**Top Stories**

**HIV Status: Don’t Keep It Secret**
A new study, the first to focus on factors associated with the initial sexual activity of young people who acquired HIV before, during or soon after birth, shows that many sexually active teens who were born with HIV either didn’t know their status, or didn’t disclose it to their first sex partners. The CDC estimates that 10,000 children and teens are living with HIV after being infected before or at birth. While mother-child transmission is rare in the U.S., many perinatal infections still occur each year because the mother doesn’t know she has HIV. These teens need additional counseling and education about how to prevent transmission and still have a normal and healthy life. (The Washington Times, 11.11.12) Read more about HIV, transmission, treatment, and testing.

**Childhood Snoring-Obesity Link**
A study by Children’s Hospital Los Angeles found that frequent snoring by children can change a child’s overall metabolism and lead to health disorders, including obesity and diabetes. Breathing problems can interrupt the sleep and activate the fight-or-flight reflex, impacting glucose metabolism and insulin sensitivity. Lack of sleep can also lead to behavioral and learning problems in children. Parents should consult their pediatrician if their child’s snoring is loud, or more than 3 nights a week. (NBC, 10.29.12) Read more about snoring, sleep disorders, and obesity.

**Help for Sickle Cell**
A bone marrow transplant could help those that suffer from sickle cell disease – a debilitating genetic disorder that can cause severe organ damage, stroke, blindness and a pain so strong it can feel like a heart attack over the whole body. Researchers at Johns Hopkins began a bone marrow transplant trial using half-match donors. The procedure could cure sickle cell, replacing defective stem cells that produce sickle-shaped cells with normal cells that produce pliable blood cells, and could make bone marrow transplants available to more than 90% of candidates. (The New York Times, 11.12.12) Read more about sickle cell disease.

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**Funding Agency News**

**Thumbs Up on School Lunches**
A recent poll by The California Endowment shows that students who say school lunches are getting better outnumber those who think meals are getting worse by more than 3 to 1. The lunches are based on new national meal nutrition standards that took effect this academic year and focus on increased produce options, a ban on trans fats, increased whole grain products, and portion size guidelines. A large number of students (82%) and even larger amount...
of parents (91%) support the changes. Healthy meals help students succeed in school and teach them the benefits of a healthy diet. (The California Endowment, 10.18.12) Read the press release and more about guidelines and standards for adolescents in schools.

CDC: 1 in 3 Adults Hypertensive
CDC reports that nearly 1 in 3 American adults (67 million) have high blood pressure, and more than half (36 million) don’t have it under control. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke, the first and fourth leading causes of death in the U.S., leading to nearly 1,000 deaths a day. Its direct health care cost is almost $131 billion annually. A team-based approach among pharmacists, nurses, dietitians, and community health workers can help provide support, medicine management, and a blood pressure control plan. (CDC, 8.29.12) Read the press release and more about blood pressure and heart disease.

Real People, Real Lives

BEWARE OF INDOOR TANNING Kim Benz, an artist from Texas and mother of two, relies on heavy makeup to hide her facial scars and disfiguring skin cancer lesions over her entire body. A self-proclaimed former “tanaholic,” she realizes she is going to fight her cancer the rest of her life. Kim had been using indoor tanning beds since the age of 17, and was first diagnosed with skin cancer in her early 20s. A new study shows strong evidence that indoor tanning contributes to all types of skin cancer, including basal cell, squamous cell and melanoma, especially among users under the age of 25. Non-melanoma skin cancers are less deadly, but have an enormous impact with treatment adding up to the fifth-most costly cancer for Medicare. The findings may renew calls to better regulate indoor tanning. (ABC News, 10.3.12) Read more about risk factors for skin cancer.

CHEATING THE SYSTEM Chyawan Bansil, a physical therapist in Lansing, pleaded guilty in federal court to health care fraud and money laundering charges. He was sentenced for defrauding Medicare, Medicaid, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan out of more than $1 million by billing for services he did not perform. Undercover police officers received suspicious services from Bansil at his office, and a federal investigation found he was also illegally laundering the proceeds of his scheme in order to avoid taxes. The U.S. District court stated he violated the trust of patients and worsened the health care crisis in the country. He has been sentenced to 13 months in prison and has paid $3 million in damages. (Lansing State Journal, 10.29.12) Read more about insurance fraud and prevention.

ROGUE EXPERIMENT IN THE WATERS Russ George, a former fisheries and forestry worker, took it upon himself to conduct a risky ecological experiment that he thinks may combat the impacts of global warming, and create carbon credits he could sell for money. He chartered a fishing boat, loaded it with 100 tons of iron dust and cruised through the waters off western Canada spewing the dust into the sea. He claims his ocean seeding spawned the growth of enormous amounts of plankton, which will help the recovery of the local salmon fishery for the native Haida. Many scientists and government officials are outraged at the rogue experiment, and claim that geoengineering—strategies for counteracting climate change by tampering with the environment—are exceedingly risky and could have disastrous consequences for people and ecosystems around the world. (The New York Times, 10.18.12) Read more about geoengineering.

Energy Efficient States
For the second year in a row, Massachusetts has been named the most energy efficient state by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, a Washington D.C.-based nonprofit. States are rated on their implementation of policies and programs to encourage efficient use of energy. Other states that scored well include California, New York, Vermont, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Beyond energy efficiency, Massachusetts has also taken the lead in many clean energy and climate priorities such as building codes, ocean planning, creative solar incentives and offshore wind, and inspires other states to do the same. (Barr Foundation, 10.30.12) Read the press release and more about energy efficiency.