

EOU's vaccination requirements limited to measles

By Max Denning
The Observer

On Jan. 18, Clark County in Southwest Washington declared a public health emergency due to a measles outbreak, but Eastern Oregon University is not overly concerned — the university strongly adheres to the Oregon law requiring the measles vaccine for college students.

Ginny Elder, clinical director for the EOU Health Center, said the university's vaccine policies follow state law, which requires university students to have an MMR vaccination (for measles, mumps and rubella, also known as German measles). She called measles "highly contagious" and more common than some of the other diseases that the university recommends vaccines for but does not require.

One of the vaccines that is recommended but not required is the meningococcal vaccine. In America's Health Rankings, published by the United Health Foundation, Oregon ranked 41st in 2017 in meningococcal vaccinations. Bacterial meningitis kills 15 percent of people that contact it,

according to the CDC.

For every 1000 people that contract measles, one or two will die, the CDC said.

In 2017, Oregon State University had an outbreak of a meningococcal disease that prompted the university to require all students younger than 26 to receive a vaccine against the B strain of the disease. In 2015, at outbreak at the University of Oregon killed a student. The university responded with a mass vaccination effort.

Elder said EOU does not require the meningococcal vaccine, calling the disease less common.

"Meningococcal diseases, at least the ones you hear about in the news, are fortunately very rare," Elder said. "The recommendations are to have vaccine programs when there has been an outbreak."

Elder also said the university has been in touch with universities of similar sizes, such as Willamette University in Salem and Western Oregon University in Monmouth.

"None of them are requiring (the meningococcal vaccine) at this point," Elder said.

The Oregon Health Authority aims for 95 percent immu-

nization at each school. Most schools in the La Grande area are considered "moderately vulnerable" to diseases, with a 90 to 94.9 percent immunization rate. One exception is the Grande Ronde Mennonite School in Cove, where only 23 percent of students have all the vaccines required by the OHA.

While schools with students in kindergarten through 12th grade are required to report their immunization rates to the OHA, universities are not. Elder said EOU doesn't have an inventory of the immunization rates for all of its students.

"Of the records we receive, students are pretty well up to date," Elder said. "But we are not scrutinizing the other vaccines either."

According to Elder, EOU hasn't had a case of a meningococcal disease that can be vaccinated against during the 12 years she's been at the university. If there was to be an outbreak of any disease with a vaccination available, Elder said EOU would have help dealing with it.

"If something like meningitis occurred, we would be working with the local health department," Elder

Clark County declares a public health emergency

Clark County officials declared a public health emergency on Jan. 18 in response to a measles outbreak in Southwest Washington. Clark County Council Chair Eileen Quiring made the declaration Friday afternoon, which allows the county to receive resources from other government agencies if needed.

As of Friday, said the number of confirmed measles cases was 19 with seven more cases suspected. Officials said 16 of those inflicted were not immunized against the disease, a highly contagious viral illness that is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The confirmed cases include 15 children younger than 10, three people between 10 and 18 and one adult.

The infected individuals visited a number of public places in Southwest Washington and Portland, including a Portland Trail Blazers game on Jan. 11 at the Moda Center, and one was in the Hood River and The Dalles area before the disease was detected.

Symptoms include coughing, fever, runny nose and a rash that typically appears first on the head and spreads to the rest of the body. If you think you are infected, call a doctor or emergency room first before visiting to avoid exposing people in the waiting room to the virus. Questions about the virus can be referred to local county health departments.

Associated Press

said. "It would become a public health event and we wouldn't be just handling it alone."

Although vaccinations other than MMR are not required and there is not a specific vaccination campaign at the university,

Elder said the health center tries to educate EOU students on the importance of vaccines.

"We continue to do a lot of work in the dorms and we have information available for students on vaccines," she said.

STDs

Continued from Page 1A

These three catalysts are tied together. Because federal and state funding has seen a 40-percent decrease in purchasing power since 2003, STD education and awareness programs have deteriorated, leading health care providers to screen less and leaving patients unaware of the importance of regular screening practices, according to Harvey.

In August 2018, the CDC published a report outlining what it termed an STD "crisis" with data from 2017: "Nearly 2.3 million cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis were diagnosed in the United States in 2017. This surpassed the previous record set in 2016 by more than 200,000 cases."

CHD's Sieders said chlamydia cases are by far the most common in Union County, but the presence of gonorrhea and syphilis is also growing.

"Chlamydia (is) increasing, but it's always been here," said Sieders. "Syphilis has gone from 'zero to sixty' real fast."

Although data provided by the CDC and the Oregon Health Authority both list zero cases of syphilis in Union and Wallowa counties in 2016, the most recent year available, the state of Oregon is experiencing an overall increase in reported syphilis cases. Multnomah County had the highest rate of syphilis in the state in 2016 with 20.9 cases per 100,000 people.

Sieders said the most concerning aspect of syphilis is the detection in pregnant women, as the disease is more dangerous to a fetus than either chlamydia or gonorrhea.

"Our priority when looking at all STD cases are pregnant women, especially with syphilis because it can be transmitted to the baby during pregnancy and the outcomes can be very poor," she said. "Syphilis is the one that can cause the most damage to the baby during pregnancy. It can cause multiple birth defects with brain development, bone development and vision."

Out of 916 cases of congenital syphilis in the U.S. reported in 2017, 64 of them resulted in a stillborn child, according to the OHA.

While the number of national syphilis cases seems fairly small, there was a 44 percent increase from 2016 to 2017.

Cases of chlamydia, which is much more common at the county, state and nationwide levels, are also increasing. Because people with chlamydia rarely show symptoms, they are less likely to get tested and more likely to unknowingly spread the disease to their partners.

More than 1.7 million cases of chlamydia were diagnosed in the U.S. in 2017, with 45 percent among 15- to 24-year-old women, according to the CDC. Data from the OHA shows Oregon state held 17,618 of those chlamydia cases in 2016 — including 115 in Union County and 13 in Wallowa County, an increase from the previous year in both counties.

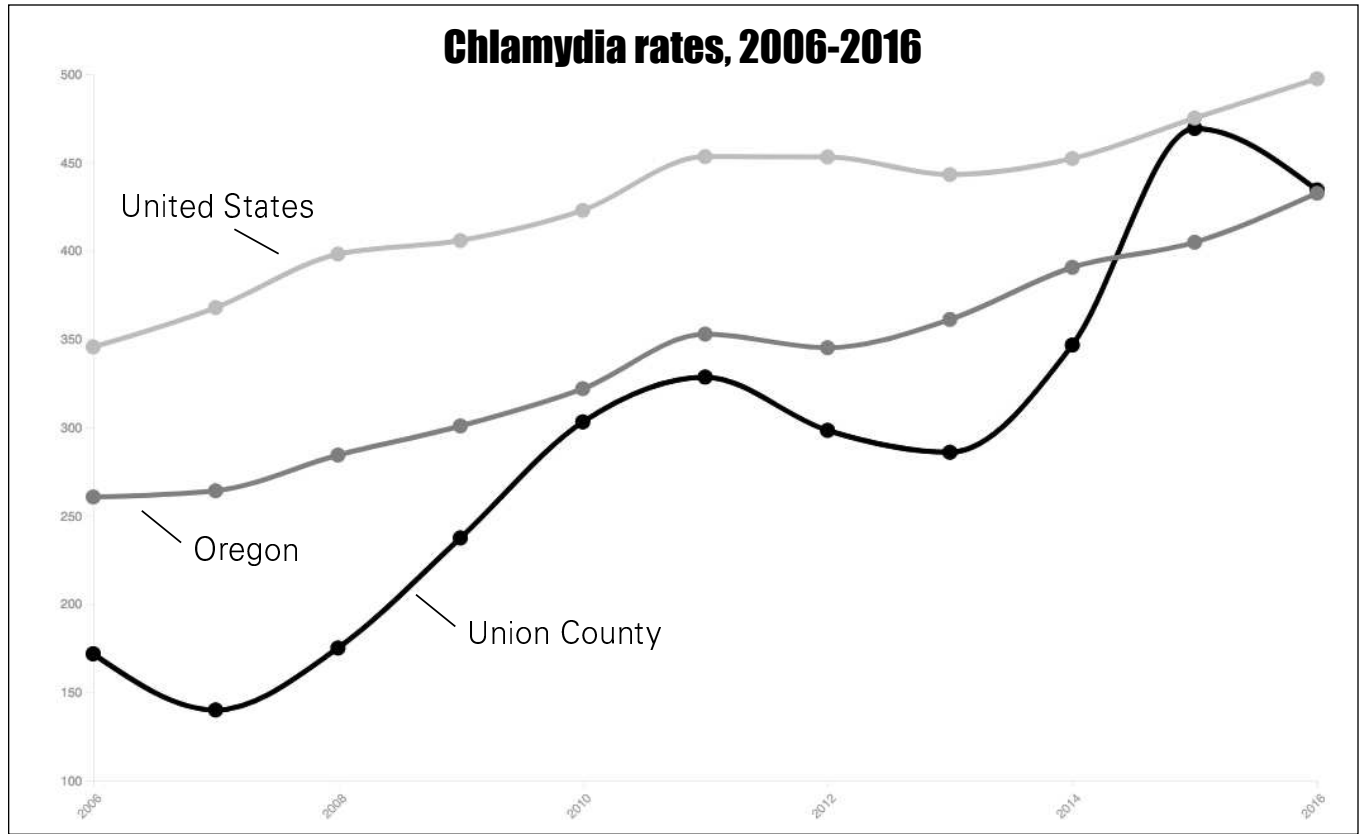
The OHA also notes an increasing trend in reported gonorrhea cases. In 2016 there were 4,367 at the state level and 11 in Union County, a substantial increase from 2013, when there were 1,729 cases in the state and only one in Union County. No cases of gonorrhea were reported in Wallowa County in either 2013 or 2016. Nationally, reported gonorrhea cases have increased by 67 percent in just five years, according to the CDC.

Gail Bolan, director of the CDC's Division for STD Prevention, spoke on the reasoning behind the increase in gonorrhea specifically at the same conference as Harvey in 2018.

"Over the years, gonorrhea has become resistant to nearly every class of antibiotic we've used to treat it," she said. "Our nation urgently needs additional treatment options for gonorrhea."

Following Bolan at the conference, Harvey noted the U.S. "continues to have the highest STD rates in the industrialized world."

"We are in the midst of an absolute STD public health crisis in this country. It's a



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

crisis that has been in the making for years," he said.

In order to fight this "public health crisis," CHD relies on educating the health care providers and community members of Union County on the importance of regular screening habits and safe-sex practices. Joeline Peasley, family nurse practitioner at CHD, educates La Grande High School students on STD prevention at one of CHD's two school-based health centers in Union County (the other is in the Union School District). These school-based centers also provide discreet STD screening services to students.

Peasley said while it is important to treat individual cases, the focus needs to be on each person's partners in order to halt

the spread of disease.

"We can treat the initial case, but the other part of it is getting those partners notified and treated," she said. "That, out of anything, will help control these cases and bring our numbers down."

In addition to its outreach programs, Sieders said CHD also provides the latest STD information to health care providers in order to cast a wider net in the area.

"Ultimately, the doctors, physicians and nurse practitioners in our community are seeing a vast majority of these patients," she said. "We're not providing direct clinical services all the time, so we try to give them as much education and tools as possible to stay in the know about these diseases as the trends and information change."

To truly quell this epidemic of STDs plaguing the nation, state and county, Peasley urges people to use protection, while Sieders recommends looking at STD treatment in a new light.

"We've got to change the stigma," Sieders said. "We live in a conservative area, but we don't really have conservative behaviors in our community. We've got to change this culture of 'we don't talk about it; we

don't do it.' (STD screening) should be as normal as going to the dentist."

"Helping you get to a healthier place"

Office Hours 9am-5pm
2212 Island Ave.
Suite 400
La Grande
541-663-0300

Eds Propane RESIDENTIAL COMMERCIAL

Eds

Come in today to see how we can serve you.

10502 West 1st Street
La Grande, OR 97850
(541) 963-8711 www.edstaub.com

Storage Solution

www.CountrysideSheds.com

Countryside SHEDS ONLY

CCB #149931

Free Solar Shed light with purchase of new Shed

"More Than Just a Shed"

Look at a Side-By-Side Comparison

Ownership Option?.....	Yes	NO
Customization?.....	Yes	NO
Can I sell it when done?.....	Yes	NO
Moveable?.....	Yes	NO
Location?.....	Your House... Across Town		

See our display lot at
10102 S. McAlister Road Island City
(541) 663-0246 or toll free (800) 682-0589
Locally owned and operated for over 20 years

Grande Ronde Hospital Home Care Services

Home Health & Hospice

Our philosophy?

It's about how you LIVE.

- Certified Hospice & Palliative Care RNs
- Pain and Symptom management
- Palliative, Transitional & Respite Care
- Skilled Nursing services
- PT, OT & Speech Therapies
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers
- CNA's for personal care
- Caregiver teaching and support
- Spiritual Care Coordinator
- Hospice Volunteers
- Bereavement Services
- Joint Commission accredited
- Medicare/Medicaid certified

Consistent Award-Winning Agency.
The ONLY not-for profit in the area.
To learn more about GRH Home Care Services,
call us at 541-963-CARE (2273)

2012 TOP AGENCY
2014 TOP 500 AGENCY
2017 TOP 100 AGENCY