Third MU Health Care worker found to have latent TB

By Emily David
July 24, 2009 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — A third MU Health Care worker has tested positive for latent tuberculosis, hospital spokeswoman Mary Jenkins said.

University Hospital officials have not yet determined if the newest case is linked to the original active TB case announced on June 4, Jenkins said. The source of the case is still under investigation.

A total of 336 people have been tested in connection with the original active TB case. Of the 318 test results that MU Health Care officials have received to date, three people have been diagnosed with latent TB — all MU Health Care workers.

MU Health Care officials are continuing to investigate the situation, Jenkins said.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

LETTERS: Debating the future of 'Pepper & Friends'

By Missourian staff
July 23, 2009 | 11:32 a.m. CDT

Editor's note: Dan William Peek, a Columbia resident, submitted the following letter to the editor in regard to the decision to cancel long-running KOMU talk show "Pepper & Friends." Peek sent his letter to the Missourian, several other media outlets, and to MU System President Gary Forsee. The letter was then forwarded to MU Chancellor Brady Deaton, who wrote his own response to Peek. Deaton's letter, as well as Peek's response to Deaton, are all included below.

Paul Pepper may have saved a child's life. In June, I was a guest on his show to talk about a Grandparents and Others on Watch fund raising event. We did not spend a lot of time on GrOW's mission of keeping molesters away from children. But a few days after the show, Paul got an anonymous letter reporting a child molester. He forwarded it to the authorities. God bless him.

I don't know anything about Marty Siddall, except that he has made a very arrogant public statement about what a strong "decider" he is (Siddall was quoted in the Tribune on July 6: "The decision has been made. I worked on it very hard, and I didn't make the decision with the intention of changing it."). I imagine that many are as angered as I am that Siddall has moved here from whatever McCity he is from with the gall to try to make us over in his image. We have a strong, long tradition here in outstate Missouri of community arts and music. We have writers and journalists who celebrate the community and our life here — some of whom are employed by your paper. We have a preference for community-based media, such as KOPN and the Tribune. Paul and James are important members of that media. There has always been a locally produced, community-centered show on KOMU and we cannot allow an outsider come in and change that.
Move on Siddall, go back to Stepford and be the decider there. Take "Access Hollywood" with you. There are other TV outlets in this ADI. We'll boycott every one of your advertisers if you cancel "Pepper & Friends."

— Dan William Peek

President Forsee forwarded to me your e-mail dated July 15 regarding the cancellation of "Pepper & Friends." While we here at MU are extremely proud of the show's history and the contribution it has made to our community over the years, we are also mindful of the need to make difficult operating decisions in this challenging economic environment. It is with sadness that I must reaffirm the decision to air the final "Pepper & Friends" show on September 18 of this year.

I want to personally assure you that, for at least the last 10 years, everyone at KOMU 8 worked diligently to financially support Pepper & Friends. Despite those considerable efforts, we've finally had to acknowledge that the high cost of production makes the show economically unfeasible going forward. KOMU no longer has the resources to continue to underwrite the program.

Additionally, I need to point out that this issue is not unique to "Pepper & Friends." Weeks prior to the announcement to end the show, 13 jobs at KOMU were eliminated because the station no longer had the advertising revenues to support them. As I'm certain you can appreciate, these are very difficult decisions for everyone involved.

I can also assure you that this was an extremely difficult decision for Marty Siddall. By the tone of your letter, I must conclude that you don't personally know Mr. Siddall. If you did, you would know that he has been a very active member of our community for more than 10 years. He raised his children here, and he has amply and repeatedly demonstrated his commitment to our community.

Marty served as chair of the United Way Campaign and the United Way board of directors. He served as chair of the Columbia Chamber of Commerce, and for 10 years as a board member of Great Rivers Council of the Boy Scouts. He currently serves as community chair of the Friends of Scouting campaign.
Marty is also co-chair of the Score Against Hunger campaign for the Central Missouri Food Bank, serves as a board member for CrimeStoppers and the Jefferson Institute, and commits his personal time to numerous other boards and committees in our area.

As KOMU viewers know, "Pepper & Friends" is just one of many components of KOMU's broad-based community service initiative. I want to personally assure you that the cancellation of the show does not diminish KOMU's commitment to serve the public interest. KOMU will continue to honor the spirit of service that hosts Paul Pepper and James Mouser have brought to our community. In fact, KOMU will continue a number of elements of the show in other locally originated programming.

Beginning this fall, KOMU will feature a segment within its morning programming that will include issues and events that have been regularly covered during the talk segments of "Pepper & Friends." The station will also introduce a similar segment in its 5 p.m. newscast.

Given the higher viewing levels at these time periods, I have been assured that KOMU's community service commitment will actually be expanded.

It is my sincere hope that our community will spend the remaining weeks of the show celebrating the accomplishments that everyone associated with the production of "Pepper & Friends" deserves.

In closing, I have a request of you: Should you choose to continue your complaint by distributing the letter you penned to President Forsee, would you please also copy my letter to you? I trust you agree that it is only fair that people have an opportunity to hear both sides of the situation.

— Brady Deaton

Dear Chancellor Deaton: Thank you for your response. I will copy your letter on all pertinent correspondence — and there is going to be a lot of pertinent correspondence. I must tell you that I doubt my doing so will change anyone's position one bit.

And let me reaffirm something to you. A viewer boycott and a boycott of KOMU advertisers will take place, and a community-wide movement in support of what we have always thought of as our show is already underway.
Mr. Siddall may have resided here for 10 years, but in that time he apparently has learned nothing about the character of outstate Missourians. He has flatly stated that he did not make his decision with a reversal in mind (not an exact quote, but pretty close — as reported in the Tribune). Not a fair or open-minded way to express himself. His tone and attitude throughout has been arrogant and faithless. There are United Way Campaigns and Boy Scout troops in most cities and towns. But there is only one "Pepper & Friends" show. And that is here in Columbia.

If you look out your residence window and squint a little, you will glimpse Columbia and, beyond that, outstate Missouri — it's on the other side of the columns. On a more positive note, it appears that the administration at MU is generally doing a good job. I hope that the wisdom to simply correct Mr. Siddall's misjudgment can somehow be found.

— Dan William Peek
Employers prepare for another minimum wage hike

By Janese Heavin

Thursday, July 23, 2009

Public entities are prepared to absorb extra costs that will accompany the automatic minimum wage increase that takes effect tomorrow.

The federal minimum wage will increase from $6.55 to $7.25 per hour. Because Missouri’s minimum wage is already $7.05, minimum wage workers here can expect to see a 20-cent-per-hour raise. For an employee with a 40-hour work week, that comes out to $416 extra per year in Missouri.

At the University of Missouri, the increase will mostly affect student employees. MU didn’t make any extra budget allocations for the wage raise; rather, departments will have to absorb the costs within their current budgets, spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said.

“In a sense, it’s a cost of doing business they will need to absorb, much like absorbing the increased cost of supplies or travel,” she said.

Banken said departments should be able to handle the increased costs because of savings realized through the hiring freeze, limited travel and other cutbacks made over the past year.

Within the city of Columbia’s budget, the minimum-wage increase will have the most effect on the Parks and Recreation Department. That department employs between 400 and 500 part-time workers during the course of a year, which includes the 200 young people who participate in the eight-week summer Career Awareness Related Experience, or CARE, program.

The 20-cent increase “is not going to be a huge burden, but it’s something we will have to plan for,” parks Director Mike Hood said. “A majority of our people are already making above minimum wage.”

The wage increase isn’t expected to affect Columbia Public Schools because all but a handful of summer employees already earn above minimum wage, Business Director Linda Quinley said.

Businesses also are bracing to weather the increase. David Maxwell, owner of The Bread Basket Café, said he doesn’t expect tomorrow’s raise to significantly affect his business, but the continual increases over time will.
"It continues to go up," he said, referring to state law that requires yearly increases to reflect Consumer Price Index changes. "Wages continue to take a bigger chunk out of the bottom line, and eventually operators have to raise prices. It's just part of doing business."

The minimum wage increases have other side effects, Maxwell said, such as forcing employers to hire fewer workers. And those earning more than the minimum wage often expect to see an increase, too, when they realize new, less experienced employees are earning similar wages, he said.

"You can't keep paying more for lack of experience without it hurting something," Maxwell said.

Although The Bread Basket Café employees earn straight hourly wages, waiters and waitresses who receive tips are paid 50 percent of the minimum wage in Missouri. Tipped employees can expect to see a 10-cent raise tomorrow, from $3.53 to $3.63 per hour.
The golden years

Turmeric: An antioxidant to add to the power-food list

By Marcia Vanderlip

Wednesday, July 22, 2009

Have you had your turmeric today? You might want to think about getting more of the pungent yellow spice into your diet.

An increasing body of research shows curcumin, the main active ingredient in turmeric root, is a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory that could fight or help prevent cancer and ease other human ailments, from arthritis to Alzheimer’s disease.

One of the most recent studies at the University of Missouri found that curcumin could reduce the cancer risk for post-menopausal women who have undergone hormone treatment.

Women who take estrogen and progestin hormone therapy have an increased risk of developing tumors. The MU study found that the spice delayed, decreased and reduced the frequency of tumors. The results show that women “could potentially take curcumin to protect themselves from developing progestin-accelerated tumors,” said Salman Hyder, Zalk Missouri Professor of Tumor Angiogenesis.

About 6 million women in the United States are using hormone replacement therapy, said Hyder, a professor of biomedical sciences in the College of Veterinary Medicine and the Dalton Cardiovascular Research Center.

Previous studies have shown that curcumin appears to slow the spread of cancerous tumors in animals. Curcumin also is being studied as a treatment for Alzheimer’s disease, Hyder said. “It is already known that” turmeric “has properties that can prevent cancer,” he added. Turmeric also is used in the East and the West to ease arthritis and joint pain.

Turmeric, the spice that gives curry powder its golden hue, has been used for centuries in Chinese and Indian medicine; it is derived from a ginger-like root and has been used treat a wide range of ailments, from arthritis to depression. Western scientists have begun to acknowledge the healing possibilities and purifying effects of the spice, a staple in Indian and Pakistani kitchens.
Hyder thinks Westerners would certainly benefit from eating more of the foods and spices that are prevalent in Asian diets. "One in eight women gets breast cancer in America," he said. That number drops significantly in places such as Japan and India, he said.

The American diet has strayed from natural, unprocessed foods and compounds, said Hyder, a native of Pakistan. He noted that human clinical trials will determine how much turmeric we need in our diets for it to be beneficial, but he recommends adding it to our diets as a preventative.

"Since turmeric is already consumed in South Asia and in the eastern countries and there is evidence for reduced incidence of certain types of cancers in that part of the world, it is possible that one is already consuming enough curcumin that is protective. Turmeric is consumed almost every day, so the blood levels are likely constant in Southeastern countries."

Hyder and his wife, Rakhshan, often cook with turmeric. Rakhshan, the main cook for the family of four, frequently uses the sharp, earthy spice.

"We try to keep a healthy diet with lots of vegetables," she said. Among her family's favorite curry and turmeric dishes are a potato-tomato dish, "Aloo Bhujia" and a meat-potato curry called "Aloo Gosht." She shops for her curry and Indian ingredients at World Harvest International and Gourmet Foods and at Campus Eastern Foods.

Cookbook author Bal Arneson slims down Indian recipes in "Everyday Indian: 100 Fast, Fresh, and Healthy Recipes" (Whitecap Books, 2009). Her recipes focus on flavor but cut the preparation and cooking time as well as the butter and cream. She offers her kidney bean and yam stew with cubed oranges as a favorite dish that utilizes turmeric.

One need not seek out exotic recipes to get turmeric into the diet. Remember, turmeric is what makes mustard yellow. Add a bit of turmeric to tofu scrambles, eggs, omelets, egg salad or potato salad or soups, or as a substitute for saffron in paella.
Mizzou raised $122.6 million last fiscal year

By Kavita Kumar
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

This piece of information came in too late for my story today about UMSL’s record-breaking fund-raising year. But Mizzou’s development folks got back to me today to tell me they were also pleased with their fund-raising year, having raised $122.6 million at the end of the fiscal year ending June 30.

That includes cash gifts, pledges, expectancies and private grants. The total is down from $160.5 million the previous year. But FY’08 was a record year and the last full fiscal year of the school’s billion-dollar capital campaign (aka For All We Call Mizzou campaign), noted Beth Hammock, a spokesperson for the MU development office. The eight-year campaign ended December 31, 2008.

“Given the state of the economy, we are pleased with the level of support we received in fiscal year ’09,” Hammock told me in an email.

She added that the school’s goal for last year was $120 million. And the school exceeded that — obviously — by a couple million dollars.

But not every university is happy with their fund-raising efforts during the recession. I saw this recent story in the Baltimore Sun that chronicles some of the pains that other schools have been feeling in this realm. The story noted, for example, that the University of Maryland raised $112 million last year, which is about 12 percent less than its goal to repeat its record $130 million from the previous year.

I’m sure we’ll hear more about this in the weeks to come as more schools announce their returns for the year.

The Grade is the St. Louis region’s premier blog on education and child welfare. To read other recent posts, go to www.stltoday.com/thegrade.