

REDUCING MEDICAL ERRORS IN PERINATAL HEPATITIS B PREVENTION

PROBLEM 1:

Cases of hepatitis B infection, including **fatalities**, of infants born to hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)-positive mothers occur due to inaccurate transcription or interpretation of prenatal HBsAg lab results.

SOLUTIONS:

- ❖ The mother's obstetrical (OB) provider should include an actual **copy** of the mother's original hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)-positive laboratory report with the medical records accompanying the mother to the birth hospital.
- ❖ If a copy is not available, do **not** rely on transcribed test results. A copy of the HBsAg-positive laboratory report should be obtained from the obstetrical provider or electronic laboratory reporting system and placed in the medical record of the both the mother and infant.
- ❖ Birth hospital staff should be able to **accurately interpret** the mother's prenatal hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) lab results and understand the **implication for medical management** of newborns
- ❖ Birth hospital staff should **alert the nursery** in the event of an infant born to a hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)-positive mother so that the infant begins timely and appropriate immunoprophylaxis
- ❖ Written protocols and standing orders are an effective way to ensure that these policies are operationalized

Standing order guidelines often recommended to prevent hepatitis B transmission can be found in, *Guidelines for Standing Orders in Labor & Delivery and Nursery Units to Prevent Hepatitis B Virus Transmission to Newborns* at:
<http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2130per.pdf>

PROBLEM 2:

Up to 20% of mothers identified as hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)-positive on *Newborn Screening Specimen* forms **are actually HBsAg-negative**. This results in unnecessary emotional anguish for the mother and in the use of unnecessary perinatal hepatitis B case management resources.

SOLUTIONS:

- ❖ Birth hospital staff should **accurately** transcribe the mother's prenatal hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) lab result onto the "Screening Lab Copy" (white page) of the *Newborn Screening Specimen* form
 - ✓ If the mother is HBsAg-**positive**, the birth hospital staff should check "positive" under the "Hepatitis B Antigen Status" question
 - ✓ If the mother is HBsAg **status unknown**, the birth hospital staff should check "unknown" under the "Hepatitis B Antigen Status" question
 - ✓ If the mother is HBsAg-**negative**, the birth hospital staff should check "negative" under the "Hepatitis B Antigen Status" question
- ❖ The birth hospital staff should consult a **copy** of the mother's prenatal hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) lab result when transcribing this information on to the *Newborn Screening Specimen* form

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the MDPH Immunization Program Perinatal Hepatitis B Nurse at: 617-983-6800