

Proposed DOH Budget Reflects Our Priorities

By Dr. Shereef Elnahal, Commissioner, NJ Department of Health

My leadership team and I had the privilege on April 25 of testifying in front of the state Assembly Budget Committee about the Department of Health’s proposed \$2.9 billion budget for FY2019.

I welcomed the opportunity to present the budget as a reflection of the priorities of both the Murphy Administration and the Department, which include eradicating the opioid epidemic; expanding access to medicinal marijuana; reducing disparities in public health outcomes, including maternal and infant mortality; enhancing access to mental health care; and making health coverage more accessible and affordable.

I appreciate the open exchanges with legislators about the Department’s mission and challenges and hope that this frank dialogue continues as we all work together to address the health issues affecting the people of New Jersey.



Dr. Shereef Elnahal, MD, MBA, third from right, addresses state Assembly members during a budget hearing on April 25.

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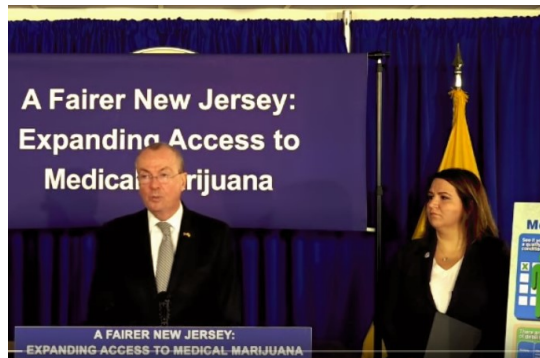
Medicinal Marijuana Program Expands, Becomes More Responsive, Patient Friendly

Governor Phil Murphy recently marked the 100th day of his new Administration.

One of the biggest changes in that time has been the transformation in the Department’s Medicinal Marijuana Program. We’re changing the culture of the program to make it more consumer-friendly and responsive to patients, physicians and alternative treatment centers (ATC).

Within the first 60 days, Commissioner Shereef Elnahal delivered a report to the Governor that contained 20 proposed legislative, regulatory and programmatic changes to the program. The report was in response to Executive Order #6, which directed the Department to conduct a comprehensive review of the program.

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Principal Deputy Commissioner Jackie Cornell joined Governor Phil Murphy for his March 27 announcement of the reforms to the New Jersey Medicinal Marijuana Program, which made it more consumer-friendly and responsive to patients, physicians, and alternative treatment centers (ATCs).

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Community Outreach March-April 2018

March 14

Commissioner Elnahal visited the Rollin' Colon exhibit at Capital Health Medical Center to recognize Colon Cancer Awareness Month in Hopewell.



March 23

Commissioner Elnahal spoke at the NJ Policy Perspective Conference in New Brunswick.

March 24

Principal Deputy Commissioner Cornell delivered the keynote address at the Newark Community Health Center Provider Retreat in Livingston.

March 27

Principal Deputy Commissioner Cornell joined Governor Murphy as he announced major reforms to New Jersey's Medicinal Marijuana Program.

April 6

Principal Deputy Commissioner Cornell delivered remarks at the DOH's Health Equity Forum in Wayne.

April 10

Commissioner Elnahal spoke at the NJ Association of Mental Health & Addiction Agencies conference in Edison.

April 17

Commissioner Elnahal spoke at Hackensack Meridian Health's Opioid Forum.

April 23

Principal Deputy Commissioner Cornell spoke about the Murphy Administration's Health Priorities to Blue Wave NJ in Montclair.

April 24

Amelia Hamarman, Assistant STD Program Manager, spoke at the New Jersey Primary Care Association's Sexually Transmitted Infection Awareness event in Lakewood.



April 25

Assistant Commissioner Lisa Asare spoke at the Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative (SNJPC) Board Meeting.

Rehabilitation & Care Center in Livingston, and Trinitas Regional Medical Center in Elizabeth were all designated as Public Health Innovators for having nearly 100 percent of their staff immunized against the flu.

"We know that when healthcare personnel get vaccinated, not only are they protected, but they also protect those who are more vulnerable to serious flu complications, like babies and young children, older people, and people with certain illnesses," said Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal. "These agencies are all ensuring a healthier New Jersey, with the work they are doing."

New Jersey, National Autism Rates Rise

In late April, CDC released data that shows the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is higher than previously reported. Nationally, the overall ASD prevalence estimate is 16.8 per 1,000 children aged 8 years. The rate of autism among children in New Jersey is nearly 3 percent, which is the highest in the nation.

New Jersey has a strong record of identifying and evaluating children for autism.

"We're proud in New Jersey to have robust diagnostic and intervention services, which may be contributing to the high incidence rates," said NJ Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal. "More children are getting evaluated and referred for services than in areas where diagnostic services are scarce."

Governor Murphy's proposed budget provides \$170 million for the Department of Health's [Early Intervention System](#), which acts as early identification and referral, service coordination, evaluation/assessment, and developmental early intervention services for children from birth to three with developmental delays and disabilities.

Each of New Jersey's 21 counties maintains a Special Child Health Services [Case Management Unit](#) to promote access to care and family supports for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs from birth through 21 years of age. Services include education about community-based resources and how to access them, advocacy training, individualized service planning, and periodic monitoring.

New Jersey is also at the forefront of supporting autism research through [the Governor's Council for Medical Research and Treatment of Autism](#). Since 2008, the Council has provided more than \$39 million in research grants for initiatives like autism medical homes as well as the Center for Excellence located at Montclair State University.

DOH Launches Public Health Innovators Awards



Earlier this month, the Department launched its Public Health Innovators Awards, along with a new [webpage](#), recognizing exemplary work being done around New Jersey to improve health outcomes.

The goal of these awards is to commend healthcare providers, agencies and organizations on implementing policies and making systemic changes that have made a difference in health outcomes.

Each month, the Department will focus on a different health topic and highlight organizations doing outstanding work in that area.

For the month of April, DOH recognized organizations who have implemented effective policies that have resulted in high employee vaccination rates.

Penn Medicine Princeton Medical Center in Plainsboro, Inglemoor

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We discussed several specifics about the Department's vast responsibilities, and I stressed our overall goal of inclusiveness and accountability as we spread best practices throughout the healthcare system.

We rely on the dedication of each member of the Department in reaching these goals.

The integration of primary and behavioral health as a widely known best practice was discussed, in the context of the October transfer of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) from the Department of Human Services to our Department.

I committed to invest the \$1.2 billion for the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services to enhance treatment and access. We also updated members of the Department's progress creating a single license for primary and behavioral health that will enable people to receive more care under one roof.

We also addressed Governor Murphy's allocation of \$100 million for a multi-agency, strategic, data-driven effort to combat the opioid epidemic through enhanced, community-based prevention and treatment services, expanded supportive housing, employment training, and development of an electronic medical records and data system that will improve efficiency and efficacy.

I also testified about the administration's commitment to reforming the Medicinal Marijuana program to expand access and make it more consumer friendly and responsive to patients, physicians and dispensaries.

We discussed the five newly added debilitating medical conditions – anxiety, migraines, Tourette's syndrome, chronic pain related to musculoskeletal disorders, and chronic visceral pain; reduced patient and caregiver registration fees; and waivers for dispensaries adding satellite locations and mobile access so that patients, caregivers and physicians can register, make payments and upload documents on their Smart phones and tablets.

I also addressed the welcomed restoration of \$7.5 million for Family Planning Services and the essential care and important resources it provides to women whose only encounter with healthcare providers is often in the clinic.

Budget Committee members expressed a keen interest in the Charity Care budget – this year proposed at \$252 million – that funds hospitals for the care they provide to our uninsured population.

I look forward to having a similarly productive session May 15 with the Senate Budget Committee.



From left, Deputy Commissioner Deborah Hartel, Deputy Commissioner Marcela Maziarz, and Commissioner Shereef Elnahal are seen answering State Assembly Budget Committee members' questions on April 25.

Local Health Departments: Save the Date

The New Jersey Department of Health Office of Local Public Health, in collaboration with the New Jersey Association of County and City Health Officials, will host a one-day forum for local health departments on **Monday, June 18, 2018** at The Conference Center at the RWJ Hamilton Center for Health and Wellness, 3100 Quakerbridge Road, Mercerville NJ.

The Public Health Forum fosters a collaborative community of state and local public health representatives committed to and passionate about excellence in public health practice. The theme for this year's forum, "Partnering for Better Public Health Practice," embodies the spirit of working together across disciplines and boundaries

to safeguard public health and save lives. The forum will offer a plethora of informational breakout sessions, and opportunity for networking. Registration will be posted on New Jersey Learning Management Network and credits will be available for attendees. The agenda and online registration details are forthcoming. Please save the date on your calendar!

New Jersey Department of Health

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Medicinal Marijuana Program Expands, Becomes More Responsive, Patient Friendly

Congratulations to...

Suzanne Miro, a Senior Health Communication Specialist in the Communicable Disease Service, was recently inducted into The College of New Jersey's "Wall of Fame" for the Health and Exercise Science Department for career achievement and leadership. She is the first public health professional to receive this distinguished honor.



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In the month since that report came out, more than 1,300 patients and 50 new physicians have joined the program; five new medical conditions have been added; patient and caregiver registration fees have been reduced; dispensaries have applied to open five satellite locations; and mobile access has been added so that patients, caregivers and physicians can register, make payments and upload documents on their Smart phones and tablets.

The biennial patient registration fee was lowered from \$200 to \$100 and veterans and seniors—65 and older—were added to the list of those who qualify for the \$20 discounted registration fee. Those receiving government assistance, including federal disability, already receive the reduced fee.

The new medical conditions are anxiety, migraines, Tourette's syndrome, chronic pain related to musculoskeletal disorders, and chronic visceral pain.

To implement the reforms, Commissioner Elnahal has

elevated the program to a Division level and appointed a new Assistant Commissioner, Jeffrey A. Brown.

The Department is also investing in a public awareness campaign to let physicians and patients know that we are expanding the program. The campaign will feature paid social media, a radio Public Service Announcement and online advertising. In addition, the Commissioner will be talking to medical students, residents and physicians in medical schools and teaching hospitals later this spring about the clinical benefits of this therapy.

The Department has also made recommendations to change the law including increasing the monthly product limit to four ounces, allowing hospice patients to have an unlimited supply, allowing adult patients to have access to edibles (helping those with dexterity issues), and eliminating the requirement that the original six ATCs be non-profits. There are currently five ATCs in New Jersey, and a sixth is scheduled to open soon. The Department of Health will also work with the Department of Law and Public Safety to expedite the current process for obtaining a permit for the next round of ATC applications.

The Department also proposes amending its rules to allow future ATCs to specialize in specific areas of the business such as cultivating, dispensing, or manufacturing, without having to do all three. The administration believes that this will add flexibility and specialization to the industry, ultimately improving access for patients.

More than 19,575 patients, nearly 600 physicians, and 875 caregivers participate in the program. With the public awareness campaign, the Department expects to increase enrollment by several thousand patients over the next year.

The Department expects to increase enrollment by several thousand patients over the next year.

Department of Health Recognizes National Infant Immunization Week



During National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) April 21-28, the Department highlighted the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventable diseases and celebrated the achievements of immunization programs and individuals in promoting healthy communities. Public health agencies and health care providers hosted special events throughout New Jersey.

As part of NIIW, each year, the CDC and the CDC Foundation honor individuals in each state who make a significant contribution toward improving public health through their work in childhood immunization. This year Dr. Jeffrey M. Bienstock from PediatriCare Associates was awarded the Childhood Immunization Champion Award for his creation and implementation of an annual seasonal influenza carnival. Dr. Bienstock and his staff vaccinated more than 1,100 children and families this year—a record since the inception of the carnival in 2013.

New Jersey has reached the Healthy People 2020 target of 90 percent vaccination coverage for polio, measles, mumps, rubella (MMR), hepatitis B, and varicella vaccination coverage for children aged 19-35 months.

Despite the success of immunizations, vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks still occur. For example, the United States experienced a record number of measles cases during 2014, with 667 cases from 27 states. This is the greatest number of cases since measles elimination was documented in the U.S. in 2000. Currently, New Jersey has no cases of measles for 2018, but had two cases in 2017 due to international travel.

Commissioner Elnahal Announces Newest Members of Leadership Team



Commissioner Elnahal was sworn in by Governor Murphy on April 2. At right are Dr. Elnahal's wife, Marwa, and daughter, Jude.

New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Shereef Elnahal took the official oath of office from Governor Phil Murphy on April 2 and announced five new members to augment his leadership team.

"I am honored to officially become a member of Governor Murphy's cabinet and welcome new team members to help me ensure that all New Jerseyans have access to safe, evidence-based healthcare," said Elnahal, an oncologist who comes to DOH from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, where he served under President Barack Obama as Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Health for Quality, Safety, and Value after initially being appointed as a White House Fellow.

The Commissioner has listed his top priorities as eradicating the opioid epidemic, decreasing disparities in healthcare, reducing infant mortality, and expanding access to medical marijuana.

To that end, he announced that he is augmenting his leadership team with the appointment of a new Deputy Commissioner, a Director of Policy and Strategic Planning, Assistant Commissioner of Medicinal Marijuana, Assistant Commissioner of Community Health, Director of Legislative Services, and Director of



Jackie Cornell

Healthcare Finance.

They join Chief of Staff Andrea Martinez-Mejia, Principal Deputy Commissioner of Public Health Services Jackie Cornell, and Deputy Commissioner of Health Systems Marcela Ospina Maziarz, who were previously appointed to lead the team.

The newest members of the leadership team are: Deputy Commissioner Deborah Hartel to oversee the Integrated Health Services branch, which includes the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Community Health Division; Director of Policy and Strategic Planning Magda Schaler-Haynes; Assistant Commissioner for Medicinal Marijuana Jeffrey Brown; Assistant Commissioner for Community Health Services Nashon Hornsby; Assistant Commissioner of HIV, STD and TB Services; Legislative Affairs Director Maria Del Cid-Kosso; and Office of Healthcare Finance Director Robin Ford.

As Chief of Staff, Martinez-Mejia oversees three major branches, 10 divisions, 14 offices, and four commissions as well as administrative, financial and facility management; communications; boards and commissions; ethics compliance; data privacy; diversity and equity services; human resources, recruitment and training; and legislative and constituent services.

Prior to joining the Department, Martinez-Mejia served as Coordinator of Community Health Services for the City of Trenton's Department of Health and Human Services; Community Recovery Director for the American Red Cross's Superstorm Sandy Long-Term Recovery Team; Acting Director of Appointments under three Governors; Director of Community Relations and Constituency Services for the Department of Health; and Director of Constituent Relations for the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of State. Martinez-Mejia earned her B.A. in Political Science from Rutgers University. She graduated from Seton Hall University with a Master's degree in Public Administration and a Master's degree in Diplomacy and International Relations in 2008.

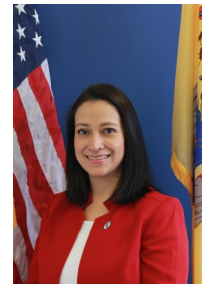
As Principal Deputy Commissioner, Cornell oversees the Public Health Services branch which includes the Divisions of Epidemiology, Environmental and Occupational Health; Family Health Services; Public Health Infrastructure, Laboratories and Emergency Preparedness; HIV, STD and TB Services; and the Medicinal Marijuana Program.

Before joining the Department, Cornell was Director of Development and External Affairs at New Jersey Policy Perspective; and senior director of Federal Relations and Regulatory Affairs at the New Jersey Hospital Association. Former President Barack Obama appointed her regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She has also worked in senior leadership positions for New Jersey Citizen Action and Planned Parenthood. She currently serves on the National Programs Committee for the New Leaders Council as well as the on the Advisory Board of the New Jersey chapter. She is a graduate of The Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy of Rutgers University and The College of New Jersey, where she teaches courses in gender and public policy and feminist advocacy.

As Deputy Commissioner of Health Systems, Maziarz oversees inspections and enforcement for 2,200 licensed health care facilities, the Certificate of Need Program, Health Facility and Field Operations; and major hospital finance programs such as Charity Care, Graduate Medical Education, and the Delivery Systems Reform Incentive Payment Program.

She previously served as the Assistant Director of Budget and Fiscal Policy for the New Jersey Senate Majority Office; Public Information Officer for the Department of Labor; Deputy Press Secretary for former Governor Jon S. Corzine, and Legislative Director for a member of the state Assembly. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Master of Public Administration from Rutgers University.

Deputy Commissioner Deborah Hartel joined the Department in April to oversee the Integrated Health Services branch, which includes the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Division of Community Health Services.



Andrea Martinez-Mejia



Marcela Maziarz



Deborah Hartel

Chilton Medical Center Designated as a Baby-Friendly Hospital



**Chilton
Medical Center**
ATLANTIC HEALTH SYSTEM

Chilton Medical Center in Pompton Plains recently became the 11th maternity hospital designated as Baby-Friendly in New Jersey.

The Baby-Friendly Initiative, launched by the World Health Organization and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), is a global program that encourages the broad-scale implementation of the [Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding](#).

The initiative assists hospitals in giving mothers the information, confidence, and skills necessary to successfully initiate and continue breastfeeding their babies or safely feed with formula, and gives special recognition to hospitals that have done so.

Chilton is one of 18 self-selected maternity hospitals participating in a breastfeeding technical assistance project funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant 1305, State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health (State Public Health Actions).

The grant is a multi-faceted initiative to improve health for all Americans through coordinated chronic disease prevention programs. Funding from CDC comes to the Community Health and Wellness Unit within Community Health Division (Integrated Health Services Branch).

Baby-Friendly hospitals and birthing facilities must adhere to the Ten Steps to receive, and retain, a Baby-Friendly designation.

The other Baby-Friendly hospitals in New Jersey are AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center in Pomona; Capital Health Medical Center - Hopewell in Pennington; Inspira Medical Center Elmer; Jersey Shore University Medical Center in Neptune; Morristown Medical Center in Morristown; Newton Medical Center in Newton; Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center in Camden; Overlook Medical Center in Summit; Southern Ocean Medical Center in Manahawkin; and University Hospital in Newark.

For more information on the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, visit <https://www.babyfriendlyusa.org/>.

Help is Available for New Jersey Residents Struggling With Alcohol Abuse

Nearly 90,000 people die every year from alcohol-related deaths.

April was declared Alcohol Awareness Month in 1987 by the National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence (NCADD) to educate the public about Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD).

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) reports that, according to the [2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) (NSDUH), 15.1 million adults ages 18 and older had AUD (9.8 million men, 5.3 million were women). About 8.3 percent of adults sought treatment.

About 623,000 adolescents had AUD (298,000 males, 325,000 female), according to the NSDUH study.

Alcohol was the primary substance of use in 27 percent of NJ treatment admissions in 2016

Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)/Alcoholism

Not all individuals diagnosed with AUD (previously referred to as alcohol abusers or alcohol dependence) develop alcoholism; however AUD includes a level that’s sometimes called alcoholism when it is severe at times. Alcoholism can develop in response to a genetic predisposition from a family history or a stressful change, such as a breakup, retirement, or another loss.

Common Signs and Symptoms

- Inability to limit intake
- Spending a lot of time drinking, planning to drink, getting alcohol or recovering from alcohol use
- Feeling a strong craving or urge to drink alcohol
- Failing to fulfill major obligations at work, school or home due to repeated alcohol use
- Using alcohol in situations where it’s not safe, such as when driving or swimming
- Developing a tolerance to alcohol so you need more to feel its effect or you have a reduced effect from the same amount
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms — such as nausea, sweating and shaking — when you don’t drink, or drinking to avoid these symptoms



**For help with alcohol in
New Jersey**

IME Addictions Access
Center
844-276-2777

NJ Connect for Recovery
855-652-3737

The Peer Recovery
Warmline
877-292-5588

New Jersey Participates in Inaugural Black Maternal Health Week

April 11-17 marked the first Black Maternal Health Week in the United States, designated by the [Black Mamas Matter Alliance](#). This week, which coincides with National Minority Health Month, is held to spotlight the disparities in maternal health among communities of color. Black maternal mortality is nearly four times that of white women in New Jersey.

As part of the week, First Lady Tammy Murphy and Department of Health Principal Deputy Commissioner Jackie Cornell joined the Essex Birth and Breastfeeding Coalition and the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network at the East Orange Family Success Center for a community discussion on Black Maternal Health Disparities on April 16. The First Lady spoke about the Murphy Administration's commitment to reducing health disparities in the state and ensuring access to healthcare, which leads to better health outcomes. Principal Deputy Commissioner Jackie Cornell also participated in the Black Mamas Matter Alliance's Twitter Chat on April 17 to raise awareness and promote conversation about the health challenges minority women face.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have given the Division of Health Facilities at the New Jersey Department of Health a 2018 National Quality, Safety &



Oversight Achievement Award for ensuring the preservation of residents' rights and safety following the termination of a Special Focus Facility's provider agreement during 2017. Stefanie Mozgai, Assistant Commissioner for Health Facility Survey and Field Operations, center, accepted the award on behalf of the Department.

Better Together

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ADDRESS THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

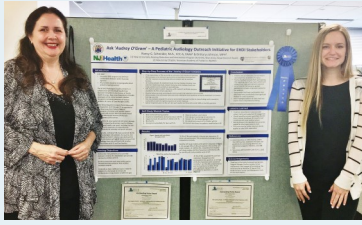


Save the Date

June 5th 2018
BRIDGEWATER MARRIOTT
700 Commons Way • Bridgewater, NJ



Congratulations to...



Nancy G. Schneider, M.A., CCC-A, FAAA, Audiologist/Research Scientist 2 at the Department's [Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program \(EHDI\)](#) and **Brittany Johnson, MPH**, Health Data Consultant at the Division of Family Health Services and Program Manager at the New Jersey Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics who won the "Outstanding Poster Award - EHDI Workforce Issues" at the 17th Annual Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (EHDI) Meeting on March 18-20th, 2018. [Ms. Schneider and Ms. Johnson's winning poster, entitled, Ask 'Audrey O'Gram' – A Pediatric Audiology Outreach Initiative for EHDI Stakeholders](#), was selected from 90 posters submitted by EHDI Programs throughout the United States and is the first winning poster for New Jersey at this national conference.

The "Ask Audrey O'Gram" project was a free, monthly, online self-study initiative that focused on increasing stakeholder awareness of topics related to children with hearing loss. All [Special Child Health Services County Case Management Units](#) were provided with monthly topical overviews, hypothetical case-studies, available statewide and national supports and services and a relevant pediatric hearing loss question. A comparison of pre- and post-test surveys revealed statistically significant improvements in knowledge related to the topics addressed throughout this initiative.

Principal Deputy Commissioner Focuses on Department Priorities

Reducing disparities in public health outcomes, eradicating the opioid epidemic and enhancing access and quality of mental health care are just a few priorities that Principal Deputy Commissioner Jackie Cornell emphasized during her keynote speech at Newark Community Health Center's Provider Retreat on March 24, 2018.

This year's retreat held in Livingston, NJ, focused heavily on healthcare priorities and challenges.

Cornell noted that maternal and child health is a key area that the department is focused on, specifically black infant mortality where the rate is three times that of white infants in New Jersey.

"Community health centers are the key to addressing health challenges like these and providing comprehensive and preventive medical care—including immunizations, health screenings, women's reproductive health care, behavioral health care and dental care and social services."

Last year, the state provided \$32 million to support Federally Qualified Health Centers' care of the uninsured. More than a \$1 million went to Newark Community Health Centers.

Newark Community Health Centers have already begun implementing programs to address black infant mortality. They are the first health center in the state to provide a Centering Pregnancy Program, to give care, education, and social support to expecting mothers in at risk communities.



DOH Celebrates National Minority Health Month

The Department celebrated National Minority Health Month with a series of health equity forums with the theme "Ensuring Health Equity for Vulnerable Populations, Recovery Through Resiliency."

Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal and Principal Deputy Commissioner Jackie Cornell highlighted some of the Department's key priorities including eliminating health disparities, addressing health equity and improving public health outcomes during their keynote speeches at the Office of Minority and Multicultural Health forums.

Principal Deputy Commissioner Jackie Cornell participated in the Passaic County event on April 6.

Both forums included multiple workshops during which participants could choose from various topics that focused on behavioral health equity, disability awareness and addressing vulnerable populations, LGBTQ Youth, improving blood pressure, cross cultural disaster response and human trafficking.

The second forum was held at Camden County College in Blackwood on Friday, April 27th with Commissioner Shereef Elnahal emphasizing how multicultural populations are disproportionately affected by health challenges.

Elnahal also announced earlier this month that the Department will issue \$2.5 million in grants to fund development of intervention programs to reduce health disparities in minority communities in New Jersey.

This summer the Department will be awarding 17 grants to develop community interventions to prevent disparities. The grants each have a three-year term with grantees receiving \$50,000 each year. Each grantee will be charged to develop best practices as a roadmap to provide quality, effective and equitable services that are responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs, practices and languages.

The Community Health Disparity Prevention Program will fund development of programs to fill gaps that prevent people from getting the medical and behavioral healthcare treatment they need. Applications are due by 3:00 p.m. Friday, May 11, 2018.

The Department and its Office of Multicultural and Minority Health (OMMH) continue to work on a variety of initiatives to create health equity, including redesigning programs and realigning investment of public dollars to increase access to treatment and better care for vulnerable populations.



Department Launches Awareness Campaign to Reduce Infant Exposure to Opioids

The Department of Health on April 9 launched an awareness campaign aimed at reducing opioid dependency in pregnant women and their newborns.

Nationally and in New Jersey there has been a rise in newborns diagnosed with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), which occurs in a newborn who was exposed to alcohol and drugs while in the mother's womb. Since 2008, cases of NAS have doubled to 685 babies diagnosed in 2016.

"Babies that are exposed to drugs in the womb are at risk of prematurity, birth defects and withdrawal symptoms such as seizures and vomiting," said New Jersey Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal. "By encouraging pregnant women to seek help, their addiction can be treated to reduce the impact to their unborn child."

The campaign includes distribution of awareness materials, targeted corner store and bus advertising, promoted social media, a robust new website (nj.gov/health/treated4baby) with information and resources about Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome and outreach to community partners and healthcare providers.

Downloadable campaign posters in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) are being shared statewide with county and local health departments, hospitals, community health centers, healthcare providers, WIC offices, maternal and child health partners, Family Success Centers, and others that serve women of childbearing age.

The campaign aims to reach women of child-bearing age that are addicted or dependent on prescription pain killers as well as illicit drugs such as heroin.

Data from the New Jersey Substance Abuse Monitoring System (NJSAMS) 2015 report reflects the most common substances used by New Jersey's pregnant women: heroin (59.8%) other opiates (9.7%); marijuana (13.5%); and alcohol (9.3%).

Because health care providers play a key role in identifying women at risk for substance abuse, health leaders in the state have joined Commissioner Elnahal in co-signing [a letter](#) to providers promoting the campaign. The letter includes the New Jersey Hospital Association, the New Jersey Primary Care Association; and the Maternal and Child Health Consortia; the Central Jersey Family Health Consortium, the Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern NJ, and the Southern Jersey Perinatal Cooperative.

"Some women don't realize that they can receive medication-assisted treatment while pregnant to help them and their neonates become opioid free," Commissioner Elnahal said. "There is no reason for these babies and their mothers to remain dependent."

The Department of Health is asking partners to share our prevention messages through social media, by displaying posters and referring individuals to our website.

New Jersey in 2014 was awarded a technical assistance opportunity through the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)-supported National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare (NCSACW) to address the multi-faceted problems of NAS.

In-Depth Technical Assistance (IDTA) for Substance Exposed Infants (SEI) and Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) aims to develop practices/guidelines that address the entire spectrum of NAS and SEI from pre-pregnancy, prevention, early intervention, assessment and treatment, postpartum and early childhood.

New Jersey's IDTA is providing assistance to strengthen collaboration across child welfare, addiction treatment, medical providers, and other stakeholders to improve the safety, health, and well-being of SEI, and the recovery of pregnant and parenting women and their families.

New Jersey awarded regionalized contracts for the Maternal Wrap Around Program (M-WRAP) Program. M-WRAP combines intensive case management and recovery support services for opioid dependent pregnant women. Pregnant women with an opioid use disorder are eligible for M-WRAP services through pregnancy and up to one year after the birth event.

**Help Yourself...
Help Your Baby...
Get Treatment!**

Prescription pain medications and heroin can harm your baby.

◆ Possible risks to your baby include:

- ◆ premature birth
- ◆ low birth weight
- ◆ birth defects
- ◆ withdrawal symptoms (irritability, seizures, vomiting, diarrhea, fever)

Talk to your doctor about what drugs you are taking.

**Get Treatment:
1-844-276-2777 (24/7)
Get #Treated4Baby**

nj.gov/health/treated4baby
NJ Health
New Jersey Department of Health

This public awareness poster promotes the Department's Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome campaign and its #Treated4Baby hashtag.

Department of Health Hosts “Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day”



The Department of Health joined workplaces across the United States to participate in “Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day” on April 26. Employees’ children joined Commissioner Elnahal and staffers from various divisions to learn about the work the Department does every day to protect the health of the residents of New Jersey.

Department Recognizes National Healthcare Decisions Day

In advance of the celebration of National Healthcare Decisions Day, Commissioner Elnahal toured one of New Jersey’s hospice providers—Holy Name’s Villa Marie Claire in Saddle River.

During the tour of the stand-alone hospice facility, the Commissioner saw the emphasis that was placed on making sure that patients who are near the end-of-life continue to live in a way that makes them most comfortable. Villa Marie Claire works to ensure patients feel at home, like having communal settings where they can dine with family and friends, allowing them to keep pets with them, and having rooms available for loved ones to stay the night. This setting allows patients to receive the palliative and hospice care they need, while still experiencing the joys of everyday life.

Planning for care is important at any age, and residents don’t need to wait until they are faced with an illness. The Department’s [palliative and end-of-life care website](#) provides residents with forms, toolkits, and guidance to help guide them in talking about and planning for end-of-life care.

The Department’s website also highlights the Practitioner Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form, which empowers residents to work with their healthcare provider to document preferences for medical care at the end of life. POLST forms, which are targeted to those with a terminal illness, are different from advance directives.

In addition, the Department houses the New Jersey Advisory Council on End of Life Care, which will soon release its recommendations on how to improve end of life care in New Jersey.

National Healthcare Decisions Day is now celebrated all week long, from April 16 to 22, highlighted the importance of discussing end of life plans early.



Commissioner Elnahal was joined by Michael Maron, President and CEO of Holy Name Medical Center, left, and Sister Patricia Codey, SC, Esq., President, Catholic HealthCare Partnership of New Jersey, during a visit to Villa Marie Claire Hospice in Saddle River on March 20.

DMHAS Assistant Commissioner honored by mental health and addiction agencies

Valerie Mielke, Assistant Commissioner of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), was honored by the New Jersey Association for Mental Health and Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA) for her leadership.

Assistant Commissioner Mielke received the State Leadership in Mental Health and Addiction Services Award during NJAMHAA's annual conference on April 10 at the Pines Manor in Edison.

"We greatly admire Assistant Commissioner Mielke's leadership and we appreciate the initiatives she undertakes to improve access to and quality of services for individuals with mental illnesses and/or substance use disorders, and her collaboration with NJAMHAA and other stakeholders to achieve these goals," said NJAMHAA President and CEO Debra Wentz. "From her earlier experience as a provider, Assistant Commissioner Mielke has always understood every facet of the field and she consistently demonstrated a personal interest that shines through in all of her communications and efforts."

The evening awards ceremony was part of NJAMHAA's two-day conference, this year entitled "Creating Balance Through Integrated Care," which was kicked off with a keynote address in which Department of Health Commissioner Shereef Elnahal stressed the importance of a data-based, patient-driven system that integrates behavioral and primary health care.

Dr. Wentz also praised Assistant Commissioner Mielke for her diligence in advocating for community-based services that support recovery from psychiatric and substance use disorders.

"Assistant Commissioner Mielke has always emphasized the peer movement and supported the use of individuals with lived experience and recovery coaches. As she served as the Regional Director for a long time, she has a good understanding of the transition from hospitals into the community and what types of resources are needed, such as supportive housing and supportive employment. It is very appropriate that she is now in a department that is emphasizing integrated health care because that has always been the focus of her approach."

DMHAS operates four state psychiatric hospitals and is the state mental health authority (SMHA) as well as the Single State Authority on Substance Abuse (SSA) that plans, monitors, evaluates and regulates New Jersey's mental health and substance abuse prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery efforts.



NJAMHAA President and CEO Debra Wentz, left, presents the leadership award to Valerie Mielke, Assistant Commissioner of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Department of Health Recognizes Medical Laboratory Professionals Week

New Jersey Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal recognized Medical Laboratory Professionals Week, April 22-28, by commending New Jersey's laboratory professionals essential role in every aspect of healthcare, including medical diagnosis and public health prevention.



"Every day, New Jersey's laboratory professionals play a vital role in health care and especially in protecting the public's health," Elnahal said. "Laboratory professionals work at commercial and hospital laboratories as well as the Department's Public Health and Environmental Laboratory (PHEL) and conduct tests daily that help residents manage chronic disease, ensure drinking and recreational water is safe, detect and report disease outbreaks, and work closely with local, state and federal agencies in maintaining vigilance against bioterrorism."

Recognizing that New Jersey's laboratory professionals are vital members of the healthcare system and public health team, Governor Phil Murphy issued a [proclamation](#) declaring April 22-28, 2018 as Medical Laboratory Professionals Week.

Each year, PHEL conducts more than 5 million tests for a wide range of microbial and metabolic diseases and chemical contaminants on a variety of environmental and clinical samples. PHEL data is generated in close collaboration with epidemiologists, local health officials and multiple state agencies, federal partners and healthcare providers who use the laboratory information to protect the public.

Public Health Infrastructure, Laboratories & Emergency Preparedness Acting Assistant Commissioner Shereen Semple, right, and Patty Jackman, Clinical Laboratory Evaluator for the DOH Public Health & Environmental Labs presented the Governor's Proclamation at the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science-NJ Expo.

Commissioner Elnahal Announces Newest Members of Leadership Team

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Deputy Commissioner Hartel joined the Department from St. Joseph's Health, where she served as Administrative Director of Behavioral Health Services for the past 21 years. She previously worked as Vice President of Mental Health at St. Mary's Hospital in Passaic and as President of the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA). She received a master's degree in social work from Fordham University and a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Upsala College in East Orange.

Director of Policy and Strategic Planning Schaler-Haynes is an Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Management at Columbia University and an independent planning and policy consultant. She previously worked as a senior health policy advisor in the New York State Insurance Department. She received her law degree from Columbia University School of Law, her Master's in Public Health at Columbia, and her Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass.

Assistant Commissioner for Medicinal Marijuana Jeff Brown worked as Vice President of Policy at the Hospital Alliance of New Jersey before joining the Department of Health. He previously worked as Executive Director of the QI Collaborative, Chief of Staff for the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute, and Policy and Communications Director for NJ Citizens Action. He received his Bachelor's Degree in English from Rutgers University.

Legislative Affairs Director Del Cid-Kosso worked as Chief of Staff for members of the state Assembly representing the 22nd legislative district. He holds an associate's degree in Psychology from Union County College and a bachelor's degree in Psychology and Political Science from Seton Hall University. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in Public Policy at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University.

Office of Healthcare Finance Director Robin Ford worked as the lead fiscal analyst at the New Jersey Office of Legislative Affairs and previously worked as Director of Prevention Services at Cochise County Health and Social Services in Bisbee, Arizona, and as Director of Advocacy and Public Affairs at the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey. She received a Master's in Public Policy at Eagleton Institute of Rutgers University, and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science at Douglass College in New Brunswick.

Assistant Commissioner Nashon Hornsby is a first generation college graduate. A native of Neptune Township, New Jersey, he earned an associate's degree in Political Science *magna cum laude* from Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, NJ (1990) and a bachelor's degree in Business Management, *cum laude* from Morehouse College in 1993. Following graduation from Morehouse, he returned to his home state and attended Seton Hall University Law School, where he earned a Juris Doctor degree and Legal Letter Masters in Health Law. Licensed to practice in the State of New Jersey, Nashon has served the State of New Jersey for approximately 16 years.

In his current post with the Division of Community Health Services, he oversees the Community Health and Wellness Unit, the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health, the Office of Minority Health and Addiction Services and Oral Health Services.

Christopher Menschner, an experienced health policy professional specializing in developing innovative programs targeting underserved populations, joined the Department of Health April 30 as Assistant Commissioner of the Division of HIV, STD, and TB Services.

Assistant Commissioner Menschner comes to DOH from the Center for Healthcare Strategies, Inc., where he has worked as senior program officer and Deputy Director since 2015, after leaving his position as a policy analyst in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program at the Department of Human Services, where he'd worked since 2011.

Prior to joining the state, Assistant Commissioner Menschner worked as Manager of Resource Development at the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and Program Manager of Patient Services; Program Manager and Data Analyst for Ant-Gang Initiatives in the Trenton Mayor's Office; International Social Work Fellow at the West Africa Aids Foundation in Ghana; Case Manager at Greater Trenton Behavioral Healthcare; and group therapist and case manager at the Association for the Advancement of Mental Health.

He holds a Masters of Arts in Public Policy and a Masters in Social Work Policy from Monmouth University and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Rutgers University.



Magda Schaler-Haynes



Nashon Hornsby



Christopher Menschner

Colorectal Cancer Research and Prevention: Innovation, Progress and Promise

By **Steven K. Libutti, MD, FACS**, and **Wadih Arap, MD, PhD**

Innovation and progress in cancer research and care are the result of collaboration and resources. This advancement also extends to cancer prevention and education, but more emphasis on these areas is needed. This especially is the case when it comes to colorectal cancer, which will strike 4,000 New Jersey residents this year according to the American Cancer Society. As hospitals build relationships with other healthcare and scientific entities to better address the cancer treatment needs of their patients through integrated care, they also recognize the need to enhance cancer education, outreach and screening efforts in their surrounding communities.

Such is the case here in the Garden State where University Hospital in Newark entered into a partnership with the state's only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey in 2016. The relationship enables the recently established Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey at University Hospital to offer unique clinical trials, share scientific discoveries and provide expanded access to cancer programs and services to the Newark community and surrounding North Jersey region.

As healthcare leaders we often devote much of our energies into studying advanced stage disease. However, we can make a greater impact on saving lives if we focus more on identifying and addressing cancer at an earlier stage or preventing it altogether with an emphasis on screening, early detection and education. Thus Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey established and is leading 'Screen NJ,' a collaborative project of organizations across New Jersey committed to reducing cancer incidence and mortality through an effective cancer screening, education and awareness program. 'Screen NJ' was launched in 2017 and is funded by the state to help reduce colorectal and lung cancer incidence.

We should also strive to address challenges such as medical literacy, cultural sensitivity, access and availability with regard to cancer screenings in the community. With data from a 2017 study (Journal of the National Cancer Institute, Siegel, et al.) showing an increase in colon cancer incidence rates by 1.0 percent to 2.4 percent annually since the mid-1980s for adults age 20 to 39 and by 0.5 percent to 1.3 percent since the mid-1990s in adults age 40 to 54 – concentrated efforts on screening for this disease should be enhanced. And given the younger age range, perhaps dialogue on initiating colorectal cancer screening even earlier than the recommended age of 50 should be part of a nationwide conversation.

With that, Rutgers Cancer Institute's New Brunswick and Newark campuses are getting the discussion started by participating in a statewide 'Go Blue NJ' (#GoBlueNJ) initiative for colorectal cancer awareness. While this awareness is important all year long, we will use the month of March to create additional awareness opportunities for our communities, whether through doctor/patient interaction, community health fairs and even through social media posts and blogs like this one.

Instead of colorectal cancer being diagnosed at a later stage, often in the emergency room when it is too late to treat effectively, we can improve outcomes by increasing awareness and access to screening through efforts like the 'Go Blue' campaign and 'Screen NJ.' Cancer is the great equalizer – a common enemy that affects all regardless of gender, race, or economic or political status. Working together and ensuring that proper resources are allocated to continue to move the science forward we can tackle a disease that impacts so many.

Steven K. Libutti, MD, FACS, Director, Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey; Vice Chancellor for Cancer Programs, Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences; and Senior Vice President of Oncology Services for RWJBarnabas Health. **Wadih Arap, MD, PhD**, Director, Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey at University Hospital.

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