



Concerning Our Health

PCDOH Receives National Accreditation

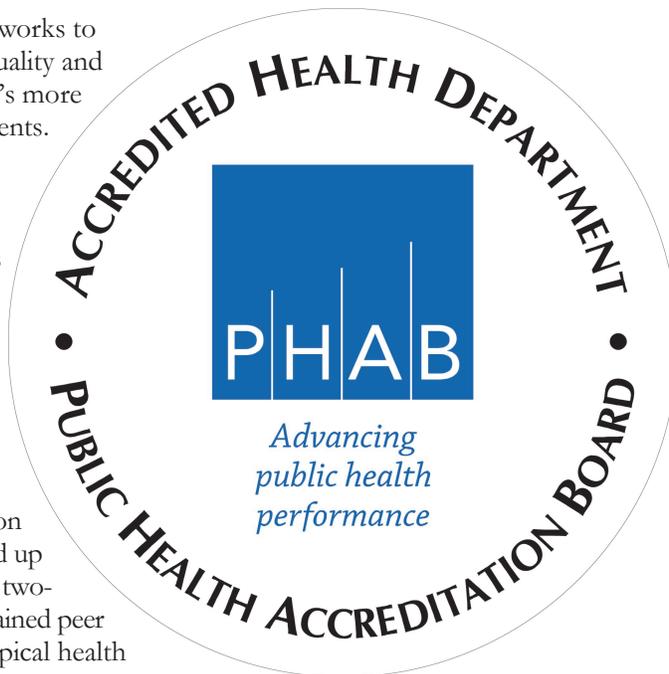
The Putnam County Department of Health achieved national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board on March 8, 2016. The five-year designation demonstrates increased accountability and credibility to the public, funders, elected officials and partners.

The accreditation process works to ultimately transform the quality and performance of the nation's more than 2,500 health departments.

The PCDOH is one of fewer than 200 to have achieved this honor.

The health department's journey to PHAB accreditation initially began in 2012 with the preliminary pre-accreditation process of strategic planning. Then in August 2013, a formal statement of intent was submitted to the accreditation board. The process wrapped up in early January 2016 with a two-day site visit by a team of trained peer examiners, familiar with typical health department procedures, who scrutinized documents and questioned staff members in face-to-face discussions.

From start to finish, partners throughout the county and nearly every staff member of the health department were engaged. The accreditation process also provided a way to measure health department performance against a set of national standards, while increasing communication and collaboration with community partners and identifying areas for improvement in the Community Health Improvement Plan. The PCDOH examined their own operations, services and mission, and formulated a strategic plan and workforce develop-



PHAB was created in 2011 to serve as the national public health accreditation body and is jointly funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

ment plan. When all was done, more than 1,080 electronic files were prepared and submitted, equaling more than 1.15 gigabytes of data.

The successful conclusion was reached at the PHAB board meeting on March 8, when committee members voted after reviewing the site visitors' final reports.

Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, has been appointed Interim Commissioner of the Putnam County Department of Health by County Executive MaryEllen Odell.
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Zika Presents Evolving Challenges

The latest virus to claim headlines is Zika. Much has been learned about this mosquito-borne illness in the last few months. New information is constantly being formulated; but many questions remain unanswered.

Current Recommendations to Reduce Risks: Zika virus has been linked to microcephaly and brain damage in babies of mothers infected with Zika while pregnant. While a causal relationship has not been definitively proven, the **strongest precautions are advised for pregnant women and their partners, as well as couples trying to get pregnant, since Zika has been found in sperm:**

- ▶ Advise pregnant women to postpone travel to any area with ongoing Zika transmission; advise partners to consider postponing travel as well.
- ▶ Advise strict mosquito bite prevention methods during trip for pregnant women or partner if travel is unavoidable (repellent; long-sleeves, socks and other clothing precautions; limit outdoor exposure, etc.).
- ▶ Advise abstinence from sex (vaginal, anal or oral) or diligent condom use for duration of pregnancy if male partner lives in or traveled to area with active Zika-transmission.

Dr. Nesheiwat Steps Up to Lead Health Department During Transition

Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, was named to lead the Putnam County Department of Health. In making the announcement, County Executive MaryEllen Odell said, "Dr. Nesheiwat has been an asset to the Putnam County community for many years. I am confident that he will do an incredible job overseeing the day-to-day operations of the health department while we undergo this transition." He succeeds Allen Beals, MD.



health commissioner in Westchester County.

As a local physician with a well-established family medicine practice, Dr. Nesheiwat has shared many innovative strategies to integrate care, striving to eliminate the silos of physical health and behavioral health. In addition to his practice with an office in Brewster, Dr. Nesheiwat has been a senior attending family practitioner on staff at Putnam Hospital Center (PHC) since

1992 and currently serves on the PHC Board of Directors. He also has served as chairman of its Department of Medicine for over a decade and is a member of the Health Quest Board of Trustees.

Dr. Nesheiwat received his medical degree in 1985, completed an internship at Brooklyn Hospital Center and a family practice residency at St. Joseph's Medical Center in Yonkers, where he was director

of the emergency department.

His passion for caring is evidenced by his strong community involvement. He serves as medical director and surgeon at the Putnam County Correctional Facility and medical director/consultant to numerous Putnam County Volunteer Fire Departments. He is a board member of the Carmel Fire Department and active in numerous civic organizations including the Fraternal Order of Police, the Free and Accepted Masons, Shriners, and Rotary Club.

BOH Member Retires Search begins for replacement

Arthur McCormick, DVM, is retiring from his position on the Putnam County Board of Health, leaving an opening on the seven-member board for a lay person. Dr. McCormick served two stretches on the board. The first was from 1990 to 1992, and the second came with a reappointment in August 2004 until present day.

The Board of Health serves in an advisory capacity to the county's health department leader, currently Interim Commissioner of Health, Michael Nesheiwat, MD, (story above) who has served alongside of Dr. McCormick as a board member for many years, (a membership Dr. Nesheiwat is suspending during his time as Interim Health Commissioner). The by-laws dictate that at least one legislator and three physicians are members of the board. The remaining four are laypersons; all must be Putnam County residents.

Board responsibilities include attendance at a monthly meeting, held from 6 to 7 p.m. on Monday evenings at the Health Department's main office at 1 Geneva Road in Brewster. **Candidates should forward a letter of interest and resume or CV to: BOH Search, Health Department, 1 Geneva Road, Brewster, NY 10509. Materials may also be emailed to:**

karen.yates@putnamcountyny.gov

Other current BOH members include Daniel C. Doyle, DMD, President; Joseph Avanzato, MD, Vice President; Theresa A. Burdick, RN, FNP, APPN, Secretary; Barbara Scuccimarra, Putnam County Legislator; Carl Albano, Alternate Putnam County Legislature; and Raymond Phillips, MD, FACP.

Putnam County Chosen as Pilot Site

One of Two US Sites to Build Resilient Children/Resilient Communities

Putnam County is one of two sites selected nationwide for a pilot program in emergency preparedness research being conducted at Columbia University's National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP). The three-year program, called the *Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative* was recently funded through a \$2 million grant from GlaxoSmithKline in partnership with Save the Children. Washington County, Arkansas, was selected as the second site.

Emergency response plans often fail to address the specific needs of children and their families before, during and after disasters. Children's institutions such as daycare centers and schools are often left out of the equation and communities may not have the resources to provide safe, non-traumatic sheltering and displacement services. Studies show that a slow recovery can delay return to normalcy that children need and that the long-term impact can be devastating.

Resilient Children/Resilient Communities builds on previous work done by NCDP and Save the Children. The Putnam County Department of Health and the Putnam County Bureau of Emergency Services collaborated in this earlier project, bringing together countywide participation from numerous sectors, to assist in the development of the Community Preparedness Index (CPI), an evidence-based readiness assessment tool.

The current initiative will involve and guide Putnam through a crisis simulation and help develop a sustainable, child-focused action plan. Impact will be measured using the CPI tool. The initiative will also form a National Children's Resilience Board to identify policies and programs that improve readiness for children, and launch a nationwide outreach campaign to educate localities on how to better care for children following disasters.

Zika Testing from A to Z

Current testing for Putnam County residents with possible Zika virus is available only at the NYSDOH's Wadsworth Laboratories, and must be facilitated through the PCDOH.

Who should be tested:

- ▶ Pregnant women who traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission while pregnant.
- ▶ Non-pregnant women and men who develop or had symptoms within 4 weeks of returning from travel to an area that had active Zika virus transmission.
- ▶ All persons who traveled to an area with active Zika virus transmission who present with Guillain-Barre syndrome.

How to arrange testing:

1. **Contact PCDOH at 845-808-1390** to discuss patient case with communicable disease public health nurse. Only health care providers (HCP) can request testing of a patient. (Patients calling the PCDOH directly will be educated about Zika virus, travel recommendations and testing, and then directed to their health care provider.)
2. **Two items are needed by the testing laboratory** and will be issued to patients meeting specific mandated criteria—a prescription for Zika testing written by the HCP and an electronic ticket generated by the PCDOH through the NYSDOH electronic Counter-measure Data Management System (CDMS).
3. **Written script from HCP** to patients states "Serum PCR and Serology, and Urine PCR for Zika Virus." A convalescent specimen may be required. The PCDOH will notify providers as necessary.
4. **Electronic ticket will be issued to patient via email by the PCDOH.** The PCDOH nurse will review testing site options with patient before issuing the electronic ticket. If site preference changes, a new ticket must be issued. Either a printed copy or phone-display version is acceptable at the lab testing center. (If a patient does not have email or a phone, the ticket will be faxed directly to the testing center and/or HCP office.)
5. **Lab results go directly to both the PCDOH and then the HCP.** The PCDOH nurse will call the HCP to discuss results and their interpretation. The NYS Zika hotline at 1-888-364-4723 can provide assistance with interpretation.
6. **Convalescent serum specimens may be required, 3 to 4 weeks after initial testing.** No urine samples are needed. The latest testing algorithm from NYSDOH was issued 3/14/16, clarifying criteria for convalescent samples. NYSDOH epidemiologists may also make special requests for this testing.

Zika, At A Glance

- ▶ single-stranded RNA virus.
- ▶ Genus *Flavivirus* and family *Flaviviridae*, found in arthropods, primarily mosquitoes and ticks. (Others include yellow fever, dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis and West Nile viruses.)
- ▶ transmitted primarily to humans by infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, the more efficient vector now in South and Central America, and not present in Putnam County.

For More Information:

www.cdc.gov/zika

For direct links to information:

- ▶ For healthcare providers
- ▶ For pregnant women
- ▶ Areas with Zika
- ▶ Transmission & Risks
- ▶ and more...

http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/zika_virus/

For direct links to information:

- ▶ Health advisories
- ▶ Clinical webinars
- ▶ Educational materials for patients



The Asian tiger mosquito *Aedes albopictus* also has been shown to have the ability to transmit Zika in the laboratory, but its significance as an efficient transmitter outside the lab is not currently known.

Once warmer weather arrives and mosquitoes become active, the PCDOH and the NYSDOH will enhance surveillance and mosquito control.

Evidence of this mosquito has been found in New York City, Nassau, Orange, Rockland, Suffolk, and Westchester. Only one lone mosquito of this species has been detected in Putnam County since 1999 when surveillance began.



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Putnam Has High Rate of Antibiotic Scripts

Putnam County has been identified as one of 11 counties in New York State with the highest rates of potentially avoidable antibiotic prescriptions, according to analysis by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). This analysis of prescribing habits was modeled after a national review of antimicrobial drug use among adult Medicaid patients presenting with upper respiratory tract infections.

Source: Li P, Metlay JP, Marcus SC, Doshi JA. Factors associated with antimicrobial drug use in Medicaid programs. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2014; 20(5):829-32.

What can be done?

Posters and “viral prescription pads,” have been shown as effective methods for increasing awareness and understanding among patients. Posters displayed in patient areas can reduce patient demand for an antibiotic. An official, pre-printed viral prescription pad that prompts physicians to select a viral diagnosis, specify OTC medications, and issue general and follow-up instructions can increase patient understanding and alleviate concerns. **Posters and prescription pads are available through the Putnam County DOH.**

Delayed prescribing is another outpatient antibiotic stewardship strategy. Patients are asked to wait, usually 24 to 48 hours after a

clinical visit to determine if an antibiotic is needed for an illness that may not appear to immediately warrant an antibiotic. Several methods exist including writing a post-dated prescription, re-contacting a patient after the initial visit, or providing a prescription while giving a verbal order to fill it after a predetermined length of time if symptoms do not improve.

For antibiotic stewardship posters and Rx pads

Jeanette Baldanza, RN

845-808-1390, ext.43113
 845-808-1336 fax

Rx Name: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Diagnosis:

- Cold
- Cough
- Flu
- Middle ear fluid (Otitis Media with Effusion, OME)
- Viral sore throat
- Other: _____

You have been diagnosed with an illness caused by a virus. Antibiotics do not cure viral infections. If given when not needed, antibiotics can be harmful. The treatments prescribed below will help you feel better while your body's own defenses are fighting the virus.

General instructions:

- Drink extra water and juice.
- Use a cool mist vaporizer or saline nasal spray to relieve congestion.
- For sore throats, use ice chips or sore throat spray; lozenges for older children and adults.

Specific medicines:

- Fever or aches:
- Ear pain:
- _____

Use medicines according to the package instructions or as directed by your healthcare provider. Stop the medication when the symptoms get better.

Follow up:

- If not improved in _____ days, if new symptoms occur, or if you have other concerns, please call or return to the office for a recheck.
- Other: _____

Signed: _____

For More Information call 1-800-CDC or visit www.cdc.gov/getsmart

Physicians who are interested in antibiotic prescribing and stewardship, and would like to spread the word to peers about appropriate use in their facility or community, can obtain a PowerPoint slide set and educational materials from the NYSDOH, by contacting Mary Beth Wenger at marybeth.wenger@health.ny.gov or call 518-474-1036. For more information on antibiotic stewardship in doctors' offices or healthcare facilities, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart>