Public Health Preparedness

During the February 2011 blizzard, Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) played an important role in the City of Chicago’s response to the extreme weather. During the storm and throughout the recovery period, CDPH Emergency Preparedness personnel staffed the City’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC), monitoring and maintaining valuable healthcare situational awareness, including bed availability and ER admissions related to weather. CDPH also stood with the Mayor and other City departments at press conferences to provide up-to-the-minute information and advised people how to avoid adverse effects of the severe weather and extreme cold. CDPH assisted with the City’s response effort by sending public health nurses to conduct community well-being checks with Department of Family and Support Services teams. In the EOC, CDPH also worked to address needs of area hospitals and health care facilities, including resource needs and assistance with improving ingress and egress to hospital facilities. Finally, CDPH participated in several city-wide After Action Conferences to garner the critical lessons learned from the response to the storm, which will be used to improve city operations and responses in future weather-related emergencies.

Communicable Disease

The Tuberculosis Program is undertaking two mass TB screenings at homeless shelters where active TB cases have recently stayed. As case numbers continue to drop (161 in 2010, down from 202 in 2009), we are focusing our efforts on the highest risk populations and these mass screenings are a pro-active method to identify undetected active TB cases who may lead to sustained TB transmission. The screenings should evaluate at least 200 very high TB risk individuals.

Immunizations: Chicago will be receiving an award for the highest series coverage (74.4%) among the six urban areas (Chicago, Philadelphia, New York City, DC, Houston, and San Antonio) that receive funding directly from CDC. The award is based on the percent of children 19-35 months of age who were up to date with their immunizations from July 2009 through June 2010. Representatives from CDPH, the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Chicago Area Immunization Campaign will receive the award at the National Immunization Conference (NIC) that will be held on March 28-March 31 in Washington, DC.
Published Disease Investigation: Board members will recall that a few months ago, the CDPH Communicable Disease Program presented on a case of plague bacteria. CDPH, with assistance from CDC, IDPH, and others, led the investigation of the death of a 60 year-old microbiology professor. This is believed to be the first report of a laboratory-acquired fatality associated with an attenuated Y. pestis strain. This study was published in the February 25, 2011 MMWR. Publication of the investigation results is important so that other plague investigators and laboratory biosafety officials can consider methods to improve detection and monitoring of illness among laboratory workers.

www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6007a1.htm?s_cid=mm6007a1_e&source=govdelivery

Food Safety: Late last month, a 15-member delegation from Beijing visited Chicago. The delegation, which included representatives from a number of governmental entities in the Mentougou District (one of several districts that comprise Beijing), met Dr. Cort Lohff, head of our Environmental health program and staff from the Food Protection Program. In addition to being provided with an overview of the Department, the delegation learned about the various roles of federal, state and local entities involved in food safety and sanitation as well as how the Food Protection Program conducts inspections.

Multi-drug Resistant Organisms: The Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council’s Clinical Services Department, in collaboration with Advocate Lutheran General Hospital, the Chicago Department of Public Health, Cook County Department of Public Health, Illinois Department of Public Health and the University of Illinois School of Public Health’s Mid-America Public Health Training Center, coordinated a conference on February 4, 2011 to assist healthcare facilities in battling multidrug-resistant organisms. Antibiotic resistance is a public health problem that is growing rapidly in magnitude. The recent discovery of new carbapenemase-producing bacteria has brought this public health problem to the forefront. This conference addressed cutting edge issues in antibiotic resistance in our community. Stephanie Black, MD, MSc spoke at this meeting to give an update on carbapenemase-producing bacteria cluster investigations, the challenges healthcare facilities face, and the need to support increased resources for infection control in acute and long term care. CDPH staff, Drs. Kathy Ritger and Joshua Jones and Epidemiologist Eric Jones, were in attendance as well.

Administration

Jaime Dircksen just joined CDPH as Deputy Commissioner for Performance Management and Strategy Review. This new office, funded through a 5-year public infrastructure grant from the CDC, will provide leadership and support to staff to ensure programs are offering services with optimal outcomes. This office will be responsible for conducting a staff needs assessment, training and enhancing infrastructure via streamlined data collection and providing management systems to efficiently store and analyze data.
Violence Prevention

On March 1, 2011, Office of Violence Prevention Director Anne Parry provided an in-service on bullying prevention to Chicago Park District staff representing 11 Chicago parks. On February 28, 2011, she returned to the Adler School of Professional Psychology to provide Psychological First Aid training for students. The Office is now entering the second year of its partnership with the Chicago Commission on Human Relations in co-sponsoring Psychological First Aid workshops for ministerial associations citywide. The Office is planning activities for the Fifth Annual Children Exposed to Violence Prevention Week, which takes place this year the week of April 18.

Community Health Worker Conference

The Chicago Partnership for Public Health is a co-sponsor of a conference being held on March 29, 2011, on “Exploring Policies that Support Community Health Workers in IL”, a forum to discuss policy development related to Community Health Worker training, workforce development, certification, and funding in Illinois.  