Welcome Dr. Charity Thoman

Charity Thoman, MD, MPH has joined the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department as a Deputy Health Officer. Dr Thoman began her college education at Oregon State University where she received an Honors Bachelor of Science in Microbiology. She completed medical school at Tulane in New Orleans, where she also completed a Masters of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. For her graduate thesis in public health, she spent three months in Gabon (West Africa) doing surgery and infectious disease control. Dr. Thoman received her residency in Internal Medicine at Cottage Hospital.

As Deputy Health Officer at the Public Health Department, Dr. Thoman is the TB and Communicable Disease Controller and she will have primary responsibility for clinical matters in the Community Health Division including all Disease Control and Prevention programs. She will work 20 hours per week in this capacity. Dr. Thoman will also serve as a primary care medical provider for approximately 10 hours each week. We are pleased to have her join our team.

Measles in California: Think Measles!

There have been 14 reported cases of measles between January and May 18th in California this year including a case in San Luis Obispo County. Nearly all of the cases reported are known to have acquired their illness by traveling to countries with a high incidence of measles or were exposed to an infectious traveler to or from these areas. There are currently measles outbreaks in many European countries, including a large outbreak in France. Over 9,000 measles cases were reported in France between October 1, 2010 and the end of March 2011; most cases have been teenagers. Because measles is currently circulating in Africa, Asia, Europe, India, and the Philippines, providers are reminded to immunize patients traveling to these countries with MMR vaccine. Infants can be vaccinated as early as six months of age even though the two standard doses of MMR should be given after the first birthday.

Consider measles as a diagnosis when:

- A patient of any age presents with a fever and rash. Fever can spike as high as 105°F. Measles rashes are red, blotchy and maculopapular and typically start on the hairline and face and then spread downwards to the rest of the body.
- A patient has travelled outside North or South America or was in contact with international travelers (including transit through an international airport) in the prior three weeks.
- A patient has not received recommended MMR vaccination

If measles is suspected, providers should immediately:

- Report suspected measles cases to the Santa Barbara County, Disease Control Unit by calling (805) 681-5280. This number is answered 24/7. Timely reporting ensures essential disease control interventions.
• Mask suspect measles patient. If a surgical mask cannot be tolerated, other practical means of source containment should be implemented.
• Isolate in an airborne infection isolation room if one is available. If such a room is not available, place patient in a private room with the door closed. Healthcare personnel should follow standard airborne precautions and use an N95 mask regardless of immune status.
• Collect specimens for measles testing:
  ◊ Draw 1-2 ml blood in a red-top tube; spin down serum if possible. NOTE: capillary blood (approximately 3 capillary tubes to yield 100 µl of serum) may be collected in situations where venipuncture is not preferred, such as for children <1 year of age.
  ◊ Obtain a throat or nasopharyngeal swab; use a viral culturette and place into viral transport media.
  ◊ Collect 10-40 ml of urine in a sterile 50 ml centrifuge tube or urine specimen container.
  ◊ Arrange for measles testing at a public health laboratory by calling the Public Health Laboratory at (805) 681-5255.


2011 Community Health Status Report
Premature Death & Preventable Illness in Santa Barbara County

The recently published 2011 Community Health Status Report (available at www.sbcphd.org) presents information about leading causes of death and disease among Santa Barbara County residents to inform community leaders, local professionals, and the general public so they can take more effective actions that support healthier and longer lives.

In 2008, 2,917 deaths were recorded in Santa Barbara County, approximately half of which were caused by heart disease and cancer. Nearly half of all deaths were considered premature, that is occurred among people under age 75. Illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, hypertension, diabetes, and various cancers that can be associated with obesity contributed to hundreds of deaths, and thousands of years of life lost to premature death.

While smoking rates continued to decline, and Santa Barbara has one of the lowest smoking rates in the country (9% of adults), illnesses that can be related to smoking such as heart disease, stroke, lung and other cancers, and respiratory diseases contributed to hundreds of premature deaths. Motor vehicle accidents, accidental drug overdose, liver disease, and suicide were other key causes of premature death, collectively accounting for over 4,000 years of life lost in 2008. Car accidents were the leading cause of death among young adults.

County residents were healthier than the average Californian in terms of lower rates of smoking, lung cancer deaths, diabetes, STDs, and homicide than the state. However, area residents were less healthy than state averages in terms of higher rates of death due to stroke and liver disease, non-fatal falls, births to teens, and late prenatal care.

Substantial progress was made addressing several health concerns. Casualties from a pandemic flu (H1N1) outbreak were minimized through extensive outreach and vaccination efforts. A local ordinance restricting new tobacco retailers within 1,000 feet of schools in unincorporated areas of the county was passed. Designation of the Public Health Department clinics as Community Health Centers will support the department’s ability to meet local health needs.

Over the years much progress has been made to improve the health status of local residents, yet there is clearly more to be done. The Public Health Department will continue to work with the many organizations and agencies that are committed to improving the health of our community. Together we can continue to support policy and lifestyle changes that will make a difference in the quality and years of life in Santa Barbara County.