



Bassett Healthcare Network
New York Center for Agricultural
Medicine and Health

NYCAMH Advisory Board Minutes
Meeting 12/12/2024 11:00-2:30
The Otesaga, Cooperstown, NY

Attendees:

Susan Ackerman, Jim, Bittner, Pauline Boyer, Liz Callahan, Andy Carlson, Heather Chauncey, Keith Clark, Steve Clark, Richard Engelbrecht, Alicia Fletcher(virtually), Lisa Ford, Jessica Garcia (virtually), Kitty Gelberg, Bruce Gibson (virtually), Conor Hammersley, Christine LaLonde-Meade, Cindy Levene, Duane Martin, Mitzi Sackett, Erika Scott, Dahlia Sheehan-Yassin, James Shuford (virtually), Julie Sorensen, Renee St. Jacques (virtually), Rich Stup, Becky Wiseman (virtually), Tonya Van Slyke, Elizabeth Wolters, Dan Zeh, Bill Zittel

Welcome: Bill Zittel

Director's Report and Updates: Julie Sorensen

Julie summarized key items in the Director's Report. She updated the Board on HealthWorks, Social Work Services, Occupational Health Services, Safety Training and Outreach, as well as ROPS and the John May Farm Safety Fund (JMFSF).

In addition, Lisa Ford thanked NYCAMH for stepping up at the last minute to assist with a Combined Space Presentation for 80 participants from 18 farms. Rich Stup noted that NYCAMH was represented at the Labor Roadshow, as well.

Budget Update: Julie Sorensen

Julie reported that we received our Ag and Markets increase as well as the DOH increase. These funds will assist with salary shortfalls and will also allow us to respond to H5N1 with testing, telemedicine treatment and expanded health assessments. This is timely and needed: farmers at the Labor Roadshow had many questions concerning the avian flu.

New NYCAMH Branding: Erika Scott

Erika shared the new NYCAMH logo and branding scheme. It is less tied to Bassett and speaks more to the Ag community with a nod to Forestry and Fishing, as well. The website is also being redesigned to be more user friendly. She noted that these changes were undertaken without a staff marketing manager and was the result of the work of many NYCAMH staff members collaborating with Iron Design. The Board shared some suggestions regarding the new website, including the importance of search capability and easy access to information about financial assistance. Erika added that Christina Day, our Farm Navigator, will be involved in maintaining the website to keep it timely and up to date.

Grants Update: Julie Sorensen

Julie thanked Erika and her team for the recent proposal submission to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to update the Farmworker Clinician's Manual. The update will expand to cover not just Ag, but also Fishing and Forestry. It will include information for workers, as well, in both English and Spanish, with entries such as how to talk to your health care provider. The grant would be for \$600K for three years.

John May Farm Safety Fund Projects Update: Dahlia Sheehan-Yassin

Dahlia updated us on the remarkable growth and success of the JMFSF over the past year. The program has grown from receiving fewer than 30 applications/year in 2016 to receiving over 100/year in 2024, and from reimbursing \$23,615 for 11 projects in 2016 to reimbursing \$1,341,067 for 92 projects in 2014. In assessing the projects, we found that on the Hierarchy of Controls, all JMFSF improvements fall in the top three most effective means of eliminating hazards from the work environment. And we have been able to achieve this without having to put farmers on a waiting list for funding. Dahlia also shared some impressive slides of before and after projects and quotes from farmers stating how the program has improved their lives.

There are no comparable programs anywhere in the country. The Board suggested developing a good means of evaluation, including a stat on how many employees have been impacted by the program. This will make it easier to market the program to donors and to replicate it in other states. Rich Stup pointed out that it might make sense to market the program to big donors, like Warren Buffett or Cargill.

2024 NYCAMH Hero Award

Tonya Van Slyke of the Northeast Dairy Producers Association (NEDPA) was presented with NYCAMH's seventh annual Hero Award. Tonya, who has worked as a safety trainer for NYCAMH in the past, has been a longtime and passionate advocate for improving health and safety on New York dairy farms. She is well known in the dairy industry for her efforts to support farm families and workers by raising awareness of the importance of safety training, calling attention to emerging issues, and supporting efforts to improve workforce management. She is most deserving of the title hero!

LUNCH

Julie noted that a card will be circulated for former Board member, Peter Ten Eyck, who is seriously ill. Please sign and we will mail it to him this week.

Heat Exposure and Health Among Farm Workers: Roxanna Chicas, PhD, RN, FANN

Dr. Roxana Chicas is a nurse scientist, who conducted the first field-based intervention study of methods to reduce core body temperature using real-time biomonitoring among farmworkers in the United States. Dr. Chicas currently serves as an Assistant Professor at Emory University Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing. In this role, she is leading the field-based testing of a wearable biopatch for outdoor workers to gather physiological data, such as skin temperature, respiratory rate, and heart rate, which will eventually help AI predict when a person is at risk for heat-related illnesses.

Dr. Chicas reported on her research with farm workers in Florida. She has found that farm workers are 35 times more likely to have heat related illness than any other workers. Takeaways from her talk included the importance of workers hydrating with water with electrolytes and the success of utilizing technology and cell phones with this population. She also discussed the fact that consistent dehydration and heat exposure over

time can lead to Chronic Kidney Disease. In tests conducted with farmworkers she found that many were already demonstrating signs of Acute Kidney Injury. This is problematic as damage can occur without any outward signs. She is open to our contacting her with questions: rchicas@emory.edu

We followed Dr. Chicas's presentation with a brief brainstorming session to see what practical solutions might be available to our farmers and foresters to address the issue of heat exposure. Groups were asked to outline what resources are needed to readily access:

Group 1: Potable water and access to shade/air conditioning:

- We need to find out the requirements for electrolytes – where to get them, what's reputable, etc.
- Clear containers are a good idea; allows workers to see how much they are consuming
- Have pop-up shade, as well as water, on rollers to move along the field as workers progress. Possibly equip these carts with solar-powered fans.
- Fans with misters in the fields?
- Early Warning System: outfit a few workers with monitors which alert the main office that heat illness is occurring among that group. Would signal that a problem was likely occurring for everyone and owner/manager could intervene.

Group 2: Access to First Aid or Treatment

- Water trough
- Water and ice
- Skin temp? gun?
- Training
- Buddy system
- Measured drink containers
- Shade system
- Surrogates for core temperature

Group 3: Acclimatization protocols, heat emergency response plan, record-keeping, signage

- Developing acclimatization protocols for new/returning workers- it would be helpful to know when acclimatization is needed. There are many variables that impact whether acclimatization is needed. If it is super cold out, then a new employee probably doesn't need heat acclimatization. Does it depend on what PPE they are wearing?
- Heat emergency response plan, keeping records of all heat-related illnesses and fatalities- if farmers are already keeping track of injuries on farm, maybe adding heat-related illness to records is doable. It would be helpful to know what symptoms to look for and what meets the definition of an emergency.
- Signs of heat illness- need information of what to look for as far as symptoms.

Feedback on PPE Program: Mitzi Sackett

Mitzi asked the Board for feedback and suggestions regarding the future of the program. Responses included:

- Don't need to be the cheapest – NYCAMH connotes trust, and that is good. People feel they can rely on the quality and compatibility of the products we supply.
- Just recommend products. Have a resource page on the website with links to vendors and good deals. "NYCAMH Approved"
- Team with Gemplers or Granger
- Consider teaming with a vendor and creating a NYCAMH box of products that farmers will need periodically.

Julie thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting at 2:30.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 13, 2025 11:00 – 2:30 The Otesaga, Cooperstown, NY