



# NJ Communi-CABLE

JULY 2007

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## COMMUNICABLE DISEASE SERVICE

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## Dr. Eddy Bresnitz Installed as President

Eddy Bresnitz, M.D., M.S., Deputy Commissioner for the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and State Epidemiologist, is the new president of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE). His term as CSTE president began on June 28th in Atlantic City where the national organization of disease detectives held its 2007 Annual Conference.



As CSTE president, Dr. Bresnitz will seek—among other priorities—to advance the field of applied epidemiology. “Epidemiologists work in both the public and private sectors so their skills are utilized beyond the public health arena. For example, industry needs epidemiologists to work in clinical trials research, to manage health care databases and the non-profit sector also has need of epidemiologists to do data-related work and, of course, there are plenty of epidemiologists who pursue careers in academia educating new epidemiologists and doing research that can have an impact on the public’s health. Epidemiology is the science of public health and holds wonderful opportunities for creative young people looking for a chance to contribute their talents. Finally, epidemiologists are often members of national committees or advisory groups helping to make public health policy at the local, state, and national level.”

Looking forward, Dr. Bresnitz is eager to put CSTE to work to reduce health disparities. “One of the nation’s overarching public health goals is to reduce health care disparities between racial and ethnic groups to the extent a health department has the ability to do that. The root cause of many disparities is not something a health department can address, and certainly not something epidemiologists can address. As epidemiologists, however, we can be sure that we collect good quality data, stratified on race and ethnicity, aggregate and analyze that data, report on it orally and in print, and provide the data to policy makers so that precious public health care resources can be directed where it can make the most difference.”

The focus of public health —preventing, rather than treating, illness—ultimately drew Dr. Bresnitz to the field of public health and his eventual leadership of CSTE.



# Avian Influenza and Pandemic Flu Planning

By: *Lisa McHugh, Epidemiologist*

## CDC Pandemic Influenza Update

### Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) Avian Influenza Training

In January of 2007, three staff members from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and one staff member from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture attended a training entitled "Rapid Response Training: The Role of Public Health in a Multi-agency Response to Avian Influenza in the United States." This training was developed jointly by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CSTE and the North Carolina Center for Public Health Preparedness. The intention of this training was to introduce materials available to states to train responders involved in responding to an avian influenza outbreak. CSTE is providing a small amount of funding to states represented at this training to develop and implement similar trainings within these states. New Jersey has applied successfully for this funding and will develop a NJ-specific training course for responding to avian influenza. This course will be offered at several venues around the state. Additionally, these CSTE-developed trainings are available for general use on the CSTE website at [www.cste.org/influenza/avian.asp](http://www.cste.org/influenza/avian.asp).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services produce a Pandemic Influenza Update newsletter on a regular basis. This newsletter contains information on planning and preparedness efforts as well as updates to the current H5N1 outbreak. Individuals may sign up to receive this update at the following web address:

[http://service.govdelivery.com/service/subscribe.html?code+USCDC\\_51](http://service.govdelivery.com/service/subscribe.html?code+USCDC_51).



## Health Awareness Months

### July:

**National Group B Strep Awareness Month**

### August:

**National Immunization Awareness Month**

### September

**National Pediculosis Prevention Month/ Head Lice Prevention Month**

**Take a Loved One for a Check Up Day (18th)**

### Recently Released Federal Documents

Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation (Feb 2007)  
[www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/commitigation.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/commitigation.html)

Guidance on Preparing the Workplace for an Influenza Pandemic (Feb 2007)  
[www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza\\_pandemic.html](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/influenza_pandemic.html)

Ethical Guidelines in Pandemic Influenza (Feb 2007)  
[www.cdc.gov/od/science/phec/panFlu\\_Ethic\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/od/science/phec/panFlu_Ethic_Guidelines.pdf)

Interim Public Health Guidance for the Use of Facemasks and Respirators in Non-Occupational Community Settings During an Influenza Pandemic (May 2007)  
[www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/commaskguidance.pdf](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/commaskguidance.pdf)

The Public Engagement Project on Community Control Measures for Pandemic Influenza (May 2007)  
[www.keystone.org/spp/documents/FinalReport\\_Community%20Control5\\_2007spc.pdf](http://www.keystone.org/spp/documents/FinalReport_Community%20Control5_2007spc.pdf)

Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers  
[www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA\\_pandemic\\_health.pdf](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA_pandemic_health.pdf)

# CDS Training Update!

## **Communicable Disease Investigator Training**

The Communicable Disease Investigator training was developed by the Communicable Disease Service to promote consistent communicable disease investigation practices across the state. Staff piloted the program to a small target audience in November 2006 and fine-tuned the course based on feedback. The training covers various aspects of disease investigation, including an overview of NJAC 8:57, disease reporting, surveillance, data analysis, interview techniques and outbreak investigation. Regional trainings were held in April and May and a total of 492 participants attended. Leadership education credits for public health professionals and contact hours for registered nurses are awarded to those who complete the program. An additional training is scheduled for October 30, 2007 at the NJ State Police Forensic Technology Center, Hamilton. Training is free and registration is available through the NJ Learning Management Network (<https://njlmn.rutgers.edu>).

## **Meningococcal Disease Education Program**

Meningococcal disease education programs are planned for fall/winter 2007. These two-hour sessions will describe the epidemiology of meningococcal disease, steps to manage a report of meningococcal disease, collaboration between health agencies and stakeholders, and risk communication strategies to reduce panic and fear. The Communicable Disease Service has developed two presentations that target unique audiences: school nurses/personnel and public health professionals. The school presentation discusses the role of the school nurse and collaboration/coordination with public health before and during an investigation of a case of meningococcal disease. The public health presentation focuses on reporting procedures, verifying the diagnosis and collaborating with stakeholders. The meningococcal disease program offers 2.0 continuing education credits for public health professionals, 2.0 contact hours for registered nurses and 2.0 professional development hours for school personnel. Meningococcal education sessions are scheduled throughout the year. To locate and register for a session near you, log onto the NJ Learning Management Network (<https://njlmn.rutgers.edu>). NOTE: Some sessions have limited registration.

## **Hepatitis B/C Overview for Local Public Health Departments**

The NJ Department of Health and Senior Services Hepatitis C Coordinator, Sandy VanSant, APN, has developed an exciting training program for public health professionals, "Hepatitis B/C Overview for Local Public Health Departments." The purpose of this training is to provide local health department staff (public health nurses, environmental health specialists, health officers) with the information needed to investigate hepatitis B and C cases, provide appropriate education to persons infected with hepatitis B or C, and discuss measures that can be taken to prevent hepatitis B & C. This program is 1.5 hours and confers 1.5 public health CE credits and 1.5 registered nurse contact hours. To schedule a program in your county/jurisdiction, contact Ms. VanSant at (609) 588-7500.

## 2007 Spring Summits a Success!

The 2007 Spring Infectious Disease Summits were held on April 24 (southern NJ) and May 1 (northern NJ). More than 530 public health and health care professionals, including infection control practitioners, health officers, public health nurses, epidemiologists, health educators and school nurses attended the day-long symposium. The Infectious Disease Summits are sponsored by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services Communicable Disease Service in conjunction with the New Jersey Society for Public Health Education.

The Summits provide a forum to address issues and provide updates concerning emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, epidemiologic surveillance and other communicable disease initiatives and activities taking place in New Jersey. The morning plenary sessions included discussions of public health control measures and highlighted outbreak investigations that include collaboration among federal, state, and local agencies. Topics featured during afternoon breakout sessions included community-acquired MRSA, "demystifying" laboratory reports and

vaccine updates and new immunization initiatives. Continuing education credits for public health professionals and certified health education specialists, contact hours for registered nurses and professional development hours for public school personnel were conferred to participants. The next Infectious Disease Summits are planned for 2008.

## Crisis Communication Conference

The 2nd annual Emergency & Crisis Communication Conference took place on May 3, 2007, at the Conference Center at Mercer County Community College, West Windsor, NJ. More than 150 public health, health care and communication professionals attended this exciting day-long symposium. This year's

program featured national and local presenters. The morning plenary session featured public information officers from Louisiana and Texas who shared their experience and described communication challenges during Hurricane Katrina. Other sessions throughout the day included panels of local and state public health professionals who discussed

communication changes in New Jersey five years after the anthrax attacks, anticipated communication challenges during a pandemic, and how cultural communication issues impact preparedness.

# Congratulations!

Congratulations to Stella Tsai, Research Scientist I, on her graduation from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey School of Public Health with a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree.

# Escolar Fish—Buyer Beware!

By: Mary Glenshaw, Centers for Disease Control, Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer

You may have read about two recent outbreaks involving persons who ate escolar fish in Bergen and Monmouth Counties. Persons affected reported yellow and orange diarrhea in the days following their consumption of escolar; two persons also experienced scombroid poisoning. This article describes escolar fish, common reactions associated with its consumption, and tips to avoid illness and control outbreaks.

## Escolar Fish

“Escolar” is the common name for the fish species *Lepidocybium flavobrunneum*, which is found in deep, tropical ocean waters, particularly the Gulf of Mexico and the South Pacific. It is closely related to oilfish” (*Ruvettus pretiosus*). The meat of these fish contains about 20% wax esters, an oily chemical compound that is indigestible.

Escolar has been noted to appeal to fish wholesalers and chefs because of its rich taste and firm texture reminiscent of Chilean sea bass, but without the high price tag. Escolar steaks are thick, cheap, and available at retail locations. A local wholesaler reported that Chilean sea bass sold for around \$14/lb, more than double the cost of wholesale escolar. The differential at retail markets may be even greater.

## Health concerns

Despite its economic value, escolar and oilfish are potentially hazardous to consumers. Nicknamed “Ex-Lax” fish, escolar consumed in large portions can cause mild to moderate

gastrointestinal (GI) illness. The hallmark symptom of GI illness from escolar is keriorrhoea, the uncontrollable passage of oil from the rectum. Affected persons often describe this symptom as diarrhea that is orange in color. Keriorrhoea can occur within a few hours of consumption, and can be accompanied by nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramping, and headaches. Symptoms generally last 1-3 days.

A more severe health risk associated with escolar consumption is scombroid poisoning. Scombroid poisoning can occur when diners consume histamine in fish that had delayed or improper refrigeration. Histamine and other amines form scombrotoxin when naturally occurring histidine is converted through histidine decarboxylase. Fish are susceptible to this chemical breakdown when a temperature of <math>4.5^{\circ}\text{C}</math> (

Scombroid poisoning reactions generally occur rapidly, often immediately following consumption, and last for up to 24 hours. Initial reactions to scombrotoxin are similar to a severe allergic reaction, including flushing, sweating, burning in the throat, dizziness, nausea, and headache. Symptoms progress to upper body rashes, hives, edema, and abdominal cramping and diarrhea. Severe reactions can include respiratory and cardiac distress that must be treated emergently.

Scombroid poisoning is most common among fish in the Scombridae family, including tuna and mackerel, but can also occur in escolar, mahi mahi, bluefish, and marlin. Fish are considered contaminated with histamine levels of 20-50ppm, but illness generally occurs upon consumption of fish with histamine levels >200ppm. Contaminated fish may have a rancid odor, and may have a “honeycomb” appearance when cooked.

## Recommendations

- When purchasing fish at restaurants or retail locations, ask for details regarding the origin of the fish. In NJ and in other states, diners have purchased escolar fish that was labeled “sea bass.”
- Encourage persons who want to consume escolar to limit portions to less than 2oz (less than a deck of cards).
- Discourage consumption of escolar and other scombroid-susceptible fish among persons with compromised immune systems, such as the very young and old, and pregnant women.
- Discourage consumption of fish with a foul odor, fish that was stored above - Encourage reporting of GI illness and scombroid poisoning related to fish consumption to local public health agencies.
- Encourage diners and food establishments to keep raw or cooked samples of suspected fish for laboratory testing.

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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.**

## CDS Welcomes New Employees

### Vaccine Preventable Disease Program

Ebony Gilchrist—Customer Service Representative 4

Renee Young—Clerk Typist



### Infectious and Zoonotic Disease Program

Lakeshi Durr—Senior Clerk

Rosemary Kidder—Research Scientist I

## CDS Employees Recognized

Congratulations are in order for the Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System (CDRSS) Committee for their outstanding work and for the receipt of the 2007 State Public Service Teamwork/Partnership Award. This award represents the strong work the committee has invested into making CDRSS what it is today and for their continued dedication to this valuable public health tool. This system has served as the foundation of communicable disease reporting/investigations for the past several years.