



# CATTARAUGUS COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

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**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
**Cattaraugus County**  
Health Department  
Established 1923

*Joseph Bohan, MD, President*

*Giles Hamlin, MD, Vice-President*

*Zahid Chohan, MD*

*Kelly J. Andreano, Legislator*

*Theresa Raftis*

*David L. Smith, Mayor*

*Kathryn Cooney Thrush, NP, MSN*

*Donna Vickman, LPN*

## MINUTES December 13, 2023

The 918<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Cattaraugus County Board of Health (BOH) was held at the Old Library Restaurant on December 13, 2023.

*The following members were present:*

Joseph Bohan, MD

Zahid Chohan, MD

Giles Hamlin, MD

Legislator Kelly Andreano (Virtual)

Kathryn Cooney-Thrush, NP, MSN

Theresa Raftis

Mayor David Smith

*Also present were:*

Kevin D. Watkins, MD, MPH, Public Health Director

Brendon Riley, Assistant County Attorney

Dr. Derien Braxton, SBU Professor & Senior Fellow

Leah Eldred, St. Bonaventure University Intern

Brookelinn Garey, St. Bonaventure University Intern

Kiran Sharma, St. Bonaventure University Intern

Kip Morrow, County Legislator

Brendon Hanson, Resident (Virtual)

Ray Jordan, Senior Public Health Sanitarian (Virtual)

Debra Lacher, Secretary to the Public Health Director

James Lawrence, Emergency Preparedness Director

Collette Lulay-Pound, Administrative Officer

Rick Miller, Olean Times Herald

Lynne Moore, Director of Nursing

Dave Porter, Hearing Officer

Robert Ring, Environmental Health Director

Tony Sowers, Resource Specialist

Erin Washburn, Assistant Health Educator

Traci Wind, Health Educator

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Bohan. The roll was called and a quorum was present.

Dr. Bohan called for the approval of the November meeting minutes. Mayor Smith made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the November 1, 2023, the motion was seconded by Dr. Chohan, and unanimously approved.

Dr. Bohan called for the approval of the January 18, 2023 Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting minutes. Kathryn Cooney-Thrush made a motion to approve the minutes, the motion was seconded by Mayor Smith, and unanimously approved. Additionally, a motion to approve the July 26<sup>th</sup> PAC meeting minutes was made by Dr. Hamlin, the motion was seconded by Dr. Chohan, and unanimously approved.

**GUEST SPEAKERS:** Dr. Bohan introduced the (3) student interns from St. Bonaventure University who had just completed an internship with the Cattaraugus County Health Department (CCHD). Leah Eldred, from Binghamton, a Senior graduating in May, Brookelinn Garey, from Olean, a Senior graduating this weekend, and Kiran Sharma, from Sayre, Pennsylvania, a Senior graduating in May. All three students worked in epidemiology and presented mortality data that they analyzed over a calendar period.

Mortality data for 2020 was provided by Kiran Sharma. She stated that in her research there were (590) deaths in 2020. The median age of death was (77.25), the oldest was (102), and the youngest was (3) years old. The top five causes of death were cardiopulmonary arrest, cancer of the lungs, respiratory issues, congestive heart failure, and sepsis. Her recommendations for a healthier Cattaraugus are to promote health education beginning at a young age, increase the prices of smoking products, urging residents to get vaccinated, increase opportunities for physical exercise, providing free transportation to clinics and hospitals for medical care.

Mortality data for 2021 was provided by Leah Eldred. She stated that in her research there were (774) deaths in 2021, more than both 2020 and 2022. The median age of death was (73) years of age, the oldest was (107) and the youngest was (2) months. The top five causes of death were cardiac or cardiopulmonary arrest, respiratory issues, heart diseases, COVID-19, (many individuals had COVID-19 as a secondary cause but this study was based on primary cause of death), and cancer, with the most prevalent being lung cancer. Her recommendations for a healthier Cattaraugus County included: health education of young children in a school setting, provide medication replacements for nicotine addiction, host health related events such as walkathons, runs, and health and wellness fairs.

Mortality data for 2022 was provided by Brookelinn Garey. She stated that in her research there were (638) deaths in 2022. The median age of death was (74.05) which is premature in comparison to the national life expectancy which was determined to be (79.05). The youngest death was an infant who lived for (41 minutes) and the oldest was (105). The five leading causes of death in 2022 were cardiac and cardiopulmonary arrest, heart disease, respiratory related illnesses, cancer, with (28%) being lung cancer, and tragic losses which included suicides, drug overdoses, and accidents. Her recommendations for a healthier Cattaraugus County included: Early Detection Driven to You or ("Eddy") which is a mobile unit that has low dose CT scanners that can detect lung cancer, and also offer a mobile primary care unit which would also be beneficial to the rural area especially for those who find getting medical care difficult. Another idea is heart healthy festivals which could raise awareness, and teach better habits; dance challenges involving local dance studios; yoga classes; fitness obstacle courses; arrange bus trips to local parks where residents could walk on trails in fresh air; educational awareness for mental health that is taught in the schools (students and faculty); and start virtual crisis intervention teams.

Dr. Chohan commended the students on their wonderful presentation. Dr. Bohan acknowledged the work that the students had done and commented on what a unique opportunity the students had to work with the health department. The students agreed that many of their fellow students did not get an internship that allowed a hands-on project like they were afforded.

**DIRECTORS REPORT:** Dr. Watkins reiterated that the interns did an outstanding job, and that he was very proud of the work that they did and the department's collaboration with the university. He went on to report that the department is currently in the midst of submitting supporting standards and measures documents for reaccreditation. One of the standard and measures that must be submitted is a progress review report for the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), and receiving feedback on the progress by the Board and its partners. Dr. Watkins explained that the CHIP, for the most part, requires that the department works with its community partners and often times it's a tedious task requesting information that is needed to complete the objectives and goals outlined in the CHIP. Cattaraugus County Health Department and Upper Allegheny Health Systems collaborated on one Community Health Assessment (CHA) and CHIP for Cattaraugus County. Five priority areas were given by NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) and every county is required to choose at least two of these five priority areas to work on within the next three years. For Cattaraugus County, "prevent chronic disease", and "promote wellbeing and prevent mental and substance abuse disorder" was chosen. These same priorities were also chosen when we completed the CHA/CHIP in 2016-2018, and 2019-2021. During 2020 and 2021, we were unable to work on these priority areas due to the pandemic.

For priority area "prevent chronic disease" one of the focus areas is on healthy eating, and increase food security. The goal is to make sure households in Cattaraugus County are able to have access to resources (grocery stores, food pantries, nutrition sites, etc.) to increase the amount of food within their household. The objective is to decrease the percentage of adults who have food insecurity. To measure how well this goal is progressing, we look at the number of partners that screen for food insecurity and facilitate referrals to supportive services; a graph was shared with those in attendance. The CCHD WIC division screened (1,403) clients in the year 2022, and (1,528) clients in 2023. The number of referrals to supportive services from WIC were (10-15) clients a week in 2022, and (15-20) clients in 2023. Most of the data is still outstanding from community partners.

Tobacco prevention is another focus area chosen for "prevent chronic disease" and the goal is to prevent initiation of tobacco use. Cancer is the second leading cause of deaths in Cattaraugus County, and lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer deaths. The objective of this focus area is to decrease tobacco use in students. The strategy is to use media, to communicate the adverse effects of tobacco use. The measures include going to schools and talking about the dangers of tobacco use, and reaching residents through various media outlets. CCHD health educators went to (4) schools in 2022 reaching (218) students, in 2023 they went to the same (4) schools but increased the number of students who heard this tobacco prevention presentation to (342) students. The media outlets that have anti-tobacco campaigns, includes the health department's Facebook page, and NYSDOH who has statewide commercials on television.

Preventative care management is yet another focus area chosen for "prevent chronic disease" and the goal is to increase cancer screening rates for breast, cervical and colorectal cancers. The strategy is to look at clinics who put systems in place to give patients a reminder that they need to have these screenings completed. In 2022, CCHD sent out (151) reminders for breast exams, and pap smears; in 2023, there were (120) reminders sent.

Finally, another goal under the focus area of preventative care management for the priority area "prevent chronic disease" is increase early detection of cardiovascular disease, by detecting diabetes, prediabetes and obesity.

The strategy is to increase the number of diabetes screening by healthcare providers using Hemoglobin A1c's (HgA1c's). Particularly, testing HgA1c's in adults of any age with obesity and those that are overweight. Data for this goal is still outstanding.

The second priority area is "promoting well-being, and prevent mental health and substance abuse disorders". The focus area chosen is similar to the priority area, preventing mental and substance use disorders. The goal is to prevent underage drinking and excessive alcohol consumption by adults. The objective is to use evidence base prevention programs in schools. To measure the success of this goal one must look at the number of students and schools participating and completing evidence-based programming. Based on the data provided by Casa Trinity in 2022, they reached (1,165) students in (8) schools. They are still collecting data for 2023.

The second goal chosen for the priority area "promote well-being, and prevent mental health and substance abuse disorders" is preventing opioid overdose deaths. The focus area is still similar to the priority area, preventing mental and substance use disorders. The objective is reducing overdose deaths involving opioids by 7%. The strategy is to increase availability of/access to Naloxone (Narcan). To measure the success of this goal, one must look at the number of residents (301) who were trained in naloxone administration in 2022 and the number of residents (707) that were trained in 2023.

The final goal for the priority area "promotes well-being, and prevent mental health and substance abuse disorders" is preventing suicides. The focus area is still similar to the priority area, preventing mental and substance use disorders. The objective is to reduce suicides mortality rate by 17% per (100,000) people. The strategy is to identify and support people at risk through Gatekeeper training, crisis intervention, and treatment for people at risk of suicide. To measure the success of this goal, one must look at the number of Gatekeeper trainings provided and the number of patients screened with the PHQ-9 tool and referred for treatment. In 2022 CCHD trained (29) staff in an all-day "Mental Health First Aide" training course that covered suicide prevention.

Dr. Watkins went on to discuss respiratory illnesses and stated that there is a lot of activity occurring this fall. He added that as of December 6<sup>th</sup>, the NYS Commissioner of Health declared influenza prevalent in NYS. This means that there is activity in every county. In accordance with Section 2.59 of the NYS Sanitary Code if any worker, within our healthcare and residential facilities regulated under article 28, 36 or 40, who has not been vaccinated against influenza, they are required to wear a facemask when they are around patients. Based on the data for Cattaraugus County from October 1<sup>st</sup> to December 12<sup>th</sup>, there were about (55) positive influenza cases that came through the NYS central data portal system. This means (55) individuals went to local physicians or medical providers, were swabbed and determined to be positive for influenza. He added that there are a number of residents who did not go to a provider but are walking around with influenza. Anyone, six months of age or older, who has not been vaccinated against influenza, it is recommended that they get vaccinated to reduce the severity of the virus. In the year 2020 there was no influenza activity, as we were in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and everyone was locked down; in 2021, influenza activity started to increase; in 2022, influenza activity peaked very early; and now in 2023, influenza activity looks like it is on a similar trajectory as seen in 2021.

As far as COVID-19 is concerned, since the department no longer keeps an active count of positive cases, there are two ways to determine the activity in the community. One is through wastewater surveillance, the other is through the number of positive cases in the local hospital.

Based on the latest wastewater surveillance intensity report (from 11-14-23 – 11-30-23), the trajectory of the average intensity activity is trending upward, and as of Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, there were (9) patients hospitalized with COVID-19 at Olean General Hospital, of which, (1) was in the ICU. In the month of November there were (175) laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 and (100) laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 were identified in the first (10) days of December.

Again, this is the number of positive cases that have gone to a provider and were tested and their test results were uploaded into the State's central data base portal, it is not the number of positive cases in the community. Residents may have tested themselves at home and not reported to a provider or to the department, or who may not have tested at all and walking around with COVID.

Dr. Watkins informed the Board that the department's Certified Home Health Care Agency (CHHA) program was being surveyed (audited) by NYSDOH. He stated that the Long-Term Home Health Care Program (LTHHCP) which was called Nursing Homes Without Walls, is an extension of the CHHA program; it was created as an alternative to nursing home placement for people of all ages who have a chronic disease or are disabled. Individuals in this program were not expected to make a full recovery. The program provided case management, respiratory therapy, social work, nutrition, respite care, and social day care. Services are primarily covered by Medicaid, which resulted in very low reimbursement. The department has not admitted anyone into this program since 2018, since cost reports indicated low revenue, and high expenses for the program. In 2018 the department came to the Board and asked for approval to surrender the department's operating certificate for this program. When the department submitted its letter to NYSDOH to surrender its operating certificate for the LTHHCP in 2018, NYSDOH called and told the department that there may be a future for this program if we held on to the LTHHCP certificate. During this audit review, the department was informed that if a new program is introduced, there would be a new certificate for that program. Therefore, once again the department is asking for the Board's approval to surrender the operating certificate for the LTHHCP that has not had any patients since 2018, no revenue or expenses. A motion was made by Mayor Smith to surrender the LTHHCP operating certificate, the motion was seconded by Ms. Raftis, and unanimously approved.

**ENFORCEMENT LIST:** Mr. Porter, Hearing Administrator Officer reported on the administrative hearing held November 14, 2023 at 9:00AM.

**DOCKET #23-024:**

**Respondent:** Bart Walton, 1964 Michigan Ave., Olean, New York 14760.

**Violations:** Sanitary Code of the Cattaraugus County Health Department (CCHD) Section 24.2.5. Resident failed to submit proof of a current rabies vaccination for his dog Gage to the Health Department when directed following a biting incident.

**Recommendation:** The civil compromise of \$75.00 be changed to a \$75.00 fine and then doubled for no show. Fine and proof of rabies vaccination must be presented to the CCHD by 1-31-24 or a \$10.00 per day per diem will be levied until in compliance.

Dr. Bohan commented that he believes the fines should be raised for these offenses, and wondered if the fines could be tripled. Dr. Watkins replied that it is up to the Board to change the fine structure but we need to look at the big picture which is, many residents live at or below poverty and own pets. They love their animals but unfortunately some do not do the right things, whether that is getting them vaccinated or letting them out to roam. If the fines are increased, that may decrease the department's ability to collect it. Dr. Watkins shared that a discussion was held by the department, to bring before the Board, a review of fines and suggestions for possible increases.

A motion was made by Dr. Chohan to accept Mr. Porter's recommendation, seconded by Dr. Hamlin, and unanimously approved.

**NURSING DIVISION REPORT:** Mrs. Moore shared that the homecare census is (260). She also informed the Board that the Medicare star rating for homecare was at (4) stars [maximum is 5 stars], up from a previous (2.5) stars. She stated that care has always been excellent, but documentation has been what's lacking. The department's CHHA competitor within Cattaraugus County, the Visiting Nurses Association (VNA), is also rated at (4) stars.

The NYSDOH showed up a month early for an anticipated survey (audit). They arrived on November 29<sup>th</sup>, and their expected leave day will be December 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup>. The department has been able to provide the surveyors almost everything they are requesting, no serious findings have been indicated so far in their review, it always falls back to documentation. The exit interview will be pushed off until the beginning of January due to the holidays.

Lead program update: in November there were (90) lead tests conducted with the highest blood lead level (BLL) tested being (33.3ug/dl), [normal is  $\leq$  5ug/dl] which was on a three year old, this was an initial test. The other tests were below (10ug/dl), with (77) of them being (5ug/dl) or below.

In November, there were (12) cases of influenza A, and (3) cases of influenza B. The department did not provide a lot of immunizations in November, but the department still has influenza, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines for anyone who is interested.

HIV Testing: In November; there were (11) tests conducted: (5) were tested in Olean; (5) were tested in Salamanca; and (1) was tested in Machias. There were no positive results identified in any of the tests conducted.

Communicable diseases: In November, there were (11) positive cases of chlamydia; (4) cases of gonorrhea; (1) case of Hepatitis B, contact was made with the MD and the questionnaire was sent; (8) chronic cases of Hepatitis C; (2) cases of salmonellosis; (1) case of syphilis; and (175) positive cases of COVID-19.

Rabies update: no pre or post exposures vaccines were administered in the month of November.

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REPORT:** Mr. Ring stated that the first rabies clinic for 2024 will be held on Saturday, January 6<sup>th</sup> and it will be held at the DPW garage in Little Valley; He went on to report that there are two upcoming food service manager trainings being held at St. Bonaventure, they are scheduled for Monday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, and Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup>.

Capital project updates; there are still a couple of construction projects going on, one is in Ellicottville, and the other is in South Dayton but both should be wrapping up for the year. In 2024 there are several major construction projects that will get underway, they are located in Little Valley, Portville, Franklinville, Allegany and a continuation of the Ellicottville project.

Staff continues to work on core programs, and annual inspections should be wrapping up prior to the end of the year.

**Old/New Business:** Dr. Bohan shared that he has been asked who will replace retiring Board member Sondra Fox. The answer is we do not choose the Board member, this is a function of the Legislature, more specifically the chairman of the Legislature chooses the member based on (3) recommendation of the Board. He added that the bylaws states, the Board of Health shall consist of seven members, one of whom shall be a member of the County Legislature, at least three of whom shall be physicians licensed to practice in the State of New York, additionally, the City of Olean and the City of Salamanca shall be entitled to one representative, for a total of nine.

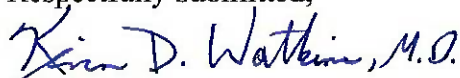
Dr. Watkins reminded everyone that there is no meeting in January, the next scheduled Board meeting is Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup>. He asked the nominating committee to convene during the break to select nominees for the President and Vice President positions on the Board. Dr. Watkins stated that unfortunately, Dr. Bohan has indicated that he feels that the torch should be turned over to a new Board Member for the Presidency. The nomination committee includes Teresa Raftis, Legislator Kelly Andreano, Kathryn Cooney-Thrush, and Donna Vickman who will reach out to Board members and provide the entire Board a slate at the next meeting.

Dr. Watkins went on to state that it has been a great experience working with Dr. Bohan, he is a great listener, great advisor, and that he has enjoyed the ten years that he has had working with him. He added that Dr. Bohan will not be leaving the Board, but he is choosing not to hold the seat as the Chair of the Board any longer. He reiterated that he appreciates all the work Dr. Bohan has done, and it has been a pleasure to work with him. Dr. Bohan responded that he has appreciated the Boards confidence in him by making him the President of the Board for the past (10) years, and it has been a pleasure working with Dr. Watkins. The staff of this county health department is really excellent and the closer you watch what they are doing, the more you realize that the county get their money's worth out of the staff at the health department.

Mayor Smith added that true leadership is marked by the ability to possess power without telling people how much power you have, the ability to build consensus for tough decisions, and to chair a meeting from a technical standpoint. Dr. Bohan has been a master of all of those things; much love and respect.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Kathryn Cooney-Thrush, the motion was seconded by Dr. Hamlin, and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin D. Watkins, M.D., M.P.H.  
Secretary to the Board of Health