Vitamin D pilot project

The purpose of this project is to attain a baseline of the vitamin D levels in newborns in Alaska. Numerous healthcare organizations and providers recognize the importance to individual health of attaining adequate vitamin D levels. Studies on the vitamin D levels in different populations in Alaska have generally found Alaskans to be deficient. There is a broad body of research that suggests vitamin D deficiency and insufficiency has negative health impacts. Knowledge of the vitamin D levels in Alaska newborns will allow healthcare providers and policy makers to more accurately address, and help prevent the health challenges facing Alaska.

The Alaska State Legislature unanimously passed a resolution establishing prevention of disease as a primary model of health care in Alaska, with a particular emphasis on vitamin D. As there are numerous studies showing the positive benefits of vitamin D, the resolution further encourages the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and healthcare providers to increase attention to vitamin D deficiency and vitamin D blood testing, and to promote the awareness of the potential benefits of supplementation.

This one-year pilot project would be voluntary on the part of the parents, and would simply add an optional blood test to the two metabolic screens that the State currently requires of newborns. The current mandatory metabolic testing is carried out by heel prick and blood drop method, with the blood collected on a sheet of test paper. As the same technology exists to measure Vitamin D levels, this testing could be carried out at the same time, by the same heel prick. The vitamin D test cards would be sent to lab through an organization that gathers vitamin D level data for different populations.

The cost of the lab test and the individual analysis is approximately $30. 11,320 children were born in Alaska in 2011. However, considering that a number of parents will opt out of the program, the estimate on the test population is about 10,000 newborns. The pilot project could be carried out for $300,000.