

Public Health Broward is a newsletter for the community from the Florida Department of Health in Broward. We will focus on public health issues and services offered by the Department.

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Issue #11

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Public Health Broward

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[Who needs an HIV test? Everyone! Ask for one at every medical visit](#)

Don't be surprised at your next annual checkup if your doctor says she's giving you an HIV test. She is doing what the Florida Department of Health in Broward County hopes every doctor will do.

DOH-Broward and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are asking medical providers to include HIV testing as a routine part of all patients' blood tests, just like blood sugar, cholesterol, triglycerides and blood count.



Routine HIV testing ensures that more people living with HIV will be diagnosed early, can begin treatment quickly, will be healthier and will be less likely to spread the virus. Also, routine testing will help eliminate any stigma associated with HIV tests.

“Routine testing means that all of us will be offered HIV testing as part of our regular checkups. No one should feel stigmatized,” says Dr. Paula Thaqi, Director of DOH-Broward. “We encourage everyone to ask their doctor for an HIV test.”

Routine testing is the first in a series of HIV topics that will be highlighted in a new TV ad campaign in South Florida (photo above courtesy of CBS Miami). Watch for it.

The CDC recommends routine testing for all people ages 13 to 65, and others if they engage in unprotected sex. Even if you are in a monogamous relationship (you and your partner having sex only with each other), you should find out for sure whether either of you has HIV.

Routine testing for HIV is not new. The CDC began recommending it for certain people in 1987 and for everyone starting in 2006.

The CDC and DOH-Broward would like to see routine testing performed by physicians, hospitals (including emergency rooms), clinics and other medical providers.

The way it works is the doctor will mention the HIV test when telling patients what will be covered in their blood work. The test will be done unless the patient specifically declines it – a practice known as opt-out testing.

Not every medical provider participates in routine testing. Some are not aware of the recommendations. Some may feel it is not their job. Some may be too busy to focus on it.

In recent years, DOH-Broward has worked to educate and encourage medical providers and institutions to implement routine testing – through professional meetings, written materials and one-on-one conversations. As a result, routine testing is on the rise.

A big argument in favor of routine testing is that HIV is spread mainly by people who do not know they have contracted it. If they are diagnosed and take medication as directed, the amount of virus in their blood falls to nearly zero – and their chance of transmitting HIV drops by 95 percent.

Preventing the spread of the virus is crucial in South Florida, which has the nation’s highest rate of new HIV cases per capita.

“Knowing your HIV status and getting treatment is one of the best ways we know to prevent HIV and keep our community healthy,” Dr. Thaqi says. “Everyone can do their part by including an HIV test in their routine health care.”

More information: 954-467-4700, Ext. 4991.

Spotlight on ...

Pharmacy lets no error reach the patients

No errors in RX filled by DOH-Broward in several years ('Knock on wood')



If you did something 160,000 times a year, how many mistakes would you make? At the DOH-Broward Pharmacy Department, the answer is zero – for at least four years in a row.

The two DOH-Broward pharmacies have not dispensed an incorrect prescription years, an amazing achievement attributable to an intricate interplay of actions among pharmacists, licensed technicians and technology, says Director Michael Ehren.

“We have a very thorough check-and-balance system in place. I’m very proud of our system and the job we do,” Ehren

says, then adds with a laugh: “Knock on wood.”

Keeping a spotless record is no small feat, given that the staff of 14 – including seven full- and part-time pharmacists plus seven technicians – dispense about 650 prescriptions a day at Fort Lauderdale and Paul Hughes Health Centers. About 90 percent of clients are people living with HIV/AIDS who are enrolled in the Ryan White or AIDS Drug Assistance Programs.



The key is that the Pharmacy staff and the system catch potential mistakes before they reach the clients’ hands. There are multiple levels of protection.

Pharmacists review each client’s medication regimen (dose, frequency, possible interactions, adherence and appropriate-ness). Then, using bar-code technology and scanners, each prescription is labeled, assembled, checked and verified according to the workflow in the department.

Each step of the process is checked, double checked, verified by the pharmacist and documented in the computer application by technicians (such as *Guadalupe Bermudez, at top, and Ninan Abraham, right*).

When the client comes for pickup, the technician makes sure the client receives their correct medication by reviewing each prescription bottle. The client electronically signs to document that the medication was received and they were offered counseling by the pharmacist.

“There’s really no such thing as an acceptable error rate for a pharmacy. A mistake on a prescription can have serious consequences,” Ehren says.

Also, Pharmacy controls a very large inventory, including pill, liquid, inject-able and vaccine medications. For years, inventory compliance has exceeded 99 percent.

The average waiting time at the two Pharmacies is less than 15 minutes for refills and 30 minutes for new prescriptions, thanks to a number calling and tracking system. That’s faster than many retail pharmacies, Ehren says.

A new project aims to reduce the number of clients living with HIV/AIDS who do not pick up their medications. DOH-Broward refills prescriptions automatically based on doctor orders. If a patient fails to come after several calls from the Pharmacy, staffers call in a DOH-Broward program called PROACT. That staff tries to track down the patient using advanced methods and does home visits if needed.

The result? More than half of the missed clients pick up their drugs, Ehren says. “Less than 5 percent of HIV patients don’t get their medications,” Ehren says. “This is a novel approach that is making a difference.”

[Health disparities issue rises to the top of DOH priority list](#)



A persistent health issue has become the No. 1 priority of the Florida Department of Health for the near future – Disparities in health, especially in infant mortality.

The Healthiest Weight campaign of recent years will continue to get attention, but new efforts are planned to address significantly different health outcomes among black residents compared to the general population, says DOH-Broward Director Dr. Paula Thaqi.

The approach uses a health equities model, meaning “the presence of physical, psychological, social, economic and spiritual well-being, not merely the absence of disease.”

The change in focus comes from Department Secretary and Surgeon General Dr. Celeste Philip, who began working on the issue before taking the top post.

To date, public health has focused mainly on encouraging people to change individual behaviors to prevent or mitigate disease. But research is showing that half or more of health status stems from larger factors, such as genetics, income, socio-economic status, access to health care, public policies, environmental issues and even the amount of control people feel they have over their lives.

Infant mortality is one place where disparities show. There’s good news and bad in Broward. From 2005 to 2014, infant deaths per 1,000 births declined overall and for every demographic group in Broward, and are now lower than state rates. But mortality rates for black babies remain two to three times higher than among Hispanic and white babies, respectively. The pattern is the same in the state and nation.

Communicable Diseases Director Patrick Jenkins says the leading causes of infant deaths remain consistent, including premature birth, low birth weight, lack of prenatal care, birth defects and pre-existing medical conditions in mothers.

Good news: Births by high-risk women (smokers and women over age 35) are down, breastfeeding is up, low birth-weight babies and pre-delivery medical issues are down. Problems: Multi-baby births, maternal obesity and mothers receiving late or no prenatal care are rising.

Contributing factors for infant deaths include substance abuse, reluctance by undocumented mothers to seek medical care, mental illness, lack of family support, lack of health insurance, lack of transportation and inadequate prenatal care.

DOH-Broward kicked off the Florida Healthy Baby Initiative last summer with a community meeting and data review. The result was an action plan that was incorporated into the Community Health Improvement Plan.

DOH-Broward works with community partner organizations on numerous efforts to reduce infant deaths:

- Fetal Infant Mortality Review, which looks at deaths to identify systemic issues.
- Breastfeeding Coalition, which coordinates hospitals and providers to encourage the healthy practice.
- Black Infant Practice Initiative, which focuses on community education, especially for immigrant families.
- Infant Health and Safe Sleep Committee, which works to promote putting babies to sleep on their backs, alone, in a crib without other items.
- DOH-Broward Perinatal HIV/AIDS program, which manages pregnant women living with the virus, educates the community and hospital/health care providers, and leads the Perinatal Providers Network.
- March of Dimes committee, whose campaign Healthy Babies Are Worth the Wait discourages elective early births.
- Healthy Start Maternal and Child Health Systems Committee, which includes the Teen Parent Alliance.

[2017 goal: Making 21 the legal age to buy tobacco products](#)

Urging political leaders to make 21 the legal age to buy tobacco products tops the list of initiatives that the Tobacco Free Partnership of Broward will pursue over the next year.

The project will involve asking Broward County, local city commissions and/or state legislators to join a growing list of localities that have raised the legal age for tobacco, which is now 18 in Florida.

California and Hawaii and more than 200 U.S. cities and counties (none in Florida) have raised the legal age to 21, and four states have raised the age to 19.

More than 80 percent of tobacco users start before age 18, many with help from 18-year-old friends who can legally buy it.

“It would help keep tobacco out of the schools,” says Health Educator Imani Richardson of Tobacco Prevention.

The partnership’s volunteer board is staffed by DOH-Broward and chaired by Ellen Feiler, retired as Director of Health Promotion and Social Marketing.

The board approved other priority projects for 2017:

- Encouraging more employers to ban smoking on their property and to offer free quit-smoking services to employees.
- Hold an anti-tobacco event at a Florida Panthers game.
- Participate in Relay for Life walk/run events with the American Cancer Society in Broward.
- Expand the Youth Essay Contest.

Get involved: 954-467-4700, Ext. 3100.



[How we talk to parents about HPV vaccine helps win their approval](#)

DOH-Broward has demonstrated that health professionals can better persuade parents to vaccinate their children against human papilloma virus, just through their choice of words.

By stating simply to parents that HPV vaccine protects kids against cancers, DOH-Broward nurses nearly doubled the number of HPV shots they gave during the 2016 back-to-school immunization campaign at Lauderhill Mall, compared to 2015.

“When HPV becomes a part of routine vaccination and is presented as cancer prevention, parents are more apt to agree to the vaccination for their child,” DOH-Broward staff wrote in a summary on the success of the practice.

HPV vaccine is given to boys and girls starting at age 11, and protects against certain STDs spread through sexual contact.

During the mall campaign in August, DOH-Broward vaccinated 1,640 children against HPV, vs. 903 in 2015, the first year it was offered there. That’s an 82 percent jump. Of those, 1,256 were initial doses, 228 were second doses and 156 were third doses.

Terri Sudden, Director of Public Health Preparedness and Response, gave a presentation on the approach at a statewide immunization conference this month.

HPV vaccine is not required for school admission, and some parents hesitate to say yes because of the sexual aspect of HPV. Federal data from 2013 rank Florida among the lowest in HPV vaccinations, with 39.4 percent of females receiving one dose.

But reframing the conversation has helped. “The success of this practice was due to training immunization nurses on how to talk to parents about HPV and willingness of nurses to implement these new methods,” the DOH report says.

The same approach has helped increase HPV vaccine rates at DOH-Broward clinics, which gave 2,577 doses last year, almost triple the 869 given in 2015.

Offering HPV vaccine at DOH-Broward settings is part of a three-pronged project DOH-Broward began in 2015.

The other parts involve training medical professionals to promote the vaccine routinely, and distributing educational palm cards in the community (over 5,000 so far). The project continues this year.

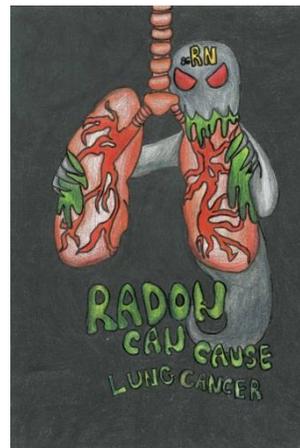
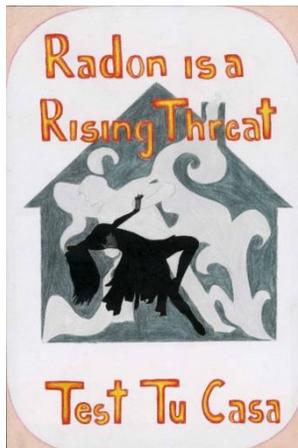
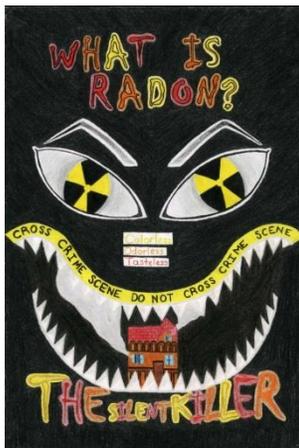
[Hollywood 8th grader wins national radon poster contest](#)

Luckily, Broward County does not have a big problem with poisonous radon gas seeping out of the ground, but our students have a lock on radon education.

Backed with information and support from DOH-Broward Environmental Health, an eighth grade art student at Hollywood Academy of Arts and Sciences won the 2016 National Radon Poster Contest, announced in January.

And, with two of her classmates, Broward swept all three top spots in the Florida poster competition -- for a fourth straight year.

Victoria Rowe (*above right*) took first place nationally and in the state with her poster (*below right*). Kaliana Hutiu (*center*) took second place in the state for her poster (*below center*). Mishel Almaleh (*left*) took third place in the state and finished in the top 10 nationally for her poster (*below left*). Honorable mention in Florida went to classmate Carolina Vilato. (***Above photo courtesy of Art Teacher Hilary Fine.***)



[Broward and 11 local cities lauded for Healthiest Weight projects](#)

Local governments in Broward continue to increase their efforts to create a Healthiest Weight community, in cooperation with DOH-Broward.

The Department named the county and 11 Broward cities as Healthy Weight Community Champions for 2017, recognizing their projects to encourage physical activity and nutritious foods. A year ago, the county and eight cities were recognized. The year before, it was the county and six cities.

The winners were: Broward County, Coconut Creek, Cooper City, Deerfield Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Hallandale Beach, Hollywood, Miramar, Oakland Park, Plantation, Weston and Wilton Manors.

Projects have included park improvements, recreation programs that promote exercise and taking steps to encourage bicycling and community gardens.

“More and more of our community partners are joining the program,” says Terri Sudden, chair of DOH-Broward’s Nutrition and Fitness Task Force.

DOH-Broward will present certificates to each of the Community Champions chosen this year:

[Our Programs, Services and Locations](#)

- * [Breast and Cervical Cancer](#) – Mammograms, pap smears, diagnostic testing, medical referrals and education for eligible women
- * [Dental Care](#) – High-quality dental services for children and for adults in the Ryan White Part A program. Also [School-Based Dental Sealant program](#)
- * [Drowning Prevention](#) -- Information and advocacy to prevent childhood drownings
- * [Emergency Response](#) -- Planning, training and response to address emergencies
- * [Environmental Health](#) -- Inspections, permits and sanitary nuisance complaints
- * [Epidemiology](#) -- Monitoring, investigation and control of infectious disease outbreaks, and data collection
- * [Family Planning](#) -- Exams, counseling, birth control and sterilization
- * [Hepatitis](#) – Testing, vaccination, diagnosis and medical referrals
- * [HIV/AIDS Testing](#) – At our locations or in the community
- * [Immunizations](#) – Childhood and adult vaccines
- * [KidCare Outreach](#) -- Recruiting and enrolling families in state-sponsored health coverage for children
- * [Pharmacy](#) – Medications for clients enrolled in AIDS Drug Assistance Program, Ryan White Part A program and our services
- * [Refugee Health](#) – Testing, immunizations and medical referrals
- * [School Health](#) -- Nursing care and health service in schools
- * [Sexually Transmitted Diseases](#) (STD) – Surveillance and partner services. Testing and treatment provided by the Broward Wellness Center under contract with DOH-Broward
- * [Tobacco Prevention](#) -- Education and advocacy to reduce tobacco usage
- * [Tuberculosis](#) – Testing, diagnosis, treatment and directly observed therapy
- * [Vital Records](#) -- Birth and death certificates
- * [Women, Infants and Children \(WIC\)](#) – Breastfeeding support, nutrition counseling, nutritious foods and referrals

HEALTH CENTERS and WOMEN INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC) OFFICES



Edgar P. Mills Health Center | 900 NW 31st Ave., Fort Lauderdale

Fort Lauderdale Health Center | 2421 SW 6th Ave.

Paul Hughes Health Center | 205 NW Sixth Ave., Pompano Beach

North Regional Health Center | 601 W. Atlantic Blvd., Pompano Beach

South Regional Health Center | 4105 Pembroke Rd., Hollywood

WIC-ONLY OFFICES

Coral Springs | 10077 NW 29th Street

Lauderdale Lakes | 4481 North State Road 7

Pembroke Pines | 8374 Pines Boulevard

OTHER

Administrative Center | 780 SW 24th Street, Fort Lauderdale

Operations Center | 2421-A SW 6th Avenue, Fort Lauderdale

CALL FOR APPOINTMENTS: [Health centers](#) 954-467-4705 or [WIC](#) 954-767-5111

Editor's note on Issue #11

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Mission: To protect, promote and improve the
health of all people in Florida through integrated
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