

Healthline with Yale Cancer Center

Hosts

Edward Chu, MD Chief of Medical Oncology

Kenneth Miller, MD Director of Supportive Care

WTIC Newstalk 1080

Connecticut Department of
Public Health

Guest Expert:

J. Robert Galvin, MD

*Commissioner, Connecticut Department of
Public Health*



*Healthline with Yale Cancer Center is a weekly broadcast on WTIC Newstalk 1080
Sunday Mornings at 8:30*

Listen live online at www.wtic.com or

Listen to archived podcasts at www.yalecancercenter.org

This is Healthline. A joint venture of WTIC news talk 1080 and Yale Cancer Center. Yale Cancer Center is a resource for cancer programs throughout Connecticut, developing new advances in prevention, screening, diagnosis and treatment. On Healthline you will hear from some of the leading doctors in the country. Healthline is not intended to provide medical advice. Yale Cancer Center urges you to consult with a qualified physician in your community for diagnosis and for answers to your medical questions. And now, our co-hosts Oncologists Ken Miller and Ed Chu

Chu Good morning and welcome to Healthline. My name is Dr. Ed Chu and I am Chief of Medical Oncology at the Yale Cancer Center here in New Haven, Connecticut. Healthline, with the Yale Cancer Center, is our way of providing you with the most up to date information on cancer care every Sunday morning at 8:30 a.m. on WTIC NewsTalk 1080. Healthline features some of the nation's leading oncologists and cancer specialists who are in the forefront of the battle to fight cancer right here in Connecticut. Each week, we are joined by a different expert from the Yale Cancer Center, and together we discuss the myths about cancer, the latest treatment options available to cancer patients, and advances in clinical research. Our goal is to give you help and hope. If you would like to submit a question about cancer to Healthline, please e-mail us at healthline@yale.edu or call 1-888-234-4-YCC, and we will answer your questions on air or in a future broadcast. If you are interested in listening to past editions of Healthline, or if you would like to learn more about a specific type of cancer, all of our shows are now posted in both audio and written formats on the Yale Cancer Center website, www.yalecancercenter.org. Today our program focuses on the issues relating to the Connecticut Department of Public Health. It is my great pleasure to introduce our special guest, J. Robert Galvin M.D., Commissioner of the Department of Public Health. Commissioner Galvin, thank you so much for being with us today on Healthline.

Galvin You are very welcome, good morning.

Chu Dr. Galvin, what is the main focus of the Department of Public Health here in the state of Connecticut?

Galvin We look to protect the health and safety of the three and a half million people who live in the state of Connecticut. To accomplish this, we look at problems from multiple angles using the 800 people who work for the department.

Chu Last night I had a chance to look at the public health website. There are so many different services and programs that are offered by the Department of Public Health; perhaps you could give our listeners a brief overview of some of the specific programs that you are focused on.

Galvin Certainly. We have very active immunization and vaccination programs in Connecticut, which are ranked top in the United States. We have a variety of functional areas as well. We operate the State Medical Laboratory on Clinton Street, located just behind the Bushnell Memorial. This

facility does a great deal of work with the various towns; it is also a top ranked lab for bioterrorism and for bioterrorist activities. A good deal of time here is spent investigating substances, which may or may not be harmful to the citizens. As a department we inspect and certify every drop of water that's consumed within the state of Connecticut. We license and regulate healthcare professionals all the way from physicians to athletic trainers. We have many programmatic areas varying all the way from asbestos and lead programs to programs which involve children and infants. We have active partnerships with the 169 towns and communities in Connecticut, and also with our friends in the two tribal nations.

Chu Sounds like there's a great deal of activity going on in your department. How would someone in the general public learn more?

Galvin Information can be accessed through the Connecticut Department of Public Health website, www.dph.state.ct.us, which has a great deal of information, or by calling the department informational line at (860) 509-8000.

Chu A minute ago you mentioned the word bioterrorism. Obviously the whole issue of terrorism was brought to the forefront last week with all the arrests made in England; not to divulge any secrets, but has your office been placed on a higher alert in the past week or so?

Galvin We have not formally been placed on a higher alert; however, we do investigate substances and incidences on a weekly basis which may be of a bioterrorist nature. For example, last week we were involved with an incident where a suspicious substance was discovered in a courtroom, and was thought to be of a bioterrorist nature. We were able to analyze that substance and assure the court system that it was benign. During the investigation we worked directly with the federal bureau of investigation, the state police, and with the various legal and law enforcement bureaus across the state. We are very deeply involved and have close working relationships; there is rarely a week that goes by that we are not involved in one incident or another.

Chu In your professional opinion, do you feel that Connecticut has the proper safeguards if a bioterrorist event should take place?

Galvin We certainly are a very advanced state, and have even received accolades from various individuals saying that we are one of the leaders in the Eastern United States for safety. We have a very active partnership with law enforcement, the State Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction services, and a great number of other agencies. Problems are worked out with through a collaboration with the medical side and the law enforcement side. We still have concerns about the individual family, and individuals throughout the state, and what would happen if they had knowledge of a bioterrorism scenario, but we are also concerned about infectious disease scenarios and weather related incidents such as fires, floods, and ice storms.

- Chu Speaking on the infectious disease aspect, you mentioned earlier that Connecticut is one of the top ranked as far as vaccination programs. As we are finishing up the summer months and heading toward fall and winter, the issue of influenza comes into play; where are we in terms of being prepared for the disease and the vaccination?
- Galvin We see influenza every single year in Connecticut. We have been told that there are adequate supplies of vaccine for the ordinary flu. This should not be confused with the avian or pandemic flu though. In the United States, approximately 35,000 people die from complications of influenza. We are concerned that despite all our efforts, only about 60% of eligible people will be vaccinated for the flu. In Connecticut, some of the vaccines are purchased by the State, while the other portions of the vaccine are purchased by private entities and private business. Two years ago we fielded 13,000 requests for vaccines and phone calls about vaccine information, and were able to get everybody the vaccine.
- Chu The issue of the avian flu has become widely reported in the news; is it a concern for Connecticut?
- Galvin We track this on a daily basis. We have two physicians within the department, one of whom is a pulmonologist, and they spend the first hour and a half of each day reviewing information on the Internet from all over the world. Under Governor Rell's direction, we have had an active partnership with several other agencies; most notably the Department of Agriculture who performs all the testing for flu viruses in New England. We also have an active partnership with the Department of Environmental Protection who deals with wild birds. We meet twice a month and have developed protocols and policies to research where the risk may be. We are aware of the fact that some people have small flocks of barnyard pet birds or fighting birds, which are not regulated by any particular agency. We are looking at initiatives to possibly vaccinate those birds, or at least make it possible for people with small flocks of birds to come forward and get some assistance.
- Chu In your role as Commissioner of the Department of Health, you spend a lot of your time focusing on how to improve public health policy. What are some recent initiatives that you and your office are focusing your attention on?
- Galvin A lot of our attention is focused on providing high quality care to every single individual in the state; however, we have three and a half million people in Connecticut, and an estimated 85,000 undocumented citizens, 15,000 of whom are children. We also have 16,000 to 18,000 migratory workers, and populations who do not have access to healthcare because of ethnic and language barriers. We try to get high quality healthcare to every single individual within the state.
- Chu At this time we would like to remind you to e-mail your questions to us at healthline@yale.edu, or call 1-888-234-4-YCC. We are going to take a short break for a Medical Minute. Please stay

tuned to learn more information about the Department Of Public Health in Connecticut, with Commissioner J. Robert Galvin.

Medical Minute

This is a medical minute brought to you as a public service by the Yale Cancer Center. Breast cancer is the second most common cancer in women. In Connecticut alone, approximately 3000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, but there is new hope for these women. Earlier detection, noninvasive treatments, and novel therapies provide more options for patients to fight breast cancer. In 2006, more women are learning to live with this disease than ever before. Women should schedule an annual mammogram, beginning at age 40 or earlier if they have risk factors associated with the disease. With screening, early detection, and a healthy lifestyle, breast cancer can be defeated. Clinical trials are currently underway at federally designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers such as the Yale Cancer Center to make innovative new treatments, which have not yet been approved by the Food and Drug Administration available to patients. For more information, visit their web site at yalecancercenter.org. That's yalecancercenter.org.

Chu Here, at the Yale Cancer Center, we focus a lot of our efforts on trying to eliminate health disparities; especially issues relating to the minority underserved population. As I understand, this is a significant priority that your office deals with as well. What are some of the things that you and your office are doing with respect to health disparities?

Galvin Ms. Nancy Berger from my organization, and Dr. Salner from Hartford Hospital, have created a state-wide correlation for cancer studies, treatments, investigation, and diagnosis with over 200 partners. It is a remarkable correlation that receives huge contributions from The Yale University School of Medicine, and also from the University of Connecticut. We realize that there are areas in the state, and certain populations, that do not have access to the appropriate type of cancer diagnosis and treatment. For this reason, we are working hard to find these pockets and to design programs that work for people who are in this relative minority. With a coalition of 200 different partners, we hope that we will be able to reach out and help people who have not been reached out to before.

Chu This is important because screening and early detection are key to identifying patients who are at a high risk. You have also focused a great deal of attention on trying to develop programs for breast and cervical cancer. Could explain the program that is ongoing here in Connecticut?

Galvin We have a very ambitious program in screening for breast and cervical cancer, which is directed toward women who are at or below 300% of the poverty level. We have reached out to every area of the state with good results, which are getting even better. Last year in March, I went to the legislature and asked them for more money because we had screened so many people in that fiscal year that we began to run out of money. No one likes to overstep one's budget, but we are

screening so actively, and retaining the people that we have screened, that we were able to get additional money to continue screening and find every single person who can benefit.

Chu If a woman is able to take advantage of these screening services, and say for instance a cancer is suspected or identified, what resources are available for that individual to undergo further testing and then treatment?

Galvin Some years ago, they realized there was a gap between women being diagnosed and appropriate treatment involved. We have closed that gap, and I can assure the audience that we have the resources to provide further refined diagnostic workup and treatment to those who need it.

Chu If you have questions for Dr. Galvin, or for Healthline, I encourage you to go to our website www.yalecancercenter.org for more information about cancer and the resources available to you. I would like to thank Dr. Galvin for joining us on Healthline. Remember to tune into WTIC NewsTalk 1080 every Sunday morning at 8:30 am for Healthline with the Yale Cancer Center. Our next program will feature an update on skin cancer. Until then, this is Dr. Ed Chu from the Yale Cancer Center wishing you a safe and healthy week.