

DALLAS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

APRIL 16, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 A.M. by Chairman, Commissioner John Wiley Price. The minutes were distributed. A motion to approve the minutes was moved by Jim Cummings and second by Barry Jenkins.

Commissioner Price commended Mr. Thompson and the HHS staff by stating, “We appreciate you being the vanguard of Public Health for this community, we can’t say enough about the number of issues you continue to take on. This department always seems to have one more initiative whether it’s with the Y or someone else. I don’t know how much more volume you can assume,” said Commissioner Price.

Zachary Thompson, Director mentioned next week is National Immunization week, and Dallas County will be receiving a *Resolution* in Commissioners Court.

Dr. Wendy Chung, MD, Chief Epidemiologist provided an overview of *Surveillance and Outbreak Investigations of Gastrointestinal Illnesses*. On a national level, food safety is an issue; it’s one of the highest priorities targeted as a winnable battle. For most of us, we have probably had some type of food borne illness sometime in our lifetime. Every year, it is estimated that 1 in 6 persons will come down with a foodborne illness. For most of us, it’s a mild illness. However, we do need to remember it can be fatal for the very young and old. Dallas County has over 3,000 deaths from foodborne illness every year.

Just to give you an idea of what we are looking at, if we could potentially achieve a ten percent reduction in foodborne illness each year, it’s estimated about 5 million people are getting sick. As a reminder, the most common cause of outbreak related hospitalizations and deaths is Salmonella. Dallas County is continually learning more and more about foodborne illness. Now, we know that foodborne illness can be transmitted by a wide variety of food. Most recently, we have heard about the ice cream outbreak, Listeria. However, we know that progress is possible. Additionally, we have data over the last sixteen years, nationally that shows we had a significant reduction of about forty percent or more in Listeria, E. coli and Campylobacter. So, it is possible to achieve some significant progress. Although, we’ve had progress, there are still areas where we are having on-going challenges. Salmonella is one of them. Salmonella is the most common bacteria support illness; we really have not made much progress. Two of the most common foods implicated in outbreaks of *Salmonella* infections have been poultry and eggs or egg products. Improving food safety for American’s is a high priority on Texas agenda. This is where we have a very unique partnership with public health and regulatory agencies.

The more we know about what is causing the illness, the more we can do on the regulatory end to try to improve those illnesses. What we are trying to do is reduce infections caused by foodborne germs, reduce outbreak infections associated with food categories, and also increase consumer awareness. What we do from a public health level is monitor food borne disease through our surveillance system. Additionally, we try to determine an ideology to that person's illness. We have access to better technology to diagnose food borne illness. The most recent is learning more about PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction), and we've been able to use it successfully in some of our outbreak investigations.

As our surveillance database is nationally improving, this means there are more outbreaks that we are not able to check for, thus causing more work for the Epidemiologists. Each time an outbreak or cluster occurs, it opens another chapter in a lengthy investigation process for a potential outbreak.

Anyone can report a foodborne illness. However, there are many challenges associated with reporting. But, our Epidemiologists are very familiar with the CDC questionnaire. Dallas County records in detail for two weeks leading up to your illness, what you ate. Do you really remember in detail what you ate or where you ate? It is very difficult. These days, we have shopping cards which are very important to have particularly during an outbreak investigation. It records everything you are buying.

Commissioner Price asked, "how do you and your team handle the under reported zip codes?" **Dr. Chung** under reporting is always a challenge, the individual must go to the doctor and that is always a variable; it goes back to education, and trying to improve diagnosis. In addition, food handlers must be cleared by a stool sample, making sure Salmonella is not in their system prior to returning to work.

Bill Alsup, City of Richardson commended Dr. Chung and her staff; they're always a great asset to him.

Zachary Thompson, Director, DCHHS, mentioned that the Legislative session is going on now, and we're very excited about it. There are a number of items we want to bring forward that are in your packets. Mr. Thompson stated that what we went through with Ebola, to be able to notify our first responders in case of possible contacts, that's up for discussion. He encourages everyone to look at that bill. In addition, he indicated there are some pros and cons concerning this particular bill.

Mr. Thompson also mentioned that there's another issue that's a concern to all of us: Fire arms restriction in our public health clinics. Mr. Thompson encouraged everyone to take a look at this particular legislative, and what impact it is going to have on our clinics.

Our concern is our TB and Immunization Clinics, as well as any clinic that we are operating where someone can bring a handgun into the facility. What potential impact it may have if a gun is brought into the facility?

There are three (3) other areas we need to focus on: Texas Association of City County Public Officials (TACCHO), House Bill 538, relates to the Ebola response. House Bill 582 deals with food service workers bill. Mr. Thompson encouraged everyone to take a look at this bill. You want to make sure you give an input on this particular bill.

House Bill 91 which is the sale of raw milk or raw milk product. There is a concern about what should and should not be allowed. This bill should be of interest to all of us.

Tracy Casto mentioned that raw milk came up last session. She encouraged Mr. Thompson to call and oppose this bill. Mr. Thompson mentioned that we need a disclaimer on this bill; and we need to be heard.

Mr. Thompson mentioned that Erikka has put together some information on ChikV, so please contact her.

Committee Reports

Clinical - No report

Public Health - Jim Cummings, Chairperson: No report
SB1781 relates to Animal shelter.

Environmental - Bill Alsup, Chairperson: No report
Bill is concerned about the mosquitoes.

Legislative - Jason Chessler: No report
Cynthia Arias mentioned the bill concerning eating in pools.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 A.M.