

# Center Spotlight



a program of the North Carolina Institute for Public Health

*A quarterly newsletter highlighting NCCPHP activities and accomplishments*

## October-December 2006

Pandemic influenza planning in North Carolina continued to be a focus for NCCPHP activities this past quarter. Work with the General Communicable Disease Control Branch of the North Carolina Division of Public Health reviewing local health departments' pandemic influenza plans is ongoing while a new online course, *Pandemic Influenza Preparedness for Local Health Departments*, was successfully piloted with 46 North Carolina local health practitioners. NCCPHP also co-sponsored a seminar titled "How Will Avian Influenza Affect North Carolina" with the UNC School of Journalism and the Triangle Center for Homeland Security. Curriculum development in partnership with the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists for a national training program on pandemic influenza for public health responders also continued this quarter.

In other areas, NCCPHP completed a proposal for the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop training materials for field epidemiologists in the South Pacific nation of Fiji. We are proud of our ongoing partnerships at the local, state, national and international level.

One particular partnership, between NCCPHP and NC Public Health Regional Surveillance Team 5 (PHRST 5), recently won the UNC Office of Research's monthly poster contest. Steven Ramsey and Mark Smith (PHRST 5) and Jen Horney (NCCPHP) were the authors of the poster titled "The Rapid Response Project: Using Handheld Computers for Rapid Needs Assessment During Outbreaks and Disasters."

We look forward to continued collaboration with existing and new partners in 2007.

*---Pia MacDonald, NCCPHP Director*

## Surveillance & Epidemiology

### Team Epi-Aid (SPH student volunteers to assist urgent public health response)

This quarter, 10 Team Epi-Aid students assisted the Alamance County Community Health Assessment task force, a coalition of governmental and non-governmental organizations, to collect data as part of the county's community health assessment process. Team Epi-Aid volunteers interviewed community residents to gain a better understanding of the county's health

## Publications

**Snider C, MacDonald PDM, Salyers M, Wolf L, Maillard JM.** Reporting communicable diseases: online trainings can help. *North Carolina Medical Board Forum Newsletter*. October 2006;3:3-4.

## Presentations

Presented at the NC Public Health Association's 2006 Annual Educational Conference. October 10-13, 2006. New Bern, NC:

**Brunette K, Padgett P.** Simple data analysis for local health departments.

**Harrison, LM.** Are we ready for the aging workforce?

Presented at the American Public Health Association 2006 Annual Meeting; November 4-8, 2006; Boston, MA:

**Alexander LK, Horney JA, Wallace JW, Davis M, Wilfert RA and MacDonald PDM.** Guiding principles of a comprehensive Internet-based public health preparedness training program.

issues. Team Epi-Aid also participated in conducting a survey [led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the NC Division of Public Health] of Yancey County school parents after Yancey County shut down schools following an influenza outbreak. Volunteers called parents of children in Yancey County schools and interviewed them to assess how disruptive it is to a community to use school closure as a public health control measure.

## Technical Assistance to North Carolina

This quarter, NCCPHP worked with several Public Health Regional Surveillance Teams (PHRSTs) on their county-level surveillance reports. Final reports for PHRST Regions 1, 2, and 6 were completed in October.

NCCPHP staff continued to provide technical assistance to local health departments around pandemic influenza planning. During the final quarter of 2006, the pandemic influenza project team made planning visits to 29 health departments/districts and received 25 pandemic influenza plans for review. A new electronic pan flu resource center was developed on UNC's BlackBoard platform in November 2006 and has been made available to all 86 health departments/districts in North Carolina. In addition, a pandemic influenza planning listserv was established to enable planners to exchange information and resources with each other. These resources and databases seek to inform and expedite the plan writing process at the local level. All local health departments that submit pan flu plans to NCCPHP will receive oral and/or written feedback on the content of their plans in the first quarter of 2007.

In the past 3 months, NCCPHP has conducted Epi Info software trainings for public health educators in Winston-Salem and Charlotte and provided Epi Info technical support for several PHRST regions (PHRSTs 2 and 5) and counties (Forsyth, Rowan) as well as assisting with data analysis for a community health assessment in Johnston County.

## Research Grant to Examine Evacuation Response During Hurricanes

NCCPHP Assistant Director Jen Horney has received a grant from the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Using funds from the National Science Foundation, the Quick Response Grant Program at the Natural Hazards Center offers small grants to gather information at the site of a disaster soon after it occurs. Jen's project is titled, "Explaining Hurricane Evacuation: The Role of Social Networks and Social Cohesion." She will use the funds to examine how community ties impact a person's decision to evacuate immediately after a hurricane.

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## Training & Education

This quarter, NCCPHP continued its work with the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists on curriculum development for upcoming training conferences on avian influenza. We also hosted several sessions in our popular online preparedness symposium series. More details on these and other training programs are below.

**Harrison LM, Rothney E, Horney JA, MacDonald PDM.** Implementing an academic/practice partnership model in local health departments across North Carolina: Promoting a lifelong learning initiative for a better prepared public health workforce.

**Harrison LM, Rothney E, Horney JA, MacDonald PDM.** Using technology and partnerships across academic and practice agencies to promote a lifelong learning infrastructure in public health.

**Horney JA, Wilfert RA.** Evaluation of the Certificate Program in Community Preparedness and Disaster Management.

**Horney JA, Wilfert RA.** Public health emergency law: planning, implementation and evaluation of the foundational course developed by the CDC Public Health Law Program.

**North Carolina Center for Public Health Preparedness,** North Carolina Division of Public Health - General Communicable Disease Control Branch. Follow-up evaluation of a hybrid Internet/classroom-based continuing education communicable disease course for North Carolina public health nurses.

## Low Literacy Influenza Educational Materials

In conjunction with staff at the Duplin County Health Department and their community partners, NCCPHP staff developed low literacy educational materials on both seasonal and avian influenza. These materials, available in both English and Spanish, are being distributed at influenza immunization clinics and throughout the county.

## Training Web Site

In the 4th quarter of 2006, the NCCPHP Training Web Site had 4,107 newly completed trainings and 1,932 new registered users, for a total of 15,843 users. There were 4 new NCCPHP-developed trainings added to the site, for a total of 163 available NCCPHP trainings.

## FOCUS on Field Epidemiology

Two new issues in Volume 3 of *FOCUS on Field Epidemiology* were published this quarter. Conducting Traceback Investigations covers the basics of carrying out a traceback investigation, a process used to determine the production and distribution chain of an item implicated as the source of an outbreak. Conducting Environmental Health Investigations discusses how to conduct an environmental health assessment, a type of environmental health investigation used to identify the practices or conditions that may have resulted in contamination of an item implicated in an outbreak.

Two issues of *FOCUS on Field Epidemiology* were also translated and published in Spanish this quarter. The newly available Spanish issues are Volume 1, Issue 6: Hypothesis Generation During Outbreaks (Generación de Hipótesis Durante Brotes Epidémicos) and Volume 2, Issue 1: Hypothesis-Generating Interviews (Entrevistas para la Generación de Hipótesis).

## Field Epidemiology Training Program, Guatemala

NCCPHP staff continued their work to develop a curriculum in field epidemiology in Guatemala. This project is being carried out in partnership with the CDC and international partners in Guatemala including Guatemala's Ministry of Public Health and the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala.

## Preparedness Training Series

The 2006 Preparedness Training Series wrapped up in December with a total of 106 participants completing all 12 monthly preparedness trainings. The 2007 series began enrolling participants in late December 2006.

## Online Certificate in Field Epidemiology

The Certificate in Field Epidemiology is a 12-credit hour graduate level program offered entirely over the Internet. The curriculum addresses the core functions of outbreak investigation, surveillance systems and methods, infectious disease epidemiology, and field epidemiology methods. Thirty-five students admitted to the program in fall 2005 completed the certificate in December 2006.

American Evaluation Association's 2006 Annual Conference. November 1-4, 2006. Portland, OR:

**Davis M.** Creating and implementing a new evaluation preparedness framework.

**Davis M.** Needs assessment in Centers for Public Health Preparedness: strategies and Issues. Panel discussion.

## NCCPHP in the News

A pandemic influenza stakeholders' meeting featuring sessions hosted by NCCPHP staff was featured on Metro 3, the staff educational television network for the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee.

Molly McKnight, a graduate research assistant with NCCPHP is featured in the latest issue of [Carolina Public Health](#). She and her fellow students are featured for their work as part of an 'Action Oriented Community Diagnosis team' looking at challenges faced by the Latino community in Johnston County.

## ***Introduction to Communicable Disease Surveillance and Investigation Training Course***

In partnership with the General Communicable Disease Control Branch at the NC Division of Public Health, NCCPHP provided technical support for a new session of the 15-week *Introduction to Communicable Disease Surveillance and Investigation* training course. A total of 38 public health staff from 31 North Carolina counties completed the fall 2006 course.

## **Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Training for North Carolina Local Health Departments**

In conjunction with the General Communicable Disease Control Branch in the NC Division of Public Health, NCCPHP successfully completed the pilot of a new short online course about pandemic influenza preparedness for North Carolina local health departments. The course is designed to increase knowledge and build skills relevant to the essential and unique elements of an influenza pandemic response at the local level. A total of 46 people from 43 different North Carolina health departments enrolled in the course. More than 80% of enrolled students in the pilot completed the course and 97% of completers reported that the course was excellent. The course will be repeated in spring 2007.

## **Symposium Series on Public Health Preparedness**

NCCPHP continued its 2006-07 Symposium Series on Public Health Preparedness by hosting three online symposia titled "Legal Preparedness: Building New Bridges with the Private Sector," "Non-Pharmacological Interventions for Pandemic Influenza," and "Hospital-based Public Health Epidemiologist Program: A Novel Approach to Public Health in North Carolina." Each symposium is broadcast in a "webinar" presentation format with audiovisuals delivered via a combination of phone and computer technology. Archived versions of these presentations and information about upcoming events in the series are available on the [NCCPHP Symposium Series](#) page.

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## **Lifelong Learning**

In the month of November NCCPHP collaborated to administer a workforce development survey to all employees of the North Carolina Divisions of Public Health and Environmental Health. This survey is part of an accreditation process for these state agencies.

NCCPHP staff have provided training and assistance to Yadkin and Buncombe counties on various issues related to lifelong learning and the online workforce development system.

## **Project Public Health Ready**

NCCPHP assisted the 25 northeastern North Carolina counties in the PHRST 1 region to apply for Project Public Health Ready certification from the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO). After final documents were submitted early in the fall, NCCPHP staff worked with PHRST 1 counties this past quarter to respond to NACCHO reviews of the application.

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