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August 25, 2016

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Cynthia Harding, M.P.H
Interim Director

SUBJECT: **INCREASING VACCINATION RATES AMONG GROUPS AT RISK FOR INVASIVE MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE**

This is to provide you with information on actions taken by the Department of Public Health (DPH) in response to a motion by your Board on July 5, 2016 about increasing vaccination rates among groups at risk for Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD) in Los Angeles County (LAC). This report includes the information requested on three key aspects of DPH's response: development and initiation of a public communications plan, creation and launch of a vaccination campaign focused on increasing access to vaccine, and engagement with partner agencies to foster effective outreach.

Background and Initial Response

On June 24, 2016, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), coordinating with DPH and other local jurisdictions, identified an outbreak of IMD in Southern California. By July 1, 2016, DPH had established a DPH Response Team, developed a Response Action Plan, and requested epidemiologic assistance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Leads for the following key areas were established: case surveillance and investigation, outreach to community members and healthcare providers, and laboratory testing. This Response Team remains in place and is leading the County's response to the outbreak. This team also coordinates with other local jurisdictions impacted by the outbreak, including Orange County and Long Beach, and maintains active dialog with experts and advisors at CDPH and the CDC.

Communications Plan and Implementation

To guide communication efforts on IMD, DPH created a comprehensive communications plan (Attachment 1) aimed at increasing awareness of the disease and the need for vaccination. The communications plan outlines key messages, methods of communication, and the target audiences

for communication efforts. Target audiences include individuals at-risk for IMD, such as men who have sex with men (MSM), community partners, health care organizations, and health care providers, especially those serving the MSM community. Communications under the plan will be in both English and Spanish, and include direct engagement with at-risk populations in community and social venues, as well as venues where social and clinical services are received. The communications plan will be continuously reviewed, evaluated for impact, and revised as needed to accomplish the goals of the response effort.

To date, DPH has used numerous venues to provide information to the public and providers about the outbreak and to encourage vaccination. DPH published press releases on June 24, July 1, July 7, and July 26, 2016 to provide information on the outbreak and the County's response efforts. On July 7, 2016, the Health Agency held a press conference jointly with key community providers at the LA LGBT Center to encourage men who have sex with men (MSM) to receive the meningococcal vaccine. This event was covered by numerous news providers in LAC, and local and national media, including Spanish language outlets, picked up key messages from the press activities. Social media has also been used to distribute prevention messages.

Communication efforts also focused on health care providers, elected officials, and community members seeking information from LAC. On June 24 and July 26, 2016 DPH issued health alerts to medical providers though the Los Angeles Health Alert Network (LAHAN) to provide updated information on the status of the outbreak, as well as on vaccination recommendations. Elected officials were provided information on IMD during a tele-briefing held on July 7, 2016. Further, information on IMD was provided to the County's 2-1-1 system to ensure that callers receive accurate information and are referred to available vaccination sites. Finally, DPH published a variety of educational materials for community members and providers on its website at: http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/DiseaseSpecific/dontswap.htm.

In addition to DPH-led efforts, agencies serving the LGBT and MSM communities have initiated public communication activities to increase awareness of IMD. For example, AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) held a press conference and launched a billboard advocacy and awareness campaign encouraging meningitis vaccination among at-risk groups. DPH will continue to explore further opportunities for targeted public communications and education with partner agencies.

Vaccination Access and Promotion

DPH has created and initiated a vaccination campaign to ensure that all at-risk individuals have the opportunity to receive the meningococcal vaccine. There is currently no routine monitoring of meningococcal vaccination rates among adults, making it difficult to track improvement of rates in this population. Since the vaccine is not recommended for all adults and the protective benefit of any prior vaccination wanes over time, vaccination rates among at-risk groups are expected to be low, and protection from any preceding vaccination to be even lower.

A number of actions were initiated by DPH to quickly increase the availability of vaccine in LAC and to deliver this vaccine to providers who could immediately administer it to at-risk individuals. The long-term strategy of the campaign will be to develop and sustain vaccine delivery capability in a variety of health care organizations that can provide direct access for the at-risk population,

including providers who serve the MSM community directly, providers who service large groups of individuals who are under- or uninsured, and pharmacy groups who can provide immediate access for a large part of the at-risk population.

Increasing Access to Vaccine for Under- and Un-insured At-Risk Individuals
Once the outbreak was declared in Southern California, DPH requested and received approval from CDPH to use Section 317 meningococcal vaccine in all at-risk individuals. "317 vaccine" is funded by the CDC to vaccinate the uninsured and underinsured. When an outbreak is declared by a local or the state health department, this vaccine can be provided free of charge to any person for purposes of "managing the outbreak" without regard to insurance status.

To launch immediate and coordinated vaccination efforts, DPH identified key partners that historically provide services to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, such as the LA LGBT Center, AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), AHF, and Bienestar. These community-based agencies have been very responsive in responding to the outbreak by increasing vaccination services and increasing awareness in the communities they serve.

Within one month of the outbreak being declared, DPH distributed nearly 2,000 doses of 317-funded meningococcal (MCV4) vaccine to community partners who serve the target population. DPH also ensured that there was an ample vaccine supply at DPH and DHS clinics. In addition, 500 doses of 317-funded MCV4 vaccine were allocated to the unit in the Men's Central Jail housing gay and transgender individuals.

Based on recommendations provided by the CDC assistance team, local vaccination recommendations were expanded on July 26, 2016 to include all gay and bisexual men. On this date, a press release, a Health Alert, and a letter from the Health Officer were distributed that provided information on the expanded vaccine recommendations to more than 10,000 recipients in the LA Health Alert Network (LAHAN) and to approximately 50 LGBT provider partners. The LAHAN and Health Officer letter were also distributed to all Los Angeles County Medical Association (LACMA) and Hospital Association of Southern California (HASC) members.

With support from the CDC epidemiologic assistance team, case data were analyzed to determine geographical "hot spots" in LAC. DPH will use this and future information to focus its vaccination efforts in areas where the disease appears to be more prevalent. DPH has begun to engage provider partners in these geographical areas to offer 317 vaccine and ensure access regardless of insurance status.

Partnering with Health Plans, Large Provider Groups, and the Medical Community
DPH and DHS will continue to strengthen collaborative relationships with large provider groups, the hospital community, individual providers, and medical associations. These relationships help foster the robust infrastructure needed for timely IMD outbreak response and management both now and in the future. DPH has communicated new vaccination guidelines and disseminated updated information to major medical provider groups in Los Angeles County, including Kaiser Permanente, LA Care, HealthNet, HealthCare Partners, Molina Medical Group, and the medical staff offices of LAC acute care hospitals.

DPH is collaborating with LA Care and Kaiser Permanente to develop strategies for increasing vaccination rates that target both providers and members. These strategies include letters to physicians to increase awareness of IMD and encourage vaccination efforts, articles for internal publications, and educational materials distributed to members. Further, DPH is working with the LA Care Behavioral Health Department to determine how to best reach the MSM community among the 1.8 million LA County residents they serve. LA Care will target specialty providers (e.g. HIV specialists and those who serve specific age groups) to promote vaccination and incorporate pharmacy benefits for such groups to increase vaccine uptake. The LA Care Health Education Department will also partner with DPH on a social media advertising campaign to increase awareness and encourage vaccination in targeted groups served by these organizations.

DPH is engaging medical associations to reach physicians with information about IMD. DPH is working with the Los Angeles County Medical Association (LACMA) to distribute all health alerts and health officer recommendations, especially pertaining to new vaccine recommendations. DPH is also working with the Hospital Association of Southern California (HASC), the American College of Physicians, the American Academy of Family Practice and LAC medical schools to increase knowledge of IMD, LGBT healthcare and the role of vaccination in protecting the public's health.

Finally, DPH will partner with the LGBT organizations and student health centers at various campuses throughout LAC. DPH will meet with campus LGBT student organizationsto conduct focus groups to better assess the barriers to vaccination uptake amongst the MSM college community population.

Engaging Pharmacy Groups in Vaccination Efforts
Ample supplies of vaccine and expanded pharmacy outreach activities at the neighborhood level are essential to sustain vaccine availability. Through its vaccination campaign, DPH will engage pharmacies to increase vaccine availability, as well as to promote vaccination for IMD on signage within stores. DPH has initiated discussions with leadership of large chain pharmacies to identify optimal pharmacy locations for additional dose ordering and distribution for identified geographic hotspots. Further, in collaboration with the West Coast University School of Pharmacy and the Immunization Coalition of Los Angeles County (ICLAC), DPH will engage pharmacy groups across LAC to increase use of the California Immunization Registry (CAIR) for recording all immunizations given at participating pharmacy locations, including, but not limited to, meningococcal vaccination. This work to gather population-based data and track uptake will help DPH direct efforts to increase vaccine administration to those most at risk.

Ensuring Adequate Vaccine Supply in DPH and DHS clinics Countywide
DPH and DHS have taken steps to ensure that at-risk adults have ongoing access to meningococcal vaccine. For the duration of the declared outbreak in Southern California, vaccine will be available in all DHS and DPH immunization clinics, free of charge, regardless of insurance status. Once the outbreak period comes to an end, meningococcal vaccine will remain accessible for under- and un-insured patients who seek services at DPH and DHS clinics. DPH will ensure that clinics providing meningococcal vaccine are listed on the DPH website for ease of access.

Long Term Planning for Increasing Meningococcal Vaccination Rates
DPH has initiated actions with long-term benefits to increase awareness of IMD and vaccination coverage rates. These actions include continuous engagement with a wide range of diverse health care partner organizations. The DPH Immunization Program (IP) will continue working with these partner organizations on vaccine service delivery capacity over the next five years to provide technical assistance, as well as to offer guidance on vaccination protocol best practices.

Partnerships with Organizations and Providers that Serve the MSM Community

Following the initiation of its communication plan and vaccination campaign, DPH has increased collaboration with providers and community organizations historically serving the MSM community. DPH will continue to work closely with the LA LGBT Center, APLA, AIDS Healthcare Foundation and Bienestar to plan vaccination outreach efforts across the county.

Few agencies and community-based organizations in LAC specifically provide services to the LGBT and MSM communities. Among these, few provide clinical services, most of which include only HIV and STD testing. A long-term outcome of DPH efforts to address IMD is to increase capacity of community-based agencies with clinical service delivery systems to provide vaccination services. DPH has created linkages between agencies that can provide immunization services in conjunction with the agencies that have influence but lack the capacity to provide such services. Through these connections, DPH seeks to reach the difficult-to-reach communities at risk and decrease barriers to services.

If you have questions or need additional information, please let me know.

CAH

Attachment

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Invasive Meningococcal Disease

Communications Plan

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
Office of Communications & Public Affairs

County of Los Angeles Public Health

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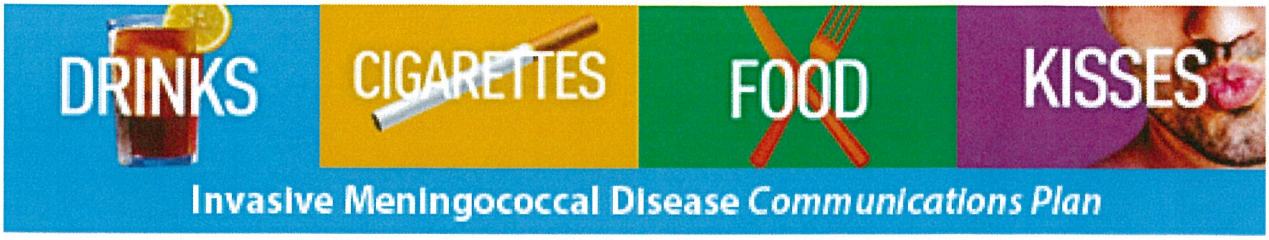


Background

Meningococcal disease is caused by a type of bacteria known as Neisseria meningitidis. The illness most people are familiar with is meningococcal meningitis, which people often call meningitis. Meningococcal disease is rare, but serious. It spreads through saliva (spit). It can lead to serious medical problems, including death.

For 2016, there are have been 15 Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD) cases in Los Angeles County (excluding Pasadena and Long Beach which have separate health departments), eight of whom are men who have sex with men (MSM). The outbreak occurring since March 2016 throughout Los Angeles and Orange Counties is ongoing. Twenty-four individuals from multiple jurisdictions, most of whom are MSM, have been associated with this regional outbreak caused by serogroup C, which is vaccine-preventable.

To date, no common social linkages have been identified among the gay/MSM Los Angeles County IMD cases and cases identified in neighboring jurisdictions; investigation still is ongoing.

Outreach/Campaign Purpose

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) will work to increase awareness of IMD, and promote the MCV4 vaccine. To be most effective, Public Health will promote key messages specifically to the most at-risk target audiences through a variety of strategic public relations tools and media platforms

Objectives

Increase vaccination rates through:

- Generate increased awareness about Meningococcal disease
- Increase levels of perceived susceptibility among unvaccinated gay, bisexual and MSM groups from pre to post measure by January 2017.
- Increased level of awareness will promote behavior change and motivate individuals to get vaccinated.

Target Audience - Key Risk Groups

Recent LA County data shows more cases than usual of IMD among gay/bisexual men and MSM. Key risk groups include:

- Anyone who is HIV positive
- All gay men/MSM regardless of their HIV status or risk factors
- All persons with HIV infection who are two months of age and older are recommended to be routinely vaccinated with MCV4 vaccine

Key Messages

1. IMD spreads from direct contact with saliva (spit) or air droplets that come out while coughing or sneezing.
2. Vaccination is the best way to prevent this disease. Public Health clinics and its partners are providing vaccinations, please see website for details.
3. Prevent infection: avoid multiple kissing partners, don't share items that spread saliva, like utensils, food, drinks, or cigarettes.
4. Symptoms of IMD can start with flu-like symptoms such as; high fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, confusion, sensitivity to light, and/or rash and could be deadly.

Resources

Net County Cost for staff time. If additional funding is allocated this communications plan can be augmented and expanded.

Methods of Communication

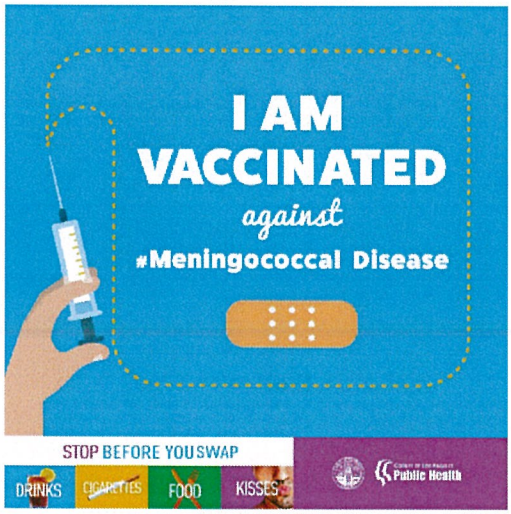
Earned media, press releases, press conference, social media, newsletters, media interviews, public service announcement/video, website, and County channel.

Social Media Campaign

Work with High Risk Group organizations to start a social media vaccination campaign. Similar to "I Voted," – but with reference to "I am vaccinated against Meningococcal Disease."

Social Media Campaign Timeline

The Social Media Campaign (draft 1) will kick off September 2016 – December 2016. Public Health will be using this hashtag: #Meningococcal.



Draft 1

Short list of potential partners: Social media TAGs to include:

1. @LALGBTCenter
2. @getPrEPLA
3. @AIDSHEALTHCARE
4. @GayWeHo
5. @gaydaysLA
6. @WehoCity
7. @gaycities
8. @LAPRIDE
9. @WEHOville
10. @LAGLCC
11. @PROYECTOORGULLO
12. @RiseUpToHIV
13. @NMAtweets (National Meningitis Association)

Details of Communications & Timeline

Determine and exercise the appropriate protocol to effectively route, receive, assign and coordinate informational updates to County leadership, staff, community partners, physicians, government offices and cooperating agencies.

Communications with the Board of Supervisors

Lead: Lauren Dunning, Board Liaison

Activity	Purpose	Date	Status
1. Communication to the Board of Supervisors and Health Deputies	Update the County Leadership - Board	June 21, 2016 June 24, 2016 July 1, 2016 July 13, 2016 July 22, 2016 July 26, 2016	**As Needed**

Communications with the Media

Lead: Natalie Jimenez, Office of Communications & Public Affairs

Activity	Purpose	Date	Status
2. Press Release	Public Health Urges Vaccination for Those at Risk for Invasive Meningococcal Disease	June 24, 2016	**As Needed**
	La enfermedad meningocócica invasiva en el Condado de Los Ángeles	July 1, 2016	
	Invasive Meningococcal Disease in LA County Disproportionate Number of Cases in Men Who have Sex with Men	July 1, 2016	
	LA County Partners with Community Providers to Encourage At-Risk Gay/Bisexual Men to Get Meningococcal Vaccine	July 7, 2016	

Activity	Purpose	Date	Status
	El Condado de Los Ángeles en asociación con proveedores de la Comunidad, invitan a las personas que se encuentren en riesgo, como los hombres gay y bisexuales para que se vacunen contra la enfermedad meningocócica Invasive Meningococcal Disease Vaccination Recommendations Expanded: All Gay/Bisexual Men or Men Who Have Sex with Men Are Urged to Get Vaccinated Se Amplia las Recomendaciones de Vacunación para la Enfermedad Meningocócica Invasiva	July 8, 2016 July 26, 2016 July 28, 2016	
3. Media Advisory	Announce press conference Press Conference: LA County Partners with Community Providers to Encourage At-Risk Gay/Bisexual Men to Get Meningococcal Vaccine	July 6, 2016	**Completed**
4. Press Conference	Increase awareness and promote vaccinations work with Department of Health Services (DHS), LA LGBT Center, AHF, APLA, and City of Long Beach.	July 7, 2016	**Completed**
5. Press Outreach	To communicate new information	Continuous	**Ongoing**

Communications with the General Public / Key Risk Groups

Lead: Natalie Jimenez, Office of Communications & Public Affairs

Activity	Purpose	Date	Status
6. Social Media	Maximize messaging by tagging target groups and linking to fact sheets, and clinic locations, and one-day vaccination clinics.	Continuous	**Ongoing**
7. Message from Health Officer on DPH website	Provide prevention message	July 1, 2016	**Completed**
8. 2-1-1 LA County	Provide information and list of clinic for vaccination	July 27, 2016	**Completed**
9. Video	Disseminate a :30 second video via social media and website	September	**Planning**

Communications with Physicians

Lead: Sarah Guerry, Medical Affairs

Activity	Purpose	Date	Status
10. Los Angeles County Health Alert Network (LAHAN) message	Outbreak of Meningococcal Disease among adult Males in Southern California Meningococcal Vaccine Now Recommended For All Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM)	June 24, 2016 July 26,2016	**Completed**

Communications with Pharmacies & Clinics

Activity	Purpose	Date	Status
11. Connect with providers who serve at-risk groups who are uninsured	Increase vaccines and awareness. DPH is providing federally "free" funded vaccine to community partners who have the capacity to provide vaccination services.	Continuous	**Ongoing**
12. Engage Pharmacies to ensure vaccine availability for insured individuals	Provide updates and engage providers. DPH communicated with pharmacy groups to increase awareness of the IMD outbreak and ensure that vaccine is in stock, particularly in targeted geographic "hot spots."	July 2016	**Ongoing**

Communications with Community Health Services

Lead: Gema Morales Meyer, Community Health Services (CHS) Administration

Activity	Purpose	Date	Status
13. Provide Fact Sheet, Who Should Get Vaccine Fact Sheet and Vaccine Clinic Locations	Provide guidance to Service Planning Areas	Continuous	**Ongoing**
14. Outreach to gay night clubs	Handouts to target population	TBD	**Planning**

Communications with Other County Departments, California Department of Public Health & Cooperating Agencies

Lead: Stella Fogelman, Emergency Preparedness and Response Program; Natalie Jimenez, Office of Communications and Public Affairs; Michelle Parra, Immunization Program, and Kyle Baker, Division of HIV and STD Programs

Activity	Purpose	Date	Status
15. Fact sheets to DPSS, DHS, County Library, etc.	Provide information to distribute – Tool kit	July 28, 2016	**Completed**
16. Send IMD 'tool kit' to cities	Provide awareness information	August 25, 2016	**Completed**
17. Speaker's Bureau	Proactively offer Speaker's Bureau presentations	Continuous	**Ongoing**
18. Telebriefing with local elected officials in LA County	Provide information to elected officials to increase awareness	July 7, 2016	**Completed**
19. Use other social media assets to disseminate messages	Targeted outreach to at risk population	August	**Planning**
20. Outreach to Community Based and Faith Based Agencies and provide content for their dissemination	Provide awareness information	August	**Planning**
21. Email List Serv: i.e. health educators	Provide awareness information	August	**Planning**

Helpful Links

- http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/DiseaseSpecific/dontswap.htm
- https://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/MeningococcalDisease.aspx
- https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/
- http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/