



# Hepatitis Update

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## Welcome Maura Comer

By April Crowley



Maura Comer

Maura Comer recently moved to the STD and Viral Hepatitis Section of the Bureau of Communicable Diseases from the Bureau of Epidemiology and is responsible for STD, viral hepatitis, and TB-related surveillance activities and initiatives. She also provides technical assistance, monitoring, and evaluation.

Maura oversees the Young Adults Project which is part of a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The project began in 2011 due to increased rates of chronic hepatitis C in those aged 18-30, while the rest of the rates for chronic hepatitis C in Florida were declining. Ten county health departments are tasked with interviewing chronic hepatitis C cases for those in this age group. They try to get specific risk factor information to see why those who are this young are chronic cases.

Maura, who grew up in Tallahassee, graduated from Florida State University with a degree in physiology. She went on to receive her MPH from the University of New York in Albany. What prompted Maura to become an epidemiologist started in high school when she read the non-fiction thriller *The Hot Zone* by Richard Preston. The book is about the Reston virus, which is a relative of Ebola virus. Even today, instead of reading fiction novels, Maura reads infectious disease books and has quite a collection at her home.

Before joining the Florida Department of Health, Maura worked at the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) in immunizations, electronic lab reporting, syndromic surveillance, and the Meaningful Use Program. Meaningful Use is a project to get health professionals and hospitals to use electronic medical records and laboratory reports.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, Maura spent a week calling hundreds of people who were without power, food, and medications. If needed, emergency crews were sent out.

Prior to the Maryland DHMH, Maura worked at the New York State Department of Health where she was deeply immersed in the 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic.

In contrast to the scientist in Maura, she also has an artistic side. She loves to dance and does ballet, tap, jazz lyrical, and international ballroom.

*Hepatitis Update* is brought to you by the Division of Disease Control and Health Protection, Bureau of Communicable Diseases, STD and Viral Hepatitis Section at the Florida Department of Health.

If you have a news item or photo you would like to submit, email the editor at:

April.Crowley@flhealth.gov

## LOOKING BACK: Highlights of the Hepatitis Prevention Program in 2014

By Phil Reichert



During 2014, April Crowley, the Hepatitis Prevention Program (HPP) Education Coordinator, provided nine one-hour Hepatitis 101 training webinars for 340 health care workers. One of the presentations was to a national audience through a webinar sponsored by The AIDS Institute. Hepatitis 101 is a basic course on viral hepatitis, and it provides one continuing education unit for nurses who participate and complete the pre- and post-tests. Each participant in a Hepatitis 101 webinar receives a certificate of completion once the post-test is submitted. (For a schedule of upcoming Hepatitis 101 classes, go to [www.flahepatitis.org](http://www.flahepatitis.org).)

Donna Wheeler, the HPP Field Services Coordinator, made site visits to the health departments in Clay, Madison, Jefferson, Leon, and Okaloosa counties in 2014. The site visit in Okaloosa included participating staff from Bay and Walton counties. Site visits are done to provide technical assistance and training. Best practices are shared with other health departments.

In August 2014, the HPP was moved from the HIV/AIDS Program to the STD Program on the Department of Health organizational chart. Most hepatitis testing and vaccine services are provided at the local level to STD clients or people who attend STD clinics in local health departments. Individuals who have risks for a sexually transmitted infection (including HIV) are also at risk for viral hepatitis. At the headquarters level, close collaboration between the STD and Hepatitis Programs are better coordinated where surveillance and prevention activities and initiatives are involved. The STD, HIV and Hepatitis Programs (along with TB and Immunization) are all part of the Bureau of Communicable Diseases.

The HPP had the opportunity to present viral hepatitis prevention and data information at a variety of meetings in 2014. These included: two HIV/AIDS Program Coordinator meetings, an STD Manager meeting, an HIV Patient Care Planning Group meeting, an HIV Prevention Planning Group meeting, and the Florida Public Health Association Annual Educational Conference in July.

In June, Phil Reichert was one of five viral hepatitis prevention coordinators from around the United States invited to participate in a CDC-sponsored meeting in Atlanta titled the *CDC National Summit on Hepatitis C Treatment and Cure*. Key stakeholders from the public and private sectors were invited to discuss currently available and upcoming medications that provide a nearly 100 percent sustained viral response (basically, a cure) in people infected with hepatitis C.

Thank you to those local health departments that held events to provide testing, hepatitis A and B vaccines, and information for individuals at risk during National Hepatitis Testing Day (May 19) and World Hepatitis Day (July 28).

The Viral Hepatitis Council met in Tampa in August and began updating the “Hepatitis Prevention Action Plan 2014—2018.”

In September, The Balm in Gilead, a national community-based HIV services organization, sponsored a hepatitis C town hall meeting in Jacksonville. Participants and presenters included: Balm in Gilead Executive Director, Pernessa Seele; DOH at Duval County Director, Dr. Kelli Wells; HEALS of the South Executive Director, Pam Langford; and HPP Field Services Coordinator, Donna Wheeler. Over 300 people attended.

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# 2014: The Year In Pictures



HIV Planning Group Meetings, Tampa, April 1-3

Hepatitis Day @ Capitol, April 16

NASTAD IDU Meeting in DC, April 22



Colleen, Dan, Alex & Corinna, Atlanta, Jun 18

FPHA: Phil (L), Sandy Magyar & Greg Danyluk (R), Orlando, Jul 30

Florida Capitol



Viral Hepatitis Council Meeting, Tampa, August 21-22

NASTAD Hepatitis Coordinator TA Meeting, DC, Oct 20-22



NASTAD Mtg, DC, Oct 20-22

TA Site Visit, Alachua, Oct 29

TA Site Visit, Leon, Dec 2

STD Manager Mtg, Tallahassee, Dec 9-11

Note to county health departments: Please send photos of your local events to [April.Crowley@flhealth.gov](mailto:April.Crowley@flhealth.gov)

## Division of Disease Control and Health Protection Bureau of Communicable Diseases, STD & Viral Hepatitis Section

## Know More Hepatitis Campaign

The CDC has just released the next phase of the national *Know More Hepatitis* campaign. Of the estimated 3.2 million Americans who have hepatitis C, three in four are people born from 1945—1965. Since as many as 50 percent of people with hepatitis C don't know they are infected, the campaign encourages everyone born from 1945—1965 to get tested for hepatitis C.

The campaign is being implemented using a variety of multi-media channels, including print, radio, and TV PSAs, as well as airport dioramas, billboards, and transit advertisements. CDC also developed materials to support educational efforts at the local level, including posters, a fact sheet, infographics, live read radio scripts, and buttons and badges.

For more information, visit:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/knowmorehepatitis/index.htm>

**BORN FROM 1945-1965?**  
**GET TESTED FOR HEPATITIS C**

- 3 IN 4** people with Hepatitis C were born during these years.
- People born from 1945-1965 are **5X MORE LIKELY** to have Hepatitis C.
- Left untreated, Hepatitis C can cause: **LIVER DAMAGE FAILURE CANCER**
- MORE THAN One Million** people living with Hepatitis C **DO NOT KNOW THEY ARE INFECTED**.
- Many people can live with HEPATITIS C FOR DECADES WITH NO SYMPTOMS.

Talk to your doctor. A blood test is the only way to know if you have Hepatitis C. Treatments are available that can cure this disease.

[www.cdc.gov/knowmorehepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/knowmorehepatitis)

**FIND OUT IF YOU HAVE HEPATITIS C**  
**IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE**

**BORN FROM 1945-1965?**

**SOME PEOPLE DON'T KNOW HOW OR WHEN THEY WERE INFECTED**

People born from 1945-1965 are **5X MORE LIKELY TO BE INFECTED WITH HEPATITIS C**

**3 OUT OF EVERY 4** people with Hepatitis C were born between these years

Up to **75%** of people living with Hepatitis C **DO NOT KNOW THEY ARE INFECTED**

Many people can live with HEPATITIS C for **DECADES** WITH **NO SYMPTOMS**

**HEP C Blood Test**

**CDC recommends anyone born from 1945-1965 GET TESTED**

TESTED	NOT TESTED
<p>KNOWING YOU HAVE HEPATITIS C can help you make important decisions about your health</p> <p>Many people can get <b>LIFESAVING CARE AND TREATMENT</b></p> <p>Successful treatments can <b>ELIMINATE THE VIRUS</b> from the body</p>	<p><b>LEFT UNTREATED, HEPATITIS C</b> can cause liver damage and <b>LIVER FAILURE</b></p> <p>HEPATITIS C is the <b>#1 CAUSE OF LIVER TRANSPLANTS</b></p> <p>HEPATITIS C is a leading cause of <b>LIVER CANCER</b></p>

*Don't go down the wrong path, talk to your doctor about getting tested. It could save your life.*

CDC U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention **KNOW MORE HEPATITIS**

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## Adult Hepatitis Vaccine Given by County Health Departments Through the Florida Department of Health

Hepatitis Prevention Program  
By Calendar Year, 2010 – 2014, Source: FLSHOTS\*

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>HEPATITIS A</u>	<u>HEPATITIS B</u>	<u>HEPATITIS A/B COMBO</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
2010	6,588	13,515	11,472	31,575
2011	5,773	13,002	6,280	25,055
2012	4,909	11,276	3,178	19,363
2013	2,491	7,632	1,336	11,459
<b>2014</b>	<b>1,771</b>	<b>9,545</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>11,763</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>21,532 (21.7%)</b>	<b>54,970 (55.4%)</b>	<b>22,713 (22.9%)</b>	<b>99,215</b>
<b>Average Per Year</b>	<b>4,306</b>	<b>10,994</b>	<b>4,543</b>	<b>19,843</b>

\*Florida State Health Online Tracking System

### CDC’s STD Screening Recommendations

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/prevention/screeningReccs.htm>



STD testing and treatment can help reduce the spread of STDs. Below is a brief overview of STD testing recommendations.

- **All adults and adolescents from ages 13—64** should be tested at least once for HIV.
- Annual chlamydia screening of all **sexually active women** younger than 25 years, as well as older women with risk factors such as new or multiple sex partners, or a sex partner who has a sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- Annual gonorrhea screening for all **sexually active women** younger than 25 years, as well as older women with risk factors such as new or multiple sex partners, or a sex partner who has an STI.
- Syphilis, HIV, chlamydia, and hepatitis B screening for **all pregnant women**, and gonorrhea screening for at-risk pregnant women starting early in pregnancy, with repeat testing as needed, to protect the health of mothers and their infants.
- Screening at least once a year for syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea for **all sexually active gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM)**. MSM who have multiple or anonymous partners should be screened more frequently for STDs (that is, at three-to-six month intervals).
- **Anyone who has unsafe sex or shares injection drug equipment** should get tested for HIV at least once a year. Sexually active gay and bisexual men may benefit from more frequent testing (for example, every three to six months).

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## National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

By Donna Wheeler

Saturday, February 7, was National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD). The Bureau of Communicable Diseases, HIV/AIDS, and STD and Viral Hepatitis Sections, along with the Florida Department of Health in Leon and Gadsden counties, the Neighborhood Medical Center, Big Bend Cares, and Livingstone International participated in a health fair and provided HIV and syphilis testing. The event took place at **Livin in the Cut Barbershop** in Tallahassee, which offered free haircuts to every individual who got tested for HIV.

During the event, 52 rapid HIV tests and 15 syphilis draws were done. County health departments throughout the state partnered with numerous community-based organizations and community leaders to demonstrate commitment to reducing HIV/AIDS disparities in Florida's black communities.

NBHAAD was first observed in 1999. This year's theme, *I Am My Brother/Sister's Keeper: Fight HIV/AIDS!*, means that everyone can be an important part of the solution.



Left to right: **Greg Pinckney**, owner of Livin in the Cut Barbershop; **Ron Henderson**, Health Equity Manager and Statewide Minority AIDS Coordinator; **Joseph Ward**, Area 2B HIV/AIDS Prevention Training Consultant at the DOH-Leon County; **Donna Wheeler**, Field Services Coordinator in the STD and Viral Hepatitis Section; **Sam Carter** (behind Donna), Neighborhood Medical Center Community Liaison; **Ralph Sinclair**, Community Representative with Faith Responds to AIDS; **Wallace Ward**, Community Representative and Partner for HIV/AIDS Counseling, Testing, and Linkage-to-Care; **Deveda Bellamy**, Minority AIDS Coordinator for Areas 2A and 2B; and **Chris Douglas**, Area 2 Disease Intervention Specialist at the DOH-Leon County.

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## LOOKING AHEAD: What's Up with Viral Hepatitis in 2015?

By Phil Reichert



Phil Reichert

There are several observances during each year that highlight viral hepatitis for the general public. The first of these is National Hepatitis Awareness Month, which takes place in May. Next, May 19 is National Hepatitis Testing Day. Local health departments and community-based organizations that provide hepatitis services are encouraged to participate in these observances by offering testing, vaccines, and/or educational information to the public. Information on both events can be accessed at [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis).

World Hepatitis Day is on July 28 each year, and encourages the distribution of information to stop the spread of viral hepatitis. You can go to [www.worldhepatitisalliance.org](http://www.worldhepatitisalliance.org) to find campaign materials, including the downloadable logo that appears at the end of this article. Again, this is an opportunity for the local areas to promote viral hepatitis prevention to the public.

National Liver Awareness Month is in October. This observance serves to highlight all liver diseases and promote good liver health. For more information, go to [www.liverfoundation.org](http://www.liverfoundation.org).

The hepatitis prevention grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for Florida ends October 31, 2015. This is the CDC funding that supports a viral hepatitis prevention coordinator (VHPC) in 48 states, including Florida, and several large cities. We are in the third year of a three-year cycle. Recently, Dr. John Ward, Director of CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis, published an article at <http://blog.aids.gov> on the importance of the VHPCs. This indicates CDC's continued support of the coordinators and this program, which is in its eighth stand-alone year; the VHPC program has existed for over 12 years.

There are six jurisdictions that received funding for the surveillance portion of the CDC grant. Florida was one of those. There is no indication yet as to whether enhanced hepatitis C surveillance, for which Florida used its funding, will continue past October 31.

Officially, the hepatitis B vaccine grant ended in September 2014. The HPP was able to get an extension until September 2015, along with about 1,400 additional doses of hepatitis B vaccine. The seven local health departments that participate in this project will continue until the vaccine supply is exhausted.

The 67 local health departments that are part of the overall Department of Health may test and vaccinate eligible adults who are at risk for hepatitis A, B, or C. Fifteen of these health departments receive funding to offer specific hepatitis prevention services to individuals at risk, which include outreach and education activities in addition to vaccine and testing. An updated fee schedule will be published in the Spring of 2015.

The HPP is updating the *Hepatitis 09 Manual*, which offers guidance on testing and vaccinating in the local health departments.

In late 2013, the HPP began to distribute rapid hepatitis C test kits to a handful of eligible health departments. Although HIV rapid testing has been available for several years, hepatitis C rapid testing is relatively new technology. Several health departments have expressed an interest in using the rapid tests. The Florida Legislature provided funding for hepatitis C testing during its 2014 session. The funds are being used to provide rapid hepatitis C testing. Health departments wishing to use the rapid tests must 1) have a Clinical Laboratory Improvement Act waiver; 2) have the capacity to provide the test in their clinic setting; 3) have staff properly trained to use the test and interpret results; and 4) collect basic testing and demographic data on each test administered.

The HPP plans to hold a face-to-face meeting of the hepatitis coordinators from the 15 funded counties for the purpose of sharing best practices and providing updated viral hepatitis information in mid-2015.

*Continued on Page 8*

**Looking Ahead, continued from page 7**

April Crowley, the HPP Health Education Coordinator, plans to offer at least eight Hepatitis 101 webinars during 2015. The intended audience is health care professionals, but the one-hour webinar is open to anyone with an interest or need. One unit of continuing education is available for licensed nurses in Florida. Every participant who completes a post-test receives a certificate of participation. To register for an upcoming 101 webinar go to [www.flahepatitis.org](http://www.flahepatitis.org).

Donna Wheeler, the HPP Field Services Coordinator, will continue to provide on-site technical assistance and training. Health departments or other agencies that provide viral hepatitis services may request a technical assistance and training site visit. The HPP tries to schedule at least one on-site visit to the funded counties every three years. Since all county health departments may provide viral hepatitis services, any one may request a site visit at any time. Donna is also always available via phone (850-245-4444 ext. 2430) or, via email ([donna.wheeler@flhealth.gov](mailto:donna.wheeler@flhealth.gov)).

In 2014, the HPP moved from the HIV Program into the STD Program within the Bureau of Communicable Diseases. We expect to merge and mix duties and responsibilities that are common to both programs to more efficiently offer prevention and other services. Program collaboration and service integration (PCSI) is a concept that was developed by and is encouraged by the CDC National Center for HIV, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention Services. You can learn more about PCSI at [www.cdc.gov/nchhstps/programintegration](http://www.cdc.gov/nchhstps/programintegration).



In 2015, the STD and Viral Hepatitis Section of the Bureau of Communicable Diseases will enhance viral hepatitis surveillance activities. The HPP currently produces a monthly report analyzing data associated with chronic hepatitis B and chronic hepatitis C. Additionally, the bureau's Monthly Surveillance Report will continue to include reported cases of acute hepatitis A, B, and C and chronic hepatitis C (in addition to HIV/AIDS, STDs, and TB).



The HPP will also continue its collaboration with Patient Care and Prevention Programs of the HIV/AIDS Section. Thanks to that collaboration, the HPP is able to continue to offer viral hepatitis testing and hepatitis A and B vaccines through the local health departments at no cost to those counties.

For further information on the Viral Hepatitis Council and other initiatives specific to the HPP, please go to [www.flahepatitis.org](http://www.flahepatitis.org).

**Pictures From the Field**



Left to Right: **Rebecca Castleberry**, DOH-Okaloosa County; **Debra McKinney**, DOH-Walton County; **Doris Smith**, DOH-Walton County; and **Shakira Hawthorne** from DOH-Bay County



**Donna Melgaard** from the DOH-Jefferson County

Reported Chronic Hepatitis C Cases in Florida									
By Year of Report									
	2000 to 2011		2012		2013		December 2014		Cumulative
	Cases	Percent	Cases	Percent	Cases	Percent	Cases	Percent	Cases
<b>TOTAL</b>	215,906	100.0%	23,236	100.0%	25,175	100.0%	25,620	100.0%	289,937
<b>Case Status</b>									
Confirmed	123,362	57.1%	18,154	78.1%	19,794	78.6%	22,466	87.7%	183,776
Probable	6,374	3.0%	277	1.2%	230	0.9%	171	0.7%	7,052
Suspect	86,170	39.9%	4,805	20.7%	5,151	20.5%	2,983	11.6%	99,109
<b>Gender</b>									
Female	84,069	38.9%	9,726	41.9%	10,637	42.3%	10,644	41.5%	115,076
Male	131,166	60.8%	13,416	57.7%	14,439	57.4%	14,854	58.0%	173,875
Unknown	659	0.3%	78	0.3%	72	0.3%	113	0.4%	922
<b>Ethnicity</b>									
Hispanic	17,872	8.3%	1,203	5.2%	1,569	6.2%	1,212	4.7%	21,856
Non-Hisp	88,286	40.9%	6,775	29.2%	7,848	31.2%	6,473	25.3%	109,382
Unknown	109,645	50.8%	15,238	65.6%	15,714	62.4%	17,906	69.9%	158,503
<b>Race</b>									
Am Indian	308	0.1%	33	0.1%	37	0.1%	23	0.1%	401
Asian/PI	1,088	0.5%	140	0.6%	101	0.4%	88	0.3%	1,417
Black	18,684	8.7%	1,226	5.3%	1,494	5.9%	1,097	4.3%	22,501
Other	2,638	1.2%	769	3.3%	624	2.5%	370	1.4%	4,401
Unknown	108,278	50.2%	13,400	57.7%	13,923	55.3%	15,523	60.6%	151,124
White	84,887	39.3%	7,651	32.9%	8,961	35.6%	8,494	33.2%	109,993
<b>Age at Diagnosis</b>									
0-9	1,089	0.5%	115	0.5%	85	0.3%	83	0.3%	1,372
10-19	2,437	1.1%	374	1.6%	411	1.6%	320	1.2%	3,542
20-29	15,562	7.2%	3,790	16.3%	4,809	19.1%	5,090	19.9%	29,251
30-34	9,944	4.6%	1,616	7.0%	2,181	8.7%	2,241	8.7%	15,982
35-39	14,460	6.7%	1,297	5.6%	1,552	6.2%	1,607	6.3%	18,916
40-44	26,297	12.2%	1,477	6.4%	1,509	6.0%	1,427	5.6%	30,710
45-49	41,118	19.0%	2,302	9.9%	2,069	8.2%	1,874	7.3%	47,363
50-54	44,318	20.5%	3,533	15.2%	3,441	13.7%	3,112	12.1%	54,404
55+	60,624	28.1%	8,688	37.4%	9,083	36.1%	9,804	38.3%	88,199



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# Prudential Productivity Winners in Seminole County

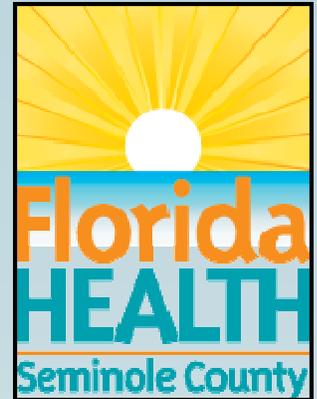
By Mirna Chamorro

We are proud to announce that our dedicated team at the Florida Department of Health in Seminole County (DOH-Seminole County) is one of the recipients of the 2015 Prudential Productivity Awards for their innovative collaboration with the Café Latino Coalition of Central Florida in reaching the Hispanic/Latino community for HIV/AIDS, STD, and hepatitis services.

“This award is a testament of the collaboration efforts with community partners and neighboring county health departments in working towards the common goal of health equity and the prevention of chronic diseases such as hepatitis and HIV/AIDS,” said Dr. Swannie Jett, health officer of the DOH-Seminole County.

During 2009, Enid Santiago-Cruz, the Hepatitis Program Coordinator from DOH-Seminole, and Tai Johnson, from the HIV/AIDS Program at DOH-Orange County and co-chair of Café Latino Coalition of Central Florida, met about collaborative efforts to reach the Hispanic/Latino community. The Coalition has improved the ability of local health departments, community-based organizations, and faith-based congregations to provide HIV, STD, and hepatitis testing, prevention, and education services to underserved populations through collaboration and partnership opportunities. Team members that received the award include: Enid Santiago-Cruz, Tai Johnson, Luz Reyes, and Mirna Chamorro.

The Café Latino Coalition comprises different state and community agencies committed to the Latino community. Its goals are to increase HIV, STD and hepatitis awareness, reduce HIV/AIDS related stigma, and to encourage healthy choices. For more information on the Café Latino Coalition of Central Florida or to become a member, please call (407) 858-1400 extension 1146 or visit [www.cafelatinocoalition.com](http://www.cafelatinocoalition.com).



## More Pictures From the Field



Left to right: **Lynn Muldoon, Phil Reichert, Ann Waltz, and Wendy Bailey.** Everyone, except Phil, is from the Florida Department of Health-Leon County.



Left to right: **Nancy Rosario-Samuels, DOH-Alachua County; Juan Machado, DOH-Volusia County; and Diana Prat, DOH-Lee County.**

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