

BACTERIA

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Drennon said it is not uncommon for the health department to see one or two cases of vibrio infection per year. There were no reported cases in Sarasota in 2013, and according to Drennon, the county has never had more than two cases since 2009. There were also no Charlotte cases in 2013.

Drennon said the symptoms of the infection depend on how the bacteria enters the body.

According to the DOH website, ingestion of *Vibrio vulnificus* can cause vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain. Infection through a cut can lead to skin breakdown and ulcers. Healthy individuals typically develop a mild disease, but infections can be more serious for people who have weakened immune systems, particularly those with chronic liver disease.

DOH spokeswoman Kathleen Gray said, "Any individuals experiencing something similar to that definitely need to go to their physician."

Charlotte County Health Department epidemiologist Ana Scuteri said vibrio infections usually are diagnosed when a patient goes to a health care provider or hospital, which contacts the health department upon diagnosis so it can do a case investigation.

"Depending on what type of vibrio it is," she said, "doctors usually

VIBRIO BACTERIA SAFETY TIPS

The following are tips to avoid vibrio bacteria, which can be contracted by eating raw shellfish or exposing an open wound to coastal waters:

- Cook shellfish thoroughly and don't eat raw oysters or other raw shellfish (scallops, clams, mussels).
- When cooking shellfish in the shell, either boil them until the shells open and continue boiling for five more minutes, or steam them until the shells open and continue cooking for nine more minutes. Don't eat those shellfish that don't open during cooking.
- Boil shucked oysters at least three minutes or fry them in oil at least 10 minutes at 375 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Avoid cross-contamination of cooked seafood and other foods with raw seafood and juices from raw seafood.
- Eat shellfish promptly after cooking, and refrigerate leftovers.
- Avoid exposure of open wounds or broken skin to warm salt water, brackish water or raw shellfish harvested from such waters.
- Wear protective clothing, like gloves, when handling raw shellfish.

— Source: Florida Department of Health (www.floridahealth.gov)

prescribe antibiotics, usually (for) five to seven days."

Scuteri said it's hard to assess the relative deadliness of the bacteria, because those who get an infection are "people whose health is already compromised."

'Flesh-eating bacteria' may be overblown

Asked if "flesh-eating" was an accurate description for vibrio bacteria, "I would say no; I'm not really familiar with it being characterized that way — other than reading it in news stories," Drennon said.

Drennon explained flesh-eating symptoms, or necrotizing fasciitis, in which an infection of deeper layers of the skin causes rapid tissue death, usually is not associated with vibrio bacteria.

"It's possible in a severe situation that a person would have necrotizing

fasciitis, Drennon allowed, "but it's not a typical symptom" of a vibrio infection.

Scuteri also disagreed with the "flesh-eating" designation.

"I don't know why they would even call it that," she said.

Although Scuteri allowed that flesh-eating systems could occur if an infection was permitted to progress for a long time without treatment, she said that happened in "very few cases," none of which have been in Charlotte County.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website, group *A streptococcus* (group A strep), *Klebsiella*, *clostridium*, *E. coli*, *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Aeromonas hydrophila* are the most common causes of necrotizing fasciitis. However, "most people who get necrotizing fasciitis have other health problems that may lower their body's ability to fight infection," the website states.

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COMMUNITY NEWS BRIEFS

SCF hosts teacher prep info sessions

State College of Florida will host information sessions in South Venice about its Alternative Certification Program for teachers. The program is for people who have at least a bachelor's degree with a noneducation major or teachers with temporary certificates who need professional course work.

Hourlong sessions are scheduled at 6 p.m. Aug. 21 and Sept. 11 at SCF Venice, 8000 S. Tamiami Trail, building 800, Selby Room.

After finishing all courses in the program and passing required state and college exams, participants will be eligible for the Florida Department of Education's professional teaching certificate. Evening and weekend scheduling of classes allows working professionals to participate. The cost for the program is approximately \$2,200.

Applications and more information is available at www.scf.edu/TeacherEd, or call SCF Venice at 941-408-1481 or email sheffis@scf.edu.

Visani partners with Relay for Life

Visani Comedy Club, 2400 Kings Highway, Port Charlotte, will hold a Giveback Night event

at 8 p.m. Aug. 7. Relay for Life teams will receive credit for their team when they purchase tickets to this event. Tickets are \$10 per person. To purchase tickets, call Virginia at the American Cancer Society at 239-936-1113.

Job fair set

On Wednesday, job seekers and employers will have a chance to connect at a job fair hosted by the North Port Economic Development Corporation.

The event, set for 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the gym at North Port High School, is one North Port EDC Executive Director Jean Harris hopes will attract professionals either in need of a job or looking for a career change.

"Because it's being held at the high school, I've had people who ask if it's for high school students. It's not," she said. "We're looking for any and all job seekers. It's not restricted to North Port. Any of the surrounding areas — Venice, Englewood, Port Charlotte. We want everyone to feel welcome and to use this as an opportunity to find a position that they're looking for."

The job fair is sponsored by Fawcett Memorial Hospital and CORE Construction.

There will be representatives from the education and health

care fields, manufacturing, transportation and construction industries. There is a \$100 exhibitor fee for employers, or \$50 if they are already a member of the NPEDC.

Job seekers should bring copies of their résumé. Suits aren't necessary, but those on the job hunt should be prepared to speak directly to employers. North Port High is at 6400 W. Price Blvd.

For more information on Wednesday's event, or for an employer interested in having a booth, call the North Port EDC at 941-429-7857.

Submarine veterans to meet

Submarine Veterans of the Sailfish Base meet at noon the third Thursday of every month at American Legion Post 159, 1770 Venice Ave., Venice. All submarine veterans are welcome. For more information, contact Tim Foster at subfrosty597@gmail.com.

Antique dealers at market

The Farmers Market will play host to various antique dealers from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Aug. 10 at the History Park, 501 Shreve St., Punta Gorda. In addition to the regular vendors, antique dealers also will be on-site. For more information, call 941-380-6814.

JAIL

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meal quality, mail access and the cost of hygiene items, among others.

"That's pretty much everything you can grieve," Turney said. "An inmate can grieve anything they feel is out of standard (with Florida Model Jail Standards). And that's usually the very first thing they do — they ask for a copy of the jail standards."

Some inmates with

allegations of wrongdoing take matters further and file lawsuits. The jail does not have a law library, but rather inmates can request legal material to be delivered through a third party — Legal Research Associates. There were 1,780 requests to LRA from the local jail in 2013.

"You can see how they can stay busy," Turney said.

Since 2008, there have been 45 suits filed at the federal level against jail staff, though they almost never make it to trial.

As of Wednesday, the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office had eight open lawsuits filed against it, according to CCSO spokeswoman Debbie Bowe. Three of those suits involve the jail.

The non-jail cases have totaled \$16,958 in legal fees so far, or about \$3,391 per case. The jail cases have cost \$34,129 in legal fees, or about \$11,376 per case.

"It's very important for us to keep proper records and documents of everything," Bureau of

Detention Commander Maj. Earl Goodwyne said. "We have to be good stewards of county money."

A couple of drawers in a large filing cabinet near the administration offices at the jail are dedicated to "possible lawsuits," where paperwork is kept for just that.

"We're very professional and follow all standards and procedures," Goodwyne said. "But even then, sometimes incidents occur and we get a lawsuit (against us)."

Adding to the likelihood

of inmates filing suits is the presence of "jailhouse lawyers."

"It's not uncommon for an inmate who has been in this situation before or has a grasp on an issue to help other inmates with cases or briefs," Goodwyne said.

For example, an inmate in November filed a federal suit against jail staff for allegedly denying him adequate access to legal materials, proper health care and freedom of religious expression. Another inmate acted as

his paralegal and handwrote the complaints.

While there was no apparent trouble with that duo, Goodwyne explained how the quid pro quo nature of these transactions can stir up additional issues for jail staff.

"What we have to do then is keep an eye on that so bartering doesn't get out of hand — there could potentially be a problem if a barter doesn't go down right," Goodwyne said. "It's the same reason we don't allow gambling."

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CURE

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educating and helping to fund research to try to help these children. On Oct. 18, on Dearborn Street in Englewood, the Foundation hopes to raise money during their annual Pasta Bar for a Cure event to help further that research.

Samantha and Nick Dzembo, of Sarasota, created the Foundation after their son Connor

was diagnosed with A-T just before his third birthday. She explained that the disease is multi-symptomatic and presents itself in a variety of ways in the children it affects.

"A-T is a very rare genetic condition and is neurodegenerative, which means that over time, it will worsen," she said. "One of the things it does is to kill brain cells that affect movement and speech, so they lose their ability to walk and to articulate clearly."

With Connor, the disease especially affected his immune system, so many of his symptoms were internal. His mother said that his first symptoms were that he had absolutely no immune system or t-cells, a type of lymphocyte that plays a central role in cell-mediated immunity. Still, it took two years to properly diagnose his condition, because it was so uncommon.

His mother said that though muscle fatigue is his biggest enemy at this time, Connor does still walk independently, which is important because at his age, most A-T children use, at minimum, a walker and some are already in wheelchairs full time. As Connor approaches his eighth birthday, many of his symptoms are kept at bay with medication.

"This disease is so rare that there are only 500 children in the United States who have it and 600 in the whole world," she said. "Right now, Connor's immune system is under control, because he's on antibiotics every two days."

Unfortunately, because A-T is still unknown to most people, funding for research is sparse. That's why the Dzembo founded the Wobbly Feet Foundation, and why they conduct at least three fundraisers a year for it. What is known is that A-T is an inherited condition, and can only present itself when a

child is born to two carriers of the disease, who probably don't even know that they have it. Both Samantha and Nick were carriers, and only found out after Connor's diagnosis.

Dzembo said that money raised at the Pasta Bar event has already been earmarked for a specific purpose.

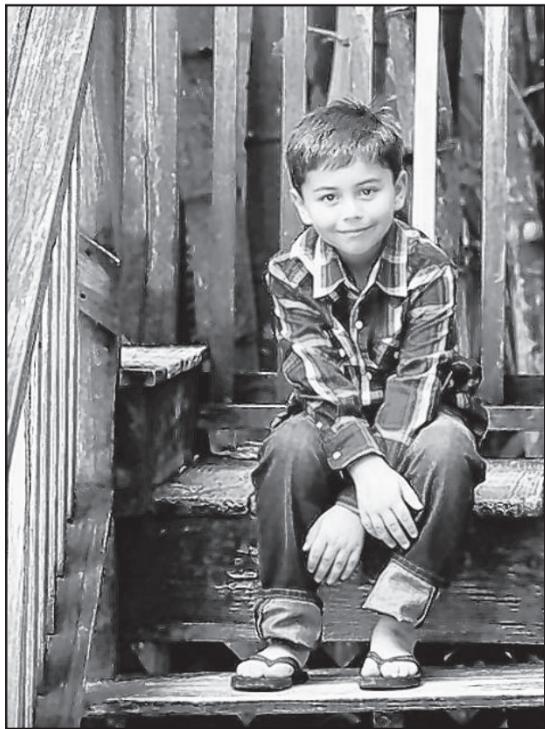
"Right now, we're looking at alternative paths of treatment based on DNA, and conducting DNA sequencing for other genetic markers in the blood," she said. "It costs \$1,500 per child for the testing, and we want to test all 500 children with A-T in the country."

The Wobbly Feet Foundation is a completely volunteer-run organization, and 100 percent of funds raised (after expenses) are guaranteed to go into research and education about the disease. Dzembo said that as one of the primary events of the year for the Foundation, the Pasta Bar is expected to garner a lot of local interest.

"Last year we raised almost \$25,000 from the Pasta Bar and over \$10,000 from the golf tournament (in November)," she said. "This year our goals are \$35,000 and \$15,000 respectively. Our annual fundraising goal for 2014 is \$60,000, and we currently have raised \$10,000, 100 percent of which has already been contributed toward a \$20,000 research commitment we are getting



The Wobbly Feet Foundation was created by the Dzembo family in 2009 to try to educate the public about their son Connor's condition. Last year's pasta bar fundraiser raised almost \$25,000 for research and education about ataxia telangiectasia.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SAMANTHA DZEMBO

Connor Dzembo is now almost 8 years old and suffers from a rare genetic disorder called ataxia telangiectasia. A fundraiser for the foundation his parents started after he was diagnosed at age 2 is set for Oct. 18 on Dearborn Street in Englewood. The foundation hopes to raise some money during its annual Pasta Bar for a Cure event to help further research into the disease.

ready to announce soon."

The fifth annual Pasta Bar for a Cure of A-T will be held from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Oct. 18 at 384 W. Dearborn St., Englewood. It will be a unique dinner experience, with a wine bar by Vino Loco, a gelato bar by Ciao Gelato, live music by Tropical Ave., dancing, a wine grab

and an exciting silent auction featuring local vacations, beautiful jewelry, artwork and more. Individual tickets are \$75, and raffle tickets are \$20.

For more information, to purchase tickets or for sponsorship information, visit www.WobblyFeet0.us, or call 941-421-2503.

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