Health Headlines

Financial Stress Leads to Childhood Brain Impairment
A recent study at Cornell University found that chronic stress from growing up poor appears to have a direct impact on the brain. Specifically, the longer children live in poverty, the weaker their working memories. Working memory is crucial for remembering information in the short-term and for forming long-term memories. These findings emphasize the need to consider at-home stress in addition to other standards and policies aiming to improve school performance among poor children. Read more about childhood stress. (Washington Post, 4.6.09)

Setback for Polio Eradication
Six of Nigeria’s neighboring countries that had previously eliminated polio have been re-infected, setting back global progress to wipe out the water-borne disease. A CDC report revealed that cases of polio in Nigeria increased from 285 in 2007 to 801 in 2008, spreading into neighboring countries during the second half of last year. Efforts for complete elimination by vaccination are in their final stages. Read more about polio. (Reuters, 4.2.09)

Malaria Elimination in Sight
Malaria still infects 500 million people and kills one million people each year. However, experts say that we are on the brink of wiping it out in many countries where it is endemic. This projected elimination is a result of aggressive control to reduce infection and death, and of research on drugs, vaccines and insecticides. A new vaccine is in its clinical trial stage, and could reach the market within three years to eliminate the disease altogether. Read more about malaria. (Reuters, 4.24.09)

Funding Agency News

Carpinteria Beats Back an Epidemic
With help from a California Endowment grant, the Diabetes Resource Center is working to empower the town of Carpinteria to reduce the rates of obesity and chronic disease amongst children and adults. With a focus on the Latino community, “Salud y Bienestar” utilizes the Mexican tradition of promotoras, peer support leaders, to teach families about the benefits of healthy lifestyles. Participants have reported great improvements in diet and exercise. Read the article here.

Emergency Response Partnerships
The CDC’s new Emergency Alert Network (EAN) has the capacity to reach more than 17,000 businesses with over eight million employees and their dependents. It is a new e-mail and voice-based system that releases CDC-cleared information in the event of a public health emergency. The EAN was created by a collaboration of the National Center for Health Marketing’s Division of Partnerships and Strategic Alliances and CDC’s business cooperative agreement grantee, the National Safety Council. Learn more about emergency preparedness and response.

Fighting TB in China
The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has committed $33 million to the Chinese Ministry of Health to support a new initiative that brings together innovations to effectively prevent, control, and manage tuberculosis. The five-year partnership will be implemented in six provinces piloting new technologies, such as drug resistance tests, and new strategies, such as the integration of alarms and cell phone text messages to help TB patients maintain their treatment schedules. Read more about tuberculosis.

Real People, Real Lives

Surgeon Heals Violence
Baltimore trauma surgeon Dr. Darnell Cooper has treated countless young African American victims of violence, only to see them quickly return to the ER with similar injuries. After 16 years of observing this cycle, Cooper has taken the initiative to create the Violence Prevention Program (VPP), which helps connect patients to additional support services, including conflict resolution, mentoring, and GED classes. The VPP has become a national model for success. Read more about violence prevention. (CNN, 3.27.09)

Reunited by a Kidney
After 27 years of marriage, Jim and Bernadette Tobin divorced over small issues and money squabbles. When Jim fell desperately ill with a kidney disease that only a transplant could cure, Bernadette discovered she was a match. After she donated her healthy kidney to Jim, the couple recuperated together at their daughter’s house. Thanks to the gift of life, the couple fell back in love and remarried last month, 17 years after their divorce. Read about organ donation. (TODAYShow.com, 3.25.09)

Cleaning Green
When Cyndi Raskin Schmitt began worrying about the effects of chemical cleaning supplies on her young daughter, she discovered that she could clean nearly everything in the house with pantry staples, such as vinegar and baking soda. Experts support this move toward cleaning “green” – particularly as household cleaners prompted a quarter of all calls to poison-control centers. Read about poison control centers. (USA Today, 4.29.09)