

Hepatitis Health

Café Latino

By Enid Santiago-Cruz, Seminole CHD



Last year, I joined the **Café Latino of Central Florida Coalition**. The purpose of this group is to bring HIV/AIDS awareness to the Latino/Hispanic community by planning health events, presentations and information on AIDS related prevention and care services.

My main focus is preventing viral hepatitis in the Latino community. Since I have personally seen a significant number of hepatitis C (HCV) positive Hispanics, it is extremely important to increase awareness to this population.

On October 15, 2010, Café Latino organized their yearly health fair in Orlando, over 250 people attended. We had leaders of the community on hand, as well as community members from Osceola, Seminole and Lake Counties.

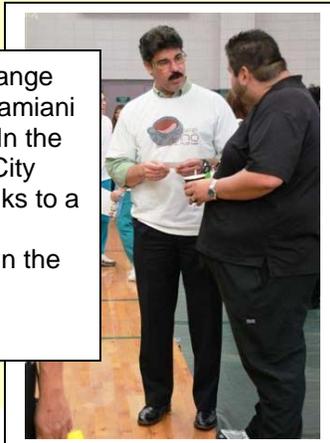
The health fair is a family event that addresses specific health concerns related to the Hispanic community. Free health screenings were available such as blood pressure checks, confidential HIV and STD testing, in addition to health information and community resources. It was a great opportunity for Seminole County Health Department (CHD) to provide hepatitis A and B vaccines.

The pride of every person associated with Café Latino shines through them. Members are from various Central Florida locations, including the Orange, Osceola and Seminole CHDs, as well as community based organizations such as Hope and Help, Miracle of Love, Positive Union, Hispanic Health Initiative and many more. Café Latino is lead by Chairperson Lester Burgos of Hope and Help, and Co-Chair Tai Johnson from Orange CHD.

The members are very passionate and dedicated to raising awareness in the Latino neighborhoods. However, we still have a lot of work to do educating the community about risk factors for HCV and HIV.



In the photo on the left is Orange County Commissioner Lui Damiani speaking with a consumer. In the photo on the right, Orlando City Commissioner Tony Ortiz talks to a community member. Both commissioners participated in the October health fair.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- ≈ *Café Latino*
- ≈ *Latinos & HCV*
- ≈ *Hepatitis & Native HIV/AIDS @ the Capitol*
- ≈ *Monroe CHD*
- ≈ *Hepatitis Summit*
- ≈ *World TB Day*



EASY C FACTS

Latinos

Hepatitis C (HCV or Hep C for short) affects some groups of people differently than others. These differences are in the number of people infected with hepatitis C, how quickly or slowly HCV damages the liver and how well current HCV medicines work:

- ◆ **More Latinos are infected with hepatitis C** than non-Latino whites – about twice as many Latinos have hepatitis C compared to non-Latino whites.
- ◆ It is also believed that **hepatitis C will advance more quickly** in Latinos as a group than in other populations who have hepatitis C.
- ◆ Another area is treatment – **Latinos do not respond as well to current HCV treatment** than non-Latino whites. But the good news is that the newer drugs (3 different drugs) that should be available in 2011 will greatly increase the chances of Latinos getting rid of hepatitis C.

Remember to talk with your doctor or nurse.....

- ◆ *About ways to stay healthy – including eating a healthy diet that includes a lot of fruit, vegetables, and lean meat.*
- ◆ *About an exercise program that is right for you.*
- ◆ *To find out if you need to be treated now or can wait until the newer medications are approved.*

www.hcvadvocate.org

by Alan Franciscus



11/2010

Monroe County Happenings

By Jean Barber, RN

The Monroe County Health Department (CHD) Hepatitis Prevention Program's major accomplishments for 2010 were to continue providing immunizations to our local detention center, as well as doing testing and vaccinations at KTR (Keys to Recovery). KTR is a residential six-month program for Monroe County Detention Center inmates to complete their sentence.

Starting at the end of March last year, we added to our outreach efforts by offering immunizations at Monroe County's local homeless shelter. The homeless shelter is called KOTS, which stands for Keys Overnight Temporary Shelter. The Florida Keys Outreach Coalition oversees the shelter, which consists of several trailers and Quonset huts in an area near the detention center.

Cheryl Radcliffe and I go to the shelter (which opens at 6:30 pm) most Monday evenings. After risk assessing and educating the clientele, we provide the accelerated series of combination hepatitis A and B vaccines. After a client's third immunization, an appointment is made for testing at the health department. The response has been tremendous, which has provided a good opportunity for us to help prevent and control viral hepatitis in Monroe County.



These three characters: I am on the left. Next to me is Peggy Ward-Grant, who is Monroe CHD's Human Services Program Specialist with our HIV/AIDS Prevention Program. Peggy provides HIV testing at the jail and we partner with her for presentations to women inmates.

On the right is Cheryl Radcliffe, RN, who works part-time with me in Hepatitis Prevention and part-time with Peggy in HIV/AIDS Prevention. Cheryl provides outreach and immunizations at the jail.



This is Nancy Banks, Program Director of KOTS. Nancy, Cheryl and I are the Monday night KOTS Hepatitis Prevention crew. Nancy keeps things down to a dull roar as the residents continually express their needs.

Hepatitis & Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day at Capitol

On March 17, 2011, the Hepatitis Prevention Program partnered with the HIV prevention section to hold "Hepatitis Awareness Day at the Florida Capitol" in conjunction with "National Native HIV Awareness Day." The third floor rotunda was overflowing with activity as several partners from other public health programs and community based organizations provided information to the hundreds of people who passed through the area from 9:00am till noon. There were two Native American tribal presentations of proclamations which addressed the viral hepatitis and HIV epidemics in the Native American communities and the population in general.



Mekko Bobby Johns Bearheart presents Phil Reichert with the hepatitis proclamation



John Ferguson and Tom Liberti with the HIV/AIDS proclamation



Steven DuBose performs an American Indian dance



Pastor Nelson Redhawk Bell and his wife Cyndy Bell with Dr. Julia Gill



Miriam Altieri, H.E.A.L.S. of the South (Hepatitis Education Awareness & Liver Support)

*Resolution to Support
Hepatitis Awareness Day
A Celebration of Life*

March 17, 2011

Momusen, it is estimated that over 300,000 Floridians are infected with hepatitis C, and 75,000 are infected with hepatitis B.

Momusen, according to one major study published in April 2007, there is an 11.5% hepatitis C positivity rate in the Native American population: and

Momusen, given adequate educational opportunities and public health services, American Indians have the wisdom, inner strength, and self-determination to overcome the threat of hepatitis within their communities: and

Momusen, the Florida Department of Health has a comprehensive, state-wide Hepatitis Prevention Program.

Momusen, the Hepatitis Prevention Program encourages and promotes the combined efforts of dedicated and skilled individuals, organizations, and populations to reduce the burden of viral hepatitis to all Floridians.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Perdido Bay Tribe of Muscogee Creek Indians supports March 17, 2011 as Hepatitis Awareness Day.

Executed the 17th day of March, 2011, in regular session of the Council of Perdido Bay Tribe by a vote of 8 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstained.

*Signed: Walter Botley Johns Spearheart
Chairman, Perdido Bay Tribe*

2010 YEAR IN REVIEW, AND HELLO 2011

By Phil Reichert and April Crowley

Here is a list of some of the things you (our faithful readers) helped the Hepatitis Prevention Program (HPP) accomplish in 2010. It is by no means all-inclusive, but is a representation of highlights.

-Through the Hepatitis 09 Program, the county health departments (CHD) provided 28,289 hepatitis A, B and A/B combination vaccines to at-risk individuals from January 1, 2010 through December 30, 2010. Also, during 2010, the state lab performed 28,794 hepatitis panel tests on behalf of the HPP.

-In 2010, there were 21,192 chronic hepatitis C cases reported into Merlin. There have now been 193,535 chronic hepatitis C cases reported since reporting began in 2000. That is 64.34% of the estimated 300,821 cases believed to exist in Florida.

-The HPP participated in Hepatitis Day at the Capitol on March 18, 2010, which included a health fair with exhibits and hepatitis A and B vaccines.

-April Crowley provided seven Hepatitis 101 conference call trainings in 2010 and trained over 300 health care providers. She also produced and distributed seven issues of the *Hepatitis Health* newsletter.

-The HPP participated in a World TB Day event in Tallahassee on March 24.

-Several CHDs held events paying special attention to World Hepatitis Day on May 19. In Tallahassee, we held an awareness event at a local fire station. Activities included several exhibits, providing hepatitis A and B vaccines, presenting a mayoral proclamation, a statewide press release and a press conference.

-Dena Hall completed monthly surveillance runs of Merlin data for the Monthly Surveillance Report.

-The HPP reviewed the program goals and objectives to provide annual and interim progress reports to CDC.

-We lost long-time employee and Field Services Coordinator Nosipho Beaufort to a CDC job in Atlanta in September.

Obviously, there were many more duties and activities that took place in 2010. These are only a sample. Here are some of the highlights we can look forward to throughout 2011:

-March 17 was Hepatitis Awareness Day and National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day at the Florida Capitol. The Perdido Bay Tribe presented a resolution in "Support of Hepatitis Awareness Day, a Celebration of Life."

-Dena Hall will provide vaccine accountability training to county health department hepatitis staff.

-April Crowley will provide ten Hepatitis 101 conference call trainings in 2011.

-World Hepatitis Day will be observed on the 28th of July this year in honor of Nobel Laureate Dr. Baruch S. Blumberg, discoverer of the hepatitis B virus, who celebrates his birthday on that date. Activities will include development of proclamations, press releases and a press conference.

-We are updating the "Hepatitis 09 Manual" and the Hepatitis Risk Assessment Form.

Again, this does not cover everything. Each of the hepatitis program staff in the local CHDs has the talent, skills, and experience to help us make an impact on the spread of viral hepatitis in 2011. Thanks to all of you, and keep up the great work!

Hepatitis C Rapid Test

OraSure Technologies, Inc.



In February of this year, OraSure Technologies received U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for a rapid hepatitis C test. The approval for the new OraQuick HCV Rapid Antibody **finger-stick test** follows about eight months after the FDA approved a similar blood-draw test for the blood-borne pathogen.

The difference between the tests is how the sample is obtained, said Ron Ticho, OraSure's vice president of communications. "This particular procedure now does not require a blood draw. Instead, it can be done with a simple prick of the finger and a smaller sample of blood, similar to a diabetes blood test. The approval makes the test more versatile," he added, "and will help health care professionals to identify more individuals with this disease."

The company plans to make it even less invasive, eventually looking to obtain approval for an oral fluid version of the test, similar to the process used to develop its HIV tests.

For more information, go to: <http://www.orasure.com/>

World TB Day

By Clayton Weiss

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) observed World TB Day on March 24th. This annual event commemorates the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacteria that causes tuberculosis (TB).

World TB Day provides an opportunity to communicate TB-related problems, solutions and support to statewide TB-control efforts. DOH and our partners are committed to eliminating TB in the United States.



Kateesha McConnell and Clayton Weiss with the Bureau of TB & Refugee Health's World TB Day display.

Hepatitis Foundation International Holds Viral Hepatitis Summit in Florida

By Phil Reichert

The Hepatitis Prevention Program, the Pinellas County Health Department's Hepatitis Program and Hepatitis Foundation International worked together to hold a viral hepatitis summit in Tampa on March 11. What follows are highlights from the people that spoke during the meeting.

Thelma Thiel, the founder and CEO of Hepatitis Foundation International in Silver Spring, Maryland, provided basic information about the liver, its functions and the effects of being infected with viral hepatitis. About forty years ago, Thiel lost a son to viral hepatitis. Ever since, she has pounded the pavement to teach the public about good liver health. According to Thiel, the liver "provides energy, controls cholesterol, aids in digestion of food and produces hormones and enzymes." The liver has more than 500 functions; it stores energy, filters toxins in alcohol, drugs and from the chemicals you breathe in and absorb through your skin, just to name a few. When a person is infected with viral hepatitis, the liver can be impaired to the point that it has difficulty functioning properly. Cirrhosis, or scarring of the liver, is one of the effects of being infected with hepatitis B or C. Of course, it can be years or decades before a person infected with hepatitis B or C develops cirrhosis or liver cancer.

Dr. Raymond Koff, a clinical professor of medicine at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, talked about recent advances in the diagnosis and treatment of hepatitis B and C. Dr. Koff stated that there are eight genotypes of hepatitis B, noted as Genotypes A-H. There are 3,000 deaths in the US and 600,000 deaths worldwide each year due to hepatitis B. In some populations in China, the rate of hepatitis B is 12%. In the US, hepatitis B occurs in less than one percent of the population. Koff noted that cirrhosis is reversible if caught early through a liver biopsy. He said that hepatitis B is more difficult than hepatitis C to treat successfully. The goal of treatment is to 1) Suppress viral replication, 2) Improve liver inflammation, 3) Reduce long-term symptoms including cirrhosis and liver cancer, and 4) Reduce infectivity.

He also stated there are six different hepatitis C genotypes, labeled at Genotypes 1-6, with Genotype 1 being the most prevalent in the US and the most difficult to treat. After becoming infected, about 15%-45% of people spontaneously recover. It is unknown why, but Dr. Koff speculated that, according to research, it may have something to do with genetics. Three to four million people in the US are infected with hepatitis C, and most do not know they are infected. It is estimated that about 40% of infected Floridians do not know of their infection. About 70% of hepatitis C infections in the US are Genotype 1, and about 25% are Genotypes 2 or 3. The latter two have a high treatment success rate. According to Koff, a great predictor of sustained viral response, or successful treatment, for hepatitis C (HCV) is that hepatitis C viral RNA is undetectable at week four of the standard of care. If a patient is Genotype 1 and still has detectable HCV after four weeks of treatment, most physicians will stop treatment, because there is a low success rate.

With new direct antiviral agents (DAA), that is Telaprevir and Boceprevir (which should be available after July 2011), added to the standard of care (pegylated interferon and ribavirin), the successful treatment rate of Genotype 1 of HCV increases from about 50%-80%. The primary goal of therapy is to "eradicate HCV infection," said Dr. Koff, and secondary goals are to, "slow disease progression, improve the regeneration of liver cells and reduce the risk of cirrhosis and liver cancer."

Glenn Treisman, MD, who is a professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the John Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore talked about depression and mental health as it relates totreatment for hepatitis C. He quoted William Osler, the first professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins Hospital in the 19th century, "It is much more important to know what sort of patient has a disease than what sort of disease a patient has."

More on page 9

Hepatitis Summit continued...

Triesman stated that health caregivers who treat patients with hepatitis C must look at the patient’s mental ability to handle the treatment. Interferon causes depression in many patients, but this depression can be counteracted with medication. Dr. Triesman said, “Why don’t we all become addicted? Because we have work, hobbies, eating, exercising, sleeping, etc., to compete with drug use, alcohol and other bad-behavioral addictions.” Some people do not have what Triesman called “Yeah!” moments. Some of these people resort to using drugs like cocaine, which causes the brain to release dopamine. This leads to temporary “Yeah!” moments. Most people get their “Yeah!” moments from work, hobbies, eating...

Dr. Jeffery Beal, the medical director of the Department of Health’s Bureau of HIV/AIDS and the Hepatitis Prevention Program, as well as a clinical associate professor at the University of South Florida’s Center for HIV Education and Research, spoke to the group about hepatitis C and HIV co-infection. Of the 1.1 million people living in the US with HIV, approximately 25%-35% are co-infected with hepatitis C. According to Dr. Beal, “Effective HCV therapy is available and a cure achievable in a proportion of (HIV) patients.” He continued, “Compared to HCV mono-infection, (co-infection with) HIV/HCV causes more rapid progression to cirrhosis, hepatocellular carcinoma (liver cancer) and death.” Dr. Beal listed several contraindications to providing treatment for HCV patients with HIV. They included: major psychiatric illness, advanced HIV disease, active TB or cancer, heavy alcohol use and pregnant or nursing females, among others. He did state caregivers should continue to evaluate co-infected patients so if their status changes, they can be re-evaluated as candidates for HCV treatment. Finally, all patients should be counseled on the risks and benefits of treatment, regardless of their HIV status.

I had the opportunity to provide the summit participants, mostly nurses who provide services for patients with viral hepatitis, information about Florida’s Hepatitis Prevention Program. I also presented on the challenge of addiction regarding prevention and treatment relating to viral hepatitis. I highlighted a substance abuse treatment facility in Orlando, which, along with six partner agencies, provided over 2,800 doses of hepatitis A/B combination vaccine to over 1000 at-risk drug users during a fifteen-month period. The Center for Drug-Free Living, led by Dr. Deborah Orr, partnered with the Hepatitis Prevention Program to provide free vaccines to these individuals. Challenges include the meager resources available to provide case management and a continuum of care to individuals infected with HCV. When clients are uninsured or under-insured, there are few medical homes for the treatment of viral hepatitis. Still another challenge is finding a health care provider willing to treat a substance abuse client even when treatment resources are available.

The Florida Viral Hepatitis Summit provided continuing education to nurses and other health caregivers. Thelma Thiel and the staff of Hepatitis Foundation International have plans to provide future viral hepatitis summits in Baltimore, Chicago and Idaho over the next several months. We hope to repeat this offering in Florida next year.



Hepatitis Foundation International CEO Thelma King Thiel and summit planner Jennifer Halter



Conference attendees Lynn Simons, from the Polk County Health Department’s hepatitis program, and Lori Theisen, from the Orange County Health Department’s hepatitis program

Welcome Jim Cobb

Jim Cobb joined the Hepatitis Prevention Program team as the new Field Services Coordinator in February. Jim comes to us from the Bureau of TB and Refugee Health, and has over 30 years of experience in the public health arena. In addition to TB program experience, Jim has worked in HIV and STD programs. Jim can be reached at: james_cobb@doh.state.fl.us or 850-245-4444, Ext. 2430.



Robert DuBose Sun Wolf and Jim Cobb at Hepatitis & Native HIV Day at the Capitol

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

By Ronald Henderson

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) recognized the tenth anniversary of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD) on Monday, February 7, 2011. NBHAAD is a national community mobilization HIV testing and treatment effort designed to encourage blacks across the United States to **get educated, get tested, get treated, and get involved** with HIV/AIDS.



The theme of the 2011 NBHAAD was, *"It takes a village to fight HIV/AIDS!"* The primary goals of NBHAAD are to motivate blacks to get educated about the transmission of HIV/AIDS, get tested and know their HIV status, get involved in their local community, and get treated if they are currently living with HIV or are newly diagnosed.

Several events honoring NBHAAD took place throughout the state. All participants were asked to encourage their families, friends, neighbors, and colleagues to get educated and tested for HIV.

Note: *Ronald Henderson is the Statewide Minority AIDS Coordinator with the Bureau of HIV/AIDS*

World Hepatitis Day Date Change

World Hepatitis Alliance

World Hepatitis Day (WHD) will be held on the 28th of July this year in honor of Nobel Laureate Professor **Dr. Baruch Blumberg**, discoverer of the hepatitis B virus, who celebrates his birthday on that date. Although the World Hepatitis Alliance was very keen to keep May 19th as the date, many members agreed that it was not convenient because it always falls during the World Health Assembly when many Ministers of Health are in Geneva. They wanted it changed so they could be in their own countries to attend events, hold press conferences, or support the day in other ways.

"This is hepatitis..." was chosen as the theme which is a development of the "Am I Number 12?" concept, in recognition of the fact that we need to move beyond just the size of the issue and the fact that one in 12 people worldwide is living with either chronic hepatitis B or hepatitis C.

For more details, visit the World Hepatitis Alliance at: <http://www.worldhepatitisalliance.org/Home.aspx>

Hepatitis Health is brought to you by the Hepatitis Prevention Program, Bureau of HIV/AIDS, Division of Disease Control, at the Florida Department of Health. We want to know what you're doing in your community to help prevent viral hepatitis. Submit your articles and photos to: April_Crowley@doh.state.fl.us