

CENTER SPOTLIGHT

A quarterly newsletter highlighting NCCPHP activities and accomplishments



October - December 2008

Once again, our state has been recognized as a national leader in public health preparedness, in large part due to the efforts of dedicated local, regional, and state public health professionals across North Carolina.

Trust for America's Health released its sixth annual *Ready or Not* report measuring state-by-state health preparedness scores in December, and North Carolina was one of only 5 states in the country to receive a perfect score. Scores are based on measurements of 10 key indicators including stockpiling of antivirals and vaccines for pandemic influenza, laboratory capabilities, electronic disease surveillance, success at recognizing foodborne outbreaks, and sufficient funding for public health.

Here at NCCPHP, we are proud that we have been able to participate in some of the state's preparedness projects, such as providing technical assistance and review of local health department pandemic influenza preparedness plans, training public health staff to use the North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NC EDSS), and creating several foodborne disease outbreak courses on our NCCPHP Training Web Site.

---Pia MacDonald, NCCPHP Director

Surveillance & Epidemiology

Team Epi-Aid (SPH student volunteers assisting with urgent public health response)

In October, Team Epi-Aid volunteers concluded their work on a hepatitis C investigation with the NC Division of Public Health. Over 3 weeks, student volunteers conducted more than 40 interviews with potentially exposed persons associated with a cardiology clinic.

In November, 8 Team Epi-Aid volunteers participated in a project sponsored by the South Central Partnership for Public Health to determine the availability of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in 13 NC counties. Volunteers contacted health care providers throughout the region via telephone to find out if they offer the HPV vaccine and whether vaccine availability is limited based on type of insurance or other factors. The information will be used to promote HPV vaccine uptake in young women, since the vaccine provides protection against the most common types of HPV that cause cervical cancer.

Publications

Rosselli R, Simeonson K, McKnight M, Alexander LC, Horney J, MacDonald, PDM. A web-based pandemic influenza training course for local health department planners. *J Interact Instr Dev.* 2008; 20(3):3-9.

Presentations

Papers presented at the American Public Health Association 2008 Annual Meeting; October 25-29, 2008; San Diego, CA:

Anderson MK, MacDonald PDM, Alexander L, Alfano-Sobsey E, Dail K, Wilfert RA. Pilot testing of training materials for local Epidemiology Teams.

Anderson MK, MacDonald PDM, Hajat A, Horney JA. Team Epi-Aid: A 5-year evaluation of graduate student assistance with urgent public health response.

DiBiase LM, Tallon L, Connolly AM, Owen-O'Dowd J, Wilfert RA. Key elements for successfully implementing an online surveillance and reporting system.

Horney JA, Ramsey S., Measuring hurricane preparedness: Few residents meet American Red Cross recommendations for preparedness in coastal NC community.

Technical Assistance to North Carolina

Together NCCPHP and NCDPH achieved a significant milestone in training local health department professionals on the North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NC EDSS). On December 15-16, NCCPHP and NCDPH conducted a training course in Sampson County, achieving a goal of training all 85 local health departments on how to use NC EDSS for reporting general communicable diseases by year-end. In this quarter alone, NCCPHP conducted 12 general trainings and 5 trainings specific to reporting cases of tuberculosis. A total of 392 persons representing more than three fourths of the state's local health departments were trained.

In addition, NCCPHP conducted several focus groups around the state to gather information for creating a toolkit of resources about at-risk population disaster planning. The primary audience for the toolkit will be local health department planners, but resources may be applicable to other agencies engaged in planning for at-risk populations. The toolkit will include examples of best practices, useful contacts and information pertaining to special needs registries, information about working with partners (including faith-based groups, volunteers, and Emergency Management), methods of communication with at-risk populations, and a summary of the guidance on the topic issued by Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The toolkit will be available in spring 2009.

Research

North Carolina Preparedness and Emergency Response Research Center (NCPERRC)

We are very pleased to announce the creation of a new research center housed within NCCPHP. The North Carolina Preparedness and Emergency Response Research Center (NCPERRC) is one of 7 new centers funded by the CDC to strengthen the nation's preparedness capacity. NCPERRC will focus on 4 research projects with partners at UNC and around the nation.

- Project #1 will involve staff at the North Carolina Institute for Public Health (NCIPH) and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, who will evaluate the impact of public health department accreditation systems on local emergency preparedness and response capabilities.
- Project #2, led by staff at NCCPHP and the UNC School of Medicine, will assess the strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement for surveillance systems, including the North Carolina Disease Event Tracking and Epidemiologic Collection Tool (NC DETECT) and the North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NC EDSS).
- Project #3, led by NCCPHP, will evaluate the effectiveness of North Carolina's regional response teams and make recommendations.
- Project #4 will be led by staff at NCIPH and NC State University, and will focus on North Carolina's Health Alert Network (HAN) using systems engineering methodologies.

Presentations

(continued)

Horney JA, Ramsey S, **Hajat A**, **Anderson MK**, **MacDonald PDM**.

Partnerships to improve local public health: Workforce surge capacity and new technologies advance community health assessments in North Carolina.

Horney JA, **Rybka TP**, **MacDonald PDM**. E is for Epidemiology, P is for Practice, I is for Investigation: An applied epidemiology training series for non-epidemiologists.

MacDonald PDM, **Hajat A**, **Wilfert RA**, **Alexander LK**, **Mejia GC**, **Caceres DD**. Learning without borders: Providing online field epidemiology training in Spanish.

Snider CJ, **MacDonald PDM**, **Deyneka S**. Review of the hospital-based public health epidemiologist program in North Carolina.

In the News

Institute launches new public health preparedness research center. *Impact: a quarterly newsletter*. The North Carolina Institute for Public Health. November 2008.

New online course provides training for preparedness coordinators at NC local health departments. *Impact: a quarterly newsletter*. The North Carolina Institute for Public Health. November 2008.

Training & Education

Training Web Site

Several new courses were added to the [NCCPHP Training Web Site](http://nccphp.sph.unc.edu/training/) (<http://nccphp.sph.unc.edu/training/>) this quarter, including a 3-part series on the North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health's role in public health and 2 new issues of *FOCUS*. The site now offers a total of 164 free courses. There were 1,584 new web site users this quarter, bringing the total number of users to 29,889. Registered users completed 4,050 courses, for 56,770 total course completions from 138 countries.

FOCUS on Field Epidemiology

Two new issues of *FOCUS on Field Epidemiology* were published this quarter: Volume 5, Issue 5: Introduction to Public Health Surveillance, and Volume 5, Issue 6: Public Health Surveillance Systems.

In addition, 3 issues are also newly available in Spanish: Volume 4, Issue 1: Análisis avanzado de datos: Métodos para el control de variables de confusión (apareamiento y regresión logística) (Advanced Data Analysis: Methods to Control for Confounding [Matching and Logistic Regression]), Volume 4, Issue 2: Toma de muestras en investigaciones de brotes (Collecting Specimens in Outbreak Investigations), and Volume 4, Issue 3: Diagnóstico de Laboratorio: Un Resumen General (Laboratory Diagnosis: An Overview).

Avian Influenza Online Training Course

In November, NCCPHP staff and CDC partners traveled to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to pilot test modules of the new *Seasonal, Avian, and Pandemic Influenza Training Course* at the TEPHINET Global Scientific conference. This distance-learning based course is being designed in Lectora™ for CDC staff around the world who might be called upon to participate in influenza response activities in the event of a pandemic. Nine participants from Kenya, Pakistan, and Morocco participated in the pilot test. These modules are currently undergoing revision to reflect participant feedback. Planning has begun for another pilot test, which is planned for 2009.

NC Preparedness Coordinators Online Course

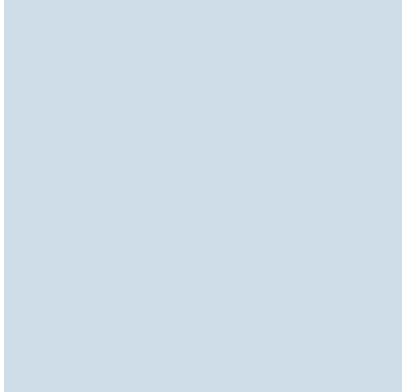
Following the conclusion of the pilot session of the *North Carolina Preparedness Coordinators Online Course* in September, NCCPHP has worked with Public Health Regional Surveillance Team nurse partners to revise and improve the curriculum. The first formal session of the course begins in early January 2009 with local health department staff in North Carolina.

The Role of the Laboratorian in Investigation: A Training Series for Public Health Laboratorians

NCCPHP completed a 3-part training program developed in partnership with the NC State Laboratory of Public Health. The 30-minute online training modules, which cover the role of the state laboratory, county laboratories, and laboratory networks, are now available on the [NCCPHP Training Web Site](http://nccphp.sph.unc.edu/training/).

CDC Sustainable Management Development Project (SMDP)

In October, 20 participants from the CDC's Management for International Public Health (MIPH) course completed a readiness assessment for distance based learning developed by NCCPHP and the CDC. Similar assessments are being disseminated to MIPH course alumni and individuals trained by course graduates in their home countries around the world. These assessments attempt to gain information regarding the "readiness" of these various groups to participate in distance-based learning programs. In November, CDC staff traveled to North Carolina to meet with NCCPHP staff to discuss distance-based learning platforms and future directions for the SMDP project.



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