

Is monkeypox the next big threat?

The COVID-19 pandemic isn't yet over and now the human version of monkeypox virus has been detected in Oregon.

Should we be worried?

That depends, says the Clatsop County Public Health Department.

"If we've learned anything from the pandemic, we all are responsible for preventing the spread of a communicable disease by understanding how it is transmitted," said Margo Lalich, Clatsop County interim public health director. "We want people to know that transmission risk from hMPXV virus is low and usually requires close, prolonged contact."

Human-to-human spread is from direct or indirect

contact with body lesions, including skin-to-skin contact with lesions, contact with contaminated objects such as towels, bedding, or other objects containing such fluids, or potentially from large respiratory droplets.

Symptoms of the illness begin with fever, headache and muscle aches, and are followed by a rash and lesions often starting on the face and spreading to the limbs.

The Oregon Public Health Division announced the news last week and informed local public health offices statewide.

The infected person is a man who had recently trav-



Lalich

eled in an area where monkeypox is circulating. There is currently no evidence that the hMPXV virus is circulating in Oregon, according to the state.

The county health department works with Oregon Health Authority to detect, track, prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases.

Local public health authorities are required to be on call to respond to reportable communicable diseases.

All Oregon physicians, other health care providers and laboratories are required by law to report certain diseases and conditions to local health departments.

VA searches for heroic soldier's long-lost family

The medals of a World War II veteran honored for heroism need a home.

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs is looking for surviving family members or descendants of George E. Hodgdon to ensure his medals are properly cared for. The medals were found recently in



a house under demolition in Lake Oswego.

Lt. Hodgdon, an Army veteran, assisted in the "Italian Campaign" in the late stages of WW II, including during the Battle of Anzio. He was awarded the Army's second-highest military decoration for extraordinary heroism, the Distinguished Service Cross, and the War Cross of Military Valor, or *Medaglia al Valor Militaire*, which is the Italian equivalent of the Medal of Honor.

Hodgdon was awarded for his actions during a fierce battle against German forces

in January 1944 near Cisterna di Littoria, Italy. Despite being under a heavy rain of machine-gun and rifle fire, he organized and led a rally that destroyed an enemy tank.

Hodgdon helped ensure the safety of his company by making himself a target, narrowly escaping injury when a bullet grazed his cheek and again when a German concussion grenade exploded at his feet.

His citation for the Distinguished Service Cross reads, in part: "Inspiring his men by his own fearless determination under heavy fire, he

led his company to its objective where he lost consciousness. First Lieutenant Hodgdon's determined courage and aggressive leadership reflect the finest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States."

Hodgdon died in 1969 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

He had no known surviving spouse and Pittsburgh was listed as his hometown of record.

"These medals represent the enduring appreciation of two grateful nations for the courageous and exemplary service Lt. Hodgdon performed in World War II more than 75 years ago," ODVA Director Kelly Fitzpatrick said. "They belong with the Hodgdon family."

Anyone with information about Lt. Hodgdon's family is asked to contact Tyler Francke at tyler.francke@odva.oregon.gov.

County targets pools, spas

Clatsop County environmental health officials have begun inspecting local hotel pools and spas after receiving concerns of violations.

"So far this year, more than half of the pools and spas inspected were closed because they did not meet the requirements of Oregon state rules," said Meredith Reiley, an environmental health specialist in the county's food, pool, and lodging program. "We want to make sure people are safe when they use hotel pools and hot tubs."

If chemicals in the water are not properly balanced, people can get eye or skin irritation. If there is not enough chlorine in the water, harmful bacteria or other pathogens can grow, leading to possible illness.

A second concern is for the health of hotel employees exposed to pool chemicals that may not be properly handled or stored.

"This is an ongoing trend and too often we are dealing with repeat offenders," Reiley said. "We closed the pool of one lodging business five

out of the six times it was inspected during a two-month period earlier this year."

A major warning sign that the water is out of balance is the strong smell of chlorine upon entering a pool or spa area.

"People often think a chlorine smell means there is plenty of disinfectant in the water. That is not the case," she said.

Guests should contact the lodging's manager if that happens.

"Pools and spas are basically giant chemistry sets that need to be properly maintained at all times. When they aren't, people can get very sick," she said. "We strongly encourage hotel managers to have their employees specifically trained and certified as pool operators. We are not finding as many problems with municipal pools because those employees have received adequate training and they know how to keep the water safe for everyone".

The public can view pool and spa safety records at inspections.myhealthdepartment.com/or-clatsop-county.

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