

ALLEGHENY COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

MINUTES

September 14, 2016

Present: Lee Harrison, MD, Chair  
William Youngblood, Vice Chair  
Karen Hacker, MD, Secretary  
Edith Shapira, MD  
Anthony Ferraro (via telephone)  
Joylette Portlock, PhD  
Caroline Mitchell  
Donald Burke, MD  
Kotayya Kondaveeti, MD

Absent: Ellen Stewart, MD

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was held at ACHD's Administrative Office, 542 Fourth Ave, Pittsburgh. Dr. Harrison called the meeting to order. Dr. Harrison announced that an executive session was held to discuss personnel matters. He also announced that Mr. Ferraro was calling in remotely to the meeting.

2. **Approval of Minutes from July 13, 2016**

Dr. Harrison asked if there were any questions about the minutes. There were none.

**Action:** Mr. Youngblood moved to approve the minutes, Dr. Shapira seconded the motion.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

3. **Public Comments on Agenda Items**

**A. Ray Firth re: lead**

Mr. Firth asked the Board to take stronger action, and to take the lead, in eliminating lead-poisoning in Allegheny County.

**B. Alison Fujito re: HPV**

Ms. Fujito noted new studies that indicated adverse reactions of the central nervous system to the HPV vaccine. She expressed concern that ACIP was dismissive of evidence showing harm from HPV immunizations.

**C. Michele Sprague re: HPV**

Ms. Sprague stated that she opposes mandating the HPV vaccine, or any other vaccine, procedure or treatment. She stated that autism should scare the Board more than HPV does, given the comparative rates of occurrence. She requested that the Board contact Congressman Bill Posey regarding investigating the CDC.

**D. Jessica Fitzgerald re: HPV Education**

Ms. Fitzgerald stated that parents have the right to make healthcare choices for their children. She stated that HPV is not a disease that is communicable in schools, and noted that over \$3 billion has been paid out by the US National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program.

**E. Jennifer Magill re: HPV**

Ms. Magill stated that she suffered injury after receiving the MMR vaccine as a 12 month old. She stated that she has suffered seizures ever since then. She stated that the potential risk factors of the HPV vaccine have not been adequately studied, noted that most HPV infections are benign, and stated that a decision on HPV vaccination should be made by parents, not by the Board.

**F. Cassi Steenblok, Clean Water Action, re: Air Toxics Risk in the County**

Ms. Steenblok stated that she was a Program Organizer with Clean Water Action, which has over twenty thousand members in Allegheny County. She noted she is also a resident of Lawrenceville. She stated that she is concerned about air toxin emissions from the McConway & Torley foundry. She stated that the permit for McConway & Torley should prioritize the health of residents.

**G. Jane Kaminski, Bike Pittsburgh, re: Air Toxics Risk in the County**

Ms. Kaminski stated she is the Membership Manager of Bike Pittsburgh, an organization with 2,700 members. Two hundred of their members live in Lawrenceville. She stated that being physically active in a polluted environment comes with risk, and asked that ACHD issue a permit to McConway & Torley to reduce emissions.

**H. Amy Rafferty re: HPV Education**

Ms. Rafferty stated that the cumulative effects of the combination of vaccines given to children has never been studied. She stated that she is against mandating the HPV vaccine. She stated that HPV education needs to include full disclosure of the adverse effects that are possible after vaccination.

#### **I. James Lyons-Weiler re: HPV and Zika**

Mr. Lyons-Weiler was not present.

#### **J. Francine Pugliese re: HPV**

Ms. Pugliese stated that her daughter suffered from hair loss, nausea, and vomiting after receiving the Gardasil vaccine. Ms. Pugliese reported that her daughter was healthy prior to receiving the vaccine. After vaccination, she was diagnosed with dysautonomia, and other conditions which require daily medications. Ms. Pugliese noted websites that report a high incidence of injury from HPV vaccines

### **4. Old Business**

#### **A. Pittsburgh Diesel Monitoring Study**

Dr. Jane Clougherty, of the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health, shared a presentation with the Board regarding a diesel monitoring study focused on downtown Pittsburgh. Dr. Clougherty stated that the study showed substantial spatial variation in air pollution across downtown, with causes consistently related to diesel emissions. Higher concentrations were found in the downtown core, with lower concentrations found on the North Shore. The spatial patterns did not differ by the time of day. Dr. Clougherty stated that a public report will be forthcoming, and that pilot funding has been obtained to investigate solutions appropriate for Pittsburgh.

Dr. Harrison asked if there were any questions for Dr. Clougherty. Dr. Hacker stated that she was intrigued that the study showed no differences during different times of the day. She asked if weekend monitoring was done. Dr. Clougherty stated that weekends were not included, as the intention was to focus the study on the most intense hours of traffic. Dr. Hacker asked if the air pollution was really so driven by buses. Dr. Clougherty stated that the data showed consistent indicators for buses. Ms. Mitchell asked if samples were taken in areas where anti-idling ordinances were enforced. Dr. Clougherty replied that she was not sure where the enforcement took place, but it would be great if the County had that data and could share it. She pointed out that the buses do idle at their stops. Dr. Portlock thanked Dr. Clougherty and stated this was wonderful data. She asked about expected health impacts related to this data. Dr. Clougherty stated that was not done explicitly, but could be put into a risk-assessment framework.

#### **B. Air Toxics Risk in the County**

Dr. Lynne Marshall, an epidemiologist from the ACHD Air Quality Program, shared a presentation with the Board addressing air toxics risk in Allegheny County. Dr. Marshall stated that she took data from the National Air Toxics Assessment, and then added diesel particulate matter estimates to the total cancer risk from the NATA. The cancer risk data was compiled at the census tract level.

Dr. Marshall stated that the cancer risk due to air toxics in Allegheny County is increasing, with an increasing population of the County. She stated that the risk is highest downtown and in the river communities. The highest risks were from exposure to diesel emissions, coke oven gas emissions, and formaldehyde and benzene emissions. Downtown was at the highest risk from diesel, formaldehyde, and benzene emissions; the Mon Valley was at the highest risk from coke oven gas emissions. Dr. Marshall stated that she can't yet estimate the effect of Shenango's closure on cancer rates.

*At this time, Mr. Ferraro's telephone connection was lost.*

Dr. Marshall stated that the information from this study can be used for planning purposes for implementation of the Plan for a Healthier Allegheny, and can help direct air quality resources to where they're most needed.

Dr. Portlock asked when the information will be updated regarding Shenango. Dr. Marshall stated that she was still gathering information, and is hoping to compare full years' worth of data. Jim Thompson stated that current data is posted on ACHD's website, but noted that is raw data without analysis. Dr. Portlock stated that she looks forward to more information in the future regarding Shenango.

Dr. Burke noted that this study prioritizes the public health risks of cancer, but pointed out that other health impacts from air toxics include respiratory and heart ailments. Dr. Marshall stated that it is true that cancer isn't the only health impact from air toxics. Dr. Kondaveeti urged Dr. Marshall to also look into asthma and COPD risks from air toxics.

*At this time, Dr. Kondaveeti excused himself and left the meeting. Mr. Ferraro's telephone connection was re-established to the meeting.*

Dr. Portlock asked for an update on the McConway & Torley permit process. Mr. Thompson stated that ACHD did propose a permit based on the best information about the foundry, which has many operations in its building. He stated that ACHD assumed that approximately 50% of the emissions were escaping the building, but that ACHD was pleasantly surprised after testing revealed that almost 100% of the emissions were contained within the building. These results showed the need for additional information, and ACHD developed stack-test protocols for seven different stacks. Testing should be completed in mid-November, after which a draft permit will be issued for public comment.

### **C. HPV Education**

Dr. Hacker stated that the Board decided at its last meeting not to move forward with mandating HPV vaccination. She informed the Board that meetings have been held to promote vaccine immunity, and that it has been noticed physicians have seen more willingness to give the vaccine at age 15, as opposed to age 13. She stated that ACHD is focused on being strategic with

its communications with providers and parents. She reported that ACHD is working with parents' groups, and sent a letter to the parents of seventh graders in Pittsburgh Public Schools. She stated that this issue will be discussed at the November 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Immunization Coalition. She informed the Board that ACHD does not have additional resources for any next big steps.

Dr. Burke stated that the Board has heard many concerns and comments regarding the vaccine. He stated that he does not question the concerns, but asked how ACHD can convey information regarding those concerns. Dr. Hacker stated that evidence should be made easily accessible and easier to understand, and that all physicians should give out vaccine risk information.

#### **D. Update on Opioid Risk and FUSE Fellow**

Dr. Hacker stated that she and Dr. Burke both attended a forum hosted by the University of Pittsburgh's Institute of Politics focusing on opioids. She stated that the IOP should release a report on this topic in early October. She informed the board that ACHD and the Department of Human Services have released a report regarding Opiate related overdose deaths in Allegheny County. The report is available on both Departments' websites. The report identified certain communities that are disproportionately affected by overdoses. Certain times were also identified as being high-risk for overdoses. Such times included after being released from jail, or when leaving mental health or substance abuse treatment. Dr. Hacker also informed the Board that the state's prescription monitoring program has just been released, and noted that many other states have already implemented such a program.

She also noted that the Heinz Foundation has provided funding, for a term of one year, for a FUSE fellow who will be focusing on heroin. She stated that the fellow will be joining ACHD in early October, and thanked the Heinz Foundation.

#### **E. Update on Live Well**

Dr. Hacker stated that Live Well has 31 municipalities and 7 school districts as members. She stated that Woodland Hills School District was the newest member. She stated that Live Well has been working with the Pittsburgh Business Group on Health on the development of Live Well Workplaces. An annual report on Live Well's progress was given to the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

#### **F. Update on Lead Recommendations**

Dr. Hacker stated that ACHD has been active with lead-issues since the last Board meeting. She reported that the Epidemiology Bureau has been using data from PA-NEDSS (Pennsylvania's National Electronic Disease Surveillance System) to identify the areas of most concern in Allegheny County. Allegheny County Economic Development received a grant from HUD for lead remediation in 200 homes, ACHD is working with ACED on that project. ACHD received a grant from the state to address lead, ACHD is trying to merge efforts with ACED to

reduce inefficiencies. Dr. Hacker also stated that that the Maternal & Child Health program is working to get babies tested for lead. ACHD's website also features information regarding how residents can get their water tested for lead.

Dr. Hacker also stated that the state recently lowered the threshold required for early intervention from 10µg/dL to 5µg/dL. She and Marc Cherna, of Allegheny County's Department of Human Services, sent a joint letter to the state urging them to implement this change. She did inform the Board that unfortunately lead-related legislation has not made any progress in moving through the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

Dr. Hacker reported that she had spoken with several pediatric groups, and the groups strongly recommended moving to universal lead screening for children. Dr. Hacker reminded the Board that universal lead screening is not new, and that it is mandated in eleven states and the District of Columbia. Internal ACHD discussions were held with the WIC program and Immunization clinic regarding ACHD's participation in lead screening. ACHD was also reviewing its Housing regulations to make sure the most recent standards were being met. Regarding the attempt to target high-risk children by testing by zip code, Dr. Hacker stated that pediatricians' feedback indicated that it would be easier to test all children.

Dr. Burke asked to be reminded what the prevalence of children under age five with elevated blood lead levels was. Dr. LuAnn Brink stated that she didn't know that figure off of the top of her head. Ray Firth stated that the figure was approximately 2-3% in the overall population, but that the percentage was higher in poorer populations. Dr. Burke stated that this would be good information to have, as well as knowing how hot the hotspots are. He then asked about lead in water. Dr. Hacker stated that the number one issue was lead in paint, but that she can't say that water has nothing to do with the problem. She said that school districts are testing their water and replacing pipes. She pointed out that there are simple things that people can do, and that their water can be tested for free, or for a very low cost, if they are concerned.

*At this time, Dr. Shapira excused herself and left the meeting. She stated that she supports universal screening of children for lead. Dr. Harrison confirmed if Mr. Ferraro was still connected to the meeting via telephone, which he was.*

**Action:** Dr. Portlock moved that ACHD will draft language about universal lead testing for children. Dr. Burke seconded the motion.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

## 5. **New Business**

### **A. Zika Overview**

Dr. Kristen Mertz stated that the Zika virus is spread mainly by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which is not present in Allegheny County. However, the *Aedes albopictus* mosquito,

which can be a vector for Zika, is present in Allegheny County. Other routes of infection, other than mosquitos, include maternal-fetal, sexual, laboratory exposures, and blood transfusions.

Dr. Mertz stated that the current outbreak originated in Brazil, and has now spread to forty countries, including the United States. She stated that there are 108 cases of Zika in Pennsylvania, including ten in Allegheny County. She stated that 80% of those infected with Zika were asymptomatic. She further stated that Zika can cause microcephaly, vision and hearing deficits, miscarriage, and Guillain-Barre syndrome.

Dr. Mertz stated that Pennsylvania Department of Health criteria for testing includes recommendations for testing for: pregnant women who have travelled to an affected area or who have had sex with someone who travelled to an affected area, men and women who experience Zika symptoms after having travelled to an affected area or who had sex with someone who had travelled to an affected area, and to test infants whose mother was positive for Zika. ACHD provides consultation to medical providers, responds to calls from the public, and educations and informs Allegheny County regarding Zika. ACHD also engages in mosquito surveillance and source reduction.

6. **Director's Report**

Dr. Hacker reported that ACHD was working on a response document for the public comments received on the e-cigarette regulations.

She also thanked Jim Thompson, who will be moving on at the end of October. She expressed appreciation for the work he has done for ACHD. Mr. Thompson thanked Dr. Hacker, and the Board, for their support. He stated that he was very proud of what the Environmental Health Bureau accomplished, and thanked the Bureau's staff. He also thanked environmental advocacy groups for their help. Dr. Harrison thanked Mr. Thompson for his service to the County.

7. **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

9. **Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items**

**A. Karen Woytowicz re: Autoimmunity**

Ms. Woytowicz stated that her children suffer from brain disorders caused by autoimmunity. She stated that some segments of the population have a genetic susceptibility to being harmed by vaccines. She stated that the safety bar for vaccinations should be higher to protect children, and that parents need to be informed.

**B. Thadeus Popovich re: Shenango**

Mr. Popovich stated that he has known Mr. Thompson for a few years and thanked him for engaging with him. Mr. Popovich stated that he was a co-founder of ACCAN. He stated that more resources are needed for a retrospective study of the Shenango site.

**C. Angelo Taranto re: Shenango**

Mr. Taranto stated that he was a member of ACCAN. He thanked Mr. Thompson for his work. Mr. Taranto stated that ACCAN is asking DTE to forfeit their Emission Reduction Credits and asked ACHD to rethink its participation with that.

9. **Adjournment**

Mr. Youngblood moved to adjourn the meeting, Dr. Burke seconded the adjournment.