

## **NPHL Updates**

*By Steven Hinrichs, M.D., Director, NPHL*

While we look forward to the summer months of outdoor activity, we also recognize that the warm weather brings a new set of public health concerns including shiga toxin producing *E. coli*, West Nile virus and Enterovirus. In addition to these familiar topics, this issue of the NPHL Newsletter contains summaries of new concepts. First, we extend our series of short basic science articles with a description of biofilms by national authority, Dr. Ken Bayles and discussion of taxonomy by our ABMM certified microbiologist, Dr. Peter Iwen. These articles are accompanied by an excellent synopsis of carbapenam beta lactamase resistance in *Enterobacteriaceae* written by Dr. Baha Abdalhamid our medical microbiology fellow. We are pleased to announce that our collaborative education program with UNMC and Creighton University Medical Center has been successful in obtaining funding by CDC and APHL to begin addressing the local and national shortage of PhD microbiologists. But the excitement doesn't only occur in microbiology; Jennifer Svoboda and her colleagues at the Regional West Medical Center laboratory in Scottsbluff are to be congratulated for their dedicated efforts to establish automated electronic messaging of reportable laboratory diseases to the State Epidemiologist. On the chemistry side, the NPHL has established a proficiency testing program so that our local emergency response personnel can document their competence in the identification of unknown powders, and we participated in a cross borders CST exercise in the Nebraska panhandle early April. Our summer edition introduces you to the career of Susan Simmons and then concludes with an update of efforts by the public health laboratory directors in our region to improve communication and cooperation through a meeting sponsored by the Mid America Alliance.