff, l to r: Phil Reichert, Dena Hall, Jessi Embleton, April Crowley & Donna Wheeler

HCV Medicines

You and your doctor have decided to treat your hepatitis C (HCV or Hep C for short). This usually means taking 2 or 3 drugs. One drug is peg-interferon. You will learn how to give yourself a shot of peg-interferon under the skin.

The second drug is a pill called ribavirin. You will take ribavirin pills twice a day with food.

If your doctor wants you to take a third drug, it will be a protease inhibitor. It is very important that you follow your doctor's directions about how often to take it–it is usually taken every 8 hours or three times a day.

Remember.....

- **Store peg-interferon and other drugs that need it in the refrigerator.**
- **Keep medicine and needles in the container they came in and out of children's reach.**
- **Do not use drugs that have expired.**
- **Everyone can forget to take their medicine, especially Hep C meds. Find ways to remind yourself. Weekly pill containers and calendars can help you keep track.**
- **Learn about the side effects of the drugs. Your doctor or nurse can help you with the side effects.**
- **Ribavirin can cause birth defects. See *Easy C Facts: Ribavirin Warning*.**
- **Make sure you keep all your doctor appointments and get all of your lab tests done.**
- **Use a special container to throw away used needles. Your pharmacist or doctor will tell you how to get rid of these safely.**
- **Find out about programs available that can help and support you during treatment.**

www.hcvadvocate.org

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www.hcvadvocate.org

09/2012

Hepatitis Health is brought to you by the HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Section, Bureau of Communicable Diseases, at the Florida Department of Health. Submit your articles and photos to: April_Crowley@doh.state.fl.us