

November 16, 2011

To: NECOEM
From: Dean Hashimoto MD
Re: **Annual report of representation at the MA DPH Occupational Health Surveillance Program**

The DPH Occupational Health Surveillance Program meeting on 10/27/11 was devoted to providing updates on various programs and asking for feedback from committee members. The updates included the following:

DPH is planning on convening a committee devoted to evaluating the issue of requiring annual flu shots for health care workers. DPH has not consulted the Occupational Health Surveillance Program on this issue, and it was felt that the occupational health community has not been well-represented on this issue. I agreed to work with Tish Davis to draft a memo to DPH requesting that there be stronger input from the occupational health community.

A draft medical journal article written by Tish Davis and others in her program is devoted to evaluating the barriers to the use of workers' compensation insurance for patients treated at community health centers. Dr. Robert Naparstek and I were involved in this issue representing the Mass. Medical Society, which conducted a survey of doctors throughout the state. While participation by MMS members was limited, the survey showed that about 80% of doctors were concerned about the low payment structure in workers' compensation. There were also concerns about administrative burden and becoming involved in litigation. The main portion of this draft article evaluated the interviews of clinicians and administrators at community health centers. It supported the notion that many patients eligible for workers' compensation do not apply or are denied coverage.

There will be a new DPH initiative this year that is devoted to evaluating safe patient handling in hospitals and the role of ergonomics. Massachusetts hospitals have a higher rate of injuries than the national average, so this initiative will help to explore the evaluation and amelioration of this problem.

Tish Davis and David Wegman participated in the Institute of Medicine Committee on Occupational Information and Electronic Health Records. The committee's report was issued in September 2011.

DPH held the annual national FACE meeting in Boston that included a panel on worker impairment. Dr. Naparstek presented on the interpretation of results of drug testing and noted that positive drug test results are not necessarily associated with work impairment.

The Sharps Subcommittee at DPH published a manuscript that summarized sharps injuries among hospital employees from 2002-2007.

MMS Interdisciplinary Meetings

The Interdisciplinary Committee of the Mass Medical Society met on January 18, March 15, June 21 and September 20, 2011. Of interest to NECOEM was the letter sent to Senator Kerry from the Specialty Society Presidents, including Phil Adamo, concerning the efforts to repeal the SGR in the deficit reduction package. Further questions can be directed to Herb Hagele who was the 2011 representative on the interdisciplinary committee. At this time, there is no one from NECOEM on this committee for 2012. If you are interested please see Dianne Plantamura.