

Folic Acid Update

National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

Spring/Summer 2004

Dear Folic Acid Advocates,

We hope you enjoyed our first issue of Folic Acid Update. In this issue, we focus on what we all can do to overcome the challenges that state folic acid councils are facing in continuing to provide folic acid education with fewer resources. Also, we want to highlight the wonderful educational materials and ideas that various councils are implementing. You might be interested in borrowing and tweaking some of these materials for your state's needs. This update letter is another way for you to hear what others are doing, and how your council or task force can benefit.

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

Alabama Spotlight

Alabama's 2003 Honorary Chairwoman

Alabama Folic Acid Council (AFAC) members took advantage of a wonderful publicity opportunity by making the First Lady of Alabama, Patsy Riley, the 2003 Honorary Chairwoman for the council.

The AFAC knew that gaining the support of a well known spokesperson in their community would help create awareness about folic acid consumption and the prevention of birth defects. AFAC members worked with the Alabama Peanut Producers Association to build a relationship with Mrs. Riley. They were extremely excited when she accepted this role.

She took part in the "State of the Campaign," an annual meeting held on the steps of the State House, which helps to increase awareness about the folic acid issue among members of the community. Mrs. Riley's attendance at this event was well covered by the media, television and newspapers, providing a lot of great folic acid publicity statewide.

Recurrence Prevention

The Alabama Department of Public Health and the Alabama Birth Defects Surveillance and Prevention Program have an ongoing program that provides, at no charge, a four month supply of 4 mg folic acid to women contemplating pregnancy who have had a previous pregnancy affected by a neural tube defect (NTD). They are now expanding this program by having supplies of folic acid vitamins available in Neonatal Intensive Care units, Genetics departments, and NTD clinics statewide.

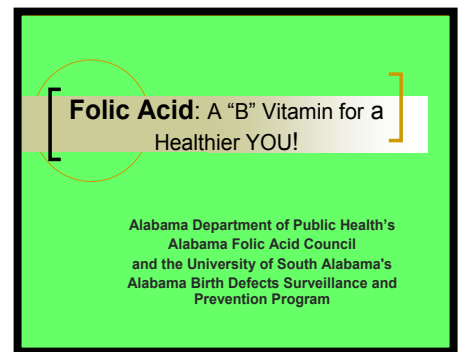
Online Folic Acid Awareness Curriculum

Alabama recently developed an online folic acid curriculum through the Alabama State Department of Education. The curriculum was created to be built into the consumer science and health curriculums that are required in Alabama high schools. The curriculum meets national and state curriculum standards.

You can download the curriculum including learning activities, educational resources, and power point presentation at

<http://www.adph.org/perinatal/Default.asp?TemplateNbr=0&DeptID=156&TemplateId=2358>.

For more information about this curriculum, please contact Gene Hamrick, Director of the Alabama Perinatal Program at ghamrick@adph.state.al.us, or Barbie Oliver, Coordinator of the Alabama Neural Tube Defects Recurrence Prevention Program at boliver@usouthal.edu.



Delaware Spotlight



Delaware Folic Acid Council and Local Girl Scouts Council Partner to Design Folic Acid Patch

The Delaware Folic Acid Council (DFAC) is working with their local Girl Scouts council to institute a Folic Acid Woman patch this fall. The patches on a girl scout's uniform are a record of her adventures and achievements as a girl scout. A girl scout must complete certain activities to earn various patches throughout her career.

One of the activities girl scouts will now be able to choose from, which will earn them the Folic Acid Woman patch is making a presentation to a group of their peers about folic acid. In addition, they can choose to take educational materials to their health care providers.

The artwork for the patch was designed by Lissa Frank and Jennie Marang at the Chesapeake Bay Girl Scouts Council. They are also working with DFAC to develop the required activities to earn the Folic Acid Woman Patch. If you are interested in borrowing the artwork, or finding out how your council can work on instituting a folic acid patch in your area, please contact Sue Samuels of the Delaware Folic Acid Council at SSamuels@christianacare.org or call 302-428-6582.

Georgia Spotlight

To stay consistent with similar organizations in other states, the Georgia Folic Acid Task Force has changed its name to the Georgia Folic Acid Coalition (GFAC). In addition, to gain visibility in the community, a new logo was designed by Jennifer McGann, a local graphic artist.



The GFAC held a new member meeting in May, and many members of the community who had not previously been a part of the organization attended. The Coalition's current and past folic acid efforts, as well as the newly revised strategic plan, were presented to new members. This meeting was held in hopes of not only expanding the Coalition's membership but also to get the folic acid message to more women of childbearing age throughout the state of Georgia.

Calendar of Events:



May 2004

**American College of Nurse
Midwives**
May 28th – June 4th

<http://www.acnm.org/meetings/>

American Dietetic Association
May 28th – 31st

http://www.eatright.org/Member/96_11180.cfm

June 2004

American Academy of Physician Assistants
June 1st – 6th

<http://www.aapa.org/annual-conf/index.html>

Spina Bifida Association of America
June 20th – 23rd

http://sbaa.org/html/sbaa_conference_2004.htm
[1](#)

The Teratology Society
June 26th – July 1st

<http://www.teratology.org/meetings/index.htm>

**Association of Women's Health, Obstetric
and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN)**
June 26th – 29th

<http://www.awhonn.org/awhonn/?pg=872-12870>

July 2004

National Association of School Nurses
July 11th – 14th

<http://www.nasn.org/conference/conference.htm#future>

**National Center on Birth Defects and
Developmental Disabilities, Centers for
Disease Control and Prevention**
July 26th – 28th

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/conference.htm>

National Council on Folic Acid Update

**National Folic Acid Awareness Week:
January 24 – 30, 2005**



The National Council on Folic Acid (NCFA) has declared January 24 – 30, 2005, the first annual National Folic Acid Awareness Week. NCFA is encouraging state folic acid councils to plan programs and events for this week to gain national recognition of the importance of taking folic acid.

The Council plans to create promotional materials that will be made available to all state folic acid councils via the NCFA website or via mail. In addition, NCFA is currently working on creative program ideas for states to implement during this week. As many state folic acid councils are facing challenges, such as lack of funding and personnel, NCFA wants to make it as easy as possible for state councils to take part in National Folic Acid Awareness Week.

If your state has any plans or ideas for National Folic Acid Awareness Week, please contact Elizabeth Fassett at the National Center on Birth Defects and Disabilities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at eff8@cdc.gov. We will post them in the next Folic Acid Update. Please continue to check NCFA's website for updates and information at <http://www.folicacidinfo.org/>.

Overcoming Challenges

As coalitions run out of financial resources, many are faced with cutting back on folic acid activities. Some coalitions have had to put their operations on hold completely. Last month, NCFA started a listserv discussion about the challenges that state folic acid coalitions are facing in continuing education efforts.

Only a few state representatives responded so, we wanted to bring this important forum to your attention again. NCFA and its members are looking for a clearer picture of the issues and problems with which state coalitions are dealing in regard to continuing their folic acid efforts. Additionally, they would like to know what they can do to help provide resources. If your state's coalition is not a member of NCFA, you can contact Donna Gentry at Healthy Mothers, Health Babies at dgentry@hmhb.org. Once your state is a member, you can join the listserv and participate in discussions.

If you would simply like to send information about what your state coalition is planning surrounding folic acid education, applying for funds, and keeping members motivated (or anything else), please contact Elizabeth Fassett at eff8@cdc.gov.

March of Dimes and Gerber Bring Wellness Fairs to Wal-Mart

The March of Dimes and Gerber Products Company are working together to present a traveling health fair uniquely designed to provide valuable health and wellness information in both English and Spanish for parents with young children and for expectant moms. The program is called “The Start Healthy, Stay Healthy™ Tour,” and it features a mobile educational unit that will visit Wal-Mart Supercenter stores in local communities in Arizona, New Mexico, California, and Texas over the next four months.

The tour offers important baby wellness and nutrition information and features interactive stations covering topics of importance to new mothers such as baby bath safety, breast feeding, and nutrition. Information on state and local health resources will also be provided.

If your state’s folic acid coalition or task force is interested in promoting this or in finding out ways to support this event at your local Wal-Mart Supercenter (and are located in one of the four states mentioned above) you can contact Kathleen Palmentiero at the March of Dimes at 914-997-4583 or kpalmentiero@marchofdimes.com.

New Research:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Spina Bifida and Anencephaly Before and After Folic Acid Mandate--United States, 1995-1996 and 1999-2000. *MMWR* 2004;53:362-365.
- Kirke, P.N., Mills, J.L., & Molloy, A.M. et al. (2004). Impact of the MTHFR C677T polymorphism on risk of neural tube defects: case-control study. *British Medical Journal*. [On-line at <http://bmj.com>.]
- Mclean, R.R., Jacques, P.F., & Selhub, J. et al. (2004). Homocysteine as a predictive factor for hip fracture in older persons. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 350, 20: 2042 – 2049.
- Patrick, T.E., Powers, T.E., & Daftary, A.R. et al. (2004). Homocysteine and folic acid are inversely related in black women with preeclampsia. *Hypertension*. [On-line at http://hyper.ahajournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/01.HYP.0000126580.81230.dav1?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=folic+acid&searchid=10833547360285747&stored_search=&FIRSTINDEX=0&search_url=http%3A%2F%2Fhyper.ahajournals.org%2Fcgi%2Fsearch&journalcode=hypertensionaha]