

www.folicacidnow.net

Florida Folic Acid Council

Volume 2, Issue 1

Fall 2002

National Folic Acid Campaign

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

National Folic Acid Campaign	1
Stuck on Folic Acid	1
Delivering the Message	2
Materials Distribution	2
Reaching Young People	2
NTDs in Hispanic Infants of Hispanic Origin	3
Outreach Education	3
National vs. Florida	4
Promoting Folic Acid	4
Folate Fairs, Food, & Fun	5
Culturally Sensitive Health Promotion Materials	6
Folic Acid/NTD Seminar	6
DOH Folic Acid Activities	7
Folic Acid Links	8

The National Folic Acid Campaign was organized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the March of Dimes, and the National Council on Folic Acid. Beginning in September 2001, the campaign launched pilot projects in Miami, Florida and San Antonio, Texas to educate Hispanic women of childbearing age about the importance of consuming folic acid. The goal of the campaign was to work with the community to help inform these women about the importance of taking folic acid prior to conception and in the first few months of pregnancy to prevent the serious birth defects such as spina bifida, anencephaly, and encephalocele. For the campaign's goals and message to have a lasting impact in these communities, CDC, March of Dimes, and the National Alliance for Hispanic Health have been working with community-based organizations and health systems that serve the Hispanic community in these cities. Television and radio messages that promote folic acid use were aired on popular stations from September through early December 2001. Articles and editorials were placed in area newspapers and magazines. Spanish-speaking promotoras were hired to conduct outreach activities at community festivals, health fairs, and radio remotes at local grocery stores and shopping malls. Educational materials developed by the CDC, March of Dimes, and the Florida Department of Health have been distributed at local events, health fairs, area health clinics, and through local health care providers in the Miami area. Evaluation of the effectiveness of this campaign in promoting folic acid awareness and use among Hispanic women of childbearing age began in early 2002.



Stuck on Folic Acid

The North Central Florida March of Dimes Division's Folic Acid Council collaborated with the local Association of Pharmacists to develop a folic acid message sticker for birth control pill containers. On October 9, 2001, the project was launched at the monthly meeting of the Association of Pharmacists and participation was high among Gainesville chain pharmacies. Several pharmacies have requested more stickers. Evaluation of this project is currently underway. During 2002, the folic acid sticker project will be expanded to other counties in the division and statewide.

Folic Acid: Delivering the Message to America's Youth

The Food Science and Human Nutrition Department, part of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, received a statewide grant from the March of Dimes to develop folic acid education materials targeted to pre-adolescents and adolescents. Materials will be distributed through the Florida 4-H Programs. The primary goal of the program is to educate young females (10-16 years of age) about folic acid and to motivate behavior change that will result in a daily folic acid intake. In addition, the program will educate males about folic acid as it relates to optimizing health. The program will consist of instructional materials to be used by 4-H educators and participants, and will include a video, computer-based instructional materials, lesson plans, interactive learning activities, a self-instruction workbook, and resource materials for youth to carry out a community service project related to folic acid education. Selected program components will be pre-tested with age-specific focus groups for applicability and effectiveness. The Florida 4-H Program reaches over 107,000 youth in this age group through an extensive and varied network of educational programs and provides a unique opportunity to educate pre-adolescents and adolescents about the health benefits of folic acid. The 4-H Florida network could serve as a prototype for a national program. Increasing folic acid awareness in this target age group may result in the development of and adherence to lifelong health habits that contribute to reduced rates of chronic diseases, as well as improved pregnancy outcomes for future generations.



The March of Dimes and University of South Florida Birth Defects Center - Folic Acid Patient Education Materials Project

The primary purpose of this project was to facilitate the distribution of folic acid patient education materials to health departments in West Central Florida. A Patient Education Materials request form was sent to 11 Directors of Nursing in the Florida Bay March of Dimes division. Six responded and materials were sent to 32 clinic sites, including Family Planning, STD, WIC & Nutrition, and Healthy Start.

Reaching Young People with the Folic Acid Message

During the past three years, the Southwest Coast Division of the Florida March of Dimes Chapter staff and volunteers, including Tricia Christian, Director of Program Services, have had opportunities to increase folic acid awareness at health fairs, student activity days at high school and university campuses, wedding and bridal shows, women's expos, and local festivals.

**"I want to make sure women understand the benefits of folic acid and the impact on their health".
-Tricia Christian**

Ms. Christian realized the difficulties of reaching the target audience during a college health fair on the campus of Florida's newest college, Florida Gulf Coast University in Ft. Myers. She decided an aggressive approach was necessary to promote folic acid use to young women on the campus. She distributed free peanuts, bottles of folic acid supplements, and educational literature at the event. During these awareness activities, approximately 80% of women approached were unaware that folic acid can prevent some types of birth defects. Many women have expressed sincere gratitude to the March of Dimes for promoting the folic acid message.

NTDs in Infants of Hispanic Origin

Neural Tube Defects in Infants of Hispanic Origin: Florida 1996-1997, by Jaime L. Frias, M.D., et al. describes the epidemiology of neural tube defects (NTDs) in Florida's racial and ethnic subpopulations and explains how these birth defects can be prevented through the consumption of folic acid. The data in this report was based on the surveillance of birth defects diagnosed in live births in Florida in 1996 and 1997.

During this period 380,739 infants were born in Florida. Out of these, 226 (5.9/10,000) had a NTD. Because this data refers to live born infants, it underestimates the actual NTD prevalence. There were 35,000 Hispanic live births during this time period. The overall rate for Hispanics was 6.6 cases per 10,000 compared to 5.8 cases per 10,000 births among non-Hispanics. Among the Hispanic subgroups, the rates varied by Hispanic origin—Mexican: 9.5/10,000, Puerto Rican: 4.5/10,000, Cuban: 4.1/10,000, and Other Hispanic groups: 7.7/10,000. This data show an increased rate for certain Hispanic subgroups.

When comparing U.S.-born versus foreign-born women of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other Hispanic origins, it was found that among all groups, the NTD rate was higher among foreign-born women than among U.S.-born women. Mexican-born women had close to double the rate of NTDs (10.7/10,000) when compared to U.S. born Mexican women (6.7/10,000) and Cuban-born (5.2/10,000) and other Hispanic-born women (8.4/10,000) had close to triple the rate of NTDs when compared to U.S. born women of Cuban (1.7/10,000) and other Hispanic (2.8/10,000) origin. However, only the rate for foreign-born Mexican women was statistically higher than non-Hispanic baseline because of the relatively small number of births in these subcategories.

The authors noted several reasons for the observed differences. These may include differences in 1) genetic factors relative to folate metabolism; 2) consumption of folic acid; 3) use of prenatal diagnosis and termination of NTD-affected pregnancies; and 4) exposure to environmental agents.

Limitations to the study noted by the authors include the fact that the data are from 1996 and 1997 and may not reflect the current situation in Florida; the registry data may not include all cases or may miscode diagnoses; and the small sample size for many of the subgroups

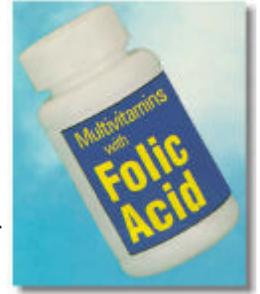
A full copy of this article is available on the web on the Florida Birth Defects Registry web site (http://fbdr.hsc.usf.edu/whatsnew/fhcg_ntd.pdf)

Folic Acid Outreach Education Campaign

Paula King, MS, RD, LD, Project Director, has been very involved with March of Dimes folic acid promotion for the last four years, educating staff and clients at her work site and in the DeSoto County community. To expand their efforts in the community, and Arcadia area, the DeSoto County Health Department received March of Dimes funds to develop a billboard, hire an outreach worker, and purchase Spanish educational materials. The billboard, placed on Highway 17, contains the March of Dimes logo and a folic acid promotional message. Eighty percent of the clients questioned acknowledged seeing the billboard. It generates between ten and fifteen calls per month. During the winter months the population of DeSoto County (a rural area located in Central Florida) doubles in size due to the influx of snowbirds and migrant workers. The migrant workers make up 50% of the population. The outreach worker educates women of childbearing age with a special focus on migrant workers. Also, Ms. King conducts presentations on folic acid and neural tube defects to Department of Health staff, local health care providers, hospitals, and community agencies. She has excellent community support as she collaborates with local businesses, school programs and educators, private physicians, and school nurses. Ms. King participates at local community events such as health fairs at churches, schools, and health clinics.

National versus Florida, Folic Acid Awareness Results

In 1995, the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation received funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to conduct a benchmark survey of women of childbearing age to assess their knowledge and behaviors relative to daily consumption of folic acid. Since the 1995 survey, the March of Dimes has commissioned the Gallup Organization to conduct four follow-up surveys to measure any changes that may have occurred since 1995 in women's awareness and behavior related to folic acid and other pre-pregnancy health issues. These surveys serve as general measures of effectiveness of the educational campaigns designated to increase awareness of folic acid among women of childbearing age.



Funded by a Mission Investment Opportunity Program grant from the Florida Chapter of the March of Dimes, the University of South Florida (USF) Birth Defects Center contracted with the University of Florida (UF) to gather data from women of childbearing age (18-45) for an assessment of folic acid knowledge. The UF Bureau of Business and Economic Research added folic acid questions to its monthly Consumer Confidence Survey, a telephone survey. These questions appeared on the survey from February 2000 to January 2001. These data along with the 2001 MOD survey provides an opportunity to compare state and national folic acid awareness and knowledge.

Nationally, it was found that 27% of women age 18-45 who are not pregnant take a vitamin containing folic acid daily. In Florida, almost one-half, 44%, of women between the ages of 18-45 take a vitamin containing folic acid.

2001 MOD Survey Questions	2001 National %	2000-01 Florida %
Folic Acid Awareness	79%	66%
Take A Vitamin with Folic Acid Daily	29%	44%
Knew Folic Acid Prevented Birth Defects	19%	15%
Knew Should Take Folic Acid Before Becoming Pregnant	7%	17%
Heard About Folic Acid From:		
Media	27%	35%
Print or Broadcast	25%	16%
Health Care Provider	22%	27%

Good Times to Promote Folic Acid

If you are looking for a special time to have a folic acid activity, here are some ideas—

September: 10th Anniversary of USPHS Folic Acid Recommendation

October: Spina Bifida Prevention Month/Florida Folic Acid Awareness Month

January: National Birth Defects Prevention Month

May: Mother's Day and Nurses Week

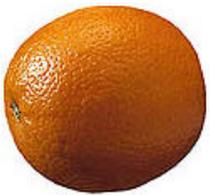
Folate Fairs, Food, & Fun on Florida Campuses

The Florida Chapter of March of Dimes provided a grant to the USF Birth Defects Center (BDC) in April 2001 to begin a folic acid awareness campaign on college campuses in fall 2001. Three universities in the State University System and four community colleges from the Florida Community College System were identified for participation in a folic acid educational campaign. These were the University of South Florida, University of Central Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University, Saint Petersburg College (formerly Saint Petersburg Junior College), Hillsborough Community College, Valencia Community College, and Edison Community College.



The primary objective of the program was to hold two student-focused activities related to folic acid during the academic year at each campus. During the Fall semester, events on the campuses varied with the diversity of these populations. The dynamics of the student body were kept in mind as events were being planned. Assistance and insight from faculty and staff members allowed for the events to be successful, increasing the awareness of folic acid among college adults in central Florida.

At a number of schools, BDC staff participated in health fairs and hosted tables in common areas. Materials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Florida Department of Health (DOH), and March of Dimes were distributed and the Florida DOH supplied folic acid supplements to be handed out. At Edison Community College, there was a "Health Awareness Fair" where students gathered in the common area in front of the cafeteria to collect information about health services relative to their age group. Similarly, at University of Central Florida, "Love Your Body Day" health fair emphasized health and fitness. Likewise, the health fair on the Florida Gulf Coast University campus emphasized health and preventive medicine and was largely attended by community members. This fair offered flu shots at a reduced cost, cholesterol testing, blood glucose level testing, eye exams, osteoporosis screening, and body fat analysis. The University of South Florida holds a Bull Market every Wednesday where participants gather in common areas to sell products, teach about student organizations, publicize events, and advertise new products marketed toward young adults. BDC staff hosted a table in conjunction with REACH, Responsible Education and Action for Campus Health, health peer educators on campus.



Saint Petersburg College invited BDC to participate in disABILITY Awareness Day with a table as well as a "Taste and Learn" Seminar. Attendees learned about folate, folate-rich foods, and how to make tasty folate-rich snacks. Hillsborough Community College has an annual event, "Halloweenfest," that takes place on Halloween. Vendors, music, face painting, and free pizza draw the students to the event. In an effort to advertise the presence of a folic acid table, health educators were dressed as oranges. This was done to increase awareness that citrus fruits contain folate. Valencia Community College had both of its events during the spring semester, including two Taste and Learn Seminars, three health fairs, and one "Spring Fling."

Culturally Sensitive Health Promotion Materials

Professional marketers for years have preached to businesses the concept of knowing whom they are selling to and what the customer wants before creating a product. Now this concept, otherwise known as social marketing, is being used to target and deliver health promotion messages to the public. The process of “message development” uses focus groups and qualitative research methods to develop and evaluate targeted health messages.

Since 1999, the Florida Department of Health, CDC, and the March of Dimes have developed folic acid educational materials targeted at women who are planning to become pregnant (contemplators) and women who are not planning to become pregnant (non-contemplators). These materials meet the needs of the general public, but not necessarily those of specific populations that may be at higher risk of neural tube defects (NTD).



As data has become available from Florida and other states, Mexican-American women of childbearing age have been identified as a specific high-risk group for NTDs. With funding from the March of Dimes (Mission Investment Opportunity Program grant), the University of South Florida Birth Defects Center and the National Collaborative for Social Marketing began a social marketing project aimed at providing folic acid educational materials targeted to this group.

In 2001, a series of focus groups were used to evaluate existing materials in Spanish. The majority did not fare well because they were either not culturally relevant for this sub-group or too complex. The focus groups did provide valuable insight into the type of materials and messages that this population would respond to. Their comments prompted us to create a photo-novella on folic acid. The novella will feature women from the Mexican-American community and focus on the concept that a healthy body means a health baby. In addition, we plan to develop a low-literacy brochure. As with all message development, an important component is its evaluation prior to implementation. The photo-novella and brochure will be pilot-tested among the target group to measure their effectiveness.

The current plan is to have these materials available by the end of summer 2002.

Folic Acid and Neural Tube Defect Seminar, November 2, 2001

March of Dimes, Florida Bay Division and USF Birth Defects Center, in collaboration with the Health Department of Pasco County WIC & Nutrition Services and the Hudson Regional Library presented the Folic Acid and Neural Tube Defect Seminar to a group of 25 nurses. Presentations were given by Clara Lawhead, MS, RD, LD, FADA entitled “The Role of Folic Acid in Preconception & Beyond” and by Kimberlea Hauser, MBA entitled “Genetics & Your Practice - Folic Acid Awareness & Prevention”. Positive comments were given by attendees, who were pleased with the information, handouts, and resources made available for staff and patient education. They also expressed interest in a lengthier follow-up seminar.

Folic Acid Activities by the Florida Department of Health

Monroe County

Staff distributed folic acid at family planning clinics. The give away is used to segue into pre-conceptional counseling and importance of good nutrition and of course, folic acid needs. Although the clients usually are seeking to postpone pregnancy at this clinic, we have specifically targeted those who are at greater risk of unplanned pregnancy, such as adolescents, homeless women, and women with substance abuse problems.

Citrus County

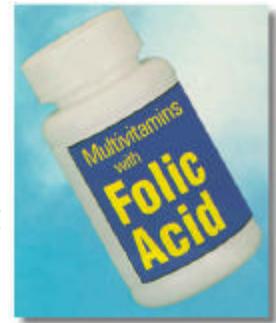
Clinic staff offered free folic acid to all women of childbearing age who sought services. Clinic Nurses developed a flyer explaining the risks and benefits of folic acid, along with a list of foods high in folic acid. Posters and flyers are posted in clinic waiting rooms. Folic acid information is distributed at all community health fairs.

Palm Beach County

WIC staff developed a brochure, which includes information about folic acid. It goes to every postpartum and breastfeeding woman on WIC. In addition, staff developed a one page low-literacy brochure on food sources of folic acid in English, Spanish, and Creole.

Volusia County

A team of employees from Women's Health Services and WIC emphasize the importance of folic acid both from a prenatal and pre-conceptual education perspective. The team is called the Healthy Baby Connection. When the team sees a prenatal client, they emphasize the importance of using a prenatal vitamin with folic acid and discuss foods that are good sources of folic acid. When the team sees these clients as postpartum moms, they discuss adequate time spacing between pregnancies and again discuss the importance of folic acid. Emphasis is placed on both pre-conceptional importance and the value of folic acid to decrease cardiac risk as women grow older. The educational material we use for the postpartum clients is the March of Dimes pamphlet -Get the "B" Attitude.



Collier County

In Collier County we've made promotion of folic acid a routine activity, both in WIC and in Healthy Start. Healthy Start nurses give bottles of folic acid to postpartum women whenever possible and explain its importance in pre-conceptional health. They also stress the importance of prenatal vitamins as soon as we encounter pregnant women. WIC nutritionists incorporate folic acid education both prenatally and postpartum.

**For more information on joining
the Florida Folic Acid Council**

March of Dimes
Florida Chapter
341 Maitland Blvd, Suite 115
Maitland, FL
Phone: 407-599-5077
Fax: 407-599-5780
Email: LReeves@marchofdimes.com

USF Birth Defects Center
17 Davis Blvd, Suite 200
Tampa, FL 33606
Phone: 813-259-8848
Fax: 813-259-8849
Email: Khauser@hsc.usf.edu

**Published by the
Florida Folic Acid Council**
Editors:
Jane Correia
Kimberlea Hauser
Lori Reeves
Michele Salter

We're on the Web!
www.folicacidnow.net

Tell us how your organization has promoted folic acid!
—email us at webmaster@folicacidnow.net

Folic Acid Links

Organization	Web Site
Centers for Disease Control	www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/default.htm
Florida Department of Agriculture	www.fl-ag.com/folic/
Florida Department of Citrus	www.floridajuice.com/floridacitrus/health.htm#birth
Florida Department of Health	http://fbdr.hsc.usf.edu/folic.htm
Florida Folic Acid Council	www.folicacidnow.net
Food and Drug Administration	www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/wh-toc.html
Kellogg's Cereal	http://www.kelloggs.com/nutrition/folic_acid/folicacid_index.html
March of Dimes	www.modimes.org/Programs2/FolicAcid/Default.htm
Mayo Clinic	www.mayoclinic.com/findinformation/healthylivingcenter/index.cfm
National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition	www.hmhb.org/planning.html
Spina Bifida Association of America	www.sbaa.org/html/sbaa_folic.html
Post Cereal	www.kraftfoods.com/postcereals
Tropicana	http://www.tropicana.com/