

**Oregon Public Health Division
MEDICAL ADVISORY GROUP
NEWSLETTER**

The Oregon Medical Advisory Group (MAG) held the 5th of 6 scheduled meetings at ODS on April 30. The MAG was convened by the state to assist in developing guidelines for decisions in emergencies such as allocation of scarce resources and altered standards of care. The MAG membership includes approximately 24 representatives of major health care, health professional organizations, tribal organizations, academia, and local government.

During the April meeting, members of MAG worked through two practical, real-world tabletop exercises. The first exercise reflected the real-life availability of 300,000 doses of Tamiflu beyond the 500,000 being provided the state by CDC. The additional doses would be made available at a discounted cost to Oregon of \$5 million; some state legislators may be interested in appropriating funds for the extra doses. MAG members discussed the effectiveness of using Tamiflu to treat cases during a possible outbreak of Avian Flu. There was general consensus that use of Tamiflu in the context of an outbreak would have marginal if any impact or utility. MAG members discussed the advisability of investing the \$5 million, as well as the possible consequences of not purchasing the additional doses. At the conclusion of the exercise, members discussed the ethical considerations related to this issue, using a brief version of an ethical framework developed for the MAG in earlier meetings.

The second exercise dealt with the practical aspects of altering the standards of care during a major public health emergency, during which the capacity of the medical care system throughout the state would be severely challenged. The discussion considered the many challenges to altering standards of care including:

- Physician liability
- Shifting responsibility for patient outcomes
- Jeopardizing trust with the public
- Challenges to financial and personal integrity of physicians

The discussion concluded with identification of ways that the state could help:

- Systems training
- Facilitation of treatment standards definition to increase clarity
- Leading a review of federal and other guidelines to determine which are best
- Providing clear system expectations
- Providing information for families to address fears and concerns
- Development of other tools and aids

The meeting also included an opportunity for a close view of how federal, state and local response occurred during the Anthrax cases of 2001, and how that scenario might play out if it were to occur in Oregon now. While there is general agreement that much has been learned and improved in the governmental and private sectors to prepare for large disasters, it was acknowledged that providers need to be prepared to address problems related to public reaction.

During the meeting, an update was provided regarding pending legislation, HB 2185, which would

- Authorize for the State Health Director to issue guidelines for emergencies
- Update statutory provisions for quarantine and isolation
- Authorize closure of schools during public health emergencies
- Authorize the state to respond to circumstances involving mass casualties

Several members of MAG testified in support of the bill, including Heather Hue, Bob Shoemaker, Dana Braner, and Steve Jones. The bill is now awaiting consideration of the respective chambers; signature by the governor is anticipated if the bill passes.

Finally, State Health Director Dr. Susan Allan informed MAG members that Oregon will be one of 3 jurisdictions participating in this 4th nationally based mobilization exercise, TOPOFF. Other jurisdictions participating include Arizona and Guam. The exercise will occur over 10 days in mid-October 2007, and will be based on a "dirty bomb" scenario in an urban area. The exercise will be highly visible and will include participation from all hospitals, both ambulance companies, emergency responders, etc. Involvement of MAG members in TOPOFF will be discussed at the final MAG meeting on May 31 at ODS.