

**Medical Director's Report
Board of Health
November 2013**

Tobacco Education Campaign (Conducted by the Centers for Disease Control):

An analysis by the CDC of the impact of a media campaign it conducted from March 4th through June 23rd of this year showed significantly positive effects in reaching people.

During that time period the CDC used outreach through television ads, radio, print, billboards, buses, bus stop advertisements and social media, as well as on-line internet to encourage smokers to consider quitting. The ads conveyed a message encouraging use of the national 1-800 quit now line as an aide to quitting and/or use of the website's resources which included information about quitting, support resources, and a message to "talk with your doctor" (encouraging interaction with their personal physician).

The ads were pulsed on a weekly basis, That is to say, that on some weeks the ads were run and on alternate weeks they were not. The most striking result of the campaign was that both calls to the 1-800 quit line, and the number of unique visitors to the campaign websites increased significantly at the very start of the campaign and dropped abruptly again at the very end of the entire campaign. In addition, in the weeks during which the ads were being run there was a significant increase in activity compared to weeks when the advertising was turned off.

In numbers this translated into a rise from about 13,000 calls per week prior to the campaign to 25,000-27,000 calls per week during the weeks of the advertising campaign. For the website there was a rise from about 1000 unique visitors per week before the campaign to 149,000 visitors per week during the campaign.

At the end of the campaign the callers to the 1-800 line and the visitors to the website dropped back to levels similar to those seen before the campaign.

Assessment: This data does not tell us how many of these people actually quit, either in the short or the long term, but it does demonstrate that the impact of an advertising campaign can be significant. The level of funding required was not mentioned.

FDA Opens 60 Day Comment Period on A Measure to Further Reduce Trans Fat in Processed Foods:

Due to the disease causing impact of trans fats (partially hydrogenated oils), the FDA is holding a public comment period on the impact of a proposed regulation requiring the removal of partially hydrogenated oils from the food supply.

The projected impact of this measure is substantial. The FDA estimates it could prevent up to 7,000 deaths from heart disease each year.

Background: Since 2006 the FDA has required the food industry to declare the amount of trans fats in their food on the nutrition facts label. Since that date, a substantial number of processed foods have been reformulated to reduce the amount of trans fat in them. Despite this a substantial number of products still contain partially hydrogenated oils. Partially hydrogenated oils have heretofore fallen under the regulatory classification “generally recognized as safe” (known by the acronym GRAS).

Food ingredients that meet the GRAS designation are not regulated by the FDA. Sodium falls in to this GRAS designation and some propose removing sodium due to its impact on blood pressure so that it too could be regulated. Although sodium is required to be declared on nutrition facts labels, it is not a regulated ingredient in foods. There are a number of food ingredients that are of importance in health which are “generally recognized as safe” and are not subjected to FDA regulations.

The comment period on the partially hydrogenated oil regulations started on November 8th and will continue for 60 days. At the conclusion of this period the FDA will consider editing its draft regulation and issuing it.

General Activities:

- Reviewed employee pre-employee physical forms, updating them and routing them to staff for further work.
- Reviewed information on youth suicide and homicide. Firearm usage is the most frequent mode. When one looks at which suicides are completed successfully one finds that when firearms are used an attempted suicide is far more likely to be successful then when medications or street / over the counter drugs are used. Some debate the role of trigger locks, gun safes, and a combination of these to reduce impulsive acts.
- Met with Dr. DeRigis to discuss pertussis as an example of public health work as he prepares a paper for his MPH program. Dr. DeRigis attended our last BOH meeting as an observer.
- Conducted a quarterly jail quality assurance jail review. I review 10% of inmate charts at the County Jail which are selected randomly. We were asked by the jail to do this starting in the mid 1990s. The report is reviewed by the jail’s medical director, the sheriff and our public health director.