



Concerning Our Health

Tobacco 21 is Now Law: Smoking and Vaping Regulation Aims to Protect Youth

Tobacco 21 is finally law in Putnam County. The new legislation, called T21 for short, goes into effect early in 2019, making it illegal to sell tobacco, nicotine and vaping products to anyone under the age of 21. Previously, the legal age to buy these products had been 18. Putnam County joins 24 other New York State municipalities that have enacted T21 laws. County Executive MaryEllen Odell signed the bill into law in October. Work on the bill was spearheaded by Garrison resident and County Legislator Barbara Scuccimarra.

Vaping has been a particular problem in Putnam County. Kristin McConnell, director of The Prevention Council of Putnam, a local substance use prevention provider, presented research at the recent Public Health Summit (see related story on the right) that shows an alarming picture of Putnam’s youth vaping numbers, which are double the national averages. According to a recent survey, the percentage of Putnam County tenth graders who used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days is 27.3 percent, compared to the national average of 13.1 percent. For twelfth graders the national average is 16.6 percent and in Putnam it is 33.8 percent. Another concern from the data is that 5.8 percent of teen e-cigarette users report using marijuana in the vaping devices, while 66 percent think the device, as purchased, just holds flavored liquid.

A number of local Putnam County agencies and organizations have been battling the war on tobacco and other addictions on many fronts. One example is The One Army in the War on Addiction Task Force that brings together representatives from the County Executive’s

Office, the Sheriff’s Department, the Department of Health (PCDOH), the Department of Social Services and Mental Health, and the District Attorney’s Office. Represented community organizations include The Prevention Council of Putnam, the Putnam Communities That Care (CTC) Coalition, Drug Crisis in Our Backyard, and CoveCare Center, as

well as other provider organizations that tackle the addiction crisis daily.

The PCDOH, which currently has been conducting “compliance checks” to ensure that retailers are not selling tobacco to minors under age 18, is initiating a campaign to educate retailers and the public about the new law prior to its going into effect.

Public Health Summit VIII Draws Crowd to PHC “Forces of Change” assessment spurs data collection

More than 85 public health partners from nearly four dozen community agencies convened at Putnam Hospital Center (PHC) in mid-October, for the eighth annual public health summit. This year for the first time, a broad effort was made through social media to invite public participation, resulting in nearly 20 Putnam residents also attending the summit. The summit was organized by the Putnam County Department of Health with support from PHC, and kicked off the data collection process for the Community Health Assessment (CHA) that helps inform the Community Health Improvement Plan, known as the “CHIP.”

Putnam Hospital Center President

Peter Kelly joined Putnam County leaders including County Executive MaryEllen Odell, interim Health Commissioner Michael Nesheiwat, MD, and Commissioner Michael Piazza from the Department of Social Services and Mental Health, in making opening remarks. Deputy Commissioner Joseph DeMarzo from Social



Stephanie Marquesano, founder and president of the harris project, was the first guest speaker .



From left are County officials Deputy Commissioner Joseph DeMarzo, Department of Social Services and Mental Health, Legislator Barbara Scuccimarra, and interim Health Commissioner Michael Nesheiwat, MD.

Services and Mental Health, and County Legislator Barbara Scuccimarra, chairperson for the Health, Social, Educational and Environment committee, were among the other County officials in attendance.

Stephanie Marquesano opened the morning session of presentations by community partners. She is founder and president of the

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Narcan use in Putnam increases; Opioid deaths remain high

Putnam statistics on the use of naloxone (Narcan) show a dramatic rise between 2016 and 2017—from 36 to 65—or an 80-percent-plus jump. With these 65 potential deaths averted, opioid deaths still remain high at 21 and 20, for 2016 and 2017 respectively. These numbers clearly show the problem is still growing. Additionally, the CDC has reported a record 72,000 overdose deaths nationwide, which equates to about a 10-percent rise.

With the release of the Putnam data in the State health department report, interim Health Commissioner Michael Nesheiwat, MD, was featured in a front page story in the *Putnam County Courier* and editor Douglas Cunningham addressed the potent topic in his weekly editorial.

“Opioid misuse and addiction, along with heroin use, are complicated issues that affect the entire country, not just our county,” Dr. Nesheiwat was quoted as saying. “Multiple interventions are

needed—from public servants and various sectors of the community. Enhanced mental health services, increased addiction treatment facilities, stigma reduction and increased public awareness, emergency medical services and law enforcement involvement are some of the key elements, as is reduced opioid prescribing.” Dr. Nesheiwat added that further restrictions have already been placed on the duration of opioid prescriptions issued from both emergency room and private physicians.

The use of the drug naloxone is one initiative that has resulted from the collaboration of diverse community sectors. This very effective lifesaving medication reverses an overdose and can now be administered by anyone. No prescription is needed to obtain the medication, but the person must be trained. If an individual has prescription coverage as part of his or her health insurance, then the state-funded naloxone co-payment assistance program

called N-CAP will cover the cost of a \$40 co-pay, so there are no or lower out-of-pocket costs at participating pharmacies.

The health department and community organizations, including Arms Acres and Drug Crisis in Your Backyard, help facilitate trainings countywide. Emergency medical services and law enforcement staff are now administering the drug when they arrive on the scene of an overdose.

But this is far from enough. “Improved, more accessible mental health services are needed. The stigma attached to addiction and mental illness must be reduced so more people will seek help before problems escalate. We are working together with other agencies to build support around these types of initiatives,” Dr. Nesheiwat continued.

For more info about the Narcan program: Visit www.health.ny.gov/overdose or call the health department at 808-1390

Public Health Summit, *continued from front page*

harris project, a unique nonprofit organization committed to co-occurring disorders (COD), a diagnosis of one or more mental health challenges together with substance misuse. She launched the organization after her 19-year-old son Harris died of an accidental overdose, after struggling with COD in a public health system that lacks the cohesiveness to properly address these dual conditions.

The significance of this fractured health care system and the challenges communities face when trying to fix it was described by presenter Ashley Brody, MPA, chief executive officer of Search for Change. His organization, which has received funding and licensure from the NYS Office of Mental Health for over 40 years, has been on the front lines of providing housing and other support for individuals who are faced with emotional, social and economic barriers. He pointed to their historical “abstinence only” orientation to substance use disorders, and the slow, uneven progress toward harm reduction and other alternate approaches. To transform to a more people-oriented care approach, the first step is to recognize that co-occurring issues and con-



CHIP partners in attendance included presenter Kristin McConnell, director of The Prevention Council, and Janeen Cunningham, director of the Putnam County Youth Bureau.

ditions are the norm—not the exception, and that recovery occurs through adequately supported, individualized and concurrent, skill-based learning for all conditions.

Other partner updates came from Kristin McConnell, director of the Prevention Council of Putnam, who spoke about Tobacco 21 (see cover story) and Sarena Chisick, community health educator at PHC, who presented on the fall prevention initiative (see back page).

The “forces of change” assessment

followed with a fast-moving discussion on a variety of factors including social, economic, political, technological, scientific, ethical, legal and environmental that may affect the public health system in the county and the country at large.

Political trends were more in the spotlight this year with audience members mentioning the possible dismantling of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the potential legalization of marijuana for recreational use. Other social and scientific or technical trends that were discussed included the continued prevalence of sexual and domestic violence, the dramatically rising rates of sexually transmitted diseases, increase and prevalence of cancer, and growing number of patients with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia. Identified trends were all discussed in terms of threats and opportunities for change. A full report of the Forces of Change assessment will be drafted and posted on the health department’s website and included in the CHA report.

Tick Borne Illnesses Rise More; EM Rash Reporting Increases

Tick-borne illnesses continue to rise in Putnam County and across the country, according to a comprehensive vector-borne illness report issued earlier this year by the CDC. Lyme disease remains the most prevalent among the tick-borne diseases, and Putnam lays claim to the third highest rate of Lyme disease of all 62 counties in New York State. Unfortunately Lyme is not the sole concern—anaplasmosis and babesiosis cases are rising in Putnam as well.

The good news is that physician reporting in Putnam has improved for erythema migrans (EM)-diagnosed Lyme cases. So far this year more than 80 cases diagnosed in this manner have been reported to the health department. A streamlined “line list” was implemented that helped to smooth the reporting process for physicians. As a result, these cases are being captured and will be added to the surveillance numbers, making the overall reporting more accurate.

The reporting line list is available online on the health department’s website, under the right-hand tab “For Healthcare Providers.” Physicians are the first line of defense against these vector-borne

illnesses in terms of surveillance and control, and are encouraged to use this simplified method to report their patient cases.

Source: www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/vector-borne/

The nine-year stat sheet... Statistics on tick-borne illnesses in Putnam County from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) are below. Because Lyme disease is so prevalent in the county, since 2009 the NYSDOH has only required that 20 percent of laboratory reports be fully investigated. The official case count numbers below are then based on a NYSDOH calculation that extrapolates the total number from the investigated cases. Cases diagnosed by erythema migrans, that are typically without laboratory results and not reported to the health department, are therefore unaccounted for in these numbers.

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Lyme disease	NA*	344	322	323	294	242	345	171	133
Babesiosis	37	16	17	23	25	15	18	8	3
Anaplasmosis	30	17	16	8	25	19	34	15	27
E. chafeensis	5	8	4	8	4	2	1	2	7
Encephalitis, Powassan virus	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	1

*NA=not available

Patients with pre-diabetes benefit from free lifestyle change program offered by PILS

Patients diagnosed with pre-diabetes can lower their risk of developing actual diabetes with a lifestyle change program called Prevent Type 2 Diabetes (PreventT2). Offered free by the Putnam Independent Living Services (PILS), this evidence-based program is recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which means it meets certain standards, such as having trained coaches and a CDC-approved curriculum. The group meets weekly for the first 20 weeks and then less frequently for six months. Learning to eat healthy without giving up favorite foods, adding physical activity to one’s life, and dealing with stress are some of the changes the program helps participants make.

Sessions are held throughout Putnam County. Provider organizations with enough interest can have programs based at their locations. The program is also held at PILS, 1441 Route 22, Suite 204 in Brewster. For more information, please call Lonna Kelly, a healthy living specialist for the Diabetes Prevention Program at PILS, 845-228-7457, extension 1110. Patient program requirements include being 18 years of age or older and being at risk for diabetes, but never having had a previous diagnosis of the disease. Being at risk is determined by:

- ▶ BMI of 25 or greater/23 or greater if Asian (American Diabetes Association criteria), OR
- ▶ Previous diagnosis of gestational diabetes, OR
- ▶ A blood test result in the prediabetes range within past year:
 - Hemoglobin A1C (5.7% to 6.4%), OR
 - Fasting plasma glucose (100 to 125 mg/dL); OR
 - 2-hour plasma glucose (after 75 gm glucose load) 140 to 199 mg/dL

Referrals: Physicians can refer individual patients using the referral form available online here:

<https://www.putnamils.org/diabetes-prevention-program/#>

Free smoking cessation group starts Jan 2019

Another eight-session Freedom From Smoking (FFS) program, is being offered by the Putnam County Department of Health, to start Tuesday, January 8. Enrollment filled quickly last year with smokers who had resolved to quit for the New Year. The program is free to Putnam residents on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Widely regarded as the gold standard in quit-smoking programs, the evidenced-based FFS program was created by the American Lung Association, an organization with more than 50 years of experience helping smokers quit.

The health department group leader is a FFS/American Lung Association-certified facilitator. The Center for a Tobacco-Free Hudson Valley provided additional technical assistance with training on the program that involves lifestyle changes that support tobacco-free living. Free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products such as the patch and gum are available, while supplies last. Using NRT is encouraged, and is discussed in detail as part of the program, but it is not mandatory.

Pre-registration is required, as group size is limited. Information on the program can be found online at www.freedomfromsmoking.org.

For more information about the program, or for patients who would like to pre-register, contact Alexa Contreras at the Putnam County Department of Health, (845) 808-1390, ext. 43155.

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Prevention Rx: Reducing Falls and Fall-related Injuries

Reducing falls and fall-related injuries is one of the priorities for the county's CHIP (Community Health Improvement Plan). Although the rate of falls for all age groups has been on the decline in Putnam County, falls remain the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries for older Americans.

**1 in 4
Americans
65 years & older
fall every year.**

In September, Putnam Hospital Center and the health department co-sponsored a Falls Prevention Expo at the hospital. The event brought together representatives from organizations working with seniors, and others at risk for fall-related injuries. All health care providers are encouraged to recommend free fall prevention programs to their at-risk patients.

Free programs

Adaptive Physical Activity Program for Fall Prevention (two locations)

- ▶ 15 Mount Ebo Rd S., Brewster
- ▶ 40 Jon Barrett Road, Patterson

Contact: Hudson Valley Cerebral Palsy Association, 845-878-9078, Email: info@hvcpa.org

Fall Prevention Classes (four locations)

- ▶ Koehler Center, 180 Route 6, Mahopac
- ▶ Carmel Friendship Center, 100 Old Route 6, Building #1, Carmel
- ▶ American Legion Hall, Cedar St, Cold Spring
- ▶ Friendship Center, 117 Town Park Lane, Putnam Valley

Contact: Mary White, Putnam County Office for Senior Resources, 845-808-1734

Stepping On

- ▶ Putnam Hospital Center, 664 Stoneleigh Ave, Suite 203, Carmel

Contact: Outpatient Physical Therapy, 845-279-1785

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention (two locations)

- ▶ Koehler Center, 180 Route 6, Mahopac

Contact: Mary White, Putnam County Office for Senior Resources, 845-808-1734

- ▶ Putnam Hospital Center, 664 Stoneleigh Ave, Suite 203, Carmel

Contact: Outpatient Physical Therapy, 845-279-1785

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE...The STEADI (Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths, and Injuries) Toolkit: *Resources for Health Care Providers*