



# NJ Communi- CABLE

Spring 2022 Quarterly Newsletter

## Communicable Disease Service Mission Statement

Our mission is to prevent communicable disease among all citizens of New Jersey, and to promote the knowledge and use of healthy lifestyles to maximize the health and well-being of New Jerseyans.

We will accomplish our mission through our leadership, collaborative partnerships, and advocacy for communicable disease surveillance, research, education, treatment, prevention and control.

Phil Murphy, Governor

Sheila Oliver, Lt. Governor

Judith M. Persichilli, RN, BSN, MA  
Commissioner

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASE SERVICE

Christina Tan, MD, MPH  
State Epidemiologist/  
Assistant Commissioner

Steven Bors, Acting Director

Suzanne Miro, MPH, MCHES  
Editor, Research Scientist

## Alpha-gal Syndrome: The Red Meat Allergy Caused by a Tick Bite

**T**Alpha-gal (galactose- $\alpha$ -1,3-galactose) is a sugar molecule found in most mammals.

Alpha-gal can be found in meat (pork, beef, rabbit, lamb, venison, etc.) and products made from mammals (including gelatin, cow's milk, and milk products) but is not found in fish, reptiles, birds, or people. Alpha-gal Syndrome (AGS) (also called alpha-gal allergy, red meat allergy, or tick bite meat allergy) is a potentially life-threatening hypersensitivity reaction to alpha-gal. Symptoms typically include abdominal cramping, urticaria, and anaphylaxis. Management of AGS includes use of antihistamines, epinephrine, and eliminating mammalian meat and other alpha-gal-containing products from the diet. Evidence suggests that the bite of some tick species induces immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies to alpha-gal, sensitizing patients to subsequent alpha-gal exposures. AGS has been reported worldwide; in the United States, it

is most closely associated with lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*) bites. Research has also suggested that other tick species, including *Ixodes* spp., may be associated with AGS. In New Jersey, *Ixodes* scapularis (blacklegged or deer tick) is widely found throughout the state. The lone star tick, once found primarily in the southern half of New Jersey, is moving north and has been found in central New Jersey counties as well. Reports of AGS in the scientific literature have been

*Continued on page 7*



## Giving “College Tour” New Meaning

**O**n February 2, 2022, Project Firstline

(PFL) health educators, Miriam Gonzales, and Jasmine Davis

successfully launched the first cohort of the Project Firstline NJ: College Tour, a six-part infection prevention and control education series. The goal of this new educational initiative is to help healthcare workers start their careers with the infection control knowledge and realities of practice necessary to keep themselves and their patients safe. This initiative is part of Project Firstline, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s innovative infection control training collaborative and is designed to reach the future healthcare and allied health workforce.

With the goal of receiving buy-in from universities, community colleges, and academic associations to bring this initiative to their students, the PFL team successfully

formed partnerships with New Jersey City University (NJCU), The College of New Jersey, Rowan University, Stockton University, Rutgers School of Public Health, Montclair State



**PROJECT  
FIRSTLINE:  
NJ COLLEGE TOUR**

An Infection Control Training Initiative for  
Healthcare and Allied Health Students

University, New Jersey Council of County Colleges, and the New Jersey College Health Association.

NJCU and their Health Sciences Student Organization (HSSO) kicked off the College Tour as the first co-host with 62 students attending virtually throughout the state.

The PFL Team is looking to grow and expand the College Tour for the Fall 2022 semester. If you would like to learn more about the College Tour and how you can partner with us, please email us at

[CDS.IC.PFL@doh.nj.gov](mailto:CDS.IC.PFL@doh.nj.gov)



### The NJDOH Communicable Disease Service includes:

Infectious and Zoonotic Disease Program (IZDP): 609-826-5964

Regional Epidemiology Program (REP): 609-826-5964

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We're on the Web!  
[www.nj.gov/health/cd](http://www.nj.gov/health/cd)

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## CDS Staff Selected for Programs and Receive Awards!

### Bernice Carr

Bernice was awarded to be one of 24 participants nationally for the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists' (CSTE) 2022, 2nd cohort of CSTE LEAD: Leading Epidemiologists, Advancing Data Leadership Program. The CSTE LEAD program aims to create development in leadership knowledge, skills, abilities, and confidence over the 12-month program, with competency-based on-the-job leadership training for mid-career epidemiologists. The online training topics will focus on becoming a leader, motivating a team, leading an organization, and navigating politics and systems change. Participants will lead a project to apply knowledge gained from the virtual trainings. Participants also get full sponsorship to attend the 2022 CSTE conference. Bernice intends to lead a novel epidemiological project that will provide background information toward NJDOH hepatitis C elimination efforts.



### Krista Reale

Krista, Public Health Consultant II – Health Education, Infectious and Zoonotic Disease Program, has been selected as a runner up in the 2021 Infographic Contest in the certified category. Her submission, "Why I Chose Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES®) Certification" explains the benefits of obtaining and maintaining certification. The annual infographic contest is sponsored and judged by the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. (NCHEC) and offers an opportunity for certified health education specialists (CHES®) and students to showcase unique and creative talents.

Infographics are visual representations of data, information, or knowledge that tell a story through visual communication and can be a powerful tool for sharing important public health information. With more than 26 creative and unique entries received, Krista's submission was considered excellent by the NCHEC marketing committee and will be highlighted on NCHEC's website, social media channels, and in future efforts to promote the value of certification. NCHEC certifies health education specialists, promotes professional development, and strengthens professional preparation and practice. NCHEC's vision is to promote, improve, and protect the health of people through upholding the highest quality standards in health education certifications. Learn more at <https://www.nchech.org/>.

### Kelly McLaughlin, Jasmine Davis, Miriam Gonzales

CDS Project Firstline's (PFL) Health Educators (Jasmine Davis, Miriam Gonzales, and Kelly McLaughlin) were awarded the New Jersey Society for Public Health Education (NJSOPHE), Outstanding Health Materials Award. The award was presented virtually during the NJSOPHE Annual Meeting on December 14, 2021. This award is given annually to an NJSOPHE member or team to recognize excellence in the creation of health education pieces, including print, multi-media, and training materials. Requirements of the application included submitting samples of health education materials and an essay describing their purpose, the intended audience, health behavior addressed, theory, and evaluation. The PFL team submitted their promotional and educational social media graphics, promotional video, flyers promoting PFL learning needs assessment and training offerings, and PowerPoint training sessions.



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## Why I Chose Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES®) Certification



Krista M. Reale,  
MA, CHES®

Public Health  
Consultant 2-  
Health Education

New Jersey  
Department of  
Health



CHES® certification showcases my unique **skill set** and verifies my real-world knowledge, planning, executing, and advocating for health education programs and promotions.



As a CHES®, I regularly participate in **continuing education** opportunities that assist in the development and/or advancement of knowledge and skills related to my professional occupation.



Because of the rigorous national and international standards of CHES®, the certification is **advantageous** as a job candidate and as a health education specialist employed in state government.



CHES® certification establishes a **national standard** of practice and confirms I have met or exceeded the guidelines and standards of the health education and promotion industry.



About 90% of certified professionals feel their CHES® or MCHES® designation shows a strong **commitment** to their industry and fulfills a sense of personal achievement - I'm one of them!



My CHES® certification has enabled me to connect with similar professionals through **networking** and membership in my state Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) chapter, NJSOPHE.

### Sources:

Build a Better Team: Hire CHES® or MCHES®; Continuing Education; Health Education Credentialing; How to Market Your Certification in a Job Interview; NCHCEC Exam Overview; Reasons to Hire a Certified Health Education Specialist

### Created with:

Piktochart  
WordClouds.com

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## Vaccine Preventable Disease Program Activities and Resources

### The NJ College and University Flu Challenge

The Challenge encourages friendly competition between institutions of higher education to determine which

campus can achieve the highest flu vaccination rates. Each participating institution develops and implements a unique influenza campaign to fit the needs of the student body. Flu vaccination coverage is measured by a short student self-reported survey. By participating in

the Challenge, institutions receive access to educational resources, an award of participation, and a chance to win the traveling trophy for the year. The 2021-2022 Challenge winners are *The College of New Jersey* (large school), *Seton Hall University* (medium school) and *Centenary University* (small school).

Congratulations to this year's winners! Visit [www.nj.gov/health/cd/edu\\_training/vpdp\\_flu\\_challenge.shtml](http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/edu_training/vpdp_flu_challenge.shtml) to learn more about this initiative and to sign up for next year's campaign.

### Updated pneumococcal vaccine recommendation:

On October 20, 2021, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommended 15-valent PCV (PCV15) or 20-valent PCV (PCV20) for PCV-naïve adults who are either aged  $\geq 65$  years or aged 19–64 years with certain underlying conditions. When PCV15 is used, it should be followed by a dose of

PPSV23, typically  $\geq 1$  year later. For additional guidance please click [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7104a1.htm?s\\_cid=mm7104a1\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7104a1.htm?s_cid=mm7104a1_w)

### “Catching Up on Vaccines: A Review of Requirements, Initiatives, and Strategies” Presented by Bert Mandelbaum, MD, Jeni Sudhakaran, MPH, and Jennifer Smith, MPH, CHES

This webinar reviews best practices and action steps for increasing childhood and adolescent immunizations for school and in-person activities. Additionally, this webinar examines how some provider practices have managed to keep adolescent patients up to date on routine immunizations despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To view the archived webinar, visit: [www.immunizenj.org/meetings-webinars/archived-webinars/](http://www.immunizenj.org/meetings-webinars/archived-webinars/). The following continuing education credits are available: CME, CNE, CHES, MCHES, and AAFP CME credits. Please note: CHES/MCHES credits are submitted on a quarterly basis, so your credits will take time to be processed. After viewing the recording, complete the post test at [https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=UKQrR\\_0-1EyHI9IR76U911E-Jt-Ioi5EhXmeVsY1ZuJUMVdFSTBPRLpVUEcwR09IOEdHUkQ5M0VIMSQIQCN0PWcu](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=UKQrR_0-1EyHI9IR76U911E-Jt-Ioi5EhXmeVsY1ZuJUMVdFSTBPRLpVUEcwR09IOEdHUkQ5M0VIMSQIQCN0PWcu).



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**Wash  
Your  
Hands**



Get more information at  
<http://nj.gov/health/cd/handwashing.shtml>.

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**NJ Health**  
New Jersey Department of Health



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New Jersey Department of Health



# SAVE THE DATE !

## 2022 NEW JERSEY IMMUNIZATION CONFERENCE Immunizing Against Misinformation: SHARING SOLUTIONS

VIRTUAL EVENT  
TUESDAY, MAY 24, 2022  
12 PM-4PM EST

**DETAILS COMING SOON!**

**RUTGERS**  
School of Public Health

*Alpha-gal, continued from page 1*

increasing over the last decade, but the true burden of cases is unknown. The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) worked with other states to develop a national surveillance case definition for AGS and in 2022 will be working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other states to characterize the burden of AGS. Avoiding tick bites not only

prevents many tickborne diseases common in New Jersey, but also reduces the chances of developing AGS. The NJDOH Communicable Disease Service has developed a website for alpha-gal syndrome (<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/alphagal.shtml>) which includes education materials, disease reporting resources and links to additional information on AGS.



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**COVID-19 Website Resources**  
Over the past two years, the New Jersey Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service has created countless materials regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. These materials encompass guidance documents (for healthcare settings, public health practices, and community settings), educational materials for the public, frequently asked questions, toolkits, signage, and more. As the situation continues to evolve, materials are updated, created, removed, and replaced as needed. Please be sure to visit <https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml> often for the most up-to-date information!



*INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL (IPC)  
TIP OF THE WEEK*



**BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR  
WEEKLY TIPS ON ALL NJ DOH  
SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES!**

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