
From: Holland, Meegan (GOV)
Sent: Tuesday, December 22, 2015 6:33 PM
To: Snyder, [PPI] Baird, Richard (GOV); Calley, [PPI] Agen, Jarrod (GOV); Hollins, Harvey (GOV); Clement, Elizabeth (GOV); Scott, Allison (GOV)
Subject: Briefing on Flint water blog post

Colleagues,

Here is a quick summary of a [blog post](#) that appears on [flintwaterstudy.org](#), based on 159 pages of DHHS emails requested by Virginia Tech researcher Marc Edwards under the Freedom of Information Act.

The headline: “Michigan Health Department Hid Evidence of Health Harm Due to Lead Contaminated Water: Allowed False Public Assurances by MDEQ and Stonewalled Outside Researchers”

Major points:

- Lee Ann Walters contacted DHHS nurse Karen Lishinski to discuss her child’s high lead level. The response: “He is barely lead poisoned. If CDC had not changed their lead poisoning standard from 10 down to 5, we would not be having this conversation ... I am working with kids in their 40’s and 50’s. It is just a few IQ points...it is not the end of the world.”
- DHHS reached out to DEQ after some red flags about lead levels; Stephen Busch responded with inaccurate information. Even so, DHHS proceeded with studies on lead levels and found spiked levels for Q3 2014 and 2015 (third quarters – the summer months - often have season spikes). July 2015 memos indicate they could see something was awry, but the story implies that DHHS sat on the results.
- In September 2015, Brad Wurfel said a study was done and he used it to discredit data from Virginia Tech showing high lead levels. The blog post says Wurfel misrepresented the DHHS results and that DHHS “stood by and said nothing while MDEQ made false claims about what the blood lead data showed.”
- Virginia Tech’s Marc Edwards requested water data on 9/2/15. He waited for several weeks for the information, and the article talks about how the request caused a flurry of emails at DHHS, particularly between Robert Scott and Nancy Peeler (who work in the childhood lead prevention program). The story says the emails show the department was acting unethically because they appeared to be stonewalling Edwards and later Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha.

DHHS’ response:

“The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has been, and continues to be, committed to full disclosure of information regarding the city of Flint and blood lead levels. To suggest otherwise is not consistent with how we have responded.

“When initially looking at the citywide and county elevated blood lead level numbers, the increase appeared to be consistent with the routine seasonal fluctuation seen in the summer months. It wasn’t until the Hurley report came out that our epidemiologists took a more in-depth look at the data by zip code, controlling for seasonal variation, and confirmed an increase outside of normal trends. As a result of this process, we have determined that the way we analyze data collected needs to be thoroughly reviewed. Our after action report will help determine how we conduct this process in the future.

"Our department is focused on ensuring that appropriate case management and follow up is occurring in Flint. Summary reports outlining blood lead level testing are posted online on a bi-weekly basis, and we are working closely with local partners to fulfill data requests as we receive them.

"Regarding the FOIA, Mr. Edwards received all of the requested documents, with personal information redacted, on Friday, December 18."

Media response: We have received requests from The Flint Journal, The Detroit Free Press, Michigan Radio, Huffington Post, Rachel Maddow and Flint TV.

If there are any questions, please feel free to ask away.

- Meegan

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