



PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS & VIEWS

A Regional Health Professional Newsletter



Karen Luparello, DO, MPH, Medical Director

FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR'S DESK

Welcome to the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency's Winter Provider Newsletter. It's my hope that you had some time with family and friends over the holiday season.

As we return to our practices to care for our patients, remember the importance of self-care too. I'm not one for giant New Year's resolutions, but committing to some new positive changes are important. This newsletter installment discusses many issues that we, as providers, can pass on to our patients.

Key topics covered in this edition:

- **January is Radon Awareness Month:** Free radon test kits are available at health department offices.
- **Respiratory illnesses:** Encouraging vaccination and educating patients about Flu, COVID, Pneumonia, and RSV.
- The **"Take Control of Your Birth Control"** program provides free contraceptives and condoms at our office locations. We also have

materials regarding birth control and sexually transmitted infections.

- **STI Prevention/National Condom Week (February 14th-21st):** Ongoing conversations with patients about protection are essential for reducing STI cases in our tri-county area.
- **Latent tuberculosis and tuberculosis:** We've included resources and continuing education on this topic.

Talking with your patients about these issues can result in a healthier community. Thank you for your dedication to your patients and the health of the tri-county area. We appreciate your willingness to educate patients and encourage them to use the resources that we offer at the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency.

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January is Radon Awareness Month:

An estimated **21,000 lung cancer deaths each year are linked to radon exposure**. Our agency offers free radon testing kits to the public year-round.

Healthcare providers, particularly in primary care, radiology, pulmonology, and oncology, can help reduce these deaths by:

- **Educating patients about prevention.**
- **Screening for radon exposure in non-smoking patients.**

[Click Here](#) for a decision tree to help guide your patient interactions regarding Radon.

Respiratory Illness Updates:

This dashboard offers seasonal data on emergency department visits and hospital admissions for acute respiratory diseases, including COVID-19, Influenza, and RSV, along with outbreak counts by setting and region for COVID-19 and Influenza.

[Click here for Seasonal Respiratory Virus Dashboards: Respiratory Disease Reports](#)

[Click here for MI Flu Focus as of January 11, 2025](#)

Pediatric Mycoplasma Pneumonia Infections:

Bacterial infections caused by *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* have increased in the United States, particularly among children, since late spring and remain at elevated levels. Healthcare professionals should consider *M. pneumoniae* as a possible cause of pneumonia and perform testing when necessary.

Recommendations for healthcare providers regarding *M. pneumoniae*:

- Consider it as a potential cause in children with community-acquired pneumonia.
- Increase suspicion if patients aren't improving on ineffective antibiotics like beta-lactams.
- Perform lab tests when *M. pneumoniae* infection is suspected, especially in hospitalized children.
- Swab both throat and nasopharynx for better detection in respiratory specimens.
- Use second-line antibiotics (fluoroquinolones or tetracyclines) for those not improving on macrolides. Be cautious of adverse effects in children or pregnant individuals with these antibiotics.
- Avoid unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions to minimize resistance risks.

Mycoplasma Pneumoniae Infections Have Been Increasing. (2024, October 18). CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncird/whats-new/mycoplasma-pneumoniae-infections-have-been-increasing.html>

2025 Health Care Professional's Guide to Disease Reporting in Michigan:

Public Health Law (Code) of the State of Michigan and the United States requires reporting of many diseases to protect the public against contagious, and possibly life-threatening diseases. Visit our Communicable Disease page for more information: <https://bhsj.org/programs/8>

[Click here](#) for the 2025: Health Care Professional's Guide to Disease Reporting in Michigan

STI rates:

According to the 2024 STI data obtained from the MDHHS STI Epidemiologist for our tri-county area, there has been a decrease in STI cases compared to 2023. We value your continued commitment to educating patients about the importance of protection.

National Condom Week- February 14-21st:

Throughout February we will be focusing on education to the public surrounding STI prevention and condom use. Condoms are available to the public in all our office public restrooms. If you would like to partner with us to distribute condoms, please reach out to stycosi@bhsj.org. Having discussions with patients on the importance of condom use, especially if the patient has multiple partners is important to prevent STI transmission.

Take Control of Birth Control:

Your Local Health Department is a part of the MDHHS: Take Control of Your Birth Control program which provides free over-the-counter (OTC) oral contraceptive pills, emergency contraception (EC), and individually wrapped condoms to the public. These items are available at all of our office locations. Patients can walk into any of our offices for supplies, no appointment needed.

Opioid Awareness Event (Hillsdale County):

Overview: In 2025, our agency will provide an educational event with presentations from multiple disciplines. Topics may include: Good Samaritan Laws, treatment, prevention, health (medical, mental, and public), court systems, etc.

Currently, we have a monthly committee of representatives from Hillsdale County agencies working to develop the event's agenda, topics, identify presenters, and education objectives.

Our goal is to provide education and awareness about substance misuse in Hillsdale County. If you are interested in being a part of our planning committee please contact stycosi@bhsj.org.

CME: Opioid Therapy and Pain Management: Guidelines, Research and Treatments | AMA Ed Hub

CME: Prescribing Opioids for Pain

February is Heart Month:

In the U.S., heart disease is the top cause of death across genders and most racial and ethnic groups, accounting for 1 in 5 deaths in 2022. High blood pressure is the leading cause of heart disease. Throughout the month of February, we will be sharing with the public about the importance of reducing sodium and eating healthy to prevent heart disease.

CME: Pressure Proof: Mastering The Art and Science of Hypertension Management

Food and Drug Administration Approves First Point-of-Care Hepatitis C RNA Test:

Over **2.4 to 4 million people in the U.S. have Hepatitis C**, which can lead to severe outcomes like liver cancer and failure if untreated, contributing to over 12,000 deaths in 2022.

In June 2024, the FDA approved Cepheid's Xpert Hepatitis C RNA test and GeneXpert Xpress system for point-of-care testing.

Free self-paced CME webinars:

- [We Treat Hep C: Focus on Michigan Medicaid](#)
- [We Treat Hep C: Eliminating HCV in Michigan](#)

Fact sheets:

- [We Treat Hep C: Fact Sheet for Clinicians](#) – Info on Hep C in Michigan, the We Treat Hep C initiative, CDC Hep C testing recommendations, and clinical consultation support.
- [We Treat Hep C: Patient Fact Sheet](#) – Info on Hep C in Michigan, the We Treat Hep C initiative, CDC testing recommendations, and treatment resources.

Latent TB Infection and TB Disease:

Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. There are two conditions: latent TB infection (LTBI) and TB disease. Approximately 13 million people in the U.S. have LTBI, where they are infected but do not exhibit symptoms or spread the bacteria.

Without treatment, about 5–10% of those with LTBI may develop TB disease over their lifetimes.

[Click here](#) for “Talking with Your Patients about Latent Tuberculosis (TB) Infection Provider Factsheet.”

[Click here](#) for “Latent Tuberculosis Infection: A Guide for Primary Care Providers.”

CME: “The Core Curriculum on Tuberculosis: What the Clinician Should Know” provides clinicians and other public health professionals with information on diagnosing and treating latent TB infection and TB disease.

Link: [Core Curriculum on Tuberculosis: What the Clinician Should Know](#)

Additional CE opportunity:

Michigan Pediatric Readiness Conference (Wednesday, March 12, 2025):

CEUS available for:

- Physicians
- Physician Assistants
- Nurses
- EMS Clinicians

[Click here for more information](#)

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