

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

**Thursday, March 12, 2015**

A meeting of the Philadelphia Board of Health was held on Thursday, March 12, 2015, in the Municipal Services Building, 1401 J.F.K. Boulevard, 14th Floor, Room 1450.

Board Members Present: Jose A. Benitez, MSW; James W. Buehler, MD; Marla J. Gold, MD; Shannon P. Marquez, MEng, PhD; Scott McNeal, DO; Robert G. Sharrar, MD, MSc; Yolanda A. Slaughter, DDS, MPH.

Attendees: Lenore Asbel, MD; Jane Baker; Kathleen Brady; Caitlin Cunningham; Bonita Cummings; Jose DeMarco; Nan Feyler; Christopher Hall; Helen Koenig; Helena Kwakwa, MD; Giridhar Mallya, MD; Mathew McClain; Jeff Moran; Jean Otis; Ann Rickseckar; Coleman Terrell

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Health Commissioner and Board President James W. Buehler, MD, called the meeting to order at 5:45 PM. He welcomed the Board and guests, and asked members and those in attendance to introduce themselves to the group.

Commissioner Buehler asked the Board to review the minutes of the meeting of October 28, 2014. It was moved that the minutes be approved as submitted. Motion seconded. **Motion passed.**

Dr. Buehler said that not many regulatory issues are likely to come before the Board during the remainder of the year. The Board plans to use some of its upcoming meetings to consider presentations devoted to selected issues that are on the horizon in public health practice. Presentations at this meeting are the first in that series of meetings, and address the topic of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis for AIDS prevention.

**PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PrEP) FOR HIV PREVENTION**

Kathleen Brady, MD, Medical Director and Medical Epidemiologist, AIDS Activities Coordinating Office (AACO), delivered a slide presentation that focused on PrEP as a tool for HIV prevention and risk-reduction (Attachment A).

Dr. Gold asked how rates of condom use among MSM (men who have sex with men) in Philadelphia compare with rates in other cities. Dr. Brady indicated that the rates in Philadelphia are near the average.

Dr. Sharrar asked about the long-term side effects of PrEP. Dr. Brady noted that PrEP is for a season in someone's life, unlike treatments that last a lifetime. She said that nausea is a common side effect in the first few weeks of therapy. Bone loss may be a long term side effect, but the evidence is unclear at this time.

Dr. Gold inquired about the source of data pertaining to HIV prevalence in teen sub-populations. Dr. Brady explained that the data is based upon National HIV Behavioral Surveillance methodology, which employs venue based sampling.

Coleman Terrell, Acting Director of AACO, outlined for the Board the department's 'PrEP Implementation Plan' (Attachment B), a plan to increase the use of PrEP through support, training, and promotion within the HIV prevention workforce and primary care and specialty care provider network.

Helen C. Koenig, MD, MPH, Medical Director of the PrEP Program, Jonathan Lax Treatment Center, Philadelphia Fight, and Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine, discussed 'Putting PrEP into Practice; Challenges & Opportunities' (Attachment C), and responded to questions from the Board.

Dr. Slaughter suggested that dentists who treat HIV patients would be a good group to engage in the effort to promote increased use of PrEP.

Deputy Health Commissioner Nan Feyler asked what might be done to promote use among women. Dr. Koenig said that this is a growing priority. Some of the family planning clinics in Philadelphia have begun to talk about it. The goal is that whenever birth control is discussed PrEP should be included in the discussion.

Dr. Koenig introduced the first person in her program to be prescribed PrEP. He spoke to the Board about his reasons for taking PrEP, its value to him, and his hope that it might become more widely available to others at risk. He said that he and his friends take it on a regular schedule like a vitamin, and feel empowered to take charge of their own health.

Dr. Buehler invited Dr. Helena Kwakwa of the department's Strawberry Mansion Health Center to share her experience with PrEP among the patients she serves at the Center. Dr. Kwakwa observed that MSM in larger number have been involved in this preventive treatment, but that the Health Center is working to engage women and heterosexual men. Strawberry Mansion has approximately 50 patients using PrEP, and the department is expanding the effort to the other Health Centers.

The Board and guests discussed next steps. The obstacles to greater use of PrEP include costs, lack of coverage by some insurers, legislative restrictions on federal funding, and the fact that treatment is generally not connected to primary care. Possible remedies include use of discount purchasing programs, State funding, Medicaid expansion, and outreach or training for primary care providers, residency programs, and the HIV testing system.

Jose A. Benitez suggested that the Board consider drafting a statement to urge the State to

provide financial support. Dr. Buehler asked the Board members to reflect on the evening's presentations and get back to the department with any additional suggestions or recommendations.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

None.

Dr. Buehler adjourned the meeting at 7:15 PM.