



Concerning Our Health

Greetings from the Putnam County Department of Health

Summer is moving quickly and with it, rising Lyme disease numbers. We're working to make Putnam stats as accurate as possible. This means enlisting your support to report all EM diagnosed cases. Our communicable disease nurses have faxed a line list reporting form to your offices, or you can request forms as indicated directly below.

Other topics in this issue include the County's continuing efforts to stem narcotic misuse and addiction with the opening of a new, permanent drop-off location for unwanted prescription medications available to all Putnam residents. Also close at hand is the return to school sports, and we wanted to highlight the serious concern related to mild traumatic brain injuries that have been on the increase nationwide. Your counseling of young athletes and their parents, along with diagnosis and treatment, are key aspects to improving concussion outcomes.

—Allen Beals, MD, JD, Commissioner of Health



Heads Up On Revised Concussion Treatment

High school athletes will be headed back to the playing fields soon, a good time to review the updated recommendations for concussion treatment and management issued last year by the American Academy of Neurology (AAN).

Diagnosing concussions can be challenging. Research has shown that up to **90 percent of cases do not involve loss of consciousness** and the symptoms—physical, cognitive and emotional—are also common to other medical conditions.

Parents should be counseled that immediate removal from the game is now recommended for athletes with suspected concussions. Clinical guidelines also require that return to play occur slowly, and **only after a licensed health care professional trained in concussion treatment and management has assessed the individual patient.** This recommendation is a change from the previous grading system for concussions first established in 1997. Gone also is a set timeline for return to play. Instead each case needs specific evaluation.

The AAN recommendations are based on peer-reviewed evidence published through June 2012.

Reporting EM Rashes to PCDOH is Vital

Lyme disease numbers in Putnam County are rising, but continue to **remain chronically under-reported.** That's because cases diagnosed by erythema migrans (EM) rash alone, without confirmatory blood work, are not consistently reported to the health department.

To capture these sought-after cases, the PCDOH has disseminated a simple line list reporting form to physician offices to streamline the data collection procedure. **Accurate numbers are critical** for the Health Department to develop a true epidemiological picture, monitor changes over time and adopt prevention strategies based on community needs. Correct statistics also help the PCDOH receive proper funding for Lyme disease and other tick-borne illness awareness and education programs in the county.

For additional info or to receive a reporting form:

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Concussion research highlights:

- ▶ No evidence found to support medication enhances recovery from concussion.
- ▶ Insufficient evidence supports complete rest after concussion. (Activities that don't aggravate symptoms, or pose risk for repeat concussion, may be part of management.)
- ▶ First 10 days after concussion presents greatest risk for repeat concussion.
- ▶ Athletes with 1 or more previous concussions are at greater risk for repeat concussion.
- ▶ Health providers should look for continuing symptoms (headache or fogginess, concussion history, younger age of patient), all associated with longer recovery times.
- ▶ Standardized Assessment of Concussion (SAC), neuropsychological testing, Balance Error Scoring System and symptom checklists may be helpful in diagnosing and managing concussions, but **should not be used alone for making a diagnosis.**

Continued on page 2.

PCDOH Makes Honor Roll... for department flu immunization mandates

The national designation “Influenza Vaccination Honor Roll” was bestowed upon the PCDOH in June. The recognition is given to health care practices and organizations that champion mandated flu immunizations for their health care personnel (HCP). **PCDOH is one of five local health departments in New York State**, and one of 400 organizations nationwide to have achieved this distinction given by the Immunization Action Coalition.

Mandatory HCP vaccination is supported by 14 leading medical organizations, including the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American College of Physicians (ACP), all of which have developed written policies to **guide physicians and other providers in implementing their own policies.**

As recommended by these groups, the PCDOH policy provides for exceptions to mandatory vaccination only in cases related to medical reasons, not personal ones. Those few, for which these exceptions apply, must take additional precautions such as wearing a mask.

For more info about the honor roll, including how your medical practice can apply:
<http://www.immunize.org/honor-roll/>

Concussion research highlights, *continued from page 1*

- ▶ Concussion risks are greatest in football and rugby, followed by hockey and soccer. For females, the greatest risk is in soccer and basketball.
- ▶ No clear evidence points to one type of football helmet over another, but use of any type protects better than none. Good fit and maintenance are necessary.
- ▶ Chronic neurobehavioral impairment in professional athletes is linked to prior concussion, longer history with the sport and presence of the ApoE4 gene, a genetic marker that has been linked to Alzheimer’s disease.

Sources:

<http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/92095-treatment>
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/126/3/597>
http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/physicians_tool_kit.html



National Hep C Testing Day

New and improving, pharmacological treatments for chronic Hepatitis C (HCV) infection point to the importance of the current screening recommendations that call for **all baby boomers, born between 1945 and 1965, to be tested once, regardless of known risk factors.** Approximately half of the estimated 3 million people with HCV infection in the U.S. are unaware of their status. National Hepatitis Testing Day in May is a time set aside to promote awareness of this disease, and the PCDOH hosted a special free testing day, educating and screening nearly 40 county employees. Untreated, the disease becomes the leading reason for liver transplantation and may progress to advanced liver disease and/or hepatocellular cancer. The PCDOH offers free testing every week at two Putnam locations, the main office at One Geneva Road and 121 Main Street in the Village of Brewster. No appointments are necessary. Call 845-808-1390, x43114, for more information and time schedule.

Free Physician Tool Kit Available

“Heads Up: Brain Injury in Your Practice” a tool kit developed by an expert work group in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is available online at http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/headsup/physicians_tool_kit.html. Or simply search on the web for “physician tool kit CDC concussion.”

The materials include: a patient assessment tool (Acute Concussion Evaluation or ACE); a “Facts for Physicians” booklet about mild traumatic brain injury; an ACE Care Plan to help guide a patient’s recovery; and a palm card for on-field management of sports-related concussion. Fact sheets for patients and their families, are also included in English and Spanish, covering concussion prevention.

Legislation on Traumatic Brain Injury

More than 1 million concussions occur annually in the U.S., and state municipalities have been enacting legislation to protect youth from such sports-related injuries. Between 2009 and 2014, 50 states plus the District of Columbia passed laws addressing traumatic brain injury, most of which established programs to safeguard youth in competition.

New York’s concussion management and awareness act specifically requires training for school personnel and the distribution of an informational concussion pamphlet to parents of students participating in interscholastic sports or those with a history of previous concussions.

The PCDOH will be conducting outreach to school districts this fall to help facilitate these important developing programs.

Source: <http://www.ncsl.org/>

Putnam Leaders Speak to Online Audience on Mental Health Issues

When *Public Health Live* wanted to illustrate successful strategies addressing mental health needs, who did they call? Putnam County's Department of Health and Department of Social Services (DSS).

The topic for the live, one-hour production from SUNY Albany's School of Public Health in May was "Mental Health in New York State: Changes and Challenges for Public Health."

PCDOH epidemiologist Erin Ray Pascaretti, MPH, and PCDSS Commissioner Michael Piazza presented the



Putnam experience in moving forward to transform mental health and how the departments of health and social services are working together with community partners to implement the county's Community Health Improvement

Plan. In the Albany studio were speakers Glenn Liebman, CEO, Mental Health Association in NYS, and Kelly Hansen, Executive Director, NYS Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors, who discussed in part the

stigma of mental health which continues to keep patients from seeking needed help.

Public Health Live broadcasts are free and provide continuing education to all interested in furthering their knowledge of current public health issues. The live webcast is held from 9 to 10 a.m. ET on the third Thursday of each month. For further information, visit: <http://www.albany.edu/sph/cphce/phl.shtml>

The July broadcast topic was "Mental Health and Substance Abuse: Connecting the Dots," and is archived along with previous broadcasts.

New 24-hour Drop-offs Open for Discarding Meds

Putnam residents now have permanent, secure, environmentally-friendly places to dispose of excess, unwanted medications.

One new MedReturn drug collection unit has been placed at the Kent Police Department, 40 Sybil's Crossing, Kent Lakes, and another at the Carmel Police Department, 60 McAlpin Avenue, Mahopac. They are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Placement in a secure law enforcement site is required because controlled substances are involved. Over-the-counter and prescription medicines, including narcotics, can be disposed of at an individual's convenience, rather than storing the medicines at home where they may be misused or fall into the wrong hands. No sharps of any kind (syringes, lancets, epi pens, etc.) are accepted. Flushing drugs down the toilet is not recommended to safeguard the environment.

Prescription medicine abuse is a significant and rising public health concern. Sales of prescribed opioid pain relievers (OPR) quadrupled nationwide between 1999 and 2010, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Of those abusing OPR, **66% surveyed report getting the medication from a friend or relative**, either for free (55%) or by paying for them (11.5%). Another 17.3% reported receiving them from a single physician. This is compared to only 4.8% who report stealing from a friend or relative. Many of these problems

could be avoided if medications were disposed of when they were no longer needed.

OPR abuse may also lead to heroin use as well. Kent Police Chief Alex DiVernieri noted that Putnam has not been immune to this growing problem. In 2010 and 2011 there were 15 overdose deaths, with this number rising more than 120 percent—to 33 deaths—during the next two-year period, 2012/2013. The town police departments partnered with the Putnam County Communities That Care (CTC) Coalition, which works to build a safe and healthy family-oriented community by reducing substance abuse, to bring these MedReturn units to Putnam.

The biannual Medication Take-Back Days, organized by the Putnam County CTC Coalition, Putnam Hospital Center, the Sheriff's Department and the Department of Health, are another alternative for proper disposal. Since the events began in 2010, thousands of pounds of unwanted medications have been collected and disposed of properly. At the April event, a total of 262 area residents dropped off approximately 168,000 pills and other forms of medication. Controlled narcotics comprised 5.2% of the total collection.



The Med Return unit in the lobby at the Kent Police Department was the first location up and running. A third secure drop-off site is being planned.

New event added:
American Legion,
Cold Spring, 9/20

The next Medication Take Back Event will be held on November 1 at Putnam Hospital Center. No sharps, including syringes, lancets and used epi-pens can be accepted. **Unused** epi-pens are accepted. In the meantime, MedReturn locations offer a convenient alternative.



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Changes in Diagnostic Criteria Highlighted for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Clinical psychologist Patricia Towle, PhD, spoke to a standing-room only crowd of more than 150 Putnam County Early Intervention and preschool providers. The free provider workshop took place on June 27 at the TOPS building at 112 Old Route 6 in Carmel.

Dr. Towle described the major changes in the diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum disorder (ASD), presented in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The DSM is the standard classification system used by mental health professionals, and was recently revised from the DSM-IV to the DSM-5. She covered the wide range of characteristics related to cognitive levels, language levels and other conditions that can accompany the disorder and presented videos to illustrate specific symptoms and how they manifest themselves in the behaviors of young children.

Dr. Towle has been practicing, teaching and conducting research in the field of developmental disabilities, with a specialization in autism spectrum disorder, for the last 30 years. She is currently a clinical child psychologist at the Westchester Institute for Human Development, where she is director of psychology training for the "LEND" program, a leadership training program in the field of neurodevelopmental and related disabilities.



The morning conference was organized by Gail Maisel, Administrator of Early Intervention and Preschool Programs, who coordinated the event, along with the provider agency All About Kids, the Early Childhood Direction Center and the Department of Health. Allen Beals, MD, Commissioner of Health, and Bruce Walker, Deputy County Executive, welcomed the crowd of providers to the Training and Operations Center (TOPS building) for the event.