

Meningitis Vaccine Recommended

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vulnerability to bacteria.

Telltale signs of bacterial meningitis include a stiff neck, fever, fatigue, nausea, and rash, among others. Patients who contract severe cases may bleed underneath their skin.

The less serious viral form shares many of the same symptoms, but it is relatively short-lived. In further contrast to the bacterial form, exposure to viral strains does not require treatment.

Meningococcal disease typically affects about 2,600 people yearly. It kills about 300, according to information from the health services section of Penn State's Web site (psu.edu/UHS/menting.html).

However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said college students as a group do not appear to face a greater risk of developing the illness than other people in that age category.

Martz said approximately one in 10 people naturally carries meningococcal bacteria in their nose and throat lining. This may provide natural resistance to the disease.

She added that during outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis, 95 percent of the population may carry the bacteria, but only about one percent of those exposed actually develop the illness.

Although meningitis occurs infrequently, some area colleges reported recent cases.

Two Shippensburg University students contracted meningitis last year, one each in the spring and fall. Those students returned to class healthy, according to Pete Gigliotti, director of Public Relations.

Millersville University's most recent case occurred in 1992, and that student also recovered fully, according to Bonnie Goshen, the school's nurse practitioner and nursing supervisor.

Health officials from several other local colleges and universities, including Franklin & Marshall, Elizabethtown, Slippery Rock, and Bloomsburg also stressed the vaccine's importance as a preventative measure against the potentially fatal illness.

Most Pennsylvania colleges, including Penn State Harrisburg, send a letter to new and returning

students recommending the Menomune inoculation.

However, no plans exist to mandate the shot. "Students are at lower risk, if they are living off campus in an apartment with roommates or friends," said Pam Koons, marketing manager of University Health Services at University Park.

"Although," she added, "it is a nasty thing when you do get it."

Price presents another obstacle to mass immunization against meningococcal disease.

It may cost at least \$70 to \$75 just to receive the shot. This figure does not include the cost of an office visit. Furthermore, as Koons explained, insurance companies may or may not cover the expense since the immunization is not required.

Questions also remain about the vaccine's effectiveness. Menomune is 85 percent effective against four of the five most common strains of bacterial meningitis, but it only lasts three to five years.

The shot is, however, largely side-effect free. Some redness and swelling may appear, but it usually lasts two days at most.

According to the website, about two percent of recipients develop a low fever.

Because it is too soon to gauge how well the vaccine works, few students here have asked for it.

In fact, some students doubted their classmates knew about the medicine. "I don't think many of us know about the vaccination, but I had to get checked for [meningitis] when I was at Pitt," said Michele Myers, Public Policy.

Other students who knew about the shot chose not to get it. "I don't have \$70 to spend," Allen Hushon, Secondary Education, Social Studies, said.

"If students are going to live in dorms, lower the cost, make it free, or the college should pay."

Since the Student Health Services Office (Olmsted W102) does not stock the vaccine, people who want it have two other options.

One, Martz said, is to visit the Polyclinic Immunization Clinic. They offer the shot for under \$50. The other choice is to see your family doctor.

Though Martz believes the best safeguard against infection is to consider Menomune, other measures can lessen the risk.

"Cover your mouth and wash your hands. Avoid sharing open containers of alcohol, and don't share food or cups at large parties," she said.

Eating well and getting proper rest also helps, as does learning stress management. "Learn how to follow a good lifestyle and protect yourself," Martz added. "That should help in the long run."

ASL Inducts New Members

By Deb Hoff

Capital Times Staff Writer

Alpha Sigma Lambda, Theta Iota Chapter, the National Honor Society for adults in continuing higher education, held its induction ceremony on Sept. 15 in the Gallery Lounge.

The audience was welcomed by Charlotte Spector, Student Affairs Specialist and National Councillor for Alpha Sigma Lambda, who has served since 1992 when the charter was granted for Penn State Harrisburg.

Dr. Janet Widoff, Coordinator of Student Activities, and keynote speaker of the evening, presented a sky-blue box tied with a white satin ribbon as a visual comparison to returning adult students.

She says returning adults are "a lot like opening a box," as she unties the white ribbon and lifts the lid off. She explains that adult students often say their ideas, perceptions, and outlooks on things "open" as a result of returning to school.

It has been a way of "changing their boundaries," she notes.

Widoff has done much research into the subject as well as having been a returning adult student herself. She says that most adults "come back to school because of a change, a trigger situation."

A "multiplicity of changes" may include such things as a job change, the last child going to school, dissatisfaction with a present job, or dissolution of a relationship.

"You don't do it alone," Widoff expands. "You have to juggle much to accomplish this." A support system of family, friends and fellow students is a vital link to academic achievement for adults.

She uses a trip or journey as a metaphor to describe the process and challenges adults face as students. She warns that like on a trip or journey, "a plan" is often in place, but the unexpected can always occur. Obstacles must sometimes be worked around and alternative plans put in place.

Dr. Susan Richman, Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, also addressed the audience.

She says one of the greatest joys and "most rewarding experiences a teacher could ever have," comes when you see in the eyes of a student, "I understand it," and the development of a love of life-long learning.

Donna Howard, Assistant Coordinator of Non-Traditional Student Affairs, Dory Crater, ASL Member 1995 and Donna Rentzel, ASL Member 1993, officiated the ceremony as pins and certificates were awarded to the newly inducted members.

Crater establishes that Alpha Sigma Lambda stands for "first in scholarship and leadership."

"Learning is a continuing process, dedicated to seeking the truth," she explains, "and leadership is influencing people to achieve a common good."

Rentzel explains the symbolism on the banner which depicts an open book, denoting love of knowledge, a lighted Roman candle, symbolizing wisdom, and a torch which is the symbol of life.

Theta Iota Chapter President Etta Tidwell paid tribute to the new members. "We are all very proud of you," she stressed, "and we want to be a vital presence on campus."

She set goals encouraging other adults, to help administration understand what is important to adult learners, and serving as mentors to new students.

Membership in Alpha Sigma Lambda recognizes a high level of academic achievement.

Membership requirements include being a student 24 years or older, earning 30 credits in a degree program at PSH, and having a grade point average in the top ten percent of that group, with a minimum grade point average of 3.2 on a 4.0 scale.

Spector points out that the competition is tough because of the top ten percent grouping. "I don't think there are any [GPAs] below 3.8" this year, she notes.

Alpha Sigma Lambda's purpose is to provide an association of adult students who have demonstrated academic excellence at PSH, as stated in its by-laws. It is a non-profit organization devoted to the advancement of scholarship and needs of adult students.

Spector reflects that the first members inducted into Alpha Sigma Lambda at Penn State Harrisburg was in May 1993. Founded in 1945 at Northwestern University, there are now 245 chapters throughout the United States.

A scholarship fund is sponsored by the Chapters and is open to all students on campus.

Below: Lead singer and guitarist Jon Shanbarger of Devoted Molded stopped by WPSH on Sept. 14 to do an interview and play an acoustic song. The visit was in support of the band's new album "Mr. Bill's Wild Ride." Right: Jon with WPSH staff members Brad Moist, Jesse Gutierrez and Brad Grissinger.



Photo by Jill Karwoski



Photo by Jesse Gutierrez