

Kentucky Work Group on Folic Acid Education and Awareness
December 10, 1998

OVERVIEW

Submitted by
Linda Lancaster

Present:

Dr. Steve Davis, Dr. Richard Mier, Dr. Steve Armstrong, Mary Ann Hindman, Dr. David Adamkin, Jan Chamness, Jackie Baker, Twila Minix, Tricia Mullins, Dr. Robbie Hutchinson, Nancy Quarcelino, Fran Hawkins, Ann Tarter, Kerda De Haan, Emma Walters, Carol Forbes, Linda Lancaster

Meeting Packet Contents:

Spina Bifida and Anencephaly Frequently Asked Questions

Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1998

Newsletter: "Prevent Spina Bifida and Anencephaly

Announcement: The Premiere of a National Prevention Campaign Meeting, January, 28-29, Washington, D.C.

Fact sheet: "Unique Characteristics of Kentucky and Birth Defects and Folic Acid"

Bibliography: Publications by CDC Division of Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (1995-6)

Overview of NTD's and Folic Acid

- Dr. Davis emphasized specific Kentucky risk factors that increase the risk for Neural Tube Defects in Kentucky (fact sheet)
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concludes that research on the preventive effects of folic acid on the incidence of birth defects (NTDs as well as heart defects) warrants that all women of child bearing age should take folic acid.
- A comprehensive coordinated education and awareness campaign is desirable for Kentucky.
- Folic Acid is very inexpensive at a cost of \$5.00 per year. Private companies, i.e. J.C. Pennies are getting involved by paying for folic acid.
- March of Dimes (MOD) new national PSA was viewed. The PSA is very dramatic, depicting a baby crawling across a busy street. The underlining message is do not take chances, taking folic acid can prevent birth defects.

Discussion and Brainstorming on Folic Acid Education and Awareness Activities

Dr. Richard Mier:

- "Parents have no idea about folic acid".
- Shriners, March of Dimes and the Kentucky Pediatric Society have collaborated to design, print and distribute to pediatricians one cycle of Folic Acid brochures. **More of these brochures are available** for distribution to other groups and are designed to encourage women to take folic acid. The message is simple. Physicians need to educate the woman as he/she personally gives the brochure to the individual.

Jackie Baker:

- Passport Health Care Plan provides case management and nutritional assessment through their prenatal program. Folic Acid education is a component.
- May incorporate folic acid education into EPDST program that track members until age 20.
- A folic acid packet is in development and will be sent to all provider members. However, materials focus on after pregnancy.

Mary Ann Hindman:

- The prevention of Birth Defects, specifically NTDs is a national goal of the March of Dimes. 10 million dollars has been dedicated nationally for Folic Acid Education. This funding will filter to the state and local level. Centrum and Florida Citrus growers have helped with education.
- Folic Acid is always included as a focus topic in every MOD grant.
- Kentucky North Central District Health Department has a MOD grant to pilot the use of a new curriculum to target the Hispanic population.
- Great strides in research. Spina Bifida has been corrected in utero.

Dr. Steve Armstrong:

- There is a problem getting folic acid to women before pregnancy and OB/GYNs see many unplanned pregnancies.
- The teen population is especially problematic. PSA on MTV may be helpful to get the message across to this population.
- When a woman decides to get pregnant and discontinue birth control pills, multivitamins should be exchanged for the pill. Many women fear that vitamins will cause weight gain.

Twila Minix:

- Kentucky Health Select provide provider and member education and involve other health plans.
- Until eligibility is established for Medicaid, women are encouraged to go to their LHD for prenatal care and folic acid.
- Will coordinate with the U.K. Nurse Practitioner program to provide prenatal services.

Nancy Quarcelino:

- The Barren River District Health Department offers folic acid to any woman coming to their LHD for a pregnancy test.
- Health Educators need to promote the use of folic acid.
- Regional and county data will help assure participation by local media. They may not see the need to promote, especially to run ads in Spanish.

Tricia Mullins:

- For some women, taking a multivitamin may be a financial hardship.
- Peer counseling is effective for teens.
- We all need to educate those we work with. Never assume that everyone knows the facts.

Ann Tarter:

- Local Health Departments (LHD) are involved in folic acid education and some LHDs distribute folic acid at time of pregnancy testing. These activities occur regardless of the outcome of the testing.
- LHD Family Planning includes preconceptional activities including folic acid education.
- LHDs have choices regarding the scope of delivery of these services.

Emma Walters:

- There is nutritionist service activity through the LHD. Need to evaluate LHD distribution of folic acid and nutrition encounters in prenatal services.
- 120,000 women get services through the LHD system.
- Men are an important audience for education in folic acid

Dr. Robby Hutchinson:

- Need to push education through the LHDs
- Need educational incentive in the school system.
- Need to advise physicians formally to inform his/her patients about folic acid/vitamins.

Fran Hawkins:

- The grocery store may be an effective place to advertise the folic acid message. Experience has proven that radio may not reach some target groups.

Carol Forbes:

- Need to work with the Department of Education and get a folic acid question on the KERA testing. Kentucky schools have been in jeopardy of losing Health Education. Dr. Tom Young has been instrumental in keeping Health Ed in the curriculum.

Dr. David Adamkin:

- Public Health message needs to promote taking a multivitamin daily for everyone.
- Incorporate Folic Acid education into CEUs for physicians and other professional disciplines.

Linda Lancaster:

- The Kentucky Birth Surveillance Registry (KBSR) will facilitate folic acid education and awareness as a component of a new CDC grant.
- The grant will promote the identification of all children born in Kentucky with Spina Bifida and the promotion of appropriate genetic and folic acid education for their families.
- The KBSR collects data on congenital anomalies and disabling conditions of birth to five-year-olds through hospital and specialty data sources. Accurate and complete hospital discharge information critical to the KBSR data collection system.

Overview: National Campaign on Folic Acid

The average age for pregnancy is 21, and 50% of ALL pregnancies are unplanned! Therefore, education is the plan. For pre-contemplators, women usually ages 18-24, the objective is to raise awareness to take multivitamins now with the key promise to reduce the risk for someday in the future in other words, "Your body is getting ready for pregnancy even if you're not planning pregnancy now". For the contemplators, usually

ages 18-35, the objective is to educate about the importance of folic acid prior to conception, in other words "the timing" will be emphasized.

The campaign kickoff will be January 28-29,1998 in Washington, D.C.

Future Steps

- Add representatives from Department of Education, Kentucky Nurses Association, others as identified.
- Determine three ways you and/or your organization are willing to assist in the promotion of folic acid education and awareness.(Send to Linda Lancaster)
- Support Kentucky representatives to attend the National Folic Acid Campaign meeting.
- Meet again in the spring to refine plans.