

Medical Director's Report Board of Health December 2012

Clinical Decision Making and Guidelines for Practice

The organization IPRO is tasked with providing a spectrum of healthcare assessment and improvement services. They are regarded as being independent in their approach. They contract with Federal, State and local government agencies in 33 states and the District of Columbia. It's a not-for-profit organization and it often does assessments and initiates activities focused on improving quality of healthcare. In their assessment about clinical practice guidelines, they came to the conclusion "that too many clinical practice guidelines are based on expert opinion, rather than clinical trials and meta-analysis ...". This conclusion is supported by a new report from the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine. Which indicated that only 14% of recommendations of the Infectious Diseases Society of America were based on more than a single clinical trial. More than half of them were found to be based solely on expert opinion. Analyzing recommendations from the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association lead to similar findings – most practice guidelines had not been subjected to controlled trials.

Comment: This follows the concerns of many other professional societies regarding data that drives our healthcare these days. In brief, the complaint is that guidelines based on expert opinions and consensus agreements are prone to influence from many sectors and are often found later to be contradicted by controlled trials and hard science. As we step forward with ever greater emphasis on preventive care, looking at cost containment, and emphasizing improved quality, it is important to steer away from recommendations and guidelines which are based on expert opinion and consensus.

Unintended Births

The National Health Statics Reports for July of this year show trends since 1982, whether a woman intended to get pregnant just before their pregnancy occurred. The results show that about 37% of the births in the United States were unintended at the time of conception, from data drawn from 2006-2010. The overall proportion has not declined significantly since 1982.

Influenza

As of mid November, the data indicated that it was at a “local” level, which means increased or sustained numbers of laboratory confirmed cases of influenza in a single region of New York State, with activity being sporadic in the rest the state. Tompkins, Cortland, Seneca, Cayuga and Ulysses counties reported no activity so far this season. The counties of Schuyler, Tioga, Broome and Steuben reported some influenza activity.

Update on Study by Bamberger & Oswald on Animal and Human Impacts Linked with Hydrofracking

I phoned Dr. Oswald and discussed with him our review of the study. He indicated that they have now included approximately an additional six sites to the ones that were published in the original article.

He has received quite a bit of criticism from industry with regard to the study.

He especially had received criticism when it was published in Australia as a news report, which criticism from industry led to a “retraction” of the news story in Australia.

His perception of NYS SGEIS regulations regarding testing of the environment with regard to fracking, is that they are not adequate, not even as compared to Texas, he states.

I informed him of the Project SWIFT in Syracuse, he was very interested. He was already aware of the Marcellus Initiative Project in Pennsylvania which was reported in the November Board meeting.

Update on Influenza

Since my dictated report, influenza has taken an upswing and has been detected within the County. We as a department have discussed vaccine supply issues, which I will detail to you verbally at the Board meeting. We have also discussed issues in regards to private practitioners and employed practitioner’s access to vaccine supplies. We have also discussed public information pieces to be released through all media, radio as well as print, with regard to medication and treatment of influenza.