



n e w s

Volume 1, No. 6

April 1989

Apple scare

Recent news stories about daminozide had many people afraid to buy apples or apple juice. In some parts of the country, school systems even refused to serve apples in their cafeterias.

This level of fear is unnecessary because, at the levels found in apple products, daminozide residues do not pose any immediate danger.

Massachusetts residents have even less cause for alarm, thanks to quick action taken by DPH's Food and Drug Division three years ago. When test results showed that both daminozide and UDMH (its breakdown product) caused cancer in laboratory animals, the EPA planned to cancel all food uses for daminozide. When this decision was challenged, however, the EPA decided to delay action until further studies were completed.

DPH's Food and Drug Division believed that immediate action was needed to protect the public health. Early in 1986, DPH adopted three-stage regulations to reduce the level of daminozide residues allowed in baby foods and heat-processed apple products. No detectable residues have been allowed in baby foods since October 1987, or in apple sauce or heat-processed apple juice since October 1988.

The limits for baby foods were phased in quickly because young children eat and drink so much apple sauce and juice for their size that they were at greatest risk. Heat-processed apple products were singled out because heat speeds up the conversion of daminozide to UDMH, which is a more potent carcinogen.

Food and Drug Division staff test apple products to make sure the standards are being met. In the most recent market-basket tests, no detectable residues of daminozide were found in any baby foods, apple juice or apple sauce sold in Massachusetts.



Testing apple products for daminozide at the Food and Drugs Laboratory.

Currently, the Department is considering taking further action to limit daminozide residues in raw apples. In the meantime, the Food and Drug Division recommends that people cooking apples at home use only fruit that has not been treated with daminozide.

A

the corner office

In honor of Secretary's Week (April 24 - 28), I'd like to devote this month's column to the Department's clerks, secretaries, receptionists and administrative

assistants. We depend heavily on these women and men, but we sometimes fail to recognize just how vital their contributions are to the functioning of our offices and the Department as a whole. Let me tell you about just two of these employees whose dedication is typical of the Department's support staff.

When Lena Trotman began working for the state in July of 1944, the country was in the midst of World War II and Leverett Saltonstall was Governor. Ms. Trotman, currently a clerk in the Division of Health Care Quality, has worked in several different areas of the Department since 1945, including the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital and the Division of Medical Care (which evolved into today's Health Care Quality Division).

Those who work with Ms. Trotman praise her for her polished professionalism as well as her gentle and considerate ways. She has been both a role model and an inspiration to generations of DPH employees.

Mary Meehan, who has also worked for the Department since World War II, began in the Division of Communicable Diseases in 1943, then transferred to TB Control. For most of her career, however, she has been a vital and valued member of the STD Program staff.

Ms. Meehan's co-workers describe her as dedicated to public health. Her current position is Head Clerk, but that title does little to describe either the variety or the quality of her work. She has worked closely with many different people over the years, and all have been impressed by her vast knowledge of how the Department works and her ability to handle

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Reducing risks and fighting fear

Are you cancerphobic? Most people are, according to the late Dr. Franz J. Inglefinger, outstanding gastroenterologist and eminent editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Why the fear? Much of it stems from lack of knowledge about what causes cancer and how to prevent it.

On a more personal basis, most people know someone — a family member or a close friend — who has cancer or who has been treated for the disease. According to Commissioner Prothrow-Stith, more than 26,000 new cancer cases are diagnosed in Massachusetts each year.

Yet there is encouraging news. Many of the causes of cancer have been identified and can now be controlled.

Helping residents reduce their cancer risks is the goal of the Department's new Cancer Control and Education Program, which is funded by a grant from the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Although most NCI grants support cancer research, DPH's

Health Promotion Sciences branch won the agency's backing to create a model educational program to help prevent cancer.

Cancer prevention tips

Don't smoke or use any form of tobacco.

If you drink, use alcohol in moderation.

Eat foods low in fat.

Include fresh fruit, vegetables and whole-grain cereals in your diet.

Avoid unnecessary X-rays.

Avoid too much sun; wear protective clothing and use sunscreens.

Over the next three months, the Cancer Control and Education Program will run a series of workshops, seminars and lectures in New Bedford and Fall River on cancer risk factors groups such as tobacco use, nutrition, and environmental and occupational exposures; and controlling cancer through community organization.

and prevention strategies. The workshops will focus on specific groups such as women, minorities and low-income populations; risk factors such as tobacco use, nutrition, and environmental and occupational exposures; and controlling cancer through community organization.

"Our goal is to train a critical mass of individuals who are already skilled in community organization and program development," explained Dr. Howard Spivak, Deputy Commissioner for Health Promotion Sciences. "By teaching them about the various causes of cancer and strategies for its prevention, we hope to develop a cohesive group of local activists who can take the lead on cancer control activities for their own communities."

Fall River and New Bedford were chosen as the first cities to participate in this innovative program because of their histories of community organization and involvement in health activities. The Cancer Control and Education Program is cosponsored by DPH, the Southeastern Massachusetts Area Health Education Center, and the Massachusetts Division and Fall River and New Bedford units of the American Cancer Society.

A

You can help

DPH and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) are looking for short-term volunteers to find out if retailers are complying with the 1988 federal ban on the sale of lawn darts.

Lawn darts are tossed underhand toward a target in an outdoor game similar to horseshoes. Although the oversized darts are not sharp enough to look dangerous, they are heavy enough to puncture skulls or otherwise seriously injure anyone accidentally hit by them. The CPSC estimates that about 6,700 people — three quarters of them children under 15 — have been injured badly enough by lawn darts to need emergency room treatment. Three children are known to have been killed by these darts.

Volunteers are needed for three months (May 1 - August 1) to find out if stores are still selling lawn darts, to inform store managers that



selling them is illegal, and to report their findings to the CPSC. All volunteers will be trained by the CPSC Regional Director before making the store visits.

If you want to help, please call Cindy Rodgers in DPH's Injury Prevention Program at (617) 727-1246. If you're calling from outside the Boston area, dial 1-800-CAR-SAFE (toll-free).

A

Local hero

Thanks in part to quick action by a DPH employee, a Randolph woman's life was saved last month.

Janet Daylor, Nursing Supervisor for the Bureau of Parent, Child and Adolescent Health at the Southeast Regional Health Office, was in the locker room at her fitness club when another woman ran in and said someone had just been pulled unconscious from the pool. Daylor ran out to help and found that the woman had stopped breathing and had no pulse. Daylor began administering CPR immediately and, with another nurse who quickly joined her, continued until emergency help arrived.

When asked if she was nervous, Daylor replied that she had acted without hesitation.

"I've done this before," she said, "and you don't have time to think about it. I'm just happy she's alive."

A

Paying the bills

Organ transplants are one of the most dramatic medical advancements in recent history, but they come with dramatic price tags. Some patients are hospitalized for months after the operation. Some have to travel out of state and rent a place near the hospital for several months of post-operative monitoring. To keep their immune systems from rejecting the transplanted organ, recipients need medication that costs about \$800 a month.

Massachusetts is the only state with a program to help transplant recipients with these and other expenses that are not usually covered by insurance. The Organ Transplant Fund, administered by DPH's Division of Organ Transplant Services, has helped over 250 Massachusetts residents keep up

with the bills for their kidney, bone marrow, heart, liver and heart-lung transplants. Before the Transplant Fund was created, many patients were forced to sell their homes or cash in their pensions to cover out-of-pocket costs for transportation, parking, medications, annual biopsies and other post-transplant expenses.

The Organ Transplant Fund receives no appropriation from the state budget for its work. Most of the Fund is donated by generous Massachusetts residents who contribute an average of \$5.00 each when they file their state tax forms. Other contributions to the Fund are given in celebration of successful transplants or in memory of deceased recipients.

If you haven't filed your state tax return yet, please consider making a small donation to the Organ Transplant Fund.



Saving a life

"There is no match in the family."

Five years ago, those words usually meant there was little hope for the patient who had leukemia, Fanconi's anemia, or another progressive bone marrow disease. Today, however, thousands of patients have a chance thanks to generous people who are willing to help by donating marrow. Through the National Bone Marrow Donor Program in St. Paul, Minnesota, individuals can register to become potential donors. Since the program began, nearly 100 donors have helped save the lives of people they never met.

Donated marrow is taken from the hipbone through a small incision in the donor's back. People who have

donated say the procedure sounds more painful than it actually is; most experience only a few days of stiffness. A donor at the VA Hospital in Seattle said, "Just knowing that I saved someone's life was worth the discomfort."

Over 25,000 Americans have registered with the program, but tens of thousands more are needed because tissue matches are rare. For more information on how to register, write to the National Bone Marrow Donor Program, Dept. P, 100 S. Roberts Street, St. Paul, MN 55107.

If donating marrow sounds too daunting, you can still help local cancer or leukemia patients by donating platelets (a process much like giving blood). For information, please call the Dana-Farber Institute at (617) 732-3207.



corner (continued)

almost any responsibility with aplomb.

Mary Meehan and Lena Trotman are just two examples of the many skilled and hard-working people who fill support staff positions at the Department. The clerks, secretaries, receptionists and administrative assistants are the backbone of this agency, which couldn't function effectively without them. As you celebrate Secretary's Week with the support

staff in your office, remember how much we depend on them every day. We can't give them all the raises or awards they deserve, but we can and should let them know how highly we value their contributions — not just in April but year-round.

Deborah Prothrow-Stith

Regional forums

DPH is inviting the public to help shape the state's health agenda for the beginning of the 1990s, through a series of regional forums being held this month.

Each year Massachusetts receives federal funds to help pay for various public health services such as AIDS prevention, nutrition programs for infants and pregnant women, rape crisis centers, and alcohol and drug abuse treatment.

"Comments from residents and local health officials are extremely helpful to us in setting priorities on how we spend that money in the coming year," said Commissioner Prothrow-Stith. "We want to know what they're thinking. We need their feedback to help us shape the public health agenda for next year."

Local health leaders, city and town officials, and representatives of advocacy groups are being encouraged to attend the forums and discuss their health concerns. Senior members of the DPH staff will be at each forum to talk about existing programs and priorities, and to listen to residents' comments.



Calendar

April 17 - May 19

Annual Open Enrollment Period. This is your chance to sign up for basic life or basic life and health insurance, or to switch health plans. Coverage for changes made during open enrollment will take effect on July 1, 1989. For more information call Marjory Reid in Human Resources, (617) 727-2638.

April 24

Financial Planning lunchtime seminar. Sandra Best, Certified Financial Planner with IDS (a sub-

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subsidiary of American Express), will meet with employees from noon to 1 pm in the Public Health Council Room to discuss tax strategies for 1989 and ways to increase your savings. Plan to attend if you have any financial questions.

April 26

Benefits Fair in the Public Health Council Room, 11 am to 2 pm. Stop by to choose or change insurance plans, or to find out what the Massachusetts Employee Assistance Program (MEAP), Equicor Disability Insurance, PEBSO Deferred Compensation, LifeStyle, the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society can do for you.

May 8

"The Continuing Saga of DES: Personal, Legal and Health Implications," a lunchtime talk by Lucinda Finley of Radcliffe College's Bunting Institute and professor of law at Yale University. Public Health Council Room A, 12:30 to 2 pm. Sponsored by the Women's Health Unit.

May 18

SCIPP 10th Anniversary Celebration at the Transportation Systems Center, Kendall Square, Cambridge. The celebration includes a panel discussion of the past, present and future of injury prevention (1:00 - 5:15 pm), with a reception to follow. All DPH employees are invited, but you must pre-register by calling the Statewide Comprehensive Injury Prevention Program at (617) 727-1246.



May 22

Kick-off for "Buckle Up America Week" at Boston's City Hall Plaza,

noon to 1 pm. DPH's Passenger Safety Program will be giving away posters, coloring books, key chains and balloons. Awards will be given to school children who have taken part in passenger safety programs. Vince and Larry (Buckle Up America spokesdummies) and Buckle Bear will be there, too. Bring the whole family; there'll be fun for everyone!

by the way

Mass buying

Mass Buying Power Inc. is the largest consumer-benefit operation in Massachusetts. DPH employees are eligible for savings on everything from auto alarm systems to real estate to windsurfers, with no membership dues, no service charges, and no obligations. Call now for more information: (617) 782-7131 or 7132.

Thanks

The St. James Armenian Apostolic Church would like to thank all of those who made contributions to aid victims of the earthquake in Armenia. Your generosity was greatly appreciated.

Thanks again

On behalf of the patients at Massachusetts General Hospital, the Mass. State Employees Blood Program would like to thank Deborah Dalton of the State Laboratory Institute and Sandra Lezberg of Services for Children with Special Health Care Needs for their donations.

April 30

Deadline to apply for NAGE-Unit 6 child care scholarships. Scholarships will be awarded to eligible union members who paid for child care for their preschool-aged children during 1988. To apply, return the coupon below as soon as possible. Eligibility forms will be mailed to you.

Please print clearly.

Name _____

Address _____

Work Unit _____

Work Phone _____

Child's Name _____ Age _____

Child's Name _____ Age _____

Child's Name _____ Age _____

Return to: NAGE Unit VI
ATTN: Child Care Committee
285 Dorchester Avenue
Boston, MA 02127



A monthly publication of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health 150 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02111

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