



Concerning Our Health

Greetings from the Putnam County Department of Health

Public health professionals are facing a challenging scenario—tightening budgets, escalating healthcare costs and a transitioning health environment. This issue takes a look at our recent efforts, working with county partners, to tackle health issues facing residents, given these problematic circumstances. The rising burden of chronic disease and mental illnesses continues to take a toll. Your input is a key component to help forge solutions. (See back cover.)

I also want to underscore the importance of your assistance in reporting Lyme disease. Those cases which present with the telltale bull's eye rash often go unreported to us and these numbers are crucial to an accurate case count and needed funding. An easier reporting system has been launched to facilitate this and is described on page 3.

—Allen Beals, MD, JD, Commissioner of Health



Public Health Summit III Attracts Record Crowd

Reducing chronic disease and improving mental health identified as top priorities

More than 70 community healthcare providers and public health administrators attended the Putnam County Public Health Summit III, held in the Michael T. Weber auditorium at Putnam Hospital Center (PHC) last month. Organized by the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH) and hosted by the hospital, the day-long event brought together nearly 40 Putnam organizations for a brainstorming session to help identify and discuss the top health priorities facing the County.

From the first activity to the last, reducing chronic disease and improving mental health clearly emerged as the leading priorities. The work did not start from scratch. New York State's health improvement plan, The Prevention Agenda 2013—2017, provided the framework with five pre-identified goals. Individual counties can choose from these based on the needs of their specific communities.

New York State Department of Health mandates were outlined by both Barbara Ilardi from the Health Department and Deb Gesner from Health Quest. For the health department, the



Maureen Kenney, American Lung Association-New York, casts one of her votes for reducing chronic disease in Putnam.

Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), a new prerequisite, must be submitted by November. For the hospital, an expanded Community Service Plan (CSP) is required and Ms. Gesner described the new directive to select at least two community priorities to focus on from The Prevention Agenda.

Health Department epidemiologist Erin Ray Pascaretti discussed the hard data available to describe characteristics of the county's health status and assist the hospital and the health department in determining the most pressing problems. ■

Depression surpasses asthma as leading teen disability

The recent suicide of a Putnam County middle school student and the tragedy in nearby Newtown, Connecticut, underscore the importance of addressing issues of mental health diagnosis and treatment. They also point to a disturbing trend surrounding these concerns.

According to a recent study published in *The Lancet* in December 2013, depressive disorders now exceed asthma for U.S. and Canadian teens, ages 10 to 14 years old, in terms of YLDs or "years lived with disabilities." Among this age group, the combined number of years

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Suicide increases 28.4% among adults, aged 35 to 64 years

Suicide is a growing public health concern. The overall number of deaths from suicide surpassed those of motor vehicle crashes in 2009, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Prevention efforts usually target youth or the elderly, but there is growing concern about substantial increases among

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Putnam County doctors and other providers are encouraged to voice their opinion about community strengths and areas for improvement if they have not yet done so. The short survey is accessible on the homepage of the Putnam County website at www.putnamcountyny.com and will run through August. See story on back page.

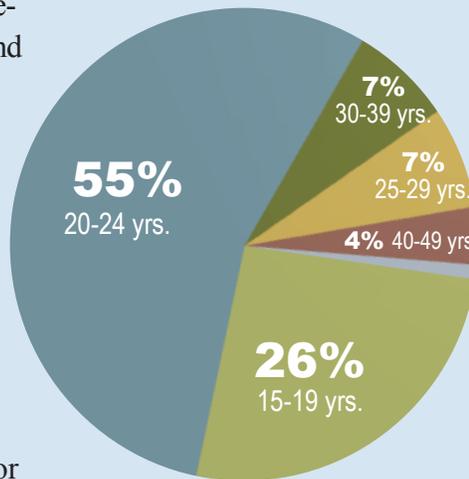
Chlamydia Rates Rise in Putnam County

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are on the rise and Putnam County offers no exception. From 2009 to 2012, rates of chlamydia rose 34 percent in the county.

For individual patients, the health consequences can be immediate, long-term and serious, and can include infertility.

In Putnam, the highest rates of chlamydia are among those aged 20 to 24 years of age, followed by those aged 15 to 19 years. Although young people in these groups comprise only 25 percent of the sexually-active population, they acquire nearly 50 percent of all new STDs, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Source: 2012 Putnam County Department of Health Annual Report (n=108)



81 percent of Chlamydia cases are among Putnam residents under 25 years of age....

The CDC recommends screening for all 15- to 24-year-olds who are sexually active. Despite this, less than 40 percent are currently being tested. Healthcare costs associated with STDs have been reported to be \$17 million in the U.S. ■

For further info

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920 Pounds of Meds Collected

Approximately 200,000 pills were dropped off by more than 300 area residents—nearly 1,000 pounds—at the recent Medication Take-Back Day, held in April at Putnam Hospital Center. Ten percent of the collected meds were controlled narcotics that could have ended up in the wrong hands or the water supply, if not disposed of properly.

Organized by the Putnam County Communities That Care (CTC) Coalition, with assistance from the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, the Putnam County Department of Health, and Putnam Family and Community Services, these events are responsible for the disposal of nearly two tons of medications, including many controlled substances since 2010.

The next Medication Take-Back Event is scheduled for Saturday, November 2, from 9 am to 2 pm at Putnam Hospital Center.

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Depression and teens

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lost to disability increased 30 percent—from approximately 140,000 to 180,000.

While depression leads, the burden from anxiety ranks fifth, schizophrenia ranks tenth, and bipolar disorder 18th among adolescents. The researchers noted that some of the increase may be the result of better diagnosis and documentation, but the degree of the rise and its broad scope should not be ignored. The study also reported that numbers grew worldwide with a 13-percent increase in the burden of depression around the globe.

Source: Girgoryev, Y. Depression has become leading cause of disability burden amongst US and Canadian teens. *Nature Medicine*. Spoonful of Medicine, blog post, Dec 18 2012. Available: <http://blogs.nature.com/spoonful/2012/12>

The Putnam County Department of Health recently embarked on a strategic planning process as part of a long-term goal to seek national accreditation as a public health department. One product of this strategic planning process was the formulation of a mission statement, and a vision and values declaration:

Mission Statement

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health is to improve and protect the health of our community.

Suicides among 35-64 year olds

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middle-aged adults, 35 to 64 years old. Data from the National Vital Statistics System from 1999 to 2010 show that the annual, age-adjusted suicide rate among people in this age group rose 28.4 percent, with the greatest increases among whites (40 percent) and American Indian/Alaska Natives (65 percent). For method of suicide, the greatest increases were observed for use of suffocation, poisoning and firearms.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, May 3, 2013.

Vision Statement

We will be recognized as bold and innovative leaders, partnering with our community in advocating for public health.

Our Values

- ▶ Excellence
- ▶ Service
- ▶ Professionalism
- ▶ Commitment
- ▶ Compassion

Rabies Contact Rises in Summer; Feral Cat Task Force Counts Successes

Bats return to the local area in warm weather and are more active and likely to get into homes, resulting in increased rabies exposures. Similarly, exposure to other wildlife, including raccoons, skunks, foxes and feral cats, often rises with people spending more time outdoors. Since the Feral Cat Task Force was launched in 2012, more than 100 cats have been captured, neutered and vaccinated against rabies, the results of continuing collaboration between Putnam Felines and the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH). Feral cats actually account for a significant number of required rabies treatments in New York State, however in Putnam the number-one reason for treatments remains bats. The task force's success lies not only in the prevention of rabies exposure, but also the increased awareness of rabies and the role that cats play in transmission.

All animal bites and/or contact with wild animals should be reported promptly to the Department of Health Environmental Division as required by NYS public health law, which mandates investigation of all human and domestic animal exposures to known or suspect rabid animals. Cases requiring rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (RPEP) are preauthorized by the Health Department and referred to the emergency room at Putnam Hospital Center for the first dose of human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) and a rabies vaccine. The Health Department nurses provide the follow-up rabies vaccines to the individual's physician for administration.

RPEP administration continues to decline. In 2012, 28 people were treated, down from 33 in 2011 and 42 in 2010. This drop is attributed to both the capture-the-bat campaign and the Feral Cat Task Force, which help to avoid unnecessary prophylaxis.

Reporting rabies

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“Line List” Simplifies Lyme Notification; New Tick-borne Infection Identified

A new system is in place for physicians reporting Lyme disease cases directly to the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH). Cases diagnosed by the telltale erythema migrans (EM) rash have previously gone unreported because no lab tests are ordered and no results exist to be forwarded automatically to the PCDOH. Now physicians can report these directly to the Health Department on a new EM “line list” form, being distributed by the PCDOH communicable disease prevention and control staff. The form is in table format—column headings identify key data to be collected; each line represents an

For additional info or to request a LINE LIST

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individual case. (Illustration above.) Every one to two weeks during high “tick season,” June through October, physician office staff are asked to fax the completed, up-to-date line list to the PCDOH.

Capturing cases diagnosed by the EM bull's eye-rash is important for gaining an accurate epidemiological picture and for future program funding for Lyme disease. Lyme and other tick-borne illnesses have continued to rise in the Hudson Valley, as well as New York State. **New York now has the second highest number of reported Lyme disease cases in**

the country, with approximately 44,900 cases in 2011, according to CDC statistics.

As always, incidence increases during the warm weather months and individuals should be reminded to take preventative measures. A newly identified tick-borne infection additionally underscores the importance of prevention. Caused by *Borrelia miyamotoi*, a genetically related bacterium to *Borrelia burgdorferi*, this infection is still quite rare and no commercially available diagnostic test exists. It was identified in archived blood samples from people participating in Lyme disease research in the endemic areas of the northeastern U.S. The advised treatment is identical to the protocol for Lyme disease. A recent study of 286 adult ticks in New York State found 7 infected with the *B. miyamotoi* pathogen, and all were co-infected with *B. burgdorferi*, which was detected in >50% of the collected ticks. (Tokarz, R. et al. 2010).

Several other tick-borne diseases are investigated and tracked by the Health Department, including anaplasmosis, babesiosis and *Ehrlichiosis chafeensis*. While the number of these infections is far less than Lyme, babesiosis in particular appears to be on the rise in Putnam County.

Source: Tokarz, R., Jain, K., Bennett, A. Briese, T. & Lipkin WI. 2010. Assessment of polymicrobial infections in ticks in New York State. *Vector-borne and Zoonotic Diseases*, 10(3), 217-221.

The six-year stat sheet... Statistics on tick-borne illnesses in Putnam County from the New York State Department of Health (NTSDOH) are below. Keep in mind that the Lyme case numbers since 2009 are based on a NYSDOH calculation that extrapolates a total number from PCDOH investigation of only 20 percent of laboratory reports. **Cases diagnosed by erythema migrans, and not directly reported to the PCDOH by the physician, are unaccounted for.** Also prior to the 2009 season, the case definition for Lyme disease was less strictly defined.

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Lyme disease	242	345	171	133	239	140
Babesiosis	15	18	8	3	6	1
<i>Anaplasma phagocytophila</i>	19	34	15	27	19	19
<i>Ehrlichiosis chafeensis</i>	2	1	2	7	1	7
Rocky Mountain spotted fever	1	0	1	0	0	0

Sample “Line List”

Patient Name Last, First	DOB mm/dd/yy	Address Street	Zip	Sex M/F	Ethnicity H/N-H	Date of Visit mm/dd/yy	Treated		# of Days Treated 14/21/28/other	MD or provider name
							Doxy (Yes/No)	Other Med Prescribed		
Ina Smith	11/12/53	1 Elm. St.	10509	F	NH	5/15/13	Yes	none	14	Lester
John Velez	4/4/75	26 State	12563	M	H	6/6/13				



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Physician Input Wanted: Selecting Health Priorities for County

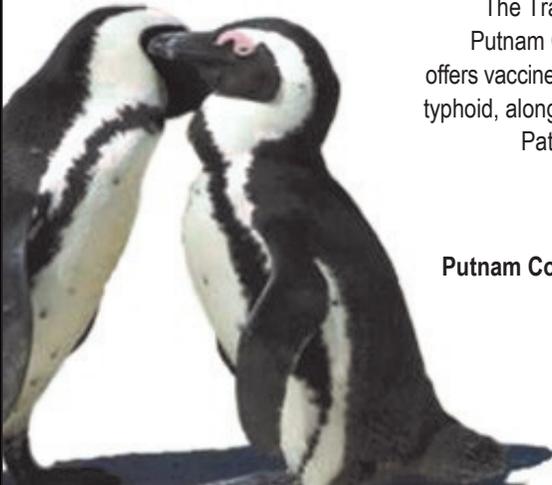
Physicians have an immediate and unparalleled opportunity to make Putnam County a healthier place. The Putnam County Department of Health and Putnam Hospital Center have developed a “community asset survey” to gain insight into community strengths and weaknesses where resources would best be spent. The quick and easy-to-complete survey is accessible on the homepage of the Putnam County website at www.putnamcountyny.com and will run through August.

The survey has just four questions. Respondents simply check off four strengths and four weaknesses from an inclusive list. Another question asks specifically about most important health-related issues.

The survey is part of an overall, community-wide planning process to prioritize issues and improve the health of the community so residents and those who visit or work in the county, can enjoy better lives. A formal and continuous process called MAPP, short for Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships, is being used and the first step in

mobilization is community engagement. Input is being collected from both individuals and organizations. Nearly two dozen community organizations, both large and small, have already been involved in this focused planning process. ■

Patients traveling abroad?



The Travel Services Program at the Putnam County Department of Health offers vaccines for rabies, yellow fever and typhoid, along with routine immunizations. Patients can call for further info:

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