

**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING**

MINUTES

Thursday, February 10, 2009

A meeting of the Philadelphia Board of Health was held on Thursday, February 10, 2009, in the Municipal Services Building, 1401 J.F.K. Boulevard, Room 1450.

Board Members Present: Jose A. Benitez, MSW; Marla J. Gold, MD; Shannon P. Marquez, MEng, PhD; Susan Schewel, CRNP, PhD; Donald F. Schwarz, MD, MPH; Robert G Sharrar, MD, MSc; Yolanda F. Slaughter, DDS, MPH

Attendees: Leslie Baird; Andrea Brockman, DDS; Charles S. Brown; Vincent DiLorenzo, DDS; Nan Feyler; Dwight Florence; Thomas Gamba, DDS; Kay Graham; Caroline Johnson, MD; Carmen Lemmo; James Lutz; Joe Meade; Giridhar Mallya, MD, MSHP; Jeff Moran; Ken Moser, DDS; Karen Palmer; Alan Roberson; Judy Roberson; Leslie Smith; Carol Ward

Welcome and Introductions

Board President Donald F. Schwarz, Health Commissioner, called the meeting to order at 5:10 PM. He welcomed the members of the Board and asked for amendments and corrections to the minutes of the Board meeting of December 11, 2008. It was moved that the minutes be approved as submitted. The motion was seconded. Motion passed.

Commissioner Schwarz introduced Dr. Caroline Johnson, director of the Department of Public Health's Division of Disease Control, to present amendments to department regulations governing school immunization requirements.

School Immunization Regulations

Dr. Johnson distributed to the Board a document consolidating current childhood immunization regulations (Attachment A) and proposed a new regulation to go into effect at the beginning of the 2009-10 school season (Attachment B).

The proposed regulation introduces three new vaccines as a requirements for admission to the sixth grade: meningococcal vaccine, tetanus/diphtheria, and a second dose of varicella vaccine. She said that the sixth grade, when students make the transition from elementary to middle school, was selected based upon the recommendations of the department's nurse partners in the school system. The school district foresees no problem with implementation, and the Law Department has approved the language of the regulation. The proposed regulation is similar to a requirement that the state is expected to adopt in 2010.

Board member Susan Schewel asked if the vaccine would be available in the schools. Dr. Johnson said that the department does not administer vaccine in the schools in order to encourage that a provider meets all of a child's medical needs. The department works with the schools to identify those who are not immunized and works with providers to ensure the availability of vaccine. The cost of the vaccine is covered by private insurance or made available through the federal Vaccines For Children Program.

Schewel asked what takes place when a child does not have a medical provider. Sometimes the Division of Disease Control assists in identifying a provider. Often, the child is referred to a City operated health center, Johnson said. The City Law Department has determined that children of eleven and above are able to consent to their own immunization, so often a child can leave school, get immunized, and return to school on the same day.

Board member Dr. Marla Gold asked what changes the department expected to come about as a result of the new regulation. Dr. Johnson said that over the past few years, at the federal and local level, there have been declines in meningococcal disease in this age group; however, the decline is more easily attributable to natural disease cycle than the vaccine.

Immunization rates are still low in this age group, in the range of 10 to 20 percent. As immunization improves, incidence of meningococcal should continue to decline and outbreaks will be more easily controlled. She noted that as children grow older parents are often less attentive to a child's need for a medical checkup. The new regulation will help to underscore the need for a pre-adolescent medical visit.

Board member Dr. Robert Sharrar asked if the vaccine has any impact on the carrier state of the meningococcal virus. Dr. Johnson said that based on the behavior of other vaccines it probably does not.

Dr. Schwarz entertained a motion to approve the regulation. It was moved and seconded. Motion passed.

Mercury in Dentistry

Dr. Schwarz said that the ordinance passed by City Council directs the Board of Health to consult with the Philadelphia Dental Society, New Era Dentistry, and Consumers for Dental Choice regarding the fact sheet required by the ordinance. He noted that members of the Board and representatives of the three organizations had been provided with copies of the proposed fact sheet (Attachment C), and invited representative of the organization to present up to three minutes of comment specifically related to the fact sheet. He asked that Board members follow these presentations with discussion of any issues or concerns they may have, and offer their amendments to the fact sheet.

Charles S. Brown, Consumers for Dental Choice, presented comments on the fact sheet and submitted his remarks in written form (Attachment D). He also submitted written proposed revisions to the fact sheet (Attachment E).

Dr. Schwarz asked for questions from the Board. There were no questions.

Thomas Gamba, DDS, The Philadelphia County Dental Society, presented comments on the fact sheet and submitted his remarks in written form (Attachment F). He also submitted written proposed revisions to the fact sheet (Attachment G). Dr. Gamba said that representatives of New Era Dentistry had reviewed his comment and concurred with them.

Dr. Schwarz asked for questions from the Board. Dr. Sharrar asked Dr. Gamba to provide a reference for the statement that, "High levels of mercury are most often associated with exposure to mercury in seafood and/or in the environment and are not caused by amalgam fillings alone." A source for the statement was not immediately available.

Dr. Schwarz opened the meeting for discussion and amendments from the Board. He then read aloud the proposed fact sheet.

Dr. Gold raised concern that the statement "Currently, it is an approved treatment for cavities in the U.S." in section two, bullet one, appears too early in the text, discouraging further reading. Following discussion, the statement was struck from the current location.

She proposed that section two, bullet seven, be replaced with the precise language used by the FDA. The Board approved the change.

She asked the board to reconsider section four, bullet three, which might encourage a consumer to make a decision based on cost. Following discussion, the Board voted to strike the third bullet, and replace it with, "There may be a cost difference between resin composite and dental amalgam."

D. Shannon Marquez, questioned the language of section four, bullet four, which refers to the disposal of mercury in the sewer system rather than the environment, and states that mercury should be disposed of "carefully, rather than "as a hazardous waste," as indicated in safety data. Drs. Gold and Schwarz noted that the City Council directive to the Board requires the fact sheet address concerns about the impact of mercury on the environment.

It was moved that the revised language, "To protect the environment, amalgam must be disposed of as a hazardous waste" replace section four, bullet four. Motion passed.

Dr. Slaughter proposed that the deleted language in section two, bullet one, "Currently, it is an approved treatment for cavities in the U.S.," be relocated, and asked the Board for assistance. It was suggested that the word "approved" be inserted in section three, bullet one: "Amalgam is one of several approved choices for filling cavities." Dr. Slaughter so

moved. Motion passed. In keeping with this change, the Board also agreed to the insertion of the word “approved” in section one, bullet one.

The Board considered a motion to place section two, bullet seven, as bullet two in that section. Motion failed.

Dr. Schwarz asked if the Board would like to propose an amendment to list additional websites in the fact sheet. No amendment was proposed

He asked if the Board would like to propose an amendment to change the phrase “ a type of metal” in section one, bullet two, to “a toxic metal”. No amendment was proposed.

He asked if the Board would like to propose an amendment to add information about the environment to the second section. No amendment was proposed.

He asked if the Board would like to propose an amendment to add to the fact sheet the sentence “High levels of mercury are most often associated with exposure to mercury in seafood and/or in the environment and are not caused by amalgam fillings alone.” No amendment was proposed.

In summary, Dr Schwarz read aloud the City Council Ordinance (Attachment H), followed by the revised fact sheet (Attachment I).

Dr. Schwarz noted that while the ordinance does not require the Board to edit the fact sheet in the future, as new information becomes available, the Board should review and update the document on an annual basis. He also asked the Board to consider, as a topic on a future Board meeting agenda, further discussion of insurance equity as it influences access to types of dental fillings.

Announcements

Dr. Schwartz announced that University of Pennsylvania’s Project for Civic Engagement is holding workshops on the City budget. He encouraged anyone concerned about public health to participate in these sessions.

Dr. Gold asked if Dr. Caroline Johnson could, at a future meeting, provide the Board with an update on HPV vaccine.

Dr. Schwarz said that he would place on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled meeting in April. He entertained a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.