New Jersey Marks World Blood Donor Day By Launching Super Community Blood Drive Campaign

By Mary E. O’Dowd, MPH, Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Health

On June 14, New Jersey celebrated World Blood Donor Day to raise awareness of the need for blood and to thank volunteers in New Jersey who donate the lifesaving gift of blood.

Every day hospitals need a ready supply of blood to treat patients with injuries and illnesses and to perform surgery. Approximately one in seven people entering the hospital need blood. Yet hospitals often have less than a two-day supply of blood on hand.

To increase blood donation in New Jersey, the Department of Health (DOH) along with the New Jersey Workplace Blood Donor Coalition (NJWBDC) have partnered with the 2014 New York/New Jersey Super Bowl Host Committee to conduct an eight-month-long campaign called the Super Community Blood Drive. Between Memorial Day weekend and the months leading up to Super Bowl XLVIII Sunday, individuals will be able to donate at thousands of blood drives held across our state. This campaign represents a special collaboration between New Jersey and New York to increase the blood supply for both our states.

Every person who offers to donate blood during the campaign will receive a red Super Community Blood Drive wristband and the opportunity to win a pair of tickets to Super Bowl XLVIII at MetLife Stadium.

The launch comes at an important time because donations decrease during the summer months when people take vacations from school and work. Under the leadership of Governor Christie, my department has been working to increase blood donations in New Jersey. Through our 2012 summer blood drive campaign, we were able to increase units of blood collected by 11 percent and the number of summer blood drives by nearly 14 percent over the previous year. This partnership with the Super Bowl Host Committee will build upon this progress—having the potential to dramatically increase the number of new donors in the State, which will have a lasting impact on our blood supply.

All eight blood centers and seven hospital collection facilities in New Jersey are participating in the Super Community Blood Drive.
The Christie Administration today announced that it received authorization to spend $209 million of a supplemental social services block grant (SSBG) from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families on services provided to victims of Superstorm Sandy. The funding is allocated to the Department of Human Services (DHS) and shared with the Departments of Health (DOH) and Children and Families (DCF) for eligible expenditures.

“The physical rebuilding of structures and the removal of debris are just one part of New Jersey’s efforts to recover from Superstorm Sandy,” said Governor Chris Christie. “Another stage of that recovery is the healing process, which many of our impacted residents have been undergoing over the last eight months through social services programs available to them. New Jersey will use these grant funds to reinforce our social services infrastructure so that we can continue to support Sandy survivors’ ongoing personal recovery efforts.”

The Disaster Relief Appropriations Act provided about $500 million to five states for expenses related to recovery and rebuilding. New Jersey received almost half of the total allotment. SSBG funds are designed to address necessary expenses resulting from Superstorm Sandy, including social, health, and behavioral health services, as well as the repair, renovation and rebuilding of health care, child care and other social services facilities.

DHS will focus its portion of the award on providing statewide clinical behavioral health services, child care vouchers to families whose services were disrupted, repair to child care provider centers damaged by Superstorm Sandy and housing location assistance to residents displaced and in search of alternate rental options.

“The SSBG supplemental funding is critical to preserving the social services safety net in the areas most impacted by Superstorm Sandy,” said DHS Commissioner Jennifer Velez. “In the months and years to come, these services will be essential to rebuilding and restoring residents’ very basic needs in storm recovery.”

DCF will focus on preventing instances of child abuse exacerbated by Sandy; prevention of domestic violence and exploitation exacerbated by Sandy; and building resiliency and supporting recovery such as expanding access to mental health services for children.

“DCF’s long-term recovery plan is a comprehensive approach that will not only support and strengthen families and address the needs of children in the aftermath of the storm, but will also have a cascading effect on many other aspects of our state’s recovery,” said DCF Commissioner Allison Blake. “Safe children and strong families are the backbone of a strong New Jersey.”

“The Department of Health will use this funding to help New Jersey residents prevent and mitigate post-storm environmental health issues,” said Health Commissioner Mary E. O’Dowd. “Working with our health care and public health partners, the Department will educate the public and conduct surveillance of West Nile Virus and health hazards in homes such as mold and lead.”

Services funded by the SSBG supplemental will complement other recovery efforts underway through the Community Development Block Grant Action Plan.
Compassionate Care Foundation, Inc. Issued Permit to Grow Medicinal Marijuana

Compassionate Care Foundation, Inc. of Egg Harbor Township was issued a permit earlier this month by the New Jersey Department of Health to begin growing medicinal marijuana. The permit was issued after a comprehensive review including several site inspections, background checks of its corporate officers and a review of its security operations and cultivation facility.

Once a permit to grow has been issued, it takes approximately three to four months to cultivate and prepare the medicinal marijuana for distribution. Once the product has been tested by the state laboratory and the dispensary is operational and inspected by the Medicinal Marijuana Program, a second permit will be issued to operate and dispense as an Alternative Treatment Center (ATC).

Once Compassionate Care Foundation is permitted to operate as an ATC, patients will be notified of the opening date. Patients and caregivers can visit the Medicinal Marijuana Program's website if they choose to change the ATC designated to serve them. The change can also be made by calling the Customer Service Unit of the Medicinal Marijuana Program at 609-292-0424 and does not require changing ID cards. Patients may refer to the FAQ section of the MMP website at http://nj.gov/health/medicalmarijuana/pat_faqs.shtml for additional information on this topic.


Christie Administration Releases Annual Hospital Performance Report

The Department of Health (DOH) today released New Jersey’s annual Hospital Performance Report which demonstrates that hospital quality continues to improve in the state. The report includes two new measures and also identifies opportunities for hospitals to continue to enhance their performance.

“New Jersey hospitals are showing steady progress in advancing quality of care with improved scores on the majority of measures placing our state in the top quartile nationally in health care quality,” said DOH Commissioner Mary E. O’Dowd. “The report is a tool for hospitals to see where they need to improve and gives patients information to help them make more informed health decisions.”

The report scores hospitals in three general categories: Recommended Care, Patient Safety, and Healthcare-Associated Infections.

- Recommended Care Measures show how often each hospital provides the recommended treatment eligible patients with four common conditions: heart attack, pneumonia, heart failure and patients having surgery.
- Patient Safety Indicators help hospitals identify potentially preventable adverse events or serious medical errors and implement corrective steps.
- Healthcare-Associated Infections show how well hospitals are providing safe care by comparing hospital Healthcare-Associated Infection experience with the national experience and giving hospitals information to reduce these preventable infections and improve patient safety.

Read more: http://www.state.nj.us/health/news/2013/approved/20130628b.html
Christie Administration Announces $4.5 Million In Grants To Advance Autism Research, Treatment and Services

Enhancing the state's commitment to families affected by autism, Health Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd joined the Governor's Council for Medical Research and Treatment of Autism to announce $4.5 million in research grants on June 27. The announcement took place in the New Jersey Autism Center for Excellence at Montclair State University.

Seven hospitals, universities and medical schools were awarded funds by the Governor's Council for Medical Research and Treatment of Autism for a variety of projects that will develop a new screening tool for culturally diverse families; assess transportation needs; examine biological markers that may help identify autism; and evaluate the influence of risk factors such as environmental pollutants, maternal health status and premature birth on those with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

The grants are as follows:

- $2.25 million over 5 years to Children's Specialized Hospital in New Brunswick to develop a new screening tool for culturally diverse families.
- $400,000 over 2 years to UMDNJ New Jersey Medical School to identify biomarkers that would identify a subtype of ASD.
- $399,846 over 2 years to Saint Peter's University Hospital in New Brunswick to examine the biological markers that can be useful in identifying children at risk for autism.
- $399,565 over 2 years to UMDNJ School of Osteopathic Medicine (SOM) in Stratford to examine the association between environmental pollutants and ASD.
- $399,336 over 2 years to UMDNJ New Jersey Medical School to evaluate perinatal risk factors such as parental age, maternal health status, premature birth and their influence on changes in ASD prevalence over time.
- $394,204 over 2 years to Rowan University in Glassboro to compare two interventions for preschool children with autism.
- $321,253 over 2 years to Rutgers University to research the transportation needs of people with ASD and develop policies, procedures and accommodations to improve the quality of life of those on the autism spectrum.

This new funding furthers Governor Christie's ongoing commitment to support the children and families affected by autism," said Commissioner O'Dowd. "This round of awards focuses both on scientific research as well as developing tools for screening and intervention."

As part of the UMDNJ Restructuring Act, oversight of funding to UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School will be part of Rutgers University and the award to the UMDNJ School of Osteopathic Medicine will become part of Rowan University.

Including today's grants, the Governor's Council has awarded $10.45 million in the last year and nearly $20 million since 2008.

Read more at: http://nj.gov/health/news/2013/approved/20130627a.html
Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV), formerly called "novel coronavirus (nCoV)," was identified in 2012 in Saudi Arabia. Most people who were infected with MERS-CoV developed severe acute respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath – about half of them died. A small number of the reported cases had a mild respiratory illness. Investigators are trying to figure out the source of MERS-CoV and how it spreads. There are no reported cases in the United States. Read more: [http://www.cdc.gov/features/novelcoronavirus/](http://www.cdc.gov/features/novelcoronavirus/)

CDC Releases Toolkit on Infection Control

CDC has recently released a new [toolkit](http://www.cdc.gov/features/novelcoronavirus/) to assist health departments and healthcare facilities with notifying patients after an infection control lapse or potential disease transmission during medical care. The toolkit includes the key steps a healthcare facility or public health department should take to initiate a patient notification. It also provides resources to assist with creating notification documents, planning media and communication strategies, developing communication resources, and releasing notification letters.

CDC’s [Patient Notification Toolkit](http://www.cdc.gov/features/novelcoronavirus/) is available on-line.

Recipe for Food Safety: Protecting People from Deadly Listeria Germs

At least 90 percent of people who get Listeria infections are either pregnant women and their newborns, people 65 or older, or people with weakened immune systems.

Many germs can be spread through food. Some, like Listeria, can be deadly. Listeria strikes hard at pregnant women and their newborns, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems. Listeria can cause miscarriage and meningitis. Most people found to have Listeria infection require hospital care and about 1 in 5 people with the infection die. Outbreak investigations tell us what foods make people sick and what needs to change to make food safer and save lives. We have made some progress against Listeria, which is the third leading cause of death from food poisoning. However, we can do more to protect people at higher risk for food poisoning and make food safer for everyone.

June 3 – Commissioner O’Dowd took part in a panel discussion at the Governor’s Conference on Women at the War Memorial in Trenton.

June 10 – Commissioner O’Dowd gave a presentation on the Department’s Sandy recovery efforts to the Middlesex County Long-Term Recovery Group in Milltown.

June 12 – Deputy Commissioner Dr. Arturo Brito, delivered remarks at the 4th annual Primary Care Summit at New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark.

June 12 – Deputy Commissioner Bill Conroy gave remarks at the groundbreaking of the Francis E. Parker Memorial Home in Monroe.

June 13 – Assistant Commissioner Alison Gibson was the keynote speaker at the Home Care Association’s Annual Conference in Atlantic City.

June 24 – Commissioner O’Dowd joined Morristown Medical Center of Atlantic Health System for a roundtable discussion about palliative and end-of-life care and the Practitioners Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) initiative.

June 26 – Commissioner O’Dowd, and members of the Ocean County Health Department, handed out free Sandy Recovery materials to residents of Ortley Beach.

June 27 – Commissioner O’Dowd announced a $4.5 million Autism Grant by the Governor’s Council on Autism Research at Montclair State University.

June 28 – Commissioner O’Dowd attended the Disaster Behavioral Health Conference in Piscataway.

Department of Health

Staff Notes

Paul Seitz, Research Scientist, attended the 112th American Society for Microbiology Conference, May 17-21. The conference provided an overview of best practices, regulatory issues, risk assessments and drug susceptibility testing.

Sandra Howell, Research Scientist, attended the 2013, Combating Autism Act Initiative Conference, May 31 – June 1. At the conference she gave a presentation on the New Jersey’s Autism Registry. New Jersey is one of only four states to have implemented a registry.

Cathleen Bennett, Director of the Office of Policy and Strategic Planning, attended the HealthDataPalooza IV conference on June 3-4. The conference sponsored by the Health Data Consortium, explored ways to foster the availability and use of health data to drive innovations in health care.

Vincent Arrisi, State Registrar, and Maria Baron, Research Scientist represented the Department at the National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information System’s annual meeting from June 2 – 6.

Jim Langenbach, Program Manager, attended the All-Hazards Analytic Seminar to receive training on the prevention of terrorism to meet goals established by the National Strategy for Information Sharing. The seminar took place on June 11-12.
The number of lives you can save by donating blood

Every three seconds someone in American needs a lifesaving blood transfusion

The percentage of New Jersey’s population that regularly donates blood

The percentage of America’s population that regularly donates blood

The number of times per year a person can donate red blood cells

The number of minutes it takes to give blood

Most people over the age of 16, who are in good health, can donate blood

The number of days a year blood is needed

New Jersey used 31,400 more units of blood than it collected in 2012

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publicizing the campaign through their drives and donor recruitment initiatives in high schools, colleges, workplaces and local communities. A list of these blood centers and hospital collection facilities is available online at www.njsave3lives.com.

NJWBDC representatives - comprised of businesses, trade associations, alliances, government agencies, and academic and healthcare institutions - will be reaching out to tens of thousands of organizations and members to generate participation around this initiative. Coalition plans include community and campus blood drives in concert with sporting events, expanded workplace drives in collaboration with members of their business communities and training sessions on how to conduct blood drives.

I will be working closely with my Coalition co-chair, Kevin Rigby who is the Vice President, Public Affairs, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation, US Country Head of Public Affairs, to call attention to the need for blood donation throughout the campaign and encourage new donors. The Super Community Blood Drive is a unique opportunity to increase New Jersey’s blood supply. My hope is that all residents will take the time to donate this summer in support of their favorite sports team to help alleviate the blood shortage - one donation can save three lives.

To learn more about the Super Community Blood Drive, visit the New Jersey Workplace Blood Donor Coalition Website at: www.njsave3lives.com.
Three New Jersey Doctors Share Their Health IT Stories in the Nation’s Capital

Douglas S. Ashinsky, MD, FACP, Warren Internal Medicine, Paulo B. Pinho, MD, FACP, FAAP, PASE Healthcare, PC, and Frank Sonnenberg, MD, FACP, FACMI, Robert Wood Johnson Medical Group were in Washington, DC on June 10-11, 2013 as part of the Office of the National Coordinator’s (ONC) Inaugural Health IT Fellows class that includes 28 champions from 18 states. This select group of physicians and office staff will be sharing their Health IT successes and challenges with the goal of continuing their leadership at the local, state, and national levels.

Drs. Ashinsky, Pinho, and Sonnenberg were selected by the ONC because of their progress in effectively utilizing Health IT in their practice as well as their innovation and dedication to improve the delivery of quality healthcare to their patients. These physicians are also advocates of Health IT, encouraging their colleagues and the medical community to implement and use EHR technology in a meaningful manner to benefit patients and their families as well as to take advantage of the federal incentives being offered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).


Office of Vital Statistics and Registry Develops New Web Based Information System

The Department’s Office of Vital Statistics and Registry is in the process of developing a web-based vital record and medical information platform (VIP) to meet new Federal and state regulations for record management and reporting. The new platform will:

- Provide hospitals with immediate access to infant birth information in the event of transfer or readmission due to critical health conditions
- Provide authorities with centralized data to better identify and manage events such as increased deaths due to epidemics, environmental/public health crises, or increases in infant health issues
- Provide long term data to enable public authorities to conduct surveillance on critical health conditions and allow for identification of trends and clusters of events
- Provide real-time data on state-mandated health screenings

The Department’s VIP Core Team that is developing the platform is comprised of representatives from within the Department, as well as representation from hospitals, the maternal and child health consortia, registrars and other outside stakeholders. Together, the team will ensure that the VIP will encompass not only the federally mandated standards, but will be the foundation by which vital record data is stored and managed into the future.

The Office of Vital Statistics and Registry looks forward to providing updates on timetables, milestones, testing, training and implementation of the VIP over the next several months.
New Jersey Pediatric Hearing Health Care Directory

Since 2002, New Jersey law has required that all newborns receive a hearing screening prior to one month of age, and preferably prior to nursery discharge. It can be challenging for the parents of infants who do not pass this screening to find a location for additional outpatient rescreening/testing services as only about half of New Jersey hospitals with maternity services also have on-site audiology departments.

The New Jersey Pediatric Hearing Health Care Directory was initially created by the New Jersey Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program in 2006 to aid families and health care providers in finding locations for follow-up screening and audiology services. The Directory provides locations of facilities, types of screening and diagnostic services available, insurances accepted, and languages spoken. All licensed audiologists, hearing aid dispensers and otolaryngologists were offered the opportunity to be included in this valuable resource guide.

The Directory is available online at www.hearinghelp4kids.nj.gov.

EHDI-PALS, the national directory of pediatric audiology services was modeled after the New Jersey Pediatric Hearing Health Care Directory. In addition, the state of Washington has requested a copy of the source code used for the directory in order to mimic this successful web site for their state.

Christie Administration Officials Encourage Residents to Remove Standing Water on Property to Reduce Mosquito Population

To prevent mosquitoes this summer, the New Jersey Departments of Health and Environmental Protection are asking homeowners, businesses and contractors working on Sandy rebuilding projects to drain sources of standing water outdoors and routinely check property for containers collecting water where mosquitoes can breed.

Concerns are elevated this year because of increased potential opportunities for mosquito breeding due to Superstorm Sandy, which could increase the risk of mosquito-borne diseases, including WNV.

"This season will be especially challenging because Superstorm Sandy has created new places for mosquitoes to breed such as wet debris piles and depressions left by fallen trees," Commissioner O'Dowd explained. "It's important to remove, clean or repair anything that can collect rain or sprinkler water - such as debris, clogged or damaged gutters or old car tires."

Steps that residents, business owners and contractors can take to reduce populations of the insect on their properties include:

- At least once or twice a week, empty water from flower pots, pet food and water dishes, birdbaths, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels and cans
- Check for clogged rain gutters and clean them out
- Remove discarded tires and other items that could collect water
- Be sure to check for containers or trash in places that may be hard to see, such as under bushes or under your home

Read more at: http://nj.gov/health/news/2013/approved/20130507a.html
New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd recognized National HIV Testing Day by highlighting the events and services available throughout the state for individuals to get tested for HIV.

“There are very effective treatments available to people with HIV,” said Commissioner O'Dowd. “I encourage people to get tested and know their status. With early detection, we can manage HIV, improve quality of life and, just as important, help stop the spread of the illness.”

Rapid HIV testing requires less than a single drop of blood from a fingertip. Test results are available in 20 to 40 minutes. For rapid HIV testing information, call 1-866-HIV-CHEC or visit the DOH website at: http://www.state.nj.us/health/aids/rapidtesting/location.shtml.

More than 36,600 people are living with HIV/AIDS in New Jersey. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that all health care providers offer HIV testing to patients between the ages of 13 and 64 as part of routine medical care.

More than $11 million in state and federal funding this year supports 140 rapid HIV testing sites in each of the state's 21 counties. Last year, more than 100,000 rapid HIV tests took place at these sites. Testing sites include community-based organizations, hospitals, health departments, federally qualified health centers and other health facilities that make getting tested easy and convenient.

Read more at: http://nj.gov/health/news/2013/approved/20130626b.html

Commissioner O'Dowd Hosts POLST Roundtable Discussion

On Monday, June 24, New Jersey Health Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd joined with Morristown Medical Center of Atlantic Health System to convene a roundtable discussion about palliative and end-of-life care and the Practitioners Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) initiative. Commissioner O'Dowd was joined by physicians, palliative care specialists and Atlantic Health System leaders. Joseph Trunfio, President & CEO of Atlantic Health opened the event, which was attended by approximately 100 people.

Commissioner O'Dowd spoke about her commitment to promoting discussion of end-of-life care and moderated the panel discussion. Atlantic Health has been working on improving the numbers of residents who document their end-of-life wishes. They have created an initiative called Anna’s Angel, a group of nurses and health care professionals who volunteer their time to educate the community about planning for difficult health care decisions.

Other panelists included: David Shulkin, MD - President, Morristown Medical Center; Poonam Ali, MD - AHS Corporate Consultant; Jeanne Kerwin, D.MH, RN - Palliative Care Program Coordinator, Overlook Medical Center; Joseph Fennelly, MD - Vice Chair, Bioethics Committee Morristown Medical Center and Bill Neigher, PhD - Vice President, Mission Development and Chief Strategy Officer.
Healthy Summer Eating Includes Fruits, Vegetables, and Lean Meats

By Kristin Waldron, RD

Summer is finally in full swing! What better way to enjoy the season than by hosting a barbeque. When planning your next barbeque, try to think of healthy food options. As delicious as hamburgers and hot dogs may taste, they are very high in fat and sodium. Plan on preparing leaner protein options such as chicken breasts, chicken sausage, turkey tenders, seafood, or veggie burgers. You can even try grilling Portobello mushroom burgers as a healthy alternative to meat. Try grilling up your favorite vegetables as a delicious side dish for your grilled meats. You can even make the perfect dessert for your barbeque by grilling your fresh fruit and making grilled fruit kabobs.

When grilling, make every effort to avoid cooking meats at very high temperatures for a long period of time. High temperatures from grilling react with substances in animal proteins to form carcinogenic compounds called heterocyclic amines (HCAs). To help lower HCA levels, avoid blackening your meats, flip food frequently while cooking, and use healthy, flavorful marinades on your meats such as fresh salsa, citrus juices or spices.

Summer is a prime time to find many of your favorite fruits and vegetables fresh and in season. Be sure to browse the selection of fresh produce available at your local farmer’s market. Keep fresh veggies in the refrigerator for a quick snack or to make a nutritious, colorful salad to go along with your dinner. You can also try to escape the summer heat by enjoying a fruit smoothie made with fresh fruits of the season.

Along with being delicious, fruit and vegetable consumption plays a key role in your health as well. A diet high in fruit and vegetable consumption has been known to reduce the risk of some cancers. According to the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), the combination of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals found in fruits and vegetables helps aid in cancer prevention. So while you’re enjoying amazing dishes this summer, know that by following these tips you’re also engaging in good health!

Kristin Waldron, RD, is a registered dietitian at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey.