



NJ Communi-CABLE

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DISEASE SERVICE

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Non-Reporting Physician Loses Court Case

By: Lynette Medeiros, Jersey City Health Department Registered Environmental Health Specialist and Ellen Rudowski, NJDHSS Public Health Nurse Consultant

Reporting of communicable diseases by physicians is a critical trigger for a public health investigation and response. Unfortunately, some physicians do not report “reportable” diseases which can impede public health investigations, both at the state and local levels. The Board of Medical Examiners (BME) has recognized this problem. Included in their April 2006 statutes/regulations document is a mandate that licensed physicians must report diseases designated as notifiable by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) and “Failure to report . . . shall constitute professional misconduct subjecting the licensee to disciplinary action by the Board” (N.J.S.A. 13:35-6.24; full text available at <http://www.state.nj.us/lps/ca/bme/bmelaws.pdf>).



The Jersey City Health Department (JCHD) took action in response to a physician’s failure to supply pertinent clinical information for a reported case of hepatitis A. “Unfortunately, failure to report and lack of physician cooperation during an investigation are becoming chronic problems that prevent proper implementation of disease control measures,” states Lynette Medeiros, JCHD Registered Environmental Health Specialist. Joseph Castagna, JCHD Health Officer and Ms. Medeiros initially issued a summons to the physician for obstruction of a public health investigation to which the physician’s legal representative requested a court hearing. Through court negotiations, a Jersey City Disturbance of the Peace municipal code was enforced based on the physician’s demeanor while conversing with local health department (LHD) staff. Time-stamped documentation in the Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System reflecting LHD and NJDHSS (on behalf of the LHD) attempts to obtain the required information was cited. The judge upheld JCHD’s \$500.00 fine as well as a decision to report the next offense directly to the BME. The physician was assessed \$33.00 in court fees as well as legal counsel expenses.

The NJDHSS commends the Jersey City Health Department for working through the many barriers related to implementing an appropriate public health response and holding those who are required to report communicable diseases accountable when they fail to do so.

Infectious Disease Summit - Coming in April 2009!

NJDHSS Continues Push for Health Ed Surge Capacity

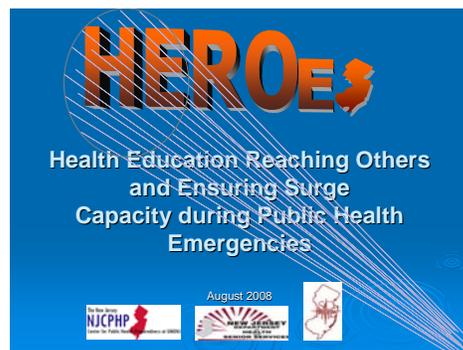
Health education is a critical component of public health emergency planning and response efforts. In the event of a large-scale emergency, it will be necessary to mobilize many health educators in order to implement an effective response.

Over the past year, the NJDHSS health educators, along with the LINC agency health educator/risk communicators (HERCs) have been working to identify health educators across the state who have the skills necessary to assist in such an emergency. "Having a network of health educators identified prior to an emergency will allow us to launch a more rapid response to meet the needs of the affected people," said Suzanne Miro, Health Education Coordinator for the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) Communicable Disease Service.

A new web-based training has been developed in a collaborative effort among the NJDHSS, the University of Medicine and Dentistry of NJ—Center for Public Health Preparedness, Rutgers—The State University of NJ, and NJ Society for Public Health

Education. The training "HEROs: Health Educators Reaching Others and Ensuring Surge Capacity during Public Health Emergencies" was launched in November 2008. This training is designed to describe different types of emergencies, explain the various phases of an emergency, clarify the role of health educators in emergency response, highlight the importance of having health education surge capacity and encourage health educators to join their local Medical Reserve Corps units.

The training is currently available on the NJ Learning Management Network system at <https://njlmn.rutgers.edu> and can be found in the Library section.



Awareness
Months

February

National Condom
Week (8th—14th)

Team Health Races for the Cure!

By: Rosemary Kidder, Research Scientist I

On October 5th, 2008, NJDHSS employees, family and friends, participated in the 2008 Central and South Jersey Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure at Six Flags Great Adventure, Jackson, NJ. It was a beautiful day for the event in which approximately 11,000 people attended to support the fight against breast cancer. The NJDHSS "Team Health" had 62 participants, as compared to last year's six participants. Team Health received an award from Komen for the "largest percentage increase on an existing team." The team proudly raised over \$3,000 in donations. The Central and South Jersey

Affiliate has raised \$17 million over the past 14 years, investing in breast cancer research and local education and screening initiatives in 13 counties. NJDHSS is looking forward to next year's event with an even bigger team!



InSPOT Provides STD Exposure Info to Partners

By: *Amelia Hamarman, Health Educator*



In New Jersey, there's a new way for people to tell their sexual partners that they were exposed to a sexually transmitted disease (STD) including HIV. InSPOT is a web-based STD and HIV partner notification tool that allows users to send e-cards to sexual partners informing them of their exposure to an STD or HIV. Partner notification has traditionally been done in conjunction with Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) who work for the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services or local health departments. However, the increasingly large number of STD cases makes this traditional means of notification for all named partners unrealistic. Providing an easy and private way for all people to notify their sexual partners of possible STD or HIV infection may increase rates of partner notification and treatment and subsequently lower rates of STD transmission.



Users visiting the inSPOT website can choose from six e-card designs, select the STD they were diagnosed with, fill out the recipients' email addresses and then decide whether they want to send the e-card anonymously or include their own email address. There is also space on each e-card for users to add their own personal message if they choose to do so.



When an e-card is received, a user simply clicks on the card which links them to a web page with information about the specific STD they were exposed to including information about testing and treatment, and search clinic locations to find out where to get tested. They can also send out their own e-cards to other sexual contacts.

InSPOT was developed by Internet Sexuality Information Services, Inc. (ISIS, Inc.) as a response to increasing STD rates in the San Francisco area. Since its original launch in 2004, ISIS, Inc. has developed inSPOT sites for 19 cities and states across the United States as well as three international sites. InSPOT has received attention and accolades from the press for its innovative approach to a public health issue. Since its launch in 2004, more than 30,000 people have sent over 49,500 e-cards. New Jersey is proud to announce the launch of our own inSPOT site. Please visit www.inspot.org/newjersey to learn more.

Welcome!

Barbara Carothers—Public Health Representative 3, CDRSS

Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite!

By: *Shereen Semple, Epidemiologist*

Prior to World War II, bed bugs were a common pest in the United States. Improvements in hygiene and widespread use of DDT led to the disappearance of most household bed bug infestations. Unfortunately, bed bugs have been making a comeback, and in recent years, bed bug infestations have been increasing in homes, apartments, hotels, health care facilities, dormitories, shelters, and schools.

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small, wingless insects that feed on the blood of animals, including humans. Bed bugs are nocturnal, meaning they are active at night and hide during the day. Bed bugs are brown to reddish-brown, oval-shaped and very thin; their flattened shape allows them to hide in and travel through narrow crevices in mattresses, box springs, bed frames, headboards, electrical sockets, walls, suitcases and even picture frames and knick knacks.

What is the life cycle of bed bugs?

Bed bugs develop from egg to adult in five stages with an average lifespan of ten months to a little over one year. In the northeastern United States, bed bugs typically have up to three generations per year. At each stage of growth, the insect must take a blood meal in order to molt, and female bed bugs require a new blood meal to lay eggs. However, bed bugs will not die without a blood meal; adult bed bugs can survive for months without feeding on a host.

Are bed bugs a public health risk?

Bed bugs are not known to spread disease. Bites produce a variety of reactions in people. Some people are not aware they've been bitten, while other people may have an allergic reaction and the area around the bite may become swollen and itchy. As a general rule, avoid scratching bed bug

bites, as they may develop scabs or lead to a secondary infection.

Individuals who experience allergic reactions to bed bug bites are advised to consult with a health care provider for more specific information.



How do infestations start?

Bed bug infestations are often mistakenly associated with poor sanitation. Bed bug infestations can occur anywhere, regardless of sanitary conditions, although cluttered homes provide more spaces for bed bugs to hide. Bed bugs are usually transported from an infested area by hitching a ride in luggage, clothing, lap top computers, infested bedding or contaminated furniture. For this reason, it is important to never bring any discarded or second hand furniture into a home without inspecting it first. Second hand mattresses should be certified as 'bed bug free' before purchasing. When staying in a hotel, it is a good idea to inspect the room for signs of bed bugs and report any problems to the hotel management immediately. Avoid placing luggage or personal items directly on the bed and use luggage racks instead, keep all luggage closed when not in use, and search luggage and personal items before bringing back home.

Who is responsible for controlling bed bug infestations?

As per New Jersey Administrative Code Title 5, Chapter 28, both tenants and landlords are responsible for controlling bed bug infestations. Tenants are responsible for maintaining a clean and sanitary dwelling. As such, if a bed bug infestation is confined to a single dwelling, the tenant is responsible for eradication. When two or more dwellings are involved, the landlord is responsible for providing a reasonably insect proof condition. Since bed bugs often hide or travel in narrow crevices and walls, infestations are rarely confined to one dwelling.

How can I control and/or prevent a bed bug infestation?

If a tenant or owner suspects a bed bug infestation, the first step is to contact a licensed pesticide control

Health Literacy Spotlight

Communicating Clearly Over the Phone

By Helen Osborne, M.Ed., OTR/L

President, Health Literacy Consulting

Wherever I go, people are talking on the phone. I recently called a workman to schedule an estimate. The conversation went smoothly enough until I gave him the address. He then asked me to wait a moment so he could write it down. Seems he was driving while talking and had no hands to spare -- one was on the wheel and the other on the phone. Yikes!

Beyond safety concerns, I wonder how people can concentrate and comprehend when they are so distracted. And I also wonder how distractions like these affect patient- provider calls. Whether distracted or not, here are some of my suggestions to make telephone conversations more clear:

- **Appreciate that the telephone only allows for auditory learning.** It is extra important to choose your words carefully when talking over the phone since there are no visual or tactile clues. Speak in plain language — using words people already know or clearly explaining ones they need to learn.
- **Make sure that now is a good time to talk.** Just because you have time to talk doesn't mean it is equally good for the other person. Ask, rather than assume, if this is a convenient time. If not, take a moment and make a phone date for later on.
- **Have help in your voice.** Sound friendly and welcoming, even if you must say something negative. As much as possible, frame your message in positive terms by saying "I will" and "I can" rather than "I won't" and "I can't." If and when you need to say "no," state why and offer alternatives.
- **Confirm understanding.** After key points and again at the end of a conversation, summarize what was discussed and actions each person agreed to take. If possible, follow-up with written information (via letter or email) as well as a number to call for questions or more information.
- **Leave clear voice messages.** Speak slowly and clearly when you leave a voice-message. State your phone number twice -- once at the beginning and again at the end. This way, the other person has two chances to get the correct number. Make sure all your voice messages (including the one on your own phone) sound friendly and inviting. My secret for doing this is to stand up when I record!

Ways to Learn More:

Osborne, H, 2004. *Health Literacy from A to Z: Practical Ways to Communicate Your Health Message*. Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett Publishers. A chapter of this book is about communicating clearly over the phone. Order your copy by going to www.healthliteracy.com or www.jbpub.com or most online bookstores.

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The NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service Includes:

- Infectious and Zoonotic Disease Program (IZDP)
- Vaccine Preventable Disease Program (VPDP)
- Sexually Transmitted Disease Program (STDP)
- Tuberculosis Control Program (TBCP)



Past issues of the NJ Communi-CABLE are available online at <http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/newsletter.htm>.

Communicable Disease Service Mission Statement

Our mission is to prevent communicable disease among all citizens of New Jersey, and to promote the knowledge and use of healthy lifestyles to maximize the health and well-being of New Jerseyans.

We will accomplish our mission through our leadership, collaborative partnerships, and advocacy for communicable disease surveillance, research, education, treatment, prevention and control.

Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite!

Cont. from pg 4

operator (PCO). Be sure to choose a PCO with expertise in bed bug control. The PCO will assess the extent of the bed bug infestation and should provide a written plan detailing eradication and control. Since bed bugs are not readily attracted to bait and usually travel from room to room, use of a residual pesticide is not effective unless other control measures are implemented concurrently. Some recommended control strategies include:

- **Remove clutter and clean the dwelling:** Keep personal items organized and neat, focusing on places where bed bugs may hide, including knick knacks, picture frames, piles of clothing and stacks of books and / or newspapers. Be sure to keep all areas in good sanitary condition; use a household cleaner on a daily basis.
- **Clean and isolate the bed:** Clean sheets, pillowcases, bed skirt and blankets in a hot dryer (140° F) for at least 20 minutes. Since bed bugs cannot fly, move the bed away from the wall and make sure the linens don't touch the ground. Encase the mattress in a plastic cover and zip or tape closed on all sides. Wrap the bed legs in tape.
- **Vacuum and/or steam clean:** Vacuum every day, tilting furniture and linens to get between crevices, seams, creases and folds. Consider using a steam cleaner ($\geq 160^{\circ}$ F) at a high

temperature. Be sure to vacuum edges where the carpet or floor meets the furniture and walls.

Seal crevices: Fill any cracks around window sills, baseboards, floorboards and on furniture. Repair or remove peeling wallpaper and tighten electrical sockets and light switch covers. If you are a tenant, report these damages and repairs to the landlord.

Where can I find more information?

Brochures and guidelines are also available through the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, Consumer and Environmental Health Services, Public Health Sanitation and Safety Program, posted on their website at: www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/phss/documents/bedbugfactsheet.pdf.

In New Jersey, many local health departments are developing brochures and guidelines about bed bugs. For example, the Hunterdon County Department of Health, Mosquito and Vector Control Program, recently developed brochures and guidelines that are posted on their website at: www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/health/westnile.htm.