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# AT YOUR SERVICE

News from the Van Buren/Cass District Health Department

Volume 5, Issue 1

February 2003

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## **Smallpox Vaccination Program**

With heightened concern that bioterrorists may have access to the smallpox virus and may attempt to use it against the American public, our local health departments are actively preparing for the upcoming smallpox vaccination program. At this time, a specific start date for the inoculation program for certain health workers has not been scheduled. Michigan has received the smallpox vaccine shipment from CDC, but is not required to immediately begin the vaccination program. MDCH is currently working closely with the federal government to resolve outstanding issues around compensation for rare injuries related to the smallpox vaccination.

Michigan's smallpox preparedness efforts involve a number of health care teams across the state. The state has been divided into eight regions, and each region will have at least one public health response team and two health care teams, for a total of approximately 30 health care teams across the state. Should there be an actual case of smallpox identified, these teams will be ready and in place to vaccinate and follow-up with persons exposed and care for those with smallpox.

The first group of individuals considered for voluntary pre-event smallpox vaccination will include the vaccinators themselves, smallpox public health response teams and smallpox health care response teams at designated hospitals. Between 5,000 and 7,000 people in Michigan may be vaccinated as part of this stage of preparedness for smallpox. Thereafter, emergency responders

including police officers and firefighters and additional health care workers may be offered the smallpox vaccination. A third phase, to make smallpox available to the general public is unlikely to begin before 2004.

Additional information on smallpox and updates on the vaccination process are available on the Health Department website [www.vbcassdhd.org](http://www.vbcassdhd.org).

## **VBCDHD Welcomes Emergency Preparedness Coordinator**

This fall we were excited to have Jennifer Zordan join our staff, as the new Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. Ms. Zordan is currently working on updating county disaster plans as well as creating and implementing a Bioterrorism Response Plan for Public Health. She will play an important role in the smallpox vaccination program.

## **SAFE KIDS SAFETY CAMP**

The Van Buren SAFE KIDS chapter will be holding a Safety Camp for area children and their parents on May 10, 2003. The event will take place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Van Buren Human Services parking lot, 57418 CR 681, Hartford, MI. The day camp will include a bike rodeo with free safety helmets, a fire smoke house with free smoke alarms, car seat and buckle up safety information, water safety instruction with free personal flotation devices to children ages 2-7, home safety assessments with free home safety devices, and much more. This is sure to be a fun family day. All freebies will be while supplies last. For more information on Van Buren SAFE KIDS or the upcoming Safety Camp contact

coordinator, Emily Diederich at (269) 621-3143.

## **HIPAA Privacy Rule**

As you are probably aware, compliance with HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) of 1996 is fast approaching. HIPAA is intended to provide better access to health insurance, limit fraud and abuse, and reduce administration costs. HIPAA includes a provision designed to encourage use, while safeguarding patient privacy. This new rule is called the notice of Privacy Practices rule. The deadline for this privacy rule is April 14, 2003. Many questions have been raised regarding the requirements of reporting confidential patient information related to communicable diseases to the local and State Health Department or immunizations to the Michigan Childhood Immunization Registry (MCIR). Reporting of these issues is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code and is used for the surveillance and prevention of communicable diseases. Physicians who are concerned about reporting communicable diseases and immunizations, can be assured that this is permitted under HIPAA and that physicians are not required to obtain patient written consent before sending this information to the Health Department. However, HIPAA does require that physicians inform patients where their Personal Health Information is being sent. To be in compliance with this, Physician offices may want to list (Public Health Issues as required by law and Communicable Diseases) on their Privacy Statement. For further information on HIPAA visit the Office of Civil Rights in the United States

Department of Health and Human Services website,

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa>.

### **Obesity**

About 25% of Americans are obese. Another 35% of us are over weight. Yet in a recent survey, people ranked obesity as a less serious concern than AIDS, cancer, heart disease and diabetes. But the fact is, obesity kills far more Americans than AIDS and is often the underlying cause of heart disease and diabetes.

Source: Harvard and Princeton research

### **PACE Program**

The Physician-based Assessment and Counseling for Exercise (PACE) program is coming to this area with a grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health.

Medical Director, John Spriegel, MD, MPH, is looking forward to working with area physicians and medical staff to help increase patients physical activity levels and improve nutritional behaviors. The PACE program is research based and has taken into account the joint influence of nutrition and physical activity upon health.

If your practice is interested in being a part of this exciting new program or would like more information on PACE, contact, Emily Diederich at (269) 621-3143.

### **HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Michigan**

The 2001 HIV data shows a small but disturbing rise in the number of new HIV cases in Michigan. This reflects the known increase of risk taking behaviors in our society. Between 1995 and 2000 the number of HIV-related deaths declined by two-thirds. The decline was marked among all groups, but was significantly greater among white males (78 percent) compared with black males (67 percent), and females (52 percent). The decline in deaths is attributed to effective treatments that prolong life but do not eliminate HIV infection.

In addition to reducing the number of deaths, medical treatments also delay the development of immune system changes and diseases that constitute meeting the AIDS surveillance case definition. In order to decrease the number of HIV/AIDS cases, we need to counsel our patients to reduce their high-risk behaviors.

Individual anonymous HIV/AIDS counseling and testing is available free of charge by appointment at the Health Department. Community education is also available. For more information or for an appointment call (269) 621-3143.

### **West Nile Virus**

Our next issue of the "At Your Service" newsletter will include national and state information on this mosquito-borne virus. If you, or your organization would like more information on West Nile Virus before April, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), or call the Health Department's Environmental Health Division in Van Buren County at (269) 621-3143 and in Cass County at (269) 445-5280 for a West Nile Virus information packet.

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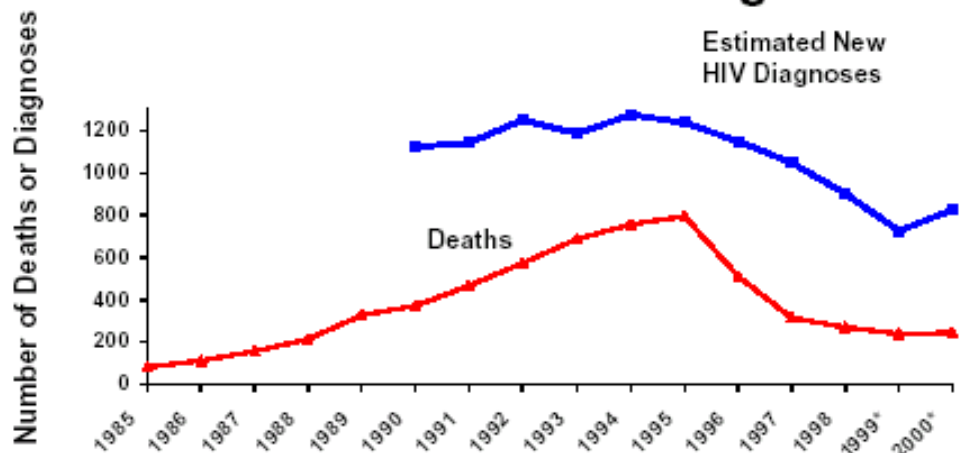
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## **New Diagnoses of HIV Infection and HIV Deaths In Michigan**



\*Death data based on ICD-10 coding. Provisional comparability difference from ICD-9 codes is 6 percent.