Lessons Learned from Flint, MI: Implications for our Community

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Photo source: abcnews.go.com
Outline

- NCEH/ATSDR Overview
- Response to Water Contamination in Flint, MI
- NCEH/ATSDR Activities in Flint, MI
- Protecting Citizens from Lead Exposure
NCEH/ATSDR OVERVIEW
NCEH/ATSDR Organization

- CDC Director also Administrator of ATSDR
- ATSDR and CDC’s NCEH share single Office of the Director
- ATSDR Divisions
  - Division of Community Health Investigations
  - Division of Toxicology and Human Health Sciences
- NCEH Divisions
  - Division of Emergency and Environmental Health Services
  - Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects
  - Division of Laboratory Sciences
NCEH/ATSDR Mission

- Protect people’s health from environmental hazards that can be present in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the world that sustains us by
  - Investigating the relationship between environmental factors and health
  - Developing guidance
  - Building partnerships to support healthy decision making
NCEH/ATSDR Priorities

1. Reduce asthma morbidity and mortality
2. Protect children from the health risks of harmful exposures and conditions
3. Ensure safe drinking water
4. Use innovative laboratory methods to detect, diagnose, and prevent environmental disease
RESPONSE TO WATER CONTAMINATION IN FLINT, MI
Background on Flint Water Contamination – Timeline

- April 2014: Change to Flint river water
- August 2015: Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha publishes study of blood lead levels
- October 2, 2015: Genesee County issues public health emergency
- December 14, 2015: Flint Mayor Weaver declared a state of emergency
- January 2016: Federal assistance begins, under a Unified Coordination Group (UCG)
- February 1, 2016: CDC EOC activated under a Unified Coordination Group (UCG)
- March 15, 2016: CDC deactivates EOC, continues to provide assistance
U.S. Government Objectives in Flint

- Immediate access to safe water (FEMA)
- Long term safety of the water supply (EPA)
- Immediate needs regarding health (HHS and Unified Command Group)
- Community resilience (HHS and Unified Command Group)
NCEH/ATSDR Response to Flint

- Mid-January 2016 – deployed first team to Flint
- Established three activities
  - Rash investigation
  - Water quality
  - Case management
- Issued guidance for Michigan to test Flint children <6 years old for lead
Provided case management to families with children identified as elevated blood lead levels, reduced backlog
Provided support for 107 communication products
Conducted 12 Congressional briefings
Responded to >12 Congressional requests for information
Conducted CASPER behavioral health assessment with Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
NCEH/ATSDR ACTIVITIES IN FLINT, MI
Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)

- Blood lead levels among children aged <6 years living in the City of Flint, MI, 2013–2016
  
  - Released June 17, 2016
  - Report added
    - Proportion of children aged <6 years in Flint, MI with BLLs ≥5 µg/dL was significantly higher during switch to Flint Water System
  
  - Implication for health practice
    - Encourage use of NSF certified water filters to remove lead
    - Use filtered or bottled water for drinking, cooking, and brushing teeth

Photo source: MLive.com
MMWR Methods

- Examined distribution of BLLs ≥5µg/dL among children aged <6 years before, during, and after switch in water source
- Used cross-sectional analysis conducted during four time intervals
- Confirmed BLLs ≥5 µg/dL defined as having one venous blood lead test ≥5 µg/dL or two capillary blood lead tests ≥5 µg/dL drawn within 12 weeks of each other
- Analyses limited to children living in area serviced by FWS at time of test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Water Source Switch</th>
<th>Early Water Source Switch</th>
<th>Late Water Source Switch</th>
<th>Post-Water Source Switch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before switch in water supply to Flint River</td>
<td>During switch in water supply to Flint River</td>
<td>When there was boil water advisory from city officials</td>
<td>After water supply switched from Flint River to DWS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Multivariate adjusted odds ratios* comparing odds of elevated blood lead levels ≥5 µg/dL among children† aged <6 years, by select covariates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>OR (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time period</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Water Source Switch</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Water Switch</td>
<td>1.46 (1.06–2.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Water Switch</td>
<td>1.28 (0.92–1.76)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-Water Source Switch</td>
<td>0.75 (0.51–1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age group§</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 year</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2 years</td>
<td>2.25 (1.25–4.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–5 years</td>
<td>1.36 (0.73–2.53)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Season</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter (Dec–Feb)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring (Mar–May)</td>
<td>1.41 (0.91–2.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer (Jun–Aug)</td>
<td>2.14 (1.44–3.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall (Sep–Nov)</td>
<td>2.25 (1.57–3.22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Odds of having BLLs ≥5 µg/dL during the pre-water–switch period compared with the early, late and post-water source switch periods.
†Flint resident defined as living in a house served by the Flint Water Service (FWS) at the time of test.
§At time of test.
The use of water from the Flint River without proper corrosion control exposed the residents to excess amounts of lead.

All children aged <6 years living in the City of Flint should have their blood tested for lead, if they have not had a blood lead test since October 2015.

Case management should be provided to all children with BLLs ≥5 µg/dL.
Rash Investigation

- Consisted of three parts
  - Questionnaire (406 fit case definition, 376 interviews conducted)
  - Clinical referral to a dermatologist (122 examined)
  - Water sampling in houses (87 samples)

- Study found that one possible explanation for the majority of eczema-related rashes is the fluctuations in water quality while residents were using Flint River water.
Pur and Brita Point-of-Use Water Filter Testing

- Worked with EPA to assess the effectiveness of the filters when the water concentrations are above the 150 ppb certification level
- Confirmed filters effectively remove lead from water even at very high levels
- Determined drinking filtered tap water is safe for everyone, including pregnant women and children
Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER)

- 51% of households feel that the physical health of at least one member has worsened due to the Flint water crisis
- 43% of households perceived a need for behavioral health services for a member younger than 21 years
- 41% of households reported experiencing fear using filtered tap water for drinking and cooking
PROTECTING CITIZENS FROM LEAD EXPOSURE
Flint – Challenges and Opportunities

- Risk communications
- Environmental health infrastructure and surveillance
- Long-term monitoring
- Educational and social services to mitigate the potential cognitive deficits for young children

Photo source: City of Flint website
Flint town hall meeting focuses on lead pipe replacement, medicaid expansion

Residents have various ways to enroll in Flint Medicaid program

EPA, DEQ and City of Flint Recommend Flushing Water to Speed Recovery of System

FLINT, MI – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in coordination with the State of Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and

Teams Canvassing Flint to Ensure Every Resident Has a Filter

June 23, 2016

Photo source: wxyz.com

Photo source: msnbc.com

Photo source: msnbc.com

Photo source: abc12.com
Flint, MI reminds us of...

- Importance of surveillance systems to help identify potential health risks
- Value of strong cooperative agreement programs to build capacity at state and local level to support lead poisoning prevention efforts
- How precious clean water is and how we must maintain constant vigilance to ensure access to clean water, especially for our most vulnerable citizens
CDC’s National Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

- Funding of lead poisoning prevention programs and staff in state/local health departments
- Surveillance
- National expertise, guidance, and recommendations
- Collaboration with federal agencies
Lead in Water – A National Issue

- Focus on safe water from all sources
- Ensure that water is sampled as potential source of lead in cities with aging infrastructure
- Implement more robust and sensitive surveillance system
- Revise existing Lead and Copper Rule to include notification of public health agencies
Questions