



South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

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Dr. Garrison Walters, Executive Director

Agenda Item 8.01 A CHE Meeting, August 4, 2010

TO: Mr. Kenneth B. Wingate, Chair, and Members of the Commission
FROM: Garrison Walters, Executive Director
SUBJECT: *ad hoc* Advisory Committee Recommended Best Practice Guidance Concerning Policies for Meningitis Vaccinations for College Students
DATE: July 28, 2010

Attached are recommendations concerning the administration of the meningitis vaccination for college students attending South Carolina public colleges and universities. Background information on the development of these recommendations is included.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Commission consider the recommendations advanced by the advisory committee and adopt a resolution commending them favorably to the state's public institutions and encouraging the state's public institutions, as well as other higher education institutions in South Carolina, to review and accept the recommended best practice guidance. The resolution for consideration follows:

Whereas, the Commission on Higher Education, at the request of The Honorable Phillip Owens, Chair of the S.C. House Education and Public Works Committee, convened an advisory committee of institutional and other agency representatives to study and consider policy recommendations concerning the administration of the meningococcal vaccine for college students at the state's public colleges and universities, and

Whereas, the advisory committee met during spring 2010 and advanced recommended best practice guidance by June in which it is recommended that public colleges and universities consider adopting the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College Health Association which provide that freshmen and other entering college students under the age of 25 years living in on-campus student housing provide proof of immunization with a conjugate meningococcal vaccine or provide a waiver declining the vaccination after reading the risks and hazards of bacterial meningitis, and

Whereas, the Commission recognizes that best practices recommendations are advanced to establish a baseline for the health and well-being of students and are not intended to supersede institutional policies that may be more stringent, and

Whereas, the Commission appreciates the guidance of the advisory committee and thanks the committee for its thoughtful research and work on this issue and for advancing the recommended best practice guidance, and

Whereas, the Commission finds it within the best interest of the health and well-being of our students for institutions to consider implementation of the recommendations,

Be it resolved by the Commission:

The Commission on Higher Education commends favorably the recommendations of the advisory committee to South Carolina's public institutions as best practice guidance with regard to meningitis vaccinations for college students and encourages the adoption and implementation of these recommendations.

It is further resolved, that the Commission also advance the recommendations to the state's private colleges and universities for information and consideration with respect to current policies.

Recommendations concerning Meningitis Vaccination policies, June 2010

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In December 2009, Dr. Garrison Walters, the Executive Director for the Commission on Higher Education (CHE), was asked by Representative Phil Owens, Chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee to explore with the institutions a statewide policy regarding Meningitis vaccination at South Carolina's public colleges and universities. Presently, by statute, public colleges and universities are required to notify students and parents about the risk of contracting Meningitis and must provide information to students on the disease (SC Code of Laws, as amended, §59-101-290).

To explore the issue, CHE formed an advisory committee (known as the Working Group). The Working Group was made-up of healthcare professionals and administrators representing all public senior colleges and universities and including a representative from the Technical College System. In addition to the institutional representatives, a representative from the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control also participated in the discussions. The Working Group met once in February and again in March. During the meetings, some fundamental issues were discussed concerning the vaccination, its administration, cost considerations and current policies and practices in South Carolina and other states. The Working Group agreed that a statewide Meningitis vaccination policy would be helpful in creating a safer environment for students living in on-campus student housing. Because of this, CHE asked the group to proceed to develop "best/recommended practices" for consideration.

The Working Group formed a subcommittee to develop best/recommended practices regarding Meningitis vaccination for consideration by the group at large. The Working Group's recommendation, submitted in mid-May 2010, follows:

RECOMMENDATION

Meningitis Vaccination or Waiver

OVERVIEW OF MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE

Meningococcal disease is a potentially life-threatening bacterial infection that can lead to meningococcal meningitis, an inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord, or meningococcal septicemia, an infection of the blood.

Meningococcal disease, caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*, is the leading cause of bacterial meningitis in older children and young adults in the United States. It strikes 1,400 to 3,000 Americans each year and is responsible for approximately 150 to 300 deaths.

Adolescents and young adults account for nearly 30 percent of all cases of meningitis in the United States. In addition, approximately 100 to 125 cases of meningococcal disease occur on college campuses each year, and 5 to 15 students will die as a result. Evidence shows approximately 70 to 80 percent of cases in the college age group are caused by serogroup C, Y, or W-135, which are potentially vaccine-preventable.

PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for and to encourage implementation of the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College Health Association (ACHA) that all freshman and other entering college students under the age of 25 years living in on-campus student housing provide proof of immunization with a **conjugate** meningococcal vaccine.

RECOMMENDATION

The Working Group, which was formed by CHE to advise on the issues of best recommended practices concerning Meningitis vaccination, suggests that public colleges and universities consider adopting the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College Health Association (ACHA) which state that all freshman and other entering college students under the age of 25 years living in on-campus student housing provide proof of immunization with a conjugate meningococcal vaccine or provide a Meningitis Waiver Form declining the vaccination after reading the risks and hazards of bacterial meningitis.

These guidelines are meant to establish a baseline consideration for institutions without such Meningitis vaccination policies and are not intended to supersede institutional policies or requirements that have been adopted or may be under consideration that are more stringent.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

- The Immunization Form distributed to all admitted students should include an explanation of the individual school's guidelines.
- All freshman and other entering college students under the age of 25 years living in on-campus student housing should do one of the following prior to attending class:
 - Provide proof of vaccination with a conjugate meningococcal vaccine.
 - Sign a waiver to decline the vaccination after reading the risks and benefits of vaccination.
 - If the student is under 18 years of age, a parent or legal guardian must also sign the waiver.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

American College Health Association, <http://www.acha.org/Topics/meningitis.cfm>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/meningitis/index.html

South Carolina Code of Laws 59-101-290, <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c101.htm>

Excerpt follows:

SECTION 59-101-290. Notification of risk of contracting certain diseases if living on-campus.

(A) A public institution of higher learning shall notify incoming students, or the parent or guardian of an incoming student under the age of eighteen, of the risk of contracting meningococcal disease and Hepatitis B if living in on-campus student housing.

(B) A public institution of higher learning shall include vaccination against meningococcal disease and Hepatitis B as recommended immunization in health and medical information provided to students or prospective students and parents or guardians.

(C) A private institution of higher learning may elect to be governed by this section and at any time may, in its sole discretion, remove itself from such governance.

WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Deborah Beck	University of SC – Executive Director, Student Health Services
Larry Blumenthal	Medical University of SC – Director, Student Health Services
Darryl Bridges	Francis Marion University – Vice President, Public & Community Affairs
Russ Bumba	SC Technical College System – Senior Manager, Student Services & Research
Carey Capell	The Citadel – College Physician
Pinkey Carter	SC State University – Director, Brook Health Center
George Clay	Clemson University – Director of Health Services
Brittany Coefield	College of Charleston – Nurse Manager, Student Health Services
Kitty Lewis	Lander University – Director, Health Services
Michelle Mann	Winthrop University – Director, Health & Counseling Services
Mike McKenzie	University of SC – Clinical Director, Thomson Student Health Center
Caesar Ross	Coastal Carolina University – Director, Student Health Services
Susan A. Smith	SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) – Director of Immunization Division
Tony Brown	SC Commission on Higher Education Staff Coordinator