



DATE: October 25, 2018

TO: Southern Nevada District Board of Health Members

FROM: Joseph Iser, MD, DrPH, MSc, Chief Health Officer

SUBJECT: Chief Health Officer Report

Influenza Update

This flu season, the Health District is providing health care professionals with tips and information they can use to help their patients navigate through the onslaught of health information available through social media and the internet. Technology has allowed health care providers to have more tools than ever at their disposal. They use online toolkits to assist in treating patients, eReferrals to provide more efficient access to smoking cessation resources, and electronic health records can make everything more accessible for both providers and patients. Technology can serve to facilitate the care and access to health care information provided to patients. The internet, social media platforms, and both mainstream and alternative news sites have made health information readily available. These sources can provide a wealth of well-researched information and data from credible agencies, organizations, and credentialed individuals. Unfortunately, misinformation and rumors are sometimes as easily accessible on these same platforms and can be prominently featured and widely circulated. Experts and published studies have stated some conflicting views about the degree to which social media platforms influence people's opinions on everything from immunizations to the political landscape – but no one disagrees that they have an impact. What is known is that the more people are exposed to information, even false information, the more it will be credible. When using social media platforms, people's preconceptions will drive their viewing choices, as well as the algorithms used by these mediums.

At the start of another flu season, this is relevant to health care providers because they play an additional role in keeping patients healthy – inoculating them against misinformation. Patients looking for an excuse not to get vaccinated can quickly find a reason, couched in scientific terms, on the internet or use the hashtag “#noflushot” on Instagram to view posts that support their position. Health care providers are the antidote to these sources of information. Common myths that circulate every flu season include:

- **Getting the flu shot can give you the flu.** This is one of the most common and persistent myths about the flu vaccine and one of the main reasons cited by people for not getting vaccinated. Health care professionals can help to dispel this myth by asking all patients who can be vaccinated if they have received their flu shot this season, encouraging them to get vaccinated if they haven't already done so, and providing them with accurate information about the safety of the vaccine and its potential side effects. It

is important that patients understand the flu shot will not give them the flu. The vaccine, and more likely FluMist, which is made from a weakened strain of the virus, may cause headache, low-grade fever, and muscle aches, but none of the flu vaccines will cause the flu.

- **Flu shots are for the elderly, sick people, and children.** The flu can impact anyone at any age. There are groups designated more at risk for complications from the flu; however, every year people in all age groups are adversely impacted by the flu. It is important that people in every age group get vaccinated to decrease hospitalizations and to protect those around them.
- **I got the flu shot and still got the flu/The flu shot doesn't work.** No vaccine is 100 percent effective. Every season the flu vaccine is developed based on projections about which influenza strains will be most prevalent during the upcoming season. The effectiveness of the vaccine varies each season and for each strain contained in the vaccine. Getting vaccinated each year is the best protection from the flu and can reduce the risk of complications if a patient does become ill. During the 2016-2017 season, vaccination was estimated to prevent 85,000 flu-related hospitalizations.

In addition to myths and misinformation, there are updates to the recommendations and information each year that health care providers should be knowledgeable about to share with their patients. Over the past few seasons, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has revised its recommendations regarding the use of live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) and for people with egg allergy of any severity. Current recommendations state any licensed, age-appropriate vaccine can be used, and this includes individuals with a history of egg allergy. For the full ACIP recommendations go to www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/rr/rr6703a1.htm?s_cid=rr6703a1_w.

Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response

On Friday, Nov. 2 and Saturday, Nov. 3, teams from the Southern Nevada Health District will begin interviewing household members in Las Vegas about how extreme heat impacts them and their families. These neighborhood surveys are part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER) technique to gather information to assist in emergency planning and response efforts. The goal of this CASPER survey is to understand how extreme heat affects Clark County residents and how local response agencies and Southern Nevadans can better prepare for such events. In 2017, the Health District reported 123 heat-related deaths among Clark County residents.

Survey team members will go door-to-door between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 2 and Saturday, Nov. 3 in 25 ZIP Codes across the Las Vegas Valley. For additional information, visit www.snhd.info/casper.

Participation is voluntary, and the interviews are confidential. The team will not ask for names or other identifiable information. The questions will be simple and will ask about how heat affects individual families and how households are preparing for an emergency. The CASPER toolkit was developed by the CDC's Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects/Health Studies Branch to assist federal, state, and local public health agencies in conducting a community needs assessment. The tools are designed to provide accurate and timely data to public health and emergency managers to help them prioritize their responses

and make informed decisions regarding the distribution of resources in an emergency. For more information visit the CDC's [Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response \(CASPER\)](#) page.

National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day

The Southern Nevada Health District and the Southern Nevada HIV Awareness Consortium offered rapid HIV screenings, syphilis testing, and additional health services on Saturday, October 13 to commemorate National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day. In the United States, Hispanics/Latinos accounted for approximately 26 percent of new HIV diagnoses in 2016 although they are only approximately 18 percent of the population. The testing event took place on Saturday, Oct. 13 at Bonanza Plaza, 4250 E. Bonanza Rd., Las Vegas, NV. The Southern Nevada HIV Awareness Consortium is a group of community partners working together to fight HIV/AIDS in the community. Each year, National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day provides an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of testing, promote effective prevention strategies, and fight HIV stigma in the Hispanic/Latino community.

This year's theme, "*Ending HIV is everyone's job*," was a call to action to present existing tools to help end HIV and ask members of the community to do their part to take an HIV test, consider PrEP as a prevention treatment, stay in HIV treatment so the virus becomes undetectable, and use condoms. Only about half of Hispanics/Latinos living with HIV have achieved viral suppression. Hispanics/Latinos tend to have delayed HIV diagnoses. A delay in seeking care increases the risk of developing AIDS. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there could be several factors that contribute to members of the community not accessing testing, including a stigma associated with HIV and language barriers, among others. The CDC reports that among Hispanics/Latinos who received an HIV diagnosis in 2016, 87 percent were men and 12 percent were women. Approximately 1 in 4 new HIV diagnoses among young (13-24 years old), gay, and bisexual men are Hispanic/Latinos; HIV infection rates for Hispanic women declined 16 percent between 2011 and 2015. For more information, visit the CDC's [HIV Among Hispanics/Latinos](#) page.

The Health District's Sexual Health Clinic provides HIV/AIDS services that include testing, counseling, case management, outreach efforts, and community referrals. In addition, the Sexual Health Clinic offers STD screenings. Testing is \$40. The Clinic is open 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Monday – Friday at 280 S. Decatur Blvd. For information, call (702) 759-0702. All testing is confidential.

Community Meetings

Week of September 24

- Participated in the Interim Health Care Committee meeting
- Attended the Big Cities Health Coalition Fall meeting
- Participated in the Nevada State Medical Society Council meeting
- Participated in the Nevada State Medical Society Annual meeting
- Participated in the Clark County Medical Society Board of Trustees meeting
- Met with Jamie Ross, Executive Director, PACT Coalition, regarding marijuana dollars to increase funding for public health
- Participated in Small Grant Call meeting

Week of September 17

- Participated in the Southern Nevada Behavioral Health Policy Board meeting
- Participated in the ODMAP (overdose mapping system) meeting sponsored by the Office of the Attorney General
- Met with Dan Burdish, Special Assistant to Councilwoman Michele Fiore, regarding a community health issue

Week of September 10

- Met with Nevada Hand Directors Michael Mullin, Mike Shohet, and Kenneth Ladd to discuss potential collaborative efforts
- Met with Drs. Morgenstern and Penn of Roseman University of Health Sciences regarding the residency program
- Discussed health issues in the community at the monthly Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM) meeting
- Participated in the Big Cities Health Coalition 2018 Monthly call

Week of September 3

- Met with Richard Whitley, Director, Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, to discuss issues related to the Health District
- Met with Julia Peek, Division of Public and Behavioral Health, regarding Antibiotic Stewardship and related issues
- Participated in the Health Officers Association of California Board meeting
- Participated in the Nevada State Board of Health meeting
- Participated in the Public Health Improvement Fund meeting