



Concerning Our Health

Volume XIX—Issue 1—Summer 2019

Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, named permanent Health Commissioner

Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, has been appointed permanent Commissioner of the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH). In making the announcement, County Executive MaryEllen Odell said, “There is no question that Dr. Nesheiwat is the best candidate for the position. He has proved this many times over the past three years. He is a true gem

and we are fortunate to have him here in Putnam. I am thrilled he has decided to accept this as a permanent appointment.”



County Executive MaryEllen Odell went on to list numerous accomplishments attributed to “Dr. Mike,” as he is known by many throughout the community. Her State of the County Address earlier this year proclaimed 2019 as the “Year of the Health Provider.” This was due in part to Dr. Nesheiwat’s leadership, under which the

Continued on page 2.

Dr. Michael Nesheiwat has served on Putnam County’s Board of Health for over 25 years. He has been leading the PCDOH for the past three and a half years.

RWJ Health Rankings: Putnam Among Healthiest NYS Counties

The ninth annual *County Health Rankings* were released earlier this year by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and for the ninth year Putnam County ranks among the healthiest counties. Putnam is third in health factors, the influencers of health, up from last year’s fourth place ranking. In health outcomes, based on length and quality of life, this year Putnam was sixth, compared to fifth last year, from among the 62 counties in the state.

One of the identified and continuing challenges in the county is the rising rates

of sexually transmitted infections. STI rates are rising everywhere—around New York State and the United States. Last year in Putnam County, the number of STI cases remained high, with syphilis numbers rising further. The PCDOH continues to work with and encourage county physicians to increase routine testing.

Similarly the issue of excessive alcohol use continues in Putnam compared to the rest of New York State. Last year alcohol-impaired driving deaths had decreased from 27% to 22% but in this year’s ranking, the rate is back up to 28%. The Prevention Council of Putnam

Measles Alert

As of June 1, no measles cases have been confirmed in Putnam County. Of course that could change at any time.

Three key provider messages prevail whether on alert or in the midst of an outbreak:

- **Report a suspect measles case to the county health department where the patient resides, as required by New York State (NYS) public health law.** The PCDOH telephone number is 845-808-1390.
- Check the measles immunity status of the people who work in your office. Each individual should have proof of immunity.
- Know what tests need to be performed and ensure the necessary supplies are on hand. The health department can also assist with sending specimens to the NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) Wadsworth Laboratories for testing.

Local measles information is available on the health department website: www.putnamcountyny.com/health/measles/.

and the Communities That Care (CTC) coalition spearhead work on these issues, along with support from the PCDOH. All three organizations have been shifting their efforts to also encompass the new, rising challenge proposed earlier this year in Albany regarding marijuana regulation.

For more information on the 2019 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, visit www.countyhealthrankings.org.

We have a new look... and masthead for Concerning Our Health!

As part of the health department’s Reaccreditation ’21 journey, a branding initiative is underway at the department. See story on page 3.

health department took the final step in achieving national accreditation in the spring of 2016. The department is currently preparing for reaccreditation in 2021, a process that must be completed every five years.

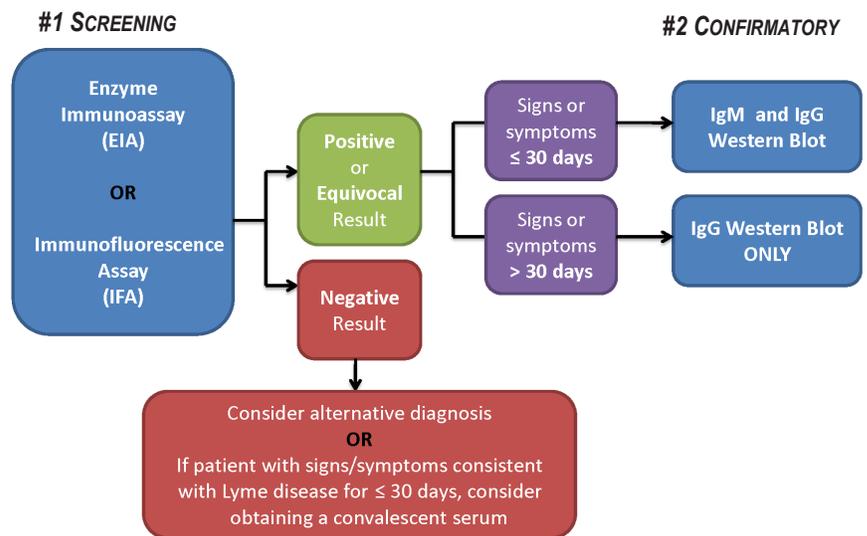
During Dr. Nesheiwat's tenure, the department has been shifting toward a quality improvement and performance management work culture. Staff have been trained in the continuous quality improvement method "plan-do-study-act" method, or "PDSA" for short. One of the first issues tackled was the reduction of paper records. The PDSA process was used by department staff and the end result was the consolidation of all case information in the NYS electronic system.

Another accreditation-required task involves developing a branding strategy which represents novel work for a health department. The branding initiative brought together a few community partners working with the health department and all health department staff members. They were surveyed for feedback on the department's current public image and how enhancements can be made.

Other highlights under Dr. Nesheiwat's leadership include the expansion of the monitoring program for harmful algae blooms. Health department environmental staff now partner closely with town personnel to protect residents from this growing concern, while they also continue surveillance with the New York State Department of Health on tick populations in efforts to stem the rise of tick-borne illnesses. On the nursing side, flu immunizations continue to rise as school-based clinics grow in popularity and with the department's support and promotion of pharmacy-based immunizations. Sexually transmitted infection surveillance and investigations also are at an all-time high—important because of rising number of cases in Putnam County, following a similar trend around the U.S.

Tickborne Disease Testing Recommendations

Lyme Disease: Two-tier testing is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and NYSDOH, starting with a screening test, followed by a confirmatory test. The screening test is usually an IFA or EIA antibody test. A Western Blot IgM and IgG is done as the confirmatory testing—**only if the IFA or EIA screening test is positive**. A schematic appears below:



Anaplasmosis and Ehrlichiosis chaffeensis: Positive PCR testing with detection of DNA. **Babesiosis:** A positive PCR OR identification of intraerythrocytic Babesia parasites by light-microscopic examination of a peripheral blood smear.

For comprehensive guidance regarding symptoms, testing and treatment of all tick-borne diseases, download the most recent *Tickborne Diseases of the United States: A Reference Manual for Healthcare Providers, Fifth Edition, 2018* at: www.cdc.gov/ticks/tickbornediseases/index.html. Scroll down the page and click on the pdf.

Opioid abuse remains high; Prescribing toolkit available

With the continuing high numbers of opioid abuse cases in Putnam County, an opioid prescribing toolkit has been put together and distributed by Putnam's Communities That Care (CTC) Coalition. The toolkit utilizes the guidelines and materials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and was created to help Putnam County providers improve communication between one another and their patients about the risks and benefits of opioid therapy for chronic pain. Evidence suggests that non-opioid medications and non-pharmacological therapies can provide the needed relief in a safer and effective manner, and that these non-opioid medications and therapies should be used as a first choice for chronic pain, outside of active cancer treatment.

In Putnam County in the first six months of 2018, there were 27 emergency department visits involving opioid overdoses and 18 opioid-related deaths were reported during the entire year, according to the New York State County Opioid Report. These numbers only tell part of the story because the use of the opioid-reversing drug Narcan, also known by its generic name naloxone, has skyrocketed, with 66 incidences of reported use in 2017, up from 35 in 2016. These figures include only reported uses by EMS and law enforcement—not community members who can also administer naloxone.

For more information or to receive a toolkit, contact: Putnam County Communities That Care Coalition at 845-225-4646 www.preventioncouncilputnam.org/coalitions.

For information about Narcan kits and training, please call the health department at 845-808-1390, x43117.

The toolkit is also available on the PCDOH website at www.putnamcountyny.com/health/for-health-care-providers.

Resilience film makes rounds in Putnam: Adverse Childhood Experiences examined

The documentary film *Resilience* has been making its way around Putnam County. Two recent showings occurred at the TOPS (Training and Operations Center) building in Carmel. The film chronicles the birth of a movement among pediatricians, therapists, educators and communities, who are using cutting-edge brain science to disrupt cycles of addiction, disease and violence. The research findings and the science of “Toxic Stress” come from the landmark study on “adverse childhood experiences,” now known as the ACE study. These discoveries are not yet recognized widely enough throughout public health or health care practice. The film is an attempt to change that and to disseminate the findings to a broad audience where changes can begin to occur in diagnosis and treatment, as well as prevention.

The ACE study, conducted by Kaiser

Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from 1995 to 1997, was one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and late-life health and well-being. It involved over 17,000 of the health maintenance organization’s members, with each receiving physical exams and completing confidential surveys regarding their childhood experiences and current health status and behaviors. Results showed a strong graded relationship between the breadth of exposure to household dysfunction and abuse during childhood, and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death in adults, including ischemic heart disease, any cancer, stroke, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, and diabetes. The

“We tend to the world of mental health from the world of physical health. But the body doesn’t do that. The body is only one.”

Victor Carrion, MD,
Director of Research Programs
Early Life Stress & Pediatric Anxiety
Stanford University

strongest prevalence of disease found in adults who experienced ACEs was found with chronic bronchitis.

The one-hour film, directed by James Redford, delves into the science of ACEs, now understood to be one of the leading causes of everything from heart disease and cancer to substance abuse and depression. Simply put, extremely stressful experiences in childhood alter brain development and have lifelong effects on health and behavior.

Future showings of the documentary are currently being planned for the fall and into 2020. The Resilient Child Fund (RCF) has purchased the screening rights and the film has been shown jointly by Putnam County’s Child Advocacy Center, the Putnam County Suicide Prevention Task Force and the Putnam County Department of Social Services. The RCF works to increase therapeutic services for children who have had an ACE by providing trauma-informed care within existing or emerging therapeutic

programs. The RCF is dedicated to improving the lives of children who have experienced ACEs so they can live happy and productive lives.

“This is the biggest public health discovery we’ve ever seen.”

Laura Porter
Former Director Washington State Family
Policy Council,
Co-Founder ACE Interface

For more info or to host a showing, please contact: Beth Coons, LCSW, founder and president of the Resilient Child Fund, at 845-702-4806, or email info@resilientchildfund.org.

▶ **COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE...**The ten questions that comprise the ACE quiz and its use in clinical practice.

Reaccreditation 2021: Branding strategy and public health



McDonald’s golden arches and the Nike swoosh are recognizable emblems in our branded world.

With the worldwide reach of corporate brands, it is not surprising that similar communications strategies have crept into health care and public health. Their symbols may be less recognizable, but they are cropping up nonetheless.

For reaccreditation ‘21, the Putnam County Department of Health is required to provide a written brand strategy. Partnering with the New York Academy of Medicine and participating in their health communications learning collaborative, health department health education staff learned from an expert. Professor Nancy R. Tag, who directs the branding and integrated commu-

nications program at City College of New York (CUNY), led dozens of local health departments through five hours of training. Additionally one-on-one technical consulting was offered to help develop a “brand style guide,” complete with a visual and verbal identity system. PCDOH staff then worked with the department-wide communications committee which provided ideas and input before disseminating the materials and guidance to staff. A nameplate, or “wordmark,” was developed with the tagline, “A PHAB-Accredited Health Department. (PHAB stands for Public Health Accreditation Board.) Other branding aspects addressed included color schemes and verbal voice, or tone, which department staff are working to use with consistency in all written and verbal communications.

In this issue

Dr. Nesheiwat named permanent Commissioner	1
RWJ Health Rankings: Putnam among healthiest	1
Putnam: On alert for measles	1
Tick-borne disease testing recommendations	2
Opioid prescribing toolkit available	2
Film Resilience makes rounds in Putnam	3
Reaccreditation '21: Branding and public health	3
Preventing falls: STEADI guidelines	4

Find us online: www.putnamcountyny.com



Like us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/putnamhealth



Follow us on Twitter @PutnamHealthNY

Putnam County Administration

MaryEllen Odell, County Executive
Michael Nesheiwat, MD, Commissioner of Health

Editorial Board

Susan Hoffner, MPH, MCHES, Health Educator
Erin Ray Pascaretti, RD, MPH, CDN, Acting Supervising Public Health Educator and Epidemiologist
Kathy Percacciolo, RN, BSN, Supervising Public Health Nurse
Shanna Siegel, RN, BSN, Public Health Nurse Educator

Community Partner Contributors

Beth Coons, LCSW, Founder and President, Resilient Child Fund
Kristin McConnell, Director, The Prevention Council of Putnam
Marie O'Connor, BS, Ed, Project Coordinator, Partnership for Success, The Prevention Council

Layout and Design

Susan Hoffner, MPH, MCHES, Health Educator

Preventing falls with 3 simple steps: *Screen, Assess, Intervene*

Falling is not an inevitable part of aging—contrary to what is commonly thought, by the public and sometimes even physicians.

Clinical screening to detect those at risk is the first step in the process that can reduce falls and eliminate the major injuries that can result. Along with assessment and intervening via treatment or referral, these steps are proven to help patients stay healthy, active, and independent longer. Follow-up helps to ensure success.

As part of the community health improvement planning process, fall prevention was identified as a priority in Putnam County and a fall prevention task force was created. This committee is made up of representatives from Putnam Hospital Center, United Cerebral Palsy, Visiting Nurse Association and Visiting Nurse Services of Westchester, along with the Putnam County Department of Health and the county's Office for Senior Resources.

These organizations and agencies are teaming

up to promote evidence-based best practices for fall prevention. One practice, developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is an initiative called STEADI, which stands for Stopping Elderly Accidents, Death & Injuries. The program provides an array of provider tools and continuing medical education to help make fall prevention routine care for all patients 65 years and older. Materials are free and downloadable. Included in the toolkit are a clinical algorithm, screening tools and tests for

mobility, strength and endurance, as well as static balance. A patient educational brochure "Stay Independent" is also available.

Incorporating one or more of STEADI tools into an existing fall prevention protocol is easy. It can save practice time and money, while at the same time significantly improving patients' quality of life. For more information or to download any of the tools, visit www.cdc.gov/steady/materials.html.

Additionally, free continuing education credits for providers are available through the STEADI Older Adult Fall Prevention Online Training www.train.org/cdctrain/welcome. A free account with the CDC's TRAIN Learning Account is required, but easy to set up.

