

Health Officers Calm Fears Over Anthrax

In the wake of recently reported anthrax cases, doctors have been deluged with requests for screening tests and preventive treatment, according to public health officials at the state Department of Human Services. These include requests for nasal swabs, blood serum tests and antibiotics.

Health officials recommend that people who are concerned about respiratory or skin problems be evaluated by their health care provider, as usual. But because there are no quick screening tests for anthrax disease and because antibiotics should not be used as a routine prevention step, they caution the public and physicians not to over-react.

Many people are requesting nasal swabs and blood serum tests, according to Mel Kohn, M.D., state

epidemiologist. "These tests will not tell you that you have been exposed to anthrax," Kohn cautions. "Meanwhile, running these tests will take up valuable laboratory capacity."

Even with the events of the last few weeks, anthrax disease is still extremely rare in the United States, Kohn says. "We need to make judicious use of laboratory capacity to investigate any credible threats of anthrax disease. That means making sure that labs are not overwhelmed with requests for tests that are extremely unlikely to be positive."

Hospitalized patients with symptoms consistent with anthrax should have an appropriate laboratory evaluation and local health departments notified immediately so that investigation and control efforts

can be undertaken promptly.

Kohn further cautions against stockpiling antibiotics. "We need to make sure we have adequate supplies of antibiotics available. If a biological attack actually happened, we would need to have those antibiotics in the hands of someone who was truly exposed rather than sitting in someone's medicine cabinet," he said.

The use of antibiotics also carries the risk of the development of resistant bacteria. Illness and even death from antibiotic resistance occur every day in Oregon, according to Kohn. "We know that inappropriate antibiotic use is a major contributor to this problem. We must use them prudently and only when the benefits outweigh the risks," he said.

Ethics in Medicine Discussed



Joan Sage of Northwest Kaiser Permanente, Bonnie Reagan of Portland Adventist Medical Center and Dr. Susan Tolle of the Center for Ethics in Health Care at Oregon Health Sciences University talk about end-of-life issues at a recent seminar at OHSU. How the medical profession deals with death and dying patients is one of the most serious subjects facing the health care profession.

Flu Shot Clinics Set Fall Schedules

Flu vaccines are starting to arrive at clinics and doctors offices in the Portland area for the winter flu season.

But officials are asking that only the elderly and others most at risk get their vaccinations now. They are asking the young and healthy to wait until more of the vaccine arrives. Legacy Visiting Nurse Association will provide Flu Prevention Clinics during November at Safeway, Kmart and community sites in the Portland metropolitan area.

Because flu vaccine suppliers are predicting a second straight year of delays in delivery of full

vaccine orders, Legacy will vaccinate only persons at high risk for influenza this month.

National health officials said more than half of the vaccine will be distributed nationwide by Halloween, with the rest arriving in November and December.

"We need to target the influenza vaccine that is available now, in October, to those at high risk of complications," Nancy Cox of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

Those who should receive their shots first, officials said, are people aged 65 and older and other at-risk groups, including:

- Residents of nursing homes and other facilities housing people with chronic illnesses.
- Children and adults with chronic heart or lung disorders, such as asthma.
- Children and adults who need regular medical care because of such chronic diseases as diabetes, kidney disease and immune suppression.
- People aged six months to 18 years who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.
- Pregnant women who will be in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during flu season.
- And health care workers.

Health Center Moves to New Location

The Multnomah County North Portland Health Center at 8918 N. Woolsey has moved to 9000 N. Lombard.

The new location in the St. Johns neighborhood is designed to serve a larger number of primary health care clients at a more

central and accessible location. The new facility is one of six primary health care centers operated by the county.

Services include Oregon Health Plan eligibility screening, family planning, pharmacy, immunizations, mental health treatment,

and newborn/well-child care. An office for medical workers who make home visits will also be located in the center.

Future plans for the two-story, 24,000-square-foot building include ground level retail space.

WSU Vancouver Enrollment Increases

Growth in enrollment and full or near full classes are the reality for Washington State University Vancouver this fall. Nearly 1,700 students are enrolled in junior-, senior- and graduate level classes and 44 percent of all classes are at maximum capacity.

"It's an exciting fall for WSU Vancouver," said Nancy Youlden, director of student services. "We

are very pleased to exceed our enrollment target and there seems to be an increase in the number of students enrolled full-time."

"It appears that more students are choosing the community colleges plus WSU Vancouver option. And for that reason, we're seeing an influx of more traditionally aged college students. I think this growth also demonstrates an

increased awareness of our programs and presence, as well as our commitment to the community."

WSU Vancouver, one of four campuses within the WSU system, provides upper-division and graduate classes leading to 13 bachelor's and eight master's degrees.

The campus is located on 351 acres just north of the Columbia River.

County Expands Access to Family Planning

Multnomah County Health Department and the Oregon Health Division recently initiated a process to expand access to family planning services to uninsured county residents.

The project provides free birth control and low-cost reproductive health care to men and women

whose incomes are below 185 percent of the federal poverty level.

According to Oregon Health Division estimates, more than 40,000 people in the metro area are in need of family planning services.

The health department and other qualified medical providers offer medical exams, lab tests, counsel-

ing services, patient education, and birth control methods. In the future, vasectomies and female sterilization may be included in the project.

For more information and eligibility requirements, call 1-800-SAFENET or visit the state's website at www.ohd.hr.state.or.us/fp.

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