

Skokie Board of Health
February 12th, 2015

Present

Mr. Abbasi
Dr. Dave
Dr. Gaynes
Ms. Langguth
Dr. Luka
Mr. Nidetz
Ms. Nikitsch Dugan
Mr. Pandya
Dr. Prince

Dr. Sood
Dr. Topouzian
Ms. Urbanus
Dr. Usman
Ms. Varma
Dr. Vernon
Dr. Werner
Dr. Williams

Excused

Dr. Drachler
Ms. Jones Thorne

Absent

Dr. Polin

Guest

Terry Mason, MD, FACS
Chief Operating Officer, Cook County Department of Public Health

Dr. Counard, Director of Health
David Clough, Staff

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m. by Dr. Williams, Acting Chairman.

Approval of Minutes –The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Dr. Terry Mason, Chief Operating Officer, Cook County Department of Public Health

Dr. Mason began by describing the governance structure for the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH). The merger of the Cook County Department of Public Health and the Cook County Health and Hospital system has created an interesting organizational structure in which there is dual reporting for operational issues versus statutory issues. A major goal for the CCDPH is to foster collaboration between local health departments in Cook County. Communicable diseases are a good example of the importance of this issue as they do not respect jurisdictional boundaries, the measles outbreak being a recent example.

Dr. Mason discussed funding issues facing the CCDPH and proposed budget cuts in the coming years under the new governor in Springfield. While there are many requirements to be a State Certified Health Department there is no requirement for the State to provide enough money to meet them. This creates an extra burden on the county level to find funding.

Priorities for the CCDPH include chronic conditions such as obesity and communicable diseases such as Ebola. However, Dr. Mason highlighted the coming issue of antibiotic resistant organisms. In the future numerous new infectious diseases that are resistant to current antibiotics will evolve and as antibiotics are made for those another antibiotic resistant generation will develop. This is a very difficult issue that they are attempting to research in detail.

Dr. Mason then reported on an initiative he started to reduce cholesterol by encouraging Chicagoans not to eat animal products for one week at the beginning of January. The initiative led to him being interviewed for a documentary called “Forks Over Knives” that was made about the whole foods

movement, the movement to eat only a natural plant based diet. Dr. Mason then showed a brief clip from “Forks Over Knives” that emphasized a study done at the Cleveland Clinic on the effects of diet on heart disease. In the study, eighteen patients with heart disease who had failed treatments like bypass surgery were put on a strict plant based diet. Sixteen years later all of the patients, who supposedly had less than two to three years to live, were still alive. The movie stressed the role of the endothelium, the lining of the veins and arteries, in preventing and reversing heart disease.

Dr. Williams mentioned that in footage at the beginning of the film salmon was among the dangerous foods being shown and asked why it was included.

Dr. Mason mentioned that the raw level of contamination in the water was a concern for him. He also stressed that the dietary changes are on a continuum and he would rather someone enjoy an occasional piece of salmon than an occasional piece of beef. There are also protective effects of naturally grown vegetables even if you continue eating meat and processed foods as well. Dr. Mason reports that his personal choice after studying this topic is to stop eating meat entirely despite the effort that it takes. He made the point that while many consider eating this way extreme some might consider having open heart surgery to be extreme as well.

Dr. Prince pointed out that dishes at many vegetarian restaurants still have high calorie foods. He asked about the balance between vegetable content and caloric intake for long term health.

Dr. Mason made the point that the movie doesn’t advocate simple vegetarianism. It advocates unprocessed foods cooked with no oils, nuts, salt or other additives. He agrees that fake vegetarian items like fake bacon and fake hamburgers are sometimes even worse than the original product. Whole food plant based means buying the original plant and preparing it yourself.

Dr. Gaynes asked if there were any models for healthy foods in public schools.

Dr. Mason reports that there are many good programs in private schools but unfortunately it has been cost prohibitive in public schools. He also made the point that a lot of kids aren’t used to eating natural products and choose unhealthy options because they are used to them. The food industry has made a science of learning our taste preferences and engineering foods that are unnatural but meet those taste criteria.

Mr. Pandya asked what could be done to control corruption in the food industry.

Dr. Mason recommended seeing the film “Food, Inc.” He said this documentary sheds more light on why the food industry can’t be regulated easily than any answer he could give.

Chair’s Report

Dr. Counard welcomed Dr. Vernon, Dr. Werner, and Dr. Dave to the Board. Dr. Williams informed them of the personal statements and suggested Dr. Dave give one in March. He then recommended that the Board of Health members go around the room and introduce themselves and say what they do for the new members. All Board Members gave a brief introduction.

Dr. Williams presented on One Health, a collaborative effort of multiple health sciences exploring the connection between the health of people, domestic animals, wildlife, plants, and our environment. The movement has been led largely by veterinarians who have explored animal illnesses as sentinel events for human illnesses. Dr. Williams reported on two cases in which household pets became ill and shortly thereafter the owners came down with similar illnesses.

Personal Statements

No new personal statements.

Director's Monthly Report highlights – a copy is attached

- South Asian Town Hall Meeting

On January 24, the Health Department and Board of Health co-sponsored a South Asian Health Town Hall event at the Skokie Public Library with a team from Northwestern Medicine. Community members from Skokie and beyond engaged in a lively discussion answering questions such as “What does a healthy town or neighborhood look like?”, “How would you rate the health of the South Asian Community?” and “Are you aware of clinics in Skokie for people without health insurance?”. A full report will be produced, including suggestions for improving community health through policies, programs, and education. Dr. Dave reported that a full report would be shared after it was written up. Dr. Usman reported that they have followed up with his wife regarding contacts within the local South Asian Community.

- Influenza

This has been a tough year for influenza, with eight adults hospitalized in intensive care, and two long-term care facilities with ill residents. Three adults have died (one in the ICU, two others in the hospital). All of these cases were over the age of 75 years. All of the ill long-term care facility residents had declined influenza vaccination, as did seven of the adults who ended up in the ICU.

- Good Samaritan Act Amendment

Fire Chief Czerwinski and I are collaborating with area public health and municipal groups to amend the Good Samaritan Act. The amendment will provide liability protection for Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps members who assist local health departments during emergencies that are not declared disasters. Currently these licensed healthcare professionals would have no liability protection while volunteering to help a local health department control the spread of infectious disease, for example, by giving vaccinations. Representative Laura Fine has agreed to sponsor the bill.

Dr. Usman asked about the recent measles outbreak and if there had been any cases in Skokie. Dr. Counard reported that there were none but we have been following up with the schools regarding vaccination rates and purchasing more measles vaccine for adults.

Mr. Abbasi asked about the elderly people who had declined the influenza vaccine and whether efforts were made to reach out to the family in cases where they might have limited decision making ability. Dr. Counard agreed that reaching out to long term care facilities specifically might be a good idea. In previous years the Health Department made special efforts to require staff in these facilities to be vaccinated.

Dr. Vernon stated that it was an important step for health care workers to be vaccinated as a requirement for employment. Dr. Williams and Mrs. Urbanus proposed that an education program in which people saw the effects of the diseases they are vaccinated against might be an effective tool.

Dr. Vernon reported that measles is highly contagious. It is one of only three infectious diseases spread through the air, the other two being chicken pox and tuberculosis. It also remains active in the air for so long that many of the basic precautions are ineffective.

Dr. Williams reported that he has had good luck telling people who refuse flu shots not to go around anyone over seventy years of age because they are at risk of giving them a fatal disease.

Community Health Plan

- Access to Healthcare
No new information on Access to Healthcare.
- Obesity Prevention
Dr. Counard reported on the North Shore University “Rethink Your Drink” educational campaign proposal.
- Tobacco Use Prevention
Dr. Williams reported on the recent CDC report on second hand smoke and its unequal effect on African Americans and individuals living in rental housing. He also reported on a recent study showing that formaldehyde is produced by e-cigarettes.
- Healthy Environment
Dr. Counard reported about meeting with UIC School of Public Health students to work on the environmental chapter in the community health plan.

Old Business

No old business.

New Business

No new business.

Adjournment The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

**REMINDER: THE MARCH 12TH MEETING WILL BE HELD AT
THE LIBRARY!!!**
