

# Center Spotlight



a program of the North Carolina Institute for Public Health

A quarterly newsletter highlighting NCCPHP activities and accomplishments

July - September 2007

In September, Rear Admiral Craig VanderWagen, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Preparedness and Response at the US Department of Health and Human Services, visited North Carolina to meet with public health officials. During his 2-day site visit to the NC Division of Public Health, several projects were featured in which NCCPHP has had a role: the geographic information systems (GIS) Project 516, which strives to improve efficiency of local health departments through use of GPS devices; evaluation of the NC DETECT surveillance and reporting system; initial training of local health department staff on the state's new system for electronic disease reporting; and ongoing planning for pandemic influenza at local health departments. I am very pleased that NCCPHP has had the opportunity to participate in these important projects and to partner with public health agencies at the state and local level in North Carolina and beyond.

---Pia MacDonald, NCCPHP Director

## Surveillance & Epidemiology

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

This quarter, Team Epi-Aid volunteers participated in community health assessments conducted in Iredell and Rockingham counties and assisted Alamance County Health Department staff with a food recall due to botulinum toxin. Volunteers also conducted interviews for an HIV risk behavior survey at the NC Pride Festival in Durham on September 29; 355 interviews were completed by Team Epi-Aid and other volunteers.

### Technical Assistance to North Carolina

NCCPHP continued to work on the statewide effort to transition local health department staff from paper-based to electronic disease reporting. NCCPHP staff developed a training curriculum to provide supplemental "hands-on" system training at 4 face-to-face regional training sessions for local health department tuberculosis staff. A total of 63 local health department staff (representing Guilford, Robeson, Wilson, Durham, Wayne, Montgomery, Johnston, Nash, and New Hanover counties) and 4 NC Division of Public Health staff attended the trainings on the NC Electronic Disease Surveillance System.

## Publications

**MacDonald PDM, Torok MR, Maillard J, Salyers M, Wolf LA, Nelson AL.** Knowledge and practice of foodborne disease clinical specimen testing and reporting in North Carolina. *NC Med J.* 2007; 68:305-311.

**MacDonald PDM, Torok MR, Nelson AL, Salyers M.** Practices around acute diarrheal illness diagnosis, counseling and reporting: laboratory and health-care practitioners in North Carolina. *Foodborne Pathog Dis.* 2007;4: 359-365.

**MacDonald PDM, Nelson AL, Hightow-Weidman L, Leone PA.** Disease intervention specialists (DIS) as a resource in a public health emergency. *Biosecure Bioterror.* 2007;5:239-248.

**Torok MR, Miller WC, Hobbs MW, MacDonald PD, Leone PA, Schwebke JR, Seña AC.** The association between *Trichomonas vaginalis* infection and level of vaginal lactobacilli among non-pregnant women. *J Infect Dis.* 2007;196:1102-1107.

NCCPHP staff developed a guidebook for use in GIS/GPS trainings, which continued throughout the state; 18 public health professionals attended a training session in Kill Devil Hills, 16 health department staff from Onslow and Carteret counties attended a training session in July, and 23 participants attended a training session in Greensboro in August.

Also this quarter, NCCPHP's pandemic influenza preparedness team continued their work reviewing plans submitted by local health departments.

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## Training & Education

### Training Web Site

In the 3rd quarter of 2007, the NCCPHP Training Web Site had 3,158 newly-completed trainings and 1,762 new registered users, for a total of 21,358 users. There were 8 new NCCPHP-developed trainings added to the site, for a total of 186 available NCCPHP trainings.

### *FOCUS on Field Epidemiology*

Two issues of *FOCUS on Field Epidemiology* were published this quarter, Volume 4, Issue 4: *Laboratory Diagnosis: Molecular Techniques* and Volume 4, Issue 5: *Laboratory Diagnosis in Outbreak Investigations*. These issues are available on the *FOCUS* Web page.

A new issue of *FOCUS on Field Epidemiology* was published in Spanish. The newly-available Spanish issue is Volume 2, Issue 5: *Introduccion a la Epidemiologia Forense (Introduction to Forensic Epidemiology)*.

### Field Epidemiology Training Program, Guatemala

NCCPHP continued curriculum development on several modules (Planned Studies, Project Management and Evaluation, and Prevention Effectiveness) for the Field Epidemiology Training Program in Central America and Panama. NCCPHP staff will meet with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention curriculum development staff in October.

### Field Epidemiology Training, Fiji

Two members of the NCCPHP staff traveled to Fiji in July to facilitate pilot testing of the Pacific Islands field epidemiology course. Nine participants worked through a portion of the basic epidemiology curriculum and provided feedback on the material. NCCPHP staff also met with partners from the World Health Organization's Office of the South Pacific to discuss the project. The curriculum was revised based on the pilot testing and is under final review by the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific. Once all materials are finalized, they will be posted to the Pacific Open Health Learning Net Web site for immediate use.

## Presentations

**Anderson, MK.** Pandemic Influenza Planning in Local Health Departments: Successes, Challenges, and Multi-Agency Collaboration in Planning for Vulnerable Populations. Paper presented at the NACCHO Annual Conference; July 11-13, 2007; Columbus, OH.

**Horney JA,** Ramsey S, Gammons L. Living in flood hazard zones and hurricane evacuation behavior: Results of a pre-hurricane assessment in Carteret County, North Carolina. Poster presented at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Hazards Research and Applications Workshop; July 8-11, 2007; Boulder, CO.

**NC Center for Public Health Preparedness,** Coastal AHEC, NC Institute for Public Health. Preparing staff and volunteers for the psychosocial consequences of diverse threats: Hurricanes, pandemic flu and more. Poster presented at the North Carolina Public Health Association Annual Educational Conference; September 26-28, 2007; Research Triangle Park, NC.

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## NCCPHP in the News

"Living in flood hazard zones and hurricane evacuation behavior: Results of a pre-hurricane assessment in Carteret County." *North Carolina Division of Emergency Management MEMO*. 2007 May-June:4.

Available at:  
<http://www.nccrimecontrol.org/div/em/newsletters/May&June%202007.pdf>.

## CDC Sustainable Management Development Program (SMDP)

In September, CDC's Management for International Public Health (MIPH) Course kicked off in Atlanta with 26 international students. A NCCPHP staff member traveled to Atlanta to demonstrate how to use the Web portion of the course and answer questions. NCCPHP staff provided technical support as the MIPH students learned how to develop personal home pages and use the Blackboard software.

The SMDP team is currently working on the next stage of the project—developing a Web site for graduates of the program—which will facilitate communication and resource sharing among alumni after the course has ended.

## Symposium Series on Public Health Preparedness

NCCPHP completed its 2006-07 Symposium Series on Public Health Preparedness by hosting two final online symposia titled “Continuity of Operations During a Flu Pandemic” and “Conducting a Pre-Hurricane Needs Assessment in a Coastal County: Lessons Learned.”

Planning is underway for the new 2007-2008 series. Updates on the new series and archived versions of previous symposia can be found online at the NCCPHP Symposium Series page.

## Avian Influenza Rapid Response Training

In August, 50 participants including local public health representatives, state public health officials, owners of poultry farms, and emergency management officials attended the North Carolina Avian Influenza/Human Health Task Force Meeting in Raleigh. NCCPHP staff attended the meeting to assist with facilitation and note-taking, and compiled an after-action report.

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

A third cohort of 57 staff from 27 North Carolina local health departments began the 14 week online pandemic influenza preparedness course. The course includes lectures, activities, and discussion groups on topics ranging from vaccines and antivirals to communication and community containment strategies. This course is offered by NCCPHP in partnership with the NC Division of Public Health.

## Training for NC Department of Agriculture

NCCPHP and the NC Department of Agriculture held webinar trainings throughout the spring and summer on issues surrounding managing pets during an emergency situation. The final training in this series was held in July. In addition, NCCPHP and the NC Department of Agriculture hosted two webinars in August concerning the Ag Emergency Operations Center and equine sheltering issues. Two thirds of the participants were from local, county, state, or tribal agencies.

## NCCPHP in the News

*(continued)*

“Center assists with Latin American field epidemiology training.” *Impact: a quarterly newsletter*. The North Carolina Institute for Public Health. August 2007.

## Forensic Epidemiology and Public Health Emergency Law

Work continued on the development of the CDC's new foundational courses in Forensic Epidemiology and Public Health Emergency Law. Pilot testing of a new forensic epidemiology case study scenario was conducted in Washington, DC, with 29 participants and in North Carolina with another 18 participants. NCCPHP staff continue to plan for Public Health Emergency Law pilot tests to be held in October in both locations.

## Mental Health Preparedness

The 8 modules in the Disaster Response Network online training, a program intended to increase the number of individuals trained in mental health disaster response in North Carolina, were piloted in August with 23 participants. The new online training will be launched in the next year to the Disaster Response Network's state and national partners. The 8 modules cover topics from types and phases of disasters to mental health interventions in disasters and ethical issues for disaster response.

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## Work with Partner States

### *West Virginia*

NCCPHP staff assisted the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health with a training for the state's local health officers. More than 40 of these physicians attended the West Virginia Local Health Officers Summit held August 17-18 in Charleston, WV, to learn more about their responsibilities as health officers. Topics included immunization issues, managing environmental health concerns, and a discussion of the legal authorities and responsibilities assigned to local health officers.

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