

Folic Acid Update

National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

Fall/Winter 2003-04

Dear Folic Acid Advocates,

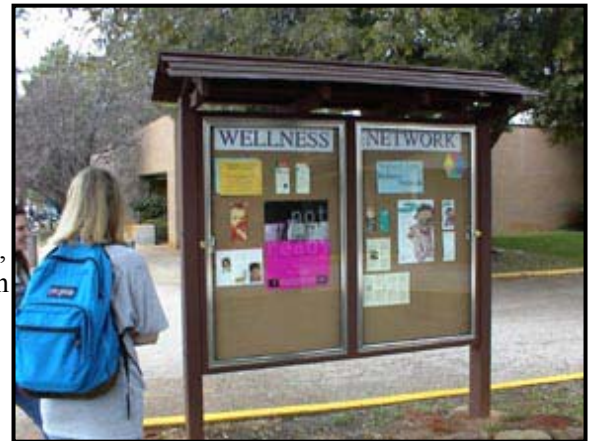
This update letter was created to increase communication between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state and community health agencies working to decrease the incidence of neural tube defects by increasing folic acid consumption among women of childbearing age. We hope that this publication will give you new and creative ways to spread the folic acid message, while updating you on the latest research, conferences, and available materials.

We welcome your comments and input. If you have an exciting folic acid program going on, we would love to highlight it in an upcoming issue! Please contact us at Flo@cdc.gov.

State Campaign Spotlight

Texas implements folic acid campaigns on college campuses. The East Texas Folic Acid Council (ETFAC) has been busy implementing folic acid campaigns on college campuses. Stephen F. Austin University, Tyler Junior College, Kilgore College, and Angelina College are four of the campuses benefiting from this wonderful campaign.

The primary goal of these campaigns, which target all female students, is to increase awareness of the importance of folic acid consumption in preventing neural tube defects. Though 50% of pregnancies in the United States are unplanned, and college-aged women experience many of those unplanned pregnancies, communicating the "Ready or Not" message to these women is often challenging because many of them believe it won't happen to them.



Folic Acid Kiosk at Stephen F. Austin University

During the first campaign, ETFAC members learned a valuable lesson. They found getting students involved worked extremely well because they are the "gatekeepers" of the school communities. Working with health professions students was especially successful. Incorporating the target audience into the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of the campaign increased the success, shown through an increase in awareness of folic acid and its benefits.

Nursing student Cindy Campbell was involved in the implementation at Kilgore College. She ran for president of the Texas Nursing Student Association this past spring, and won! Her platform included a promise to encourage folic acid campaigns on every campus in the Texas Nursing Student Association membership. Campbell plans to meet with representatives of several campuses this fall to provide them with information on how to conduct a folic acid campaign. Because these campaigns will be implemented all over the state of Texas, the Texas Folic Acid Council (rather than the ETFAC) will most likely become the resource organization for these campaigns.

For more specifics about this campaign, please contact ETFAC representative Susan Bennett at the Texas Department of Health at susan.bennett@tdh.state.tx.us.

New Research:

Keep yourself and your staff up to date on the latest folic acid research.

Check out the following articles:

- March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation. (2003, August). Folic acid and the prevention of birth defects: A national survey of pre-pregnancy awareness and behavior among women of childbearing age 1995 – 2003. White Plains, NY. **Order at - 1-800-367-6630. The item number is 31-1784.**
- Lawrence, J.M., Watkins, M.L, Ershoff, D., Petitti, D.B., Chiu, V., Postlethwaite, D., & Erickson, J.D.(2003). Design and evaluation of interventions promoting periconceptional multivitamin use. American Journal of Preventive Medicine 25, (1) 17-24.
- Dhar, M., Bellevue, R., & Carmel, R. (2003). Pernicious anemia with neuropsychiatric dysfunction in a patient with sickle cell anemia treated with folate supplementation. The New England Journal of Medicine 348, 2204-2207.
- Depression, Low Folate Levels, Linked: <http://enews.tufts.edu/stories/062303Folate.htm>
- Daily Reproductive Health Report: http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=18307

Calendar of Events:

January 2004

NBDPN 2004:

Advances and Opportunities for Birth Defects Surveillance, Research, and Prevention

7th Annual Meeting
January 21-23, 2004

Marriott City Center Hotel

Salt Lake City, Utah

National Birth Defect Prevention Network

<http://www.nbdpn.org/NBDPN/annualmeeting/2004/index.html>

February 2004

Preventive Medicine 2004:

This meeting will serve as a national forum for physicians, healthcare professionals, policymakers and other health professionals with an interest in preventive medicine.

February 18-22, 2004

Caribe Royale
All-Suites Resort & Convention Center

Orlando, FL

American College of Preventive Medicine

<http://www.preventivemedicine2004.org/>

New Resources:

Look for the following new resource from CDC's Folic Acid Clearinghouse at <http://www2.cdc.gov/ncbddd/faorder/orderform.htm> .



- “**Healthy Mothers Have Healthier Babies with Folic Acid: Emma's Story**,” is now available in both English and Spanish from CDC's Folic Acid Clearinghouse. The booklet was developed in response to your requests for educational materials specifically designed for pregnancy contemplators with low-to-average literacy skills. The booklet is written at a 6th grade reading level, contains vivid photos, limited text, and a captivating story-line about a woman and her husband who, while preparing for pregnancy, learn the importance of taking folic acid every day.

CDC's Spanish-Language Folic Acid Campaign Evaluation Survey (SFACES)

First Annual Partners Meeting July 31st - August 1, 2003



SFACES Promotoras, from top to bottom, left to right:
Diana Coker, Barrio Comprehensive Family Care Centers, *San Antonio, TX* **Caroline Ponce**, Latin American Research Service Agency, *Denver, CO* **Julie Pandya**, Congreso de Latinos Unidos, *Philadelphia, PA* **Sonia Figueroa**, Congreso de Latinos Unidos, *Philadelphia, PA* **Rosario C de Baca**, Latin American Research Service Agency, *Denver, CO* **Linda Albe**, Little Havana Activities and Nutrition Centers of Dade County, *Miami, FL* **Magdalena Castro-Lewis**, National Alliance for Hispanic Health, *Washington, DC*.

CDC held the first annual SFACES Partners Meeting, bringing together the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, Promotoras (lay health educators) hired in each of the campaign intervention cities, Porter Novelli, and CDC.

The purpose of the 2-day meeting was to build and strengthen relationships among the SFACES partners. Promotoras from Miami, San Antonio, Denver, and Philadelphia took part in training sessions on folic acid and neural tube defects, behavior change, media training, local outreach campaign development, and evaluation.

CDC's Spanish-language media campaign is beginning its third year. The campaign intervention cities for 2003-2004 are Denver and Philadelphia. Both cities will receive a combination of paid media and local community outreach. CDC has chosen to continue the local outreach portion of the campaign in Miami and San Antonio, to sustain folic acid education among Hispanic women of childbearing age in those communities.

The SFACES campaign was developed to empower Hispanic women in the Denver, Philadelphia, Miami, and San Antonio areas to take steps to reduce their risk for having a pregnancy affected by a neural tube birth defect. The campaign was convened by CDC, in conjunction with the March of Dimes and the National Council on Folic Acid.

For more information on the campaign, please contact Alina Flores at CDC at ail5@cdc.gov.

GEORGIA FOLIC ACID TASK FORCE UPDATE:

Reaching Health Care Providers



Katie Kilker, GFATF member, at NGCS Conference

Over the past few months, the “*Folic Acid Road Show*” has been traveling to educate Georgia health care providers about the folic acid message. Members of the Georgia Folic Acid Task Force (GFATF) are spreading the word through the distribution of an educational CD, *Folic 400*, that includes tailored presentations for different types of health care providers, the latest folic acid research articles, and communication tactics to get the folic acid message out to patients and clients. Educational materials from CDC and the March of Dimes are also being distributed.

GFATF presented and exhibited at the Georgia Pharmacy Association annual conference in June 2003, reaching approximately 300 Georgia pharmacists with the folic acid message. In September, GFATF exhibited at the National Society of Genetic Counselors conference, distributing educational materials to over 500 genetic counselors from all over the United States. In October, the task force exhibited at The Medical College of Georgia’s Annual Neonatology Conference. This conference was attended by a variety of neonatal health care professionals, including obstetricians, gynecologists, and nurses.

In addition to the Folic Acid Road Show, task force members wrote and distributed articles stressing the health care provider’s role in communicating the folic acid message to women of childbearing age. Articles were submitted to various Georgia health professional newsletters. To date the GFATF article has been published in seven newsletters specifically targeting health care professionals.

If you would like a copy of the health care professional article to tailor it to your state’s needs, or a copy of the educational CD, *Folic 400*, please contact Elizabeth Fassett at eff8@cdc.gov. For more information about the Georgia Folic Acid Task Force, please visit http://www.sph.emory.edu/gafolic/task_force_page1.htm.

ARE YOUR FOLIC ACID MATERIALS *EASY TO READ*?

According to the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), approximately half of American adults read at the fifth to eighth grade levels. When creating new materials, it is important to keep the literacy level of your target population in mind. Check your old and new materials to see if they meet some of the basic criteria on writing for adults with limited literacy skills:

- *Need* for information is established.
- *Information* is useful without being extraneous.
- *Target audience* is identified. Its characteristics are understood and not forgotten as the primary receiver of the information.
- *Audience* is made to feel personally involved and motivated to read the material.
- *Sentences* are simple, short, specific, and mostly in the active voice.
- *Ideas* are clear and logically sequenced, and each idea is limited to one, or two pages, presented face to face. Important points are highlighted and summarized.
- *Illustrations* are relevant to text, meaningful to the audience, and appropriately located.
- *Words* are familiar to the reader. Any new words are clearly defined. None, or very few, have three or more syllables.
- *Readability level* is determined to be close to fifth grade level.
- *Layout* balances white space with words and illustrations.

The preceding list is an excerpt from Gaston and Daniels, *Guidelines: Writing for Adults with Limited Reading Skills*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Information, 1988. There are many resources to help you write it *easy to read*. Check out the following websites for more information:

- Pfizer Clear Health Communication Initiative at <http://www.clearhealthcommunication.org/>
 - National Institute for Literacy: Literacy & Health at <http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/health.html>
 - World Education, Inc: Health and Literacy at <http://www.worlded.org/us/health/lincs/index.htm>
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