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# NBDPN e-Newsletter

October 2009

National Birth Defects Prevention Network

NBDPN Website Redesign  
Coming in 2010!

Please contact us at  
webmaster@nbdpn.org if you  
have any suggestions on the  
website redesign.

## Hot Topics

NBDPN Collaboration with  
the Journal of Registry  
Management

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) is pleased to announce a themed issue of the *Journal of Registry Management* (JRM) with papers focusing on birth defects program methods, approaches to assuring/evaluating data quality and completeness, and innovative approaches to improving the science and practice of birth defects surveillance. The NBDPN annual report will continue to be published in the fall in *Birth Defects Research Part A* (BDRA). However, future calls for BDRA manuscripts will focus on birth defects epidemiology and etiologic research. Our exploratory arrangement with JRM, now indexed in PubMed,

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## **Save the Date: 2010 NBDPN Annual Meeting**

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) will hold its 13th Annual Meeting at the [Gaylord National Convention Center](#) in National Harbor, Maryland from March 8-10, 2010. This meeting will be co-located with the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) Annual Meeting.

Plenary and breakout sessions are scheduled to appeal to a diverse audience and cover birth defects surveillance, research, and prevention issues. Featured sessions include:

- Skeletal Defects, such as hip dysplasia, clubfoot, skeletal dysplasias, and anomalies of ribs, sternum, spine, and limbs
- Science of folic acid
- Research agenda and emerging issues of the National Birth Defects Prevention Study
- Diabetes among women of childbearing age and birth defects
- Electronic medical records and birth defects surveillance
- Newborn screening and birth defects

Also on the agenda are sessions designed to encourage information sharing and networking, such as poster presentations and exhibits. An interactive record linkage pre-conference workshop will be offered on March 7, 2010.

will enable NBDPN to continue to advance the field of birth defects surveillance through the publication of papers demonstrating methodological innovations and registry practice enhancements.

### Pregnancy and H1N1

"National Obstetric Grand Rounds: Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza and Pregnancy" a conference call led by Dr. Sonja Rasmussen is now available for download along with additional materials. For more information visit [CDC's Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity \(COCA\)](#)

### Upcoming Meetings

Canadian Congenital Anomalies Surveillance Network (CCASN) : November 18 - 20, 2009 in Ottawa

[Click here for more information](#)

### Resources and Publications

The 2009 NBDPN Annual Report in Birth Defects Research Part A will be mailed to all network members in December 2009. For information on obtaining additional copies, contact [SParker4@cdc.gov](mailto:SParker4@cdc.gov).

January is Birth Defects Prevention Month!



## ASTHO Grant Awarded to NBDPN

This Fall, the Network received a grant from the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) to conduct a survey of all state and territorial birth defects programs. The goal of the project is to assess data capacity and the ability of programs to collect and exchange data with other public and private health systems, as well as to identify possible challenges that programs may face in collecting or accessing needed data. Questions also assess the variety of ways programs serve the public through education, dissemination, and research, in addition to informing health officials and policy makers.

Through this survey, we hope to assess current program capacity, and compare this to both past trends in funding, activities, and staffing, and future anticipated changes in these areas.

Findings learned through this work will help document the struggle that many birth defects programs are facing, and the impact this will ultimately have on our country's ability to conduct public health surveillance of birth defects. Results will also point us to strategies that programs can use to capitalize on information technology and health data exchange as an efficient means to enhance the scope and quality of our work. It will also provide us with information regarding common barriers that programs face in accessing electronic health data, and possible remedies for such problems.

Consequently, it is vital that all birth defects programs participate in this important survey. Your program should be receiving a formal request by the end of October, with the online survey beginning in early November. As an added incentive, two respondents will be selected at random for \$50 Amazon.com gift cards. Please contact Craig A. Mason at [craig.mason@umit.maine.edu](mailto:craig.mason@umit.maine.edu) with any questions regarding the survey or project.

## NBDPN Collaborative Data Project News

The results of the NBDPN collaborative project on clubfoot, which included data from ten participating surveillance programs, will be published in the November 2009 issue of Birth Defects Research Part A.

The first NBDPN collaborative paper...

"Laura J. Williams, Cara T. Mai, Larry D. Edmonds, Gary M. Shaw, Russell S. Kirby, Charlotte A. Hobbs, Lowell E. Sever, Lisa A. Miller, F. John Meaney, Miriam Levitt, "Prevalence of Spina Bifida and Anencephaly During the Transition to Mandatory Folic Acid Fortification in the United States", *Teratology*, 66,1 (July 2002), 33-39"

Resources will be available on the NBDPN website beginning in November 2009. This year's focus is on diabetes among women of childbearing age and the risk of birth defects.

### NBDPN Silent Auction 2010

What if Beethoven composed but no one ever heard it or Rembrandt painted and no one ever saw, or Michael Angelo painted the Sistine chapel in a lost cave? Our auction is a great fundraiser and continues to grow in popularity. We are listening and what we have learned is that the most treasured items are those fashioned by our members themselves. Maybe you have a favorite recipe you like to make, or a copy of one of your favorite books to read? Maybe you paint or draw or have a favorite old harmonica that was played at every NBDPN meeting? Even though we will still enjoy those warm stories about regression analysis and the comforts of coding, plan on bringing a little something to share for the donation table.

It will be a Great Feast as Always. Contact [hillcw@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:hillcw@dshs.wa.gov) for more information.

### Classified

Does the thought of Rocky XX not thrill you?  
Do you have the ability and desire to produce your own MySQL?"

If so, become a Star in the PC production of the new NBDPN webpage!

Benefits include: choice of work hours, writing your own lines,

...now has 99 Science Index citations - one more and we will achieve the milestone of 100!!!

## Epidemiology Notes

### Preconceptional Folate Supplementation and the Risk of Spontaneous Preterm Birth: A Cohort Study.

Folic acid supplementation is well-established as an important tool in reducing the risk of neural tube defects. But supplementation has also shown potential for reducing the risk of preterm birth. Results from observational and intervention studies have been inconsistent but Bukowski et al. (2009) suggest that the timing of supplementation might be a factor. While most studies on preterm birth have focused on folate levels and supplementation during pregnancy, few studies, if any, have examined supplementation during the preconceptional period, which can have important downstream effects on a pregnancy. Using data from a large U.S. multi-center cohort study conducted between 1999 and 2002 to examine Down Syndrome screening, Bukowski et al. tested their hypothesis that preconceptional folic acid supplementation reduces the risk of spontaneous preterm birth. The analysis used data from 34,480 singleton pregnancies with 2,660 (7.7%) preterm births (<37 weeks). Folic acid supplementation before conception was self-reported during the first trimester and categorized into no preconceptional use, use <1 year before pregnancy, and use  $\geq 1$  year before pregnancy. In comparison to women who did not use folic acid supplementation, women who took a supplement for  $\geq 1$  year before conception, had a 69% [adjusted hazard ratio (aHR)=0.31 (95% CI: 0.11 – 0.90)] lower risk of a spontaneous preterm birth between 20 to 28 weeks and a 47% (aHR=0.53; 95% CI 0.28 – 0.99) lower risk between 28 to 32 weeks. There was no association with preterm birth between 32 to 37 weeks. Results were attenuated towards the null and not statistically significant among women who used folic acid supplements < 1 year before pregnancy.

The biologic plausibility of the results cited by the authors includes folate's associations with infections, immune response, and decreased inflammation during pregnancy. In addition, certain polymorphisms and deletions in folate-metabolizing genes have also been found to be associated with preterm birth. Although the results are promising, it must be noted that there were only 16 women who used folic acid supplementation for  $\geq 1$  year with a preterm birth before 32 weeks. In addition, the results are based solely on duration of folic acid supplementation and the authors did not have data regarding dose or frequency of use. While further evidence is still needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of folic acid in preventing preterm birth, this study does provide some immediate implications by compelling future studies of preterm birth to expand the timeframe in which they measure folic acid supplementation.

**Reference:** Preconceptional Folate Supplementation and the Risk of Spontaneous Preterm Birth: A Cohort Study. Radek Bukowski, Fergal D. Malone, Flint T. Porter, David A. Nyberg, Christine H. Comstock, Gary D. V. Hankins, Keith Eddleman, Susan J. Gross, Lorraine Dugoff, Sabrina D. Craigo, Ilan E. Timor-Tritsch, Stephen R. Carr, Honor M. Wolfe, Mary E. D'Alton. PLoS Med 6(5): e1000061.

helping out a wonderful non-profit organization...for further details contact:

[wxy01@health.state.ny.us](mailto:wxy01@health.state.ny.us)

or [cmai@cdc.gov](mailto:cmai@cdc.gov).



A Gentle Reminder...  
The NBDPN Annual Awards Ceremony never fails to bring out the smiles on everyone's faces. Pretty soon the red carpet will be unrolled again, so it is time to start thinking about nominations. Watch your email for a description of the awards and upcoming details about when and how to nominate. We look forward to hearing from you.

Special Thanks to Eric Miller (TX) for contributing the Epi Notes Section this issue.

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## Membership and Elections Committee Update

The Membership and Elections Committee (ME) has three major projects occurring in the fall of 2009: NBDPN Nominations and Election cycle for offices of President-Elect, Secretary-Treasurer-Elect, and Member-at-Large. The ME, as delegated through the NBDPN bylaws, will solicit nominations from its members between October 5-21st. From the nominations, the ME creates a slate of nominees for the ballot, and voting for the new officers is between November 17th and Dec 1st. Watch your e-mail for ongoing updates regarding this annual elections process. Program Status Survey. This was developed during 2009, and is a survey of state birth defects surveillance programs. The purpose of the survey is to describe the current status of program operations, and to obtain projections of activities over the next two years. Implementation of the survey is scheduled during the fall of 2009. Watch your e-mail for this important survey, that will be completed electronically. Dues Implementation. Based on the results of a 2008 survey that was completed by NBDPN members, the ME is developing a strategy to incorporate a dues structure for NBDPN members. This includes working with several NBDPN groups, such as the Finance Group, and the Strategic Planning Group. ME meets every third Monday of the month and welcomes new members. Contact Carol Stanton at [carol.stanton@state.co.us](mailto:carol.stanton@state.co.us).

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## NBDPN Website New Additions

Be sure to check out these new additions to the everchanging content on your NBDPN web site! **Recently added:**

- [Articles of Potential Interest](#)...helping you to stay warm and informed

**and to the Members Only Section:**

- The NBDPN Officers by position and year..."Build it and they will come"...our Field of Dreams Team
- Officer Perspectives added...Where is the Love?...Right He!
- Birth Defects Data Presentation Materials...making your presentation a real gift to your audience!
- Question and Answers on Coding...keep up on the adventures of abstracting!

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Please submit comments concerning the NBDPN Newsletter to [Russel Rickard](#).

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