



Background

On December 8, 1998, the Kentucky Work Group on Folic Acid Awareness and Education met for the first time. Participants representing four organizations (The KY Dept. for Public Health, the KY Chapter of the March of Dimes, the KY Spina Bifida Association, and the Barren River District Health Dept.) shared and explored ways to increase education across the state about folic acid, while they also identified other prospective participants to invite into membership. During the August 5, 1999 meeting, the Work Group officially adopted the name "Kentucky Folic Acid Partnership". The Partnership members voted to approve the work plans that the Development Committee had drafted. As the Kentucky Folic Acid Partnership began to grow, the March of Dimes and the Kentucky Department for Public Health had the foresight and commitment to fund a part-time State Folic Acid Campaign Coordinator position. Susan Brown, RN, ICCE, IBCLC, RLC from the Barren River District Health Department, accepted the Coordinator position on August 30, 1999. There were 19 members to the KFAP on September 7, 1999, and membership has continued to grow. In January 2004, the KFAP voted to expand the partnership's scope to also include other perinatal health issues in addition to folic acid. Our logo was changed to reflect that expansion and additional members were brought to the table raising our total membership to include 74 organizations and over 80 individual members.

Purpose

The Kentucky Folic Acid Partnership was established to involve as many organizations as possible in the effort to educate Kentuckians about the Public Health Service recommendation that all women consume 400 mcg of folic acid daily to prevent serious birth defects of the brain and spine. The goal of the statewide folic acid campaign is to reduce by 50 percent the number of babies affected by spina bifida and anencephaly by the year 2010.

Methods/Process

Initially the Kentucky Folic Acid Partnership met quarterly, and a Development Committee met between the Partnership meetings to develop activity plans, plan the Partnership meetings, and act as a steering committee to get the Partnership running smoothly. Now the Kentucky Folic Acid Partnership provides leadership and action for the statewide folic acid campaign. Based upon information received at the Folic Acid National Campaign kickoff meeting, the Partnership decided on three approaches for increasing folic acid awareness. The three approaches are community action, mass media, and health professional education. The large group meets for two hours every four months (January, May and September) while the three sub-committees meet immediately following those with a working lunch meeting. This allows business to be completed in one day of travel for the partners. Any pressing business between dates is handled via email, and the partners report their monthly activities to the Coordinator who generates the monthly reports. New in 2004 is the KFAP website: www.kfap.org

Results

As of June 2005, the Kentucky Folic Acid Partnership has 81 individual members representing 74 agencies, organizations, and businesses. Between July 2003 and June 30, 2005, there have been a total of 1,227 activities that reached over 2,801,882 participants statewide. Some examples: 90 health fairs reaching 10,185 people, 361 health promotion/education classes reaching 119,321 people, 75 professional education for healthcare providers & educators reaching 3,809 professionals, and 574 media events or mass distribution of information reaching 2,494,485. Plus over 372,384 services occurred to provide women with folic acid supplementation and counseling/education through local health departments during a 5-year period.

Conclusions

The three approaches of community action, mass media, and health professional education offer a campaign with both depth and coverage. This multi-pronged approach assures a deeper impact on the awareness and behavior of women of childbearing age. The Kentucky Folic Acid Partnership has contributed to an increase in women's awareness of folic acid, and the work of the Partnership must continue in order to increase the number of women who take the supplement daily in order to meet the goal of reducing by 50 percent the number of babies affected with Neural Tube Defects by the year 2010. In addition, with the National March of Dimes' focus shifting from folic acid to prematurity, the partnership saw a need to take a closer look at prematurity and unravel the mystery of what causes prematurity in the state of Kentucky. We make an effort to identify the top three "culprits" that influence prematurity in Kentucky, and develop objectives and activities to best tackle these identified risks, in 2005. We continue to promote folic acid while working hard to fight prematurity in the process.