

Pennsylvania

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Rural Health News

A resource exchange from the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health for health professionals, extension and outreach coordinators, and community organizers

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Domestic Violence: Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Women at Risk

One of the most indispensable assets in the United States' \$28 billion fruit and vegetable industry is the migrant and seasonal farmworker (MSFW). Unfortunately, this group, specifically women, is at risk to be victims of domestic violence.

Although research on domestic violence among MSFW women continues to progress, it is at a slow pace. It was not until the mid-1990s that MSFW women were considered to be part of the research population. In 1998, a random sample of MSFW women reported that 20 percent were physically abused; however, it is unclear how much underreporting of this issue affects comparisons between MSFW women and other populations.

Although most studies indicate that women of all races are about equally vulnerable to domestic partner violence, low income and isolated living conditions increase the risk of domestic violence.

Further, if their partners are using drugs or alcohol, women are six times more likely to be abused. Domestic violence contributes to chronic illnesses, including chronic pain, depression and substance abuse, and may account for 22 to 35 percent of women seeking care in emergency rooms.

Surprisingly, less than ten

percent of primary care physicians routinely screen for domestic violence, even though statistics highlight the mental health consequences faced by victims of domestic violence. Pregnancy decreases the probability of abuse by 65 percent; however, of women in the general population who experience domestic partner abuse, 29 percent attempt suicide, 37 percent show symptoms of depression, 46 percent exhibit symptoms of anxiety disorders and 45 percent suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

Immigrant women face the triple burden of discrimination based on sex, race and immigration status. They also face barriers to care such as isolation, language, cultural issues, immigration/citizenship status and lack of access to services.

Healthcare providers have been slow to respond to the needs of these battered MSFW women. The Migrant Clinicians Network is working to educate and train providers in assessing abused MSFW women. A grassroots model providing outreach, education and access to the criminal justice system to farmworkers in California was developed in 1995 and continues today. The model is funded by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Office of Migrant

Health and the Migrant Clinicians Network. More research also is needed to identify access to services available to this population and the specific areas of risk for MSFW women that fall victim to domestic violence. ❖

For more information, contact Terri King, outreach coordinator, at 814-863-8214 or tjc136@psu.edu

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From the Director...



Show me the money. For many rural health advocates in the state, that has been the focus of much conversation as President George Bush and Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell released their proposed budgets for the next fiscal year.

On February 7, the Bush Administration released its 2006 budget figures. As in previous years, the president's budget reduced or eliminated funding for a number of programs considered to be key to national efforts to strengthen the rural health infrastructure. Bush's budget proposal decreased rural health network development and outreach grants to \$11 million (down from \$39.6 million), and eliminated funding for the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program and the Small Hospital Improvement program. Funding for the Rural Automatic External Defibrillator program was reduced from \$9 million to \$2 million and funding for the State Offices of Rural Health decreased by \$0.4 million. The Area Health Education Center program, as well as other health professions training programs, was zeroed out. Winners in the budget included the Rural Health Research Program and the National Health Service Corps. By far, the greatest gains were achieved in the line item for Community Health Centers which saw an increase of \$245 million to \$1.933 billion.

What do these numbers mean? The Bush Administration has noted that the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) included a number of rural provider reimbursement "fixes" that resolved the need for long-term funding for rural health programs. The MMA authorized \$19 billion in rural provisions, spread over 10 years, which were intended to address long-standing provider payment inequities within the Medicare program. However, rural health advocates have argued that the MMA addressed long-standing reimbursement issues but did not rectify fully all of the issues that rural providers face.

In previous years, Congress has restored much of the rural health funding cuts and that could occur again this year. However, the president's budget does not include line items for the war in Iraq and the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan, both of which promise to come with high pricetags. This could limit the amount of funds available for rural health.

In Pennsylvania, Governor Rendell released his proposed \$23.8 billion proposed budget on February 9. The proposal has been applauded for offering incentives to businesses, creating workforce and educational opportunities and promoting Pennsylvania as a strong economic contender. And, although the budget includes an increase of \$612 million for the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, the budget targets reforms to the state's Medicaid Program, including a limitation on benefits for enrollees and co-payments for some services. The budget also proposes to increase the number of uninsured adults who will receive health insurance benefits by 5,400 and adds 10,000 more children to the State's Children's Health Insurance Program.

It will be up to the legislators and the committees to make the final determination regarding what programs will be funded and at what levels. As a rural health advocate, you may want to attend the 2005 Rural Health Conference and participate in the pre-conference workshop on policy skill development and advocacy. That time has been set aside for attendees who register for that session to meet with their state legislators and health staff. Information on how those meetings can be set up by attendees will be sent to conference registrants.

We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at venues throughout the state. ❖

Rural Health Advocates to Connect

Be among the rural health advocates who will join together June 7–9 for the 13th annual Rural Health Conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Harrisburg. The 2005 event, *Strengthening Rural Health: Different Solutions for Common Challenges*, will highlight how communities across the state and country have positively influenced the delivery of health care in rural areas.

This year's conference will be held in conjunction with the biannual meeting of the Robert Wood Johnson's Southern Rural Access Program, a long-term effort to build the institutional and leadership capacity necessary to improve access to basic health care in eight southern states. This partnership will offer conference attendees additional opportunities for networking. The conference will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown Harrisburg.

Hilda Heady, president-elect of the National Rural Health Association, will kick off the conference and Gary Wiltz, MD, CEO of Teche Action Clinic in Franklin, Louisiana, will give the opening plenary session on the last day. In addition, participants will hear from speakers focused on healthcare infrastructure, healthcare issues for the elderly population, community-based programs, rural health policy and more. Attendees will also be able to attend sessions coordinated by the Southern Rural Access Program and hear how health issues in southern communities have been addressed effectively.

Other features include:

- Two pre-conference workshops: "Customized Place-based Initiatives for Pennsylvania," with a focus on individually customized GIS programs, and "Policy Skill Development and Advocacy," which will give participants an opportunity to visit their state legislators, and provide advice and information for making effective legislative contacts;
- An evening networking reception and a lunch; and
- The opportunity to learn about the latest products and services available from companies whose business it is to assist you in fulfilling your mission.

The annual event is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health, the Pennsylvania Rural Health Association, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Geriatric Education Center, Penn State Outreach, Penn State Cooperative Extension and the Penn State College of Health and Human Development. ❖

For more information, contact Terri King, outreach coordinator at 814-863-8214 or tjc136@psu.edu or visit <http://www.porh.cas.psu.edu>.

PLEASE NOTE: PORH recently mailed "Save The Date" postcards announcing the dates and location of the 13th annual conference. Please accept our apologies as we inadvertently listed the location incorrectly. The conference will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Harrisburg and NOT at the Penn Stater Conference Center and Hotel in State College.

Migrant Farmworker Advocates Join Forces

For the fourth consecutive year, the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health offered the Pennsylvania Migrant and Immigrant Health Conference, *"Migrant and Immigrant Health in Pennsylvania: Cultivating a Healthy Agricultural Community."* The conference was held April 5-6, at the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel in State College.

This series of conferences brings together the agricultural production and the healthcare communities to discuss the healthcare issues of the migrant and immigrant farmworker population and identify strategies to assist this population in achieving optimal health. This is the only conference in the state devoted exclusively to migrant and immigrant farmworker health.

The conference featured plenary and concurrent presentations on agricultural safety, community-based resources, advocacy initiatives and more. A dairy farm employing Hispanic farmworkers also was toured.

The conference was sponsored by Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health, The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Penn State Outreach and Penn State Cooperative Extension. ❖

For more information, contact Terri King, outreach coordinator, at 814-863-8214 or tjc136@psu.edu.

Pennsylvania Department of Health Awards Funds For Medical And Dental Clinic Services

Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Calvin B. Johnson recently announced that five organizations received more than \$500,000 in Community Primary Care Challenge Grants to develop and implement medical and dental clinic services in Pennsylvania.

The Community Primary Care Challenge Grants are designed to address locally identified health-improvement priorities. The grants are used to promote the recruitment of healthcare practitioners, increase clinical capacity and access, encourage the development of healthcare systems in underserved areas, stimulate community-based approaches to this development and maximize community participation through local health improvement partnerships.

The Community Primary Care Challenge Grant program has awarded 71 grants since it began in 1993. Since then, 34 rural and 37 urban communities have benefited from funding.

Funds are awarded to non-profit, community-based organizations; local community-based health-improvement partnerships and local governments. Grants are for a 24-month period and require a dollar-for-dollar match from the community. The number of grants awarded each year is based on the quality of the projects, the number of applications received and the availability of funding.

Funds were awarded to Hoffman Memorial Medical Center in Clarion County, Community Health Net in Erie County, JC Blair Memorial Hospital in Huntingdon County, Keystone Rural Health Consortia, Inc. in Elk County and Wellspan Health in York County. ❖

For more information, contact the Department of Health's toll-free helpline at 1-877-PA-HEALTH or visit <http://www.health.state.pa.us/>.

Leadership Scholarship Announced

The Pennsylvania Rural Health Association is once again seeking a person who is interested in being supported to participate in the Penn State Rural Leadership Development Program (RULE). RULE is designed to develop community leaders who have the skills and resources necessary to meet the challenges of a changing community. Through individual and group learning experiences, participants develop the knowledge to make a difference. RULE fellows can expect to gain an increased understanding of public issues, analytical skills for evaluating alternative solutions to problems, understanding of how organizations function, enhanced leadership and interpersonal skills and a better understanding of government and business roles.

Last year's scholarship winner, Mary Ann Spotts, had this to say after her first year: "It has been a busy year that culminated in a very interesting legislative study institute. Several highlights included:

- We had the opportunity to educate other RULE X members in specific topics. The one my group chose was autism. Not only was it a goal to complete at the end of our first year, but several students decided to continue educating others about autism and treatment options.
- We met with various state and public officials regarding rural issues. We had a wonderful legislative reception where we were able to meet and talk to our representatives and really see the issues being addressed.
- We also had the opportunity to gear some of our grant monies towards providing rural education on Advanced Burn Life Support (ABLS). Locations of classes conducted include Danville, Bradford, Meadville, Lock Haven, Bedford, DuBois, Sayre and Pittsburgh.

"It has been a great year and I am looking forward to the second year of RULE. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this program." ❖

If you are interested in the RULE program or in applying for the PRHA scholarship, contact PRHA at 717-561-5248 or RULE at RULE1@psu.edu.

Statewide Rural Issues Forums Planned

Have you been seeking the opportunity to share your ideas and concerns about rural communities? If so, plan now to attend one or more of the Rural Issues Forums being planned for this spring. The forums, coordinated by the Pennsylvania Rural Development Council, will focus on rural quality-of-life issues associated with health care, housing, tourism, agriculture, economic development, education, energy and telecommunications. They will offer a venue to gather input from rural citizens and rural advocates about these and other issues of significant concern.

The information gathered at each forum will be used by the Pennsylvania Rural Development Council to develop a strategic plan that meets the needs of Pennsylvania's rural citizens and communities and to provide practical recommendations to the Governor and the Pennsylvania General Assembly for implementing the plan. Results of the data gathered also will be presented at the 2005 Pennsylvania Rural Health and the Robert Wood Johnson's Southern Rural Access Program Conference, June 7-9 in Harrisburg.

The forums are set for the following locations on the days indicated:

- Uniontown April 20, 2005
- Clarion April 21, 2005
- Williamsport May 4, 2005
- Tannersville May 5, 2005
- Bradford June 1, 2005

The forums are co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania Rural Health Association, the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Forum for Primary Care, Rural LISC, Penn State Cooperative Extension and Pennsylvania/USDA Rural Development. ❖

For more information, contact Bill Sturges at the Pennsylvania Rural Development Council at 717-772-9028 or via e-mail at bsturges@state.pa.us.

Cover the Uninsured Week

Cover the Uninsured Week has been slated for April 30 - May 8, 2005. Forums will take place to inform the nation's leaders and elected officials about policy proposals to extend coverage to the uninsured and to make coverage affordable and stable for those who do have it. For more information on *Cover the Uninsured Week* and how you can participate, visit www.CoverTheUninsuredWeek.org. ❖

Technology Provides Advance Care Planning and Hospice Advice

According to a comprehensive national study (Last Acts, 2002), ill and dying residents in Pennsylvania receive only mediocre care at the end of life. With respect to state advance directive policies, Pennsylvania's laws do a poor job of supporting good advance care planning in the form of living wills and medical powers of attorney. The state received the lowest possible grade for this indicator – an E.

Now, a Pennsylvania nonprofit organization, the Take Charge of Your Life Partnership, has started Take Charge Online, which provides computer access for individuals and families on expert advice in late-in-life planning. Users can interview the expert for as long as they like, whenever they like and at their own pace.

The partnership began as a group of supporters of the PBS series, *On Our Own Terms: Moyers on Dying*. They took Moyers' words to heart — "If we are going to change the way we die, then we are going to have to start talking about it and then take action." Their mission is to "educate, support and empower all people to deal with end-of-life issues."

Their "Take Charge of Your Life" campaign trained volunteers to hold workshops on advance care planning for community groups in partnership with the Allegheny County Bar Association and Highmark/Blue Cross/Blue Shield. This led to a collaboration with MedRespond, a company that provides technology developed at Carnegie Mellon University that allows computer users to interview an online expert. Take Charge Online, a demonstration project supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, presents two "Heart2Heart" interviews at the partnership's Web site, takechargeonline.org. One deals with advance care planning and the other with hospice and palliative care.

Last fall, the partnership won an Award of Excellence - one of only three awardees nationwide - from Rallying Points, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Building on this momentum, the organization hopes to work in Pennsylvania and elsewhere throughout the country. All are welcome to log onto Take Charge Online, try out the technology and offer feedback. ❖

For more information, contact Cynthia Pearson, project co-director at 412-241-7885.

Pennsylvania Department Of Health Announces 500th Placement In Primary Health Care Program

Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Calvin B. Johnson recently announced that the Pennsylvania Department of Health has reached a milestone by placing the 500th healthcare practitioner in the Primary Health Care Practitioner Program. The program, which was established in 1992, works to improve the accessibility of providers in designated Pennsylvania underserved rural and urban areas.

The 500th participant is Helena Choi, M.D., who will be working at Keystone Rural Health Center's Family Practice Center in Chambersburg, Franklin County. Keystone Rural Health Center is a Federally Qualified Health Center, which provides medical services to low-income people and migrant farmworkers.

Primary healthcare practitioners are the foundation of local and regional health systems and provide health care and staffing for health facilities. They also manage the system of referrals to other facilities to assure uninterrupted patient care. For most people, they provide a medical or dental "home" by representing the point of initial access to the community healthcare system.

In spite of the important role played by primary healthcare practitioners, there are still areas within the Commonwealth where access to care is challenging – either because of insufficient numbers of practitioners or as a result of poverty, healthcare disparities, linguistic or cultural

barriers or other factors. Each year, it is estimated that a primary care physician will encounter approximately 4,200 patients, a mid-level practitioner approximately 2,100 and a dentist approximately 2,600.

The Primary Health Care Practitioner Program has two components: the Loan Repayment program, in which Dr. Choi is participating, and the J-1 Visa Waiver program.

The Loan Repayment Program forgives loan repayment for physicians who agree to practice for up to four years in a federally designated primary care or dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). Physicians specializing in family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics and obstetrics, as well as general dentists, certified registered nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives and physician assistants are eligible for the program.

The J-1 Visa Waiver Program allows a non-citizen physician to waive the requirement to return to their home country after they have completed their training, provided that they agree to practice for at least three years in an underserved area. Since the program began in 1992, there have been 220 loan repayment placements and 280 waiver placements. ❖

For more information, visit
www.health.state.pa.us.

Immunization Messages Available

Healthcare providers can provide messages to their patients on the importance of immunizations. Working together, the Pennsylvania Immunization Coalition (PAIC) and CVS Pharmacy will initiate a three-part public awareness campaign. Three messages were developed to provide information on vaccines that are needed to protect children and young adults from life-threatening, vaccine-preventable diseases.

CVS will be printing these messages on targeted age group prescription bags during the campaign. The first phase will coincide with National Immunization Week in April with a message on childhood vaccines. The second phase will target high school graduates. The third phase will target required vaccines for school attendance.

The PAIC and CVS are asking healthcare workers to assist their effort to increase public awareness on vaccines. Providers can participate by educating patients on immunizations for their children and offering access to information. It is important for the public to understand that keeping immunizations current is a lifelong, life-protecting job. ❖

For more information or for copies of the immunizations messages, contact
Sandy Schwartz at
sschwartz@chesco.org

Bone Health Conference Announced

The Pennsylvania Osteoporosis Coalition and Geisinger Health System announce the 2005 Conference on Bone Health in Pennsylvania. The conference is slated for May 19 - 20 at the Holiday Inn Harrisburg-Hershey in Grantville. One of the keynote speakers will be Dr. Debra Gold, director of the Undergraduate Human Development Program at Duke University. For more information, visit www.geisinger.edu.cmecalendar. ❖

SHIP Call for Papers Announced

The State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) is the Pennsylvania Department of Health's overall strategy to sustain and improve the health of Pennsylvanians. Introduced in 1999, the plan emphasizes three primary focus areas:

- Preventing death, disease and disability by addressing the root causes of these conditions;
- Engaging in meaningful ways with organized community health improvement partnerships to give communities greater voice in identifying and addressing local health priorities and solutions; and
- Improving access by communities to relevant health and health-related data and information.

To increase the awareness of SHIP and promote graduate-level student research in community health improvement topics in Pennsylvania, the Department is sponsoring the SHIP Student Research Paper Competition for the sixth consecutive year. The Department, with the guidance provided by the SHIP Steering Committee, encourages graduate students in community health-related topics to participate in the competition with unpublished research papers that incorporate the SHIP principles. Through collaboration with the Pennsylvania Northcentral Area Health Education Center and the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health, the winners will be recognized at a public health conference in 2005. ❖

For more information, contact Serina Gaston, director of the Division of Plan Development, at 717-772-5298 or sgaston@state.pa.us.

Managing Agricultural Emergencies

Three programs offered through Penn State's Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering's Agricultural Safety and Health program is geared to prepare farm communities to better manage injury emergencies on the farm. *Managing Agricultural Emergencies* is an effort that comprises three separate programs, two of which teach farm families and one which teaches emergency workers how to care for victims injured on the farm. The three programs are aimed at providing the best care for the injured as well as protecting the safety of those providing the care.

The *Farm Family Emergency Response* program teaches farm families, employees and others what to do and not do when they initially discover an injury emergency on the farm. This discovery may be several hours after the injury occurred and the emotional stress of finding a family member injured needs to be addressed first. However, the one discovering the incident must also recognize the hazards present to avoid becoming a second victim. These two points can be very difficult, especially when family members are involved. The actions discussed in this program are geared at making life-saving decisions. This program discusses initial actions up to calling for help.

The *Emergency First Aid Care for Farm Families* program picks up where the *Farm Family Emergency Response* program leaves off. This program teaches untrained individuals how to perform important emergency medical tasks such as rescue breathing, blood control, splinting and care of burns. These measures will not only be beneficial for the injured victim, but they

will also help pass the time for those waiting for emergency services to arrive. This will lessen the anxiety for all involved.

The *PAgricultural Rescue* program trains fire, rescue and EMS responders about managing injury emergencies on the farm. The normal training for these emergency responders does not involve farm situations and most of their procedures, techniques and protocols used in other types of trauma and emergencies need to be adapted to have the same effect in the agricultural sector. Dealing with a person who has been trapped in a corn bin, under a tractor or in a machine is much different than dealing with a person involved in a motor vehicle crash. The rescue procedures, the rescue tools and the patient care procedures are different than what is more typically seen by emergency responders.

Preparing the entire community to be better equipped to manage an injury emergency on the farm should result in fewer deaths and serious injuries. When farm family members realize the consequences of trauma, they will be more likely to employ strategies to reduce the likelihood of having an injury incident. Also, the better trained people are (whether lay people or emergency providers), the better the care they will give to the injured. The better the care, the better the chances of survival. ❖

For more information, contact Dave Hill, program director at 814-865-2808 or deh27@psu.edu or visit <http://agemergencies.cas.psu.edu>.

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Conference Calendar

May 4

Helping Geriatric Patients and Caregivers Through Difficult Transitions

State College, PA
Contact: Sandra Beideman at 570-724-9145 or sandrabe@ncpaahc.org

May 13

Nutrition, Fitness and Women's Wellness

State College, PA
Contact: www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/NutritionConference

May 17

Building an Academic Community for Rural Medical Education

New Orleans, LA
Contact: Eli Briggs at 703-519-7910 or briggs@NRHArural.org

May 18

Rural Minority/Multicultural Health Conference

New Orleans, LA
Contact: www.NRHArural.org/conf
May 19 - 21

National Rural Health Association 28th Annual Conference

New Orleans, LA
Contact: www.NRHArural.org/conf

June 7 - 9

13th Annual Rural Health Conference and Robert Wood Johnson's Southern Rural Access Program Conference

Harrisburg, PA
Contact: Terri King at 814-863-8214 or tjc136@psu.edu

June 15 - 17

Pennsylvania Forum For Primary Health Care 24th Annual Conference

Valley Forge, PA
Contact: Jane Alleman at 717-761-6443

July 11 - 13

The Clock is Ticking for Rural America: A Behavioral Health and Safety Conference

Bloomington, MN
Contact: 712-235-6100 or www.agriwellness.org