



Concerning Our Health

Greetings from the Putnam County Department of Health

Public health is about promoting and protecting the health of people in their communities. We can't do that without you—our healthcare providers and our community partners. In this issue you will learn more about free services for you to help patients quit smoking and an innovative program being rolled out with the help of another community partner, our schools.

We are also asking for your input to help us improve this newsletter. Please take a moment to take the enclosed readership survey so that we may serve you better.

—Allen Beals, MD, JD, Commissioner of Health



Public Health Summit V Tackles Expanded Priorities, *Encompassing substance abuse prevention alongside mental health promotion*

More than 85 public health partners from 43 different community agencies convened at Putnam Hospital Center (PHC) on Tuesday, October 20, for the Fifth Annual Public Health Summit, organized by the Putnam County Department of Health with support from the hospital.

Health Commissioner Allen Beals, James Caldas, PHC president, and Social Services and Mental Health Commissioner Michael Piazza, opened the five-hour event,

sharing their perspectives on the upcoming challenges as the healthcare marketplace and public health infrastructure shift,

regroup and strengthen together.

Preventing chronic diseases and promoting mental health remain top priorities in Putnam. However, given Putnam's opioid overdose problem—a chilling 233 percent increase in overdose deaths from both heroin and opiates from 2011 to 2012 (see story below)—

this component has been
Continued on next page.



"Big Apple Crunch" time: partners gather at summit to commemorate National Food Day, celebrated every year on October 24. Food Day was established to inspire Americans to adopt healthier diets and a better food system. This year's theme is "Toward a Greener Diet."

Putnam County's Opioid Overdose Problem Continues Unabated

Kristin McConnell, executive director of the National Council on Alcoholism and other Drug Dependencies (NCADD)—Putnam, and Doreen Lockwood, project coordinator, Partnership for Success, Putnam's Communities That Care (CTC), presented a report at the 5th Annual Public Health Summit on the opioid overdose epidemic in Putnam County. In response to this epidemic which is being felt nationwide, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Admin-

istration (SAMHSA) awarded funding to 10 communities in New York to reduce prescription drug and heroin use. Putnam's Communities That Care (CTC) Coalition is one of these ten grant recipients. Highlighted Putnam-specific statistics, presented by Ms. McConnell and Ms. Lockwood, appear below:

- ▶ 233% increase in overdose deaths from heroin and opiates from 2011 to 2012.
- ▶ 63 overdose deaths occurred between 2011 and 2015 (many from mixed drug intoxication).
- ▶ 257% increase in treatment admissions citing heroin as primary drug of abuse, between 2007 to 2013 (from 76 to 271) (NYS OASAS).
- ▶ More than double the treatment admissions for prescription opioids as primary drug of abuse from 47 in 2007 to 97 in 2013.

Classroom-based Physical Activity Toolkit to Debut

What do jumping jacks, knee lifts and new vocabulary words for youngsters have in common?

They are part of a language arts exercise that incorporates physical activity into the school room. Together with other classroom activities, these exercises get elementary school children out of their seats and boost learning. They also make up a new toolkit developed by the PCDOH, grounded in evidence-based research, for use across all curriculum areas including math, science and social studies. Austin Road Elementary School in Mahopac has expressed wide interest in the toolkit and is working with the PCDOH to launch a pilot program by year's end.

The research is undisputed: physical

activity, cardiovascular fitness, overweight and obesity, and cognitive function are increasingly being linked with each other. These factors are also being associated with academic success. For decades physical activity in schools has been declining, while childhood obesity has significantly increased. Now more than ten years of research is beginning to show that integrating physical and educational activities is feasible and can help students focus on academics.

Sources:

Donnelly JE & Lambourne K. Classroom-based physical activity, cognition, and academic achievement. *Preventive Medicine*, 2011, 52: S36-S42.

Kibbe DL, Hackett J, Hurley M, McFarland A, Schubert KG, Schultz A & Harris S. Ten years of TAKE 10!: Integrating physical activity with academic concepts in elementary school classrooms. *Preventive Medicine*, 2011, 52: S43-S50.

School-based clinics reduce the flu's impact

School children play a significant role in the spread of influenza in the community, given the close contact within the school, lower immunity among children and the generally longer periods in which children remain contagious.

With this in mind, the PCDOH established a school-based immunization program that for the past three years has encompassed all districts in the county. In anticipation of this year's flu season, 20 Putnam schools, elementary through high school, hosted clinics for their students from September through November. Now a mathematical model from public health researchers in the United Kingdom is lending credence to this comprehensive immunization program. The study looked at whether it was more effective and cost-efficient to immunize in primary schools

continued on next page

Public Health Summit V, *continued from front page.*

formally incorporated into the mental health priority. Putnam's top two priorities now exactly mirror those crafted by the New York State Department of Health's Prevention Agenda 2013-2017.

Promoting mental health and preventing substance abuse are intricately linked. Mental, emotional and behavioral illnesses are part of a cluster of what is called "MEB" disorders, affecting one in five young people nationally. These include conduct disorders, depression and substance abuse, and about 75 percent of them are first diagnosed between the ages of 14 and 24 years of age.

Unlike last year's summit which was held close on the heels of the U.S. Ebola cases, this year's event had no distractions. From the first presentation to the last, work was highly focused on strengthening community partnerships to anticipate, strategize and problem solve around the county's Community Health Improvement Plan, the "CHIP." The "Forces of Change" exercise was conducted in the morning session and "breakout" groups were held in the afternoon to allow community partners to split up and focus in on one priority to share ideas, lay groundwork and formalize joint plans.

New "Essential Plan" Offered through NYS Health Exchange

Open enrollment for New York State's official health plan exchange runs from November 1 through Sunday, January 31, 2016. A new option is being unveiled this year called "The Essential Plan," costing much less than other health plans, but offering the necessary benefits. It is designed for low-income people who don't qualify for Medicaid or Child Health Plus, which consumers can apply for throughout the year.

FREE assistance in selecting a healthcare plan through the NYS healthcare marketplace is available to all patients in Putnam County through two partner organizations of the PCDOH:

- ▶ **MiSN** (originally Maternal-infant Services Network), a not-for-profit agency now dedicated to family and community health, serves the mid-Hudson region, and offers guidance to Putnam residents, free of charge and bias. MiSN navigators can be reached at 1-800-453-4666 or by email at navigator@misn-ny.org
- ▶ **Fidelis Care NY** also offers free guidance to their array of health insurance plans. Both have English- and Spanish-speaking representatives available to help in Putnam County. A Putnam representative for Fidelis Care can be reached 845-483-1292, extension 25114.

Those who qualify for The Essential Plan may pay \$20 a month per person, or nothing at all depending on income. The plan has no deductible, meaning that the plan begins paying for health services right away. Routine doctor exams, screenings, and other preventative services are provided for free. Doctor ordered tests, prescription drugs and hospital visits are also covered.

Anyone who needs health coverage can apply through the marketplace exchange, called "The New York State of Health." For more info, visit: www.nystateofhealth.ny.gov

Help Your Patients Quit Smoking

The Center for a Tobacco-Free Hudson Valley works with primary care providers and health care organizations to implement systems to screen patients for tobacco use and prompt providers to offer advice and assistance to quit.

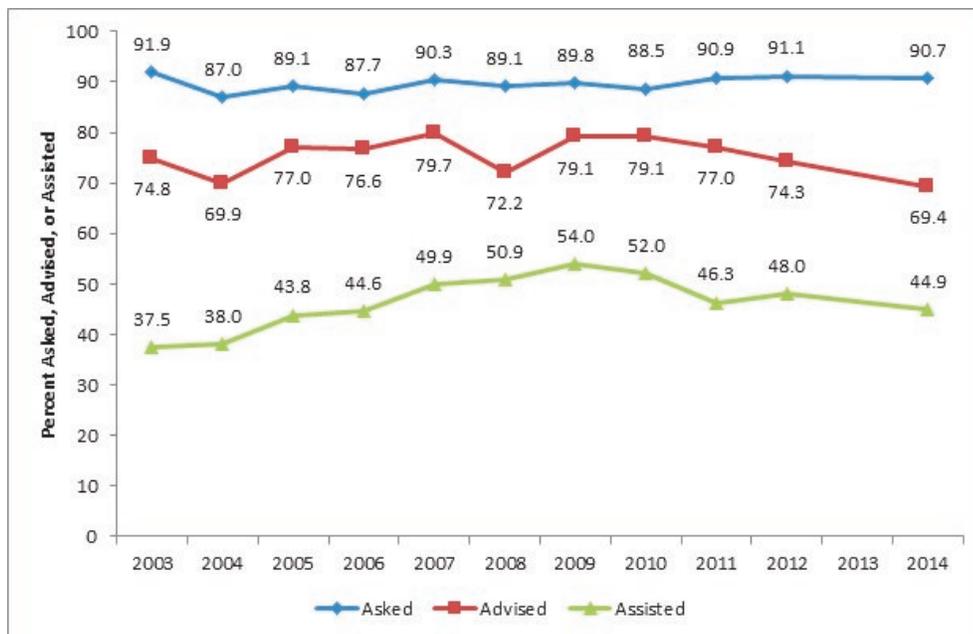
Free services for providers include on-site staff training (individual or group) on topics such as effective motivational counseling techniques, how to talk to patients about quitting, how to improve office practices to promote patient cessation success and pharmacotherapy options. Free patient education materials on topics related to smoking cessation are also available through the Center for a Tobacco-Free Hudson Valley.

For further information:

Didi Raxworthy, Director, Center for a Tobacco-Free Hudson Valley at draxworthy@lungne.org.

When she is in the office, she may also be reached at 914-407-2214.

Percentage of smokers who were “Asked, Advised or Assisted”



The Clinical Practice Guidelines for Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence recommend that health care providers **ASK** if their patients smoke, **ADVISE** smokers to quit, and **ASSIST** patients with quit attempts through counseling and medications. Data from the Adult Tobacco Survey (2003-2014) indicate that while most providers consistently ask about patient smoking, fewer advise smokers to quit, and less than half assisted their patients with a quit attempt in 2014. Increasing the rate at which providers assist their patients with a quit attempt is a key priority of the Bureau of Tobacco Control’s Health Systems for a Tobacco-Free New York initiative.

This and all StatShots can also be viewed online at: http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco_control/reports/statshots/

School-based clinics

Continued from previous page

or in secondary schools and discovered that targeting one and not the other was not the best strategy. Rather a dual approach, **achieving 48% coverage in primary schools and 34% in secondary schools, offered the optimal, most cost-efficient policy.** This was in addition to the long standing flu immunization program in place for at-risk individuals with certain health conditions, those 65 years and older, and pregnant women.

The PCDOH continues to collect data regarding absentee rates and causative factors to determine the effect of this program on flu rates in Putnam County.

PHAB Accreditation Site Visit Scheduled for January 2016

Early next year, the PCDOH will reach the final step before an accreditation decision is made by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), the non-profit entity charged with implementing and overseeing a national health department accreditation process. The site visit, scheduled for January 6 and 7, will be conducted by a team of three PHAB-trained site visitors, who will not only verify the accuracy of the PCDOH’s submitted documentation, but also ask questions and discuss conformity with the standards and measures.

The team then develops its report for submission to the PHAB accreditation



committee, describing how successfully each measure was met, any areas for improvement, and other specific areas of excellence. This report is the basis for the accreditation committee’s decision, “Accredited” or “Not Accredited.”

Health departments not accredited have an opportunity to submit an action plan which requires approval of the accreditation committee. Failure to submit a plan or to implement the approved plan results in the health department not being accredited as well.

To date, only two local health departments out of 57 in New York State have achieved PHAB accreditation.



Putnam County Department of Health
 1 Geneva Road
 Brewster, NY 10509
 Phone: (845) 808-1390
 Fax: (845) 808-1336

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Layout and Design

Susan Hoffner, MPH, MCHES, Health Educator

We want your input, now and always

A readership survey is enclosed inside. Help us improve this newsletter by letting us know what type of information is most useful to you and your staff. This brief survey takes less than five minutes to complete and it will help us serve you better. Thank you.

Do you see patients between 13 and 19 years of age?

If so, we want your feedback to help assess the needs for improving adolescent health in the Putnam County community.

Please take our short, 10-question survey by December 31 at www.putnamcountyny.com/adolescentsurvey/.

While adolescence is typically a healthy stage of life, transitioning from childhood to adulthood presents challenges, and serious health and safety issues can arise. According to the CDC, more than one in five in this age category report current tobacco use, and nearly two out of three report not regularly using condoms.

Talking to teens about sexual health topics is not always easy, but it can make a difference in your patients' health. A recent study published in *the Journal of American Medical Association Pediatrics* found that while 65% of adolescent

visits had some discussion about sexual health, the average conversation was brief (36 seconds).



Source: Alexander SC, Fortenberry JD, Pollak KI, et al. Sexuality Talk During Adolescent Health Maintenance Visits. *JAMA pediatrics*. 2014;168(2):163-169.

For additional info or to receive a SURVEY:

Alexa Contreras
 x43155
 845-808-1390
 845-808-1336 fax

Concerning Our Health Readership Survey

Please take a moment to provide feedback on the PCDOH newsletter, *Concerning Our Health*, published three times a year. Your input will allow us to better serve you as health providers.

Putnam County
Department of Health
845-808-1390
One Geneva Road
Brewster, NY 10509

Newsletter publication and format

How many times a year do you recall receiving the newsletter?

One Two Three

Do you receive a print copy or a digital copy?

Print Digital I receive both.

How many times each year do you read the newsletter?

One Two Three

How much of an issue do you usually read?

None Some Most All

The frequency of the newsletter should be:

Increased Decreased Remain same

I would prefer to receive the newsletter in:

Print Digital Both Not at all

Newsletter quality

Do you find the newsletter easy to read?

Yes No Somewhat

Do you find the newsletter informative?

Yes No Somewhat

Do you find the newsletter accurate?

Yes No Somewhat

Do you find the newsletter well-researched?

Yes No Somewhat

Please rate overall quality of newsletter

Poor Fair Good Excellent

Tell us about yourself

Which category best describes your role?

- Physician
 Other healthcare provider
 Community partner working with PCDOH
 PCDOH employee
 Putnam County legislator
 Putnam County resident
 Other, please specify: _____

Do you work in Putnam County?

Yes No

How many years have you worked in Putnam County?

Less than 3 years 3 to 8 years

More than 8 years

Rate newsletter topics in terms of interest to you

	High	Moderate	Neutral	Low	None
Communicable diseases	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Chronic disease	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Environmental health issues	<input type="checkbox"/>				
PCDOH news	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Research-based stories	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Clinical guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Other suggestions or comments: _____

Please mail completed survey to:

Putnam County Department of Health
COH Readership Survey—Health Education
1 Geneva Road
Brewster, NY 10509